

# Captain of Industry



## How did you find the transition from commercial vessels to yachts?

It's an easy transition in some respects and harder in others. One of the biggest beefs I had with the Academy was that I assumed when I was going there that everyone else would be like me, having grown up on the water or with a passion for the sea. But in reality 90 per cent of them were farmers from the Midwest or Maine and had never been on the water before. At the time I was dumbfounded that these students with no small-boat-handling skills would come out of school and be licensed to drive a tanker across the Atlantic without being able to dock a 20-footer. One of the things that my father and I pushed and that the Academy has adapted later on is to encourage their sail-training programme and small boats, because you have to

learn basic seamanship. Yachts are more hands on and there is more seamanship, whereas on the commercial side of things there is more of a technical and business focus than the hands-on stuff.

## As you have a commercial training, with an unlimited mate's ticket, how did you get into yachting?

When I first got out of school I worked as chief mate on a 180-footer for six months, but I left for three years to carry out a Whitbread campaign and work on the racing maxi *Challenge America*. When that programme ended, I worked commercially on tugboats for a year.

Then I was asked to run a 140ft motoryacht, *Miss Turnberry*, which was my first command at 25 years of age. We were a very successful charter boat,

**Captain Dean Maggio** grew up on boats. Literally. The Florida-born captain of *S/Y Meteor* was raised in the Bahamas, living on the water from infancy until he headed north to attend the Maine Maritime Academy at 16, never considering an alternative path in life. From his early teens, Maggio junior worked on his father's charter flotilla, providing him with boat-handling skills and an understanding of phenomenal guest service that he says help him today in running the 51.6m schooner. Maggio, who joined *Meteor* during her build at Royal Huisman seven years ago, talks with **Esther Barney** about his life, his yachts and a recent tender project.

which made my name in the charter business. I was the captain when she went down on 26 December 1995. We still don't know what happened for sure that day. We were on charter, it was an unusually crystal clear, flat day in the Caribbean winter and we had left St Kitts and were on our way to St Maarten. We noticed about halfway that we were taking on water. It only took an hour and 45 minutes from the time that we noticed the water coming in to the boat going under. I was very proud of the way the crew handled themselves with the guests, and we got them off immediately without any panicking and everyone waited in the launched tenders while I was with the mate on board, trying to work out what was going on.

**What was going through your mind?**

Everything. I dived under the boat to try to figure out what was happening and we were trying to pump out the water we were taking on but we weren't successful in saving her and she went down. In 1996, 140ft was a big yacht and this was before the MCA's LY2 [which came out in 1998] and she was not USCG certified; there were no watertight bulkheads or engine room doors. With today's regulations, she never would have gone down.

**"If the captain, first mate and even chief stewardess don't demand that those who they are in charge of have a certain work ethic then they might not get it all the time."**

**So that is a very positive reason for increased regulation over the years in improving the safety of the industry...**

I argue that with people all the time. The majority of regulations are positive and great, even if you get some smaller ones that seem unnecessary. I have worked on five build projects now and have always had pushback when putting these to owners. If you build a jet and tell the owners that they have to put in a 10sqm piece of flameproof carpet for \$500,000, then they won't argue with you simply because the FAA [Federal Aviation Association] requires them to do it. But if you tell them to put in a \$100,000 sprinkler system on the yacht because it's a good idea rather than enforced, then they will give you a hard time. But regulators give you a mandate to show the owners what is needed to make the yacht safe.



METEOR AT THE SUPERYACHT CUP, PALMA

**Captain Maggio has recently been working on a new modular tender project with Yellowfin. TSR asks what inspired the collaboration and its driving forces.**

When I was sourcing the tenders for *Meteor*, I realised that generally their pricing is ridiculous and in my opinion the quality and function of a lot of tenders could be done better.

*Meteor* owner Dan has a grand prix sailing yacht, *Numbers*. We had one of the more popular 36ft racing tenders supporting *Numbers* that in the off-season we would use it as a towable for *Meteor*. After a season of using the boat, and knowing what we paid for it, I was certain that I could do a better job. So I researched the market and designed a tender. I feel that my design is a far superior and functional design for the market. I think that the equipment and the construction methods and overall quality of the product are far superior to a lot of what is on the market, but our pricing is similar or even a little less than existing tenders.

**Tenders with modular, interchangeable arrangements have been done to an extent before, so what makes yours different?**

I feel that a lot of tenders on the market have good functionality and look attractive but don't ride well, and many of those that do ride well don't have good functionality, so I am trying to integrate both.

