

# Victory Cup



**See you in Spain.** Having successfully defended the oldest trophy in the world of sport yet again, the Alinghi team will return to Valencia for the 33<sup>rd</sup> America's Cup in 2009.

PHOTOS: DAVID CHIPPERFIELD, TH.MARTINEZ, IVO.ROVIRA/ALINGHI

Until recently, the America's Cup seemed something of an insider tip. Now, though, the Cup has moved into the international limelight. This year, up to a billion people followed the finals of the 32nd Cup. From San Diego to Auckland where the Cup was followed via Internet stream or on television, to the dedicated spectators who lost themselves in the races beaming from the screens of the Nespresso Foredeck Bar, it all boils down to one thing: the America's Cup has conquered hearts around the world. And fans old and new are unlikely to forget this year, as two nearly equal competitors sailed it out in one of the world's most hotly contested trophies.

That Alinghi eventually managed to carry the day may be traced back to seven major virtues it embodied:

**Modern Technology** ... that is, the fastest yacht. The new regulations governing the America's Cup Class leave only the smallest of margins among the competing yachts. Minimal speed discrepancies can often be discerned only by trained eyes. The start of the second race is a case in point. Alinghi passed the starting line to leeward, three seconds after ETNZ (Emirates Team New Zealand). Alinghi, however, held its position and rounded the first windward mark ahead of ETNZ. The speed of Alinghi's yacht made it possible.

**Experienced Crew** In the case of the Alinghi team, almost every crewmember had previous America's Cup experience, including the B-Crew. Of the 17 sailors onboard, a total of 14

In all 156 years of the America's Cup history, only three countries have managed to defend the prestigious trophy: the USA, New Zealand, and now Switzerland. With its 5:2 victory off Valencia, Swiss team Alinghi has secured its place among the greats of this illustrious sport. As a co-sponsor, Nespresso is proud to share in Alinghi's outstanding success in the quest for the ultimate cup.

had previously won the Cup at least once; five of them had won it no less than three times, including skipper Brad Butterworth and strategist Murray Jones. Obviously, experience adds a touch of sangfroid. In the words of navigator Juan Vila: "We will take one race at a time and just keep the concentration up and look for our opportunities and sail the way we know we can and that should do it." A solid, experienced team is an indispensable prerequisite for

**Perfect Seamanship** ... as the technical handling of the boat is referred to. Even Dean Barker, skipper of the opposing team, gallantly conceded: "The guys in Alinghi are just doing it a little better at the moment, making the most of the opportunities that are there." Deficits in this department could be studied best in the opposing team's manoeuvring, which sometimes cost it the lead.

**Tactical Finesse** When it came to tactical manoeuvring, Alinghi showed off its extraordinary prowess in the final race for the America's Cup. In the approach to the 2nd windward mark, with both boats drawing even, ETNZ received a penalty for failing to keep clear, and Alinghi rounded ahead by 12 seconds. This meant that ETNZ had to exonerate itself with a penalty turn – which eventually decided both the

race and the Cup. To be able to execute manoeuvres as sophisticated as these, the one indispensable thing is...

**Precision**... which, in Alinghi's case, could also be observed on other occasions. Whenever Alinghi managed to draw ETNZ into a tacking duel, more often than not Alinghi came out the winner. During each tacking manoeuvre, the yacht has to turn its bow through the wind. It corresponds to taking the foot off the gas pedal in a car – with the obvious challenge to get the boat going again as quickly as possible. This requires considerable feeling on the part of both helmsman and crew, as the sails need to be pulled fast in sync with the boat's turn. In a word, what matters more than anything else is precision.

**Passion** There are no two ways about it – these days the America's Cup is a sports event in a class of its own, and non-professionals need not apply. Yet anyone who witnessed Ed Baird's reaction on winning the America's Cup must have been moved by his passionately unprofessional behaviour. As soon as Alinghi docked, the helmsman jumped ashore and embraced everyone in sight, friends and strangers alike, to the tune of Alinghi's anthem, the Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Can't Stop". No doubt about it – for Baird, helming a yacht is much more than just a job;

he puts his heart and soul into it. And he's certainly not the only one among Alinghi's crew who sees things this way.

**Self Reliance** There's no denying that the Alinghi crew felt some surprise after the first race. It had been won, but not as easily as anyone – including the crew – had expected. "I think Alinghi's performance was impressive, particularly when the team was down 2-1 and managed to stay on course and rely on its strength," commented Ernesto Bertarelli, team syndicate head and afterguard member. "We lost that race, but for some reason I came out of it feeling stronger than before, knowing we could win the Cup again."

