



BIG PLANS: The Audi ultra Super Maxi arriving in Singapore. PICTURE COURTESY OF YUZZOO CORPORATION

Big ambitions for yacht racing team

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AN ALL-SINGAPORE team, in a yacht that is designed and built in Singapore, that is capable of winning the prestigious America's Cup in 2013.

That is what the owners of the Audi ultra Super Maxi aim to achieve in an ambitious project to promote big-boat racing here.

Ludde Ingvall, Ron Croesvey and Thomas Zilliacus have relocated their 30-metre ocean-racing yacht from Sydney with the aim of grooming sailors in handling boats of such sizes, in a partnership with the Singapore Sailing Federation (SSF).

The trio also aim to transfer the logistical know-how, and that of maintaining such boats, to Singaporeans in hope of developing the relevant industries, as well as raising the profile of professional sailing here.

"A lot of good crew have sailed with me and a lot of people have given me good breaks over the years," said Ingvall at the 90-minute press conference at the Marina Barrage yesterday.

"There was once when I thanked my guru and asked him how I could repay him. He said 'you pass it on'.

"That's what I have doing in the last few years in countries such as South Africa, Portugal and Australia," added Ingvall, a two-time world champion.

Logical choice

The fact that the trio had businesses here – all three are the head honchos of Singapore-based YuuZoo Corporation – and the available talent pool here made it "logical" for the owners to relocate the boat.

"I guarantee you that a Singapore team can win the America's Cup in 2013, if there is sufficient support," said Ingvall.

Such support includes interest from Singaporeans at large, which ties in with interest from corporate sponsors.

Currently, there are about 60 sailors training to be the Audi ultra's crew members.

Eighteen will be chosen at the end of next month, with 12 sailing with other renowned international sailors as a 28-strong crew in the China Sea Race in Hong Kong in October.

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The boat's owners aim to race competitively in the region at least once a month next year, as well as to groom the Singaporeans sufficiently to send an all-Singaporean crew for regattas in the same year.

SSF general manager Jason Lim said the new partnership allows another avenue for sailors to grow their passion in the sport, as well as to earn their keep.

The federation will also do its part to ensure Singapore's medal chances in the dinghies will not be affected by the migration of talent to big-boat racing.

"Wearn Haw (SSF chief executive) has made it very clear – the people identified for future Olympic Games cannot be touched; the SSF has a strong influence in the selection process.

"But, in between the sailing season, these sailors can do it to get some experience."

Lim was also cautious about the 2013 target. He said: "I cannot put a time frame to it. It is easier to achieve that in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, England and the United States, where sailing is really hot.

"We want to be beneficiaries and get a lot of sailors under (Ingvall's) wing, to give them a taste of sailing in big boats."