This is a full RIB design and we are doing a range of sizes. I started drawing the concept in 2009 and the project started gaining momentum. I finalised the design in 2011 and partnered with Yellowfin towards the end of that year. Yellowfin owns the yacht and we are using their hull, which is a very proven hull, predominantly in the sport fishing sector but they are appearing more and more in yachting. The first 40ft tender comes out in September for the America's Cup Artemis Racing team in time for the San Francisco racing at the end of the year, and we should have a model at Fort Lauderdale show.

**Can you have a tender that's all things to all people?**

I think you can. A modular design can offer a huge number of options to the crew and owners. Once we get the tender out you will see – it has a mix of American and European flair. ■

See more about the new tender project on p86.



**Coming straight back into yachting as a captain after your racing campaign, how did you find running a new vessel and commanding respect from your crew at such a young age?**

It was always a struggle. Having run my father's yachts from a young age, I was lucky to grow up with a sense of leadership and responsibility, so those aspects of the role didn't bother me. That was 90 per cent of the battle. As long as you are confident, people will follow you. I pride myself on hiring good people, and I put in place a great team around me and I tried to keep them close in age so, although I was always the youngest, they weren't too much older than me. Even today, I am constantly evolving and learning from things that I say or do, but I am open minded about it and want to evolve.

**"I would rather find people who are more inclined to give good service and we can train them up to sail rather than vice versa."**

**Do you have any mentors?**

My mentor was my father, who was running boats up until he passed away this year. He taught me everything. At 74 he was running a company out of the Bahamas that puts 1,000 boy scouts through its sail-training programme each summer.

You could say that Andy Chase, one of the professors at the Maine Maritime Academy, was a bit of a mentor figure

for me, too. He came in my later years and was very strict but fair as a teacher, and we have since become friends.

**You have had him on board *Meteor* to carry out some training exercises, like man overboard. How did you find these?**

From a captain's standpoint, it's great to be able to sit back and listen to a professional teacher's perspective and to his ideas – he is out on the water every day and trains with the students. I didn't incorporate all of his ideas, but I did incorporate a lot of them. He brought a perspective that I had not thought of. People often use time constraints as an excuse for lack of on-board training.

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ABOVE: METEOR AT THE 2010 BUCKET

### Would you agree that there should be more time dedicated to this in general?

There is never enough time and I think very few people do enough ongoing training on board. We try to be diligent about doing something regularly. We always spend a morning going through our procedures and drills before we go offshore and is that enough? It's never enough, but we try to do as much as we can.

### Finding great crew with a good fit on the yacht is always tough for a captain. From my experience, your team has always been very friendly and professional. What's the secret to finding such great crew?

Crew is always a frustration as far as making sure you have the right team all the time. I've been lucky in general; we have had our share of crew who have not quite fit, but it's about finding the right personalities. I try to breed a culture with

professional crew who are also friendly and outgoing. It comes from the top down. It's human nature for a lot of people to try to get away with what they can when they aren't in charge. If the captain, first mate and even chief stewardess don't demand that those who they are in charge of have a certain work ethic then they might not get it all the time. That being said, I look for people with certain personal values, too, so I try to find the balance.

I have found there is a big difference between the sailing yacht and motoryacht crew. I have brought my motoryacht charter hat over to the sailing yachts. I think a lot of captains on sailing yachts say to their owners that the crew are there as sailors and don't focus on the guest entertainment aspect of the job, which I don't think is the way it should be. I would rather find people who are more inclined to give good service and we can train them up to sail rather than vice versa.

### What's your advice to future captains who are working towards their first command?

I think there are a lot of great crew who are good in certain areas – great at maintaining a boat or excellent engineers – but they aren't looking at the whole picture. Being a captain is like running a business and if you are looking to become one, you need to concentrate on not just learning your job but everybody's job, and learning the business of the yacht. Some people have it [the authority] and some people don't. You might be the best navigator or yacht handler in the world, but if you are not conveying that confidence to the owner, then he is not going to hire you. On the flip side, there are many captains who I think are very confident and convince their owners that they are right for the job when in fact there are a lot of areas that they need to work on. You need to know the whole business.

### Who are the best owners you have worked for and why?

No doubt about it, the current owners of *Meteor*, John Risley and Dan Meyers, are by far the best owners for whom I have worked. As captains, I think we are CEOs of small companies, and with the yachts you have a lot of responsibility. The *Meteor* owners don't micromanage me, they give me their parameters for running the boat – much like a business – and let me get on with the job. Too many owners try to micromanage their captains and yachts.

### Having two owners hasn't worked for everyone in the past. What makes it work with *Meteor*?

Again, they don't micromanage me. If you have a situation where one does and the other doesn't then that causes problems. They have a huge mutual respect for one another, which I think makes it work better.

Images: Justin Ratcliffe

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