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Sailor Rich Wilson to sail around the world alone, again

Marblehead, MA September 14, 2016 – On November 6, 2016, Marblehead sailor Rich Wilson will be one of 29 sailors to leave the port of Les Sables d’Olonne in France to compete in the Vendée Globe non-stop singlehanded around the world race. Competing in the race for the second time Wilson will once again be the only American, the only asthmatic and, at 66, the oldest skipper in the fleet.

An experienced sailor, Wilson has won the Newport to Bermuda race and holds three world sailing records. Yet when he first learned about the Vendee Globe race, which is sailed in 60 foot IMOCA class boats, his initial reaction was “it is too hard, too long and too dangerous.” Eight years ago Wilson was one of 30 skippers to compete in the race. He sailed 28,790 miles in 121 days, endured broken ribs, a facial gash and compressed vertebrae, and came in 9th of eleven finishers. He encountered hurricane force gales, gear breakage, and had to climb up his 90-foot mast to make repairs. He crossed the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans via the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn in his monohull *Great American III*.

Wilson’s motivation to participate in the race is to engage and educate students around the world, with some 250,000 students and schools in 15 countries participating in his educational sitesALIVE! program. With degrees from Harvard, MIT and Harvard Business School, Wilson was a math teacher in the Boston Public Schools system when he realized that kids really paid attention when he confronted them with real world experiences. “Excite a kid with bats, bugs, and snakes in the rainforest, or with gales, flying fish, and dolphins at sea, and they will pay attention not knowing what will happen next,” noted Wilson. “Then the science, geography, and math flow freely.”

Educators, students and people around the world can sign up to sitesALIVE! and track Wilson’s progress daily on the website (<http://vg2016.sitesalive.com>). Program components include a daily ship’s log and audio podcast plus photos and videos from the boat at sea. For educators there is also a teacher’s guide, weekly lesson plans, skipper & expert essays, and the opportunity for regular Q&A.

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About sitesALIVE!

Wilson’s first sitesALIVE! project in 1990 was to challenge a clipper era record for the fastest passage from San Francisco to Boston via Cape Horn. Sailing in a 60-foot trimaran, Wilson and crew mate Steve Pettengill encountered 85 knot winds and 65-foot seas off Cape Horn which caused the catamaran to double somersault and capsize. Shipwrecked, Wilson and Pettengill clung to the remains of the hull until they were rescued at midnight by the giant containership *New Zealand Pacific*. The ship’s captain, Murray Lister, is now one of the 15 strong team of experts Wilson has for support, including his trainer and his asthma doctor.

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About the Vendée Globe

The Vendée Globe race was started in 1989, and is described by world class sailor and TV commentator Gary Jobson as a race almost beyond belief – 28,000 miles around the world non-stop and singlehanded. While Jobson is the first to admit that the race is “too scary, the boats are too big, and you are too far from land,” he also realized that it would provide the true theater of the mind that was his mission for sitesALIVE!, which enables school kids and participating newspapers and online to follow his exploits daily.

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