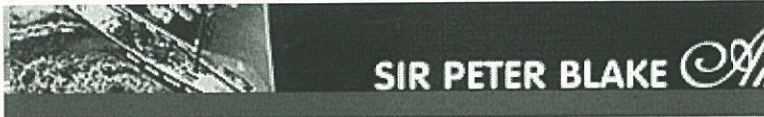


(Sir Peter Blake Trust, n.d.[b])

As at date of publication Archive



Sir Peter Blake

The Early Years

America's Cup

America's Cup
1992 - 1995

America's Cup
1999 - 2000

Red Socks

Ocean Racing

Blakexpeditions

Sir Peter Blake and the
Environment

America's Cup 1999 - 2000

For all that Peter Blake's adventures began with dreams - and the more ambitious, the more they inspired him - he was also a complete realist. He was very astute at determining what was required, measuring the strengths of the opposition and analysing the obstacles.

He reckoned that even though New Zealand was the smallest nation ever to attempt the America's Cup, a Kiwi challenge could achieve it. And, at his first attempt, he assembled and then led a very talented team to overwhelming success in 1995. Even as the victory celebrations continued to resound around New Zealand, Blake was assessing the challenge that lay ahead. He was under no illusion that defending the Cup would be much tougher than winning it had been.



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He vowed that the New Zealand defence would be notable on two counts: it would be a fair contest and it would take place from a central location, with all the syndicates gathered together like the pits in a Formula One Grand Prix.

A fair contest was something of a novel idea because the long history of the Cup was riddled with skulduggery and underhanded efforts to either retain it or capture it. "We are going to clean it up," vowed Blake. "It is going to be fair for both groups - an event that people will want their sons and daughters to get involved in because they can see they have a fair sporting chance of getting through and actually winning the Cup."

"There will be no shifting of the rules. There are some who think they will arrive here and pile on the pressure and that New Zealand will simply roll over and give in to their demands. It is not going to happen that way and they should know that from the outset. If they don't want to play by the book, they should not bother to come at all."

To prepare for hosting the Cup, enormous development work was required in Auckland. Blake's vision was that the event should have a strong, visible presence in Auckland city. Unlike San Diego, where the syndicates were widely dispersed, Auckland would have an America's Cup village, he said, a central location where all the syndicates would gather side by side to create an atmosphere that would excite the public.

We had achieved one goal, but now there is a new one. Goal setting is very important and unless the goal is a difficult one, it is hardly worth bothering

about."

— Sir Peter Blake

What became known as "Syndicate Row" was the outcome, with all the teams lined up on one side of the basin, with multimillion dollar commercial and residential development on the other sides. From a semi-industrial area of neglect, the Viaduct Basin was completely transformed into one of the most vibrant parts of Auckland's downtown area.

Achieving this took great energy, patience and political footwork as merchants and politicians jockeyed for position and sought their own best advantage.

For a while it looked as if the whole thing would be mired in stalemate, but at the 11 th hour a coalition of central, regional and local politicians and commercial interests was bullied into place. Sir Tom Clark, a long-time Blake patron and Team New Zealand trustee, described Blake as a "shaggy-haired sheepdog, barking and snapping at their heels" as he herded the various players into the fold.

If the preparation of infrastructure represented a major effort, the challenge on the water was no less daunting. As 11 challengers from seven nations assembled in Auckland, Blake was very conscious that defending the Cup would be a lot more difficult than challenging was. "Indeed," he said, "after we won in 1995, there might have been a temptation to sit back and say, Mission Accomplished.



[More about this image](#)

"But, that victory was in a sense only a beginning. We had achieved one goal, but now there is a new one. Goal setting is very important and unless the goal is a difficult one, it is hardly worth bothering about. At Team New Zealand, we are in no doubt that we face an extremely difficult goal.

"The America's Cup has only left the United States twice and has never been successfully defended outside of the US. Our job is to keep it here for as long as possible."

Through the Millennium summer, Team New Zealand engaged in a relentless regime of practice, testing and development. At the same time, the Hauraki Gulf was crowded with the challengers competing for the Louis Vuitton Cup and, with it, the right to take on the Defenders for the America's Cup itself.

At last, after an exhausting and extremely hard-fought battle, the Italian Prada team emerged as the Challenger. The moment of destiny was at hand and Team New Zealand responded magnificently.

Once again, the New Zealand superiority was overwhelming and the Italian challenge was despatched with a 5-0 scoreline. The apparent ease of this victory was deceptive. Behind the achievement lay meticulous planning, preparation and a relentless discipline that never allowed for complacency and left absolutely nothing to chance. In that, it epitomised every campaign Blake undertook.

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)

Sir Peter Blake

"Having vision is not enough. Change comes through realising the vision and turning it into a reality. It is easy to espouse worthy goals, values and policies; the hard part is implementation."

- > [About Sir Peter Blake](#)
- > [The Early Years](#)
- > [Ocean Racing](#)
- > [America's Cup](#)