

# Yachtsman Ger is the country's top sailor

By CLODAGH O'LEARY

CELEBRATED Limerick yachtsman Ger O'Rourke is on the crest of a wave this week following the announcement that he has been crowned Cork Dry Gin Sailor of the Year 2006.

With his Chieftain crew, Mr O'Rourke won seven major international sailing events last year, most notably coming first in class and fourth overall in the gruelling Sydney to Hobart Race, often referred to as the Everest of sailing.

The 44-year-old skipper beat off stiff competition from 15 other sailors to win the coveted title at an awards ceremony, hosted by sailing enthusiast and RTE presenter Kathryn Thomas at the Allianz Boatshow in the RDS.

No stranger to awards, Mr O'Rourke's Cookson 50 Chieftain, designed by the world famous Bruce Farr and built by Cookson Boatyard in New Zealand, was awarded Boat of the Year by the Irish Cruiser Racing Association Conference in December. The Chieftain crew also achieved an overall win last August in The Round Britain and Ireland Race and in September they won the Cowes to Cascais sprint.

A well-known property developer in Limerick Mr O'Rourke is CEO of Chieftain Construction, responsible for the new 200m Coonagh Cross development, amongst other major business interests in Ireland, Chicago and South Africa.

Mr O'Rourke, a member of the Western Yacht Club in Kilrush, said he was thrilled with the accolade, which saw him presented with a Waterford Crystal jug.

"I was up against a number of very talented sailors, so it was a nice surprise to be selected as Sailor of the Year," Mr O'Rourke told the Limerick Leader.

Not one to rest on his laurels, the Chieftain crew and Mr O'Rourke have a busy 2007 ahead.

Just last month, the team came fourth in the Acura Key West 2007 Regatta in Florida and preparations are currently underway for the team to take part in the six-day Antigua race from April 29 next. From there the team will compete in the New York-Hamburg race in June/July and the Rolex Fastnet race in August.

Mr O'Rourke is looking for sponsorship for the Chieftain crew 2007 season. For more information log onto: [www.chieftainracing.com](http://www.chieftainracing.com)



Limerick yachtsman Ger O'Rourke who was named as Cork Dry Gin Sailor of the Year this week, pictured with RTE presenter Kathryn Thomas

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