

Keith Musto and Tony Morgan competing in their Flying Dutchman in 1964. They wore flannel trousers, canvas shoes and sweaters hand-knitted by their wives



## MUSTO at sixty

In the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Keith Musto sailed for Britain wearing flannel trousers and a very wet hand-knitted sweater. He was sure there were better options – and started a company to make them

In 1964 Keith Musto competed in the Tokyo Olympic Games. It was the world's largest sporting stage, but was a very amateur playing field. "The team that went to Tokyo was very different to the team that went to Tokyo in 2021. The professionalism had no bearing on the very amateurish team that went to Tokyo in '64," said Keith. "I can never remember a team meeting, there was no support boat or training boat – you were on your own."

Keith was competing in the Flying Dutchman dinghy class with crew Tony Morgan. They were deemed to be at a disadvantage because they were considered lightweight compared to their competitors: dousing their clothing with water made them heavier and more competitive. Their clothing was really just shore-based gear: flannel trousers, Guernsey sweaters, canvas shoes, and none of it waterproof. "We wore sweaters which our wives knitted," said Keith. "They were very heavy sweaters, and even heavier when you got them wet, which you did on purpose before the start to give you more power for going upwind."

Keith and Tony won a silver medal, Britain's only sailing medal in 1964, although a gold medal had nearly been within their grasp except for one error in judgement. "I'm still grieving the mistake

I made in the last race," said Keith. "The weather forecast was for a typhoon and there was very, very little wind, but a big sea which you would get prior to heavy winds coming. Both Tony and I were very light compared with the competition, so we had to choose whether to use our light wind genoa or our heavy wind genoa – you had a choice of two. I chose the heavy wind genoa but the wind didn't come through until the last 20 minutes of the race. We finished 11th and New Zealand just pipped us overall."

***'They were very heavy sweaters, and even heavier when wet, which you did on purpose to give you more power for going upwind'***

From his experience at the 1964 Games and the woeful lack of proper sailing gear that could provide protection from the elements as well as freedom of movement, Keith embarked on a journey that led to the creation of the Musto performance clothing brand. And what a journey it has been.

Over the past 60 years, Musto has kitted out some of the biggest names in the sport – from solo adventurers like Ellen MacArthur, to teams in The Ocean Race and America's Cup. Today, Musto is the technical performance sailing kit of choice for the British Sailing Team, seen in action just last month off Marseille, and 11 Musto ambassadors will set off on the notoriously challenging Vendée Globe in November 2024, racing solo and non-stop around the world.

Sailing clothing over the past 60 years has evolved through consistent attention to innovation and detail. It was Musto which developed the concept of the three-layer system, advising sailors to layer up with thin layers for warmth, protection, and freedom of movement.

"We thought about what is the ideal? We want to be last into the changing room and first out. We want to have little to wash and we don't want to have to spend lots of money on lots of clothing. We went searching for materials that would give you a very good thermal rating for underwear, and we got very lucky," said Keith.

Musto's first HQ, in Benfleet, Essex, in the early 1970s





From left, state-of-the-art ocean sailing kit in 1977, multiple layers on Flyer II in 1981 in the Whitbread Round the World Race, coastal/leisure wear in 1988 and below, round-the-world sailor Sam Davies testing out the very latest innovations



Based in an old WWII prisoner of war hut in Essex, Keith conducted extensive research, and discovered the minimum number of layers for maximum protection was three. Initially he found a fabric that Italian company Mont Eddison had developed, offering good thermal and wicking possibility; plus it was non-absorbent and most importantly light. This fabric became the basis for the first layer of Musto's iconic three-layer system. For the middle layer, 3M had recently launched a new microfibre yarn which provided warmth without the bulk.

The key layer was the outer layer. *"At that time our options for the outer layer were limited. We knew we needed it to be waterproof, but the PU coated nylon we had at the time was ok for dinghies but not adequate enough for anything serious. There was British Nylon, that was hardy enough for ocean racing but was pretty heavy and none of these materials breathed, so the condensation build up inside was pretty big. The first three-layer system we developed for offshore was using heavier British Nylon, and for inshore, the PU coated nylon, but we soon ran into problems because the PU nylon was coated and this wore away quickly in salt water."*

*"I read an article about a material developed in the States by a company named Gore-Tex and sent away for samples. We decided that was the ideal, but the ideal needed testing. It was at the same time that Dutch skipper Conny van Reitschoten was looking for better protection, so we invited him to visit. He flew into Southend airport in his personal aircraft and we sat down with pencil and paper and asked the question – what do you want? He simply said 'to sit on a cold aluminium deck for a month and be warm and dry.'"*

The idea took off in the Whitbread Round the World Race in the 1981-82 edition when van Rietschoten put it to the test in the Southern Ocean. Now layering is standard across all outdoor pursuits.

Fast forward to today and Keith's legacy and philosophy continues: he strongly believed that anything he created for professional sailors should be available to purchase by the "everyday sailor" off the rack.

Musto's roster of offshore ambassadors and Olympic sailors are provided with prototype kit who test it to its limits, and return the kit with detailed feedback – perhaps about pocket location, protection padding, or hood systems – allowing the designers back in London to re-engineer and perfect their products. This feedback then trickles down into all collections: for example the BR1 cruising range has the same hood design as worn by The Ocean Race offshore sailors.

***'British Nylon was hardy but heavy, and it didn't breathe. Then I read about a material called Gore-Tex and sent away for a sample'***

And developments in fabric technology for those at the highest levels of the sport keeps all sailors cool when it's hot, and warm when it's cold. The LPX range uses state-of-the-art ICE-Café® fabric, which is coated with post-consumer coffee grounds for an active cooling of the skin. Sunblock Dynamic gear uses cloth infused with Xylitol, the same chemical which gives the cooling sensation in chewing gum. Musto aims to keep its customers at the heart of product development, finding new ways to bring comfort and performance across all collections.

It's been an incredible journey for the Musto brand, from the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, via a tin hut in Essex, to its London HQ where innovations for the next 60 years are already under way.



## Discounts for CA members

Musto is offering a generous **20% discount to CA members** on its range. Just go to the CA discount pages at [www.theca.org.uk/discounts](http://www.theca.org.uk/discounts) for a link. Options range from state-of-the-art ocean sailing gear to the ever-popular BR1 range (pictured). Also on offer is the 64 range, designed to tie in with Musto's anniversary – see page 19 for more info.



Keith Musto with his silver Olympic medal