Sailor

JESSICA WATSON

(1993–)

Jessica Watson blasted onto the world stage in 2010 when, at only 16, she successfully sailed solo nonstop and unassisted around the world in her yacht, Ella’s Pink Lady. It was a 210-day journey, which involved travelling 23,000 nautical miles over some of the world’s most challenging oceans.

Jessica grew up in a family passionate about boats and even lived on one for five years of her childhood, and yet she was afraid of the water, shy, quiet and anything but adventurous. But when she was read the story of Jesse Martin’s solo sailing trip around the world at only 17, it hatched a dream, and over the next few years Jessica threw herself into learning as much as she could about boats, sailing and the sea.

Those years of preparation would help Jessica survive not only the intense loneliness of long days alone on the ocean, but also terrifying moments when her boat was knocked sideways into the water in huge seas.

As her adventure unfolded, the world followed through her blog. It attracted five million hits on the day she sailed back into Sydney, where she was overwhelmed by a crowd of 75,000, including the Australian Prime Minister.

Jessica went on to become Young Australian of the Year in 2011, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2012, wrote a book about her experiences, filmed a documentary with Sir Richard Branson, skippered the youngest ever crew to compete in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and is now a co-founder and Communications Manager of a start-up company, Deckee.com.

Jessica, you proved to the world that if you believe in your dreams, and work hard, you can overcome any obstacle.

We are in awe of your fearless nature!

ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA BINGH