

Golden Globe Ocean Race 2018

Luke and Antoine audio podcast

Contributor names

Luke Mander

Antoine Cousot

LUKE MANDER: So I've come to Falmouth to meet with Antoine Cousot. It's a beautiful sunny day. There's not a cloud in the sky. And there's a gorgeous northerly breeze blowing. The harbor is alive with activity. A little passenger ferry has just put out carrying a few people onto the other side of the water. And I'm going to go and find his boat now.

Can you hear me, Antoine?

ANTOINE COUSOT: Yes, I do.

LUKE MANDER: Can I stick this just around here while you're changing?

ANTOINE COUSOT: Yeah, yeah, sure.

LUKE MANDER: So have you always sailed in your life?

ANTOINE COUSOT: I started sailing early 20s. I used to have my own boats. And then, I started to work as a professional yacht skipper when I was 27/28. And then, for 10 years, I carry on working on different boats, different places around the planet.

LUKE MANDER: Nice. So what point did you feel ready to make an assault on around the world trip? Because being a delivery skipper is one thing, of course.

ANTOINE COUSOT: That's right. I've got this dream since probably 25 years actually because in 1993, I was crossing the Atlantic. And that was the first time I heard about the race, 1993. I heard about Bernard Moitessier, my French guru. So that was 25 years after actually the race, 1968. And we are in 2018, so 25 years back. That's quite symbolic, every 25 years.

LUKE MANDER: Yeah. So you mentioned Moitessier, your French guru. You're following in a line from Slocum, Dumas, Moitessier--

ANTOINE COUSOT: That's right. And there's of single-ended sailors, but you mentioned the key people, Joshua Slocum and Moitessier, Marcel Baggio, Vito Dumas. And one I really appreciate is Alain Gerbault, which is French sailor as well.

LUKE MANDER: One of the things that struck me in Moitessier's book is the amount of mental preparation he did as well. Yoga on his deck, mental conditioning do you have any particular routines?

ANTOINE COUSOT: I do the same. I do yoga and meditation. Yoga is not that easy on a boat, so you need to find some posture, just simple, where you don't have to stretch the whole body on the floor and everything. But you can just sit down. I do a lot of what we call prana yoga, which is the breathing, to calm down and just--

LUKE MANDER: Just chill out and not--

ANTOINE COUSOT: Yeah, and focus to release the pressure and really focus on. It's a good way.

LUKE MANDER: And one of the wonderful things about sailing is that you're very close to nature.

ANTOINE COUSOT: That's right.

LUKE MANDER: That's one of things. Is it the case that for you, the primary motivation in sailing is the actual sailing, the working of the sails, the seamanship, or is it being close to the ocean, being close to the environment and so on.

ANTOINE COUSOT: It's a combination of everything because why am I doing this race is also as a former professional skipper is just to do the ultimate challenge, go around the world nonstop, single line. And you can't do better than that. And then it's a real opportunity in life just to take that upon you to be on your own for so long.

There's more people who have been in space. I think there's 550 people who have been at least once in space compared to solo skipper. Probably 100 have been around the world.

LUKE MANDER: That's a fascinating statistic. I had no idea, actually.

ANTOINE COUSOT: And we are in 2018. And the thing is I like the idea also to change the time. Today we leave on the linear time. There's a lot of stress. We are always rushing after time and everything. And now, when you are at sea, you back with the cosmos. I mean, it's just the cycle, the sun and the stars, everything is a bit different. So you can take your time.

LUKE MANDER: I often say to my students at the OU that the first step is often the hardest, either that's deciding to study or maybe submitting their first piece of coursework or something like this. You've made a huge decision to enter this race. And was it frightening? And with that experience, what would you say to somebody who is contemplating something new?

ANTOINE COUSOT: It's always difficult to take any decision in life. And life is a succession of decision. And sometimes we right. Sometimes we make bad decisions. But that one was actually easy because I really wanted to do that.

And you can't postpone your dreams forever. We have one life, and life is short. I think that was the right time, the right moment, and it's more than a race. It's not only participating to or a Jubilee or something like that. It's really a big chapter for my life. So I just spent 2 years preparing the boats, and now it's--

LUKE MANDER: And it's almost here. You're almost ready to cross the sea.

ANTOINE COUSOT: Yeah, definitely there.

LUKE MANDER: Well, good luck, Antoine. Thank you very much.

ANTOINE COUSOT: Thank you very much.