



TOGETHER IN THE SAME BOAT FOR 20 YEARS AND AIMING AT THEIR SECOND MEDAL:

Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel sail in the 49er on course for Tokyo

Hamburg/Kiel, 8 July 2021: Last night they took off for Tokyo, and in 19 days the first Olympic starting signal will be given for 49er sailors Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel.

On 27 July, the 31-year-old helmsman and his 33-year-old crew will start their second Olympic campaign since 2016. Five years ago the Berlin-born pair won bronze in Rio de Janeiro, the only medal for Germany's Olympic sailing team. Based with Norddeutscher Regatta Verein in Hamburg, the duo have their sights set on nothing less than a second medal at their second Olympic start. "We want to win another medal," says Erik Heil, "preferably in an even more beautiful colour than last time."

The team's coach Marc Pickel says of the 2019 World Cup runners-up and 2020 World Cup bronze medallists: "They are very complementary; they match each other very well." The Kiel coach trusts his top team to win a second Olympic medal at the up-coming games. Medical student Heil and mechanical engineering master Plößel are among the strongest challengers for the New Zealand duo Peter Burling and Blair Tuke who currently dominate the class. Burling and Tuke were 2016 Olympic champions and six-time world champions and are considered the measure of all things in the skiff at the upcoming Olympics. However, their German rivals have proven that they can be very dangerous to the Kiwis, as seen at the contested 2019 World Championships where they almost knocked the New Zealanders off their throne. Erik Heil's insight afterwards: "We have come closer to them, closer than ever before."

While the Kiwis successfully defended the Americas Cup at home in Auckland this spring, they spent less time than usual training on their 49er. Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel intensively pushed their sailing game tactically and technically in close cooperation with their Spanish training partners Diego Botín and Iago López Marra.

TEAM STRENGTHENS PERFORMANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND THE "BEST TRAINING COMMUNITY IN THE WORLD"

Between 2013 and 2020, Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel worked side by side with Kiel based Justus Schmidt and Max Boehme on their rise to the top of the sailing world. This mission succeeded, for the second time in a row as the Berliners, also known to the sailing world as "HP Sailing", were able to beat their sparring partners and friends Schmidt/Boehme in the national elimination in 2020. Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel have not forgotten what they owe to the trusting cooperation with the North Germans. Erik Heil says: "That was the best training team in the world, it really made us strong." Since the Kieler's career ended, Heil and Plößel have worked in deliberately open cooperation with Spaniards Diego Botín and Iago Lopez Marra, even though they will be competing against each other for medals in Japan. The reward is clear for both crews on course for Enoshima; at the 2019 World Championships, Heil/Plößel narrowly missed out on World Championship gold as runners-up, while Botín/López finished fourth. At the 2020 Worlds, the Spaniards were second, the Germans third. The goal of taking the crown from Burling/Tuke unites them and makes them serious challengers for the Kiwis. "Pete and Blair haven't been a kilometre



ahead in the recent test races as was usual in past years," Heil holds, "they are still very, very good, but no longer unbeatable."

RECORD PARTNERSHIP: TWO DECADES IN ONE BOAT

Erik Heil (Kiel) and Thomas Plößel (Hamburg) are linked by a record partnership that is unparalleled internationally and at home: they met as students at the Tegeler Segel-Club in Berlin and have been in the same boat for 20 years! Youth coach and mentor Michael Koster had a good eye and brought them together. Key dates in this partnership include their first race together on Lake Tegel on 19 and 20 May 2001. Second place at the Tegeler Youth Festival which at that time was the core of Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel's joint career. Michael Koster, who visited his former crew at the 2016 Olympics and is cheering them from afar this time, said: "Erik and Thomas generate their performance from the joy of sailing. They had to work hard after Rio. When they get into the olympic competition, I trust them with everything."

For more than a decade and a half, Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel have also been spurred on by the NRV Olympic Team, where the 1.85-metre helmsman Heil and his 1.81-metre crew Plößel are among the top-supported teams. In the German Sailing Team's Olympic squad, the skilled inland water sailors with a penchant for complicated conditions are the most experienced players alongside their friend Laser World Champion Philipp Buhl. Thomas Plößel attests to the good "chemistry" of the German Sailing Team in Enoshima: "The social component is definitely important, the atmosphere in the team is good. We are part of a remarkably powerful German Sailing Team and will line-up with a couple of bullets in our magazine. Yes, I am wishing for a medal for our crew, but almost more than that, I hope that if we can win a medal, it won't be the only one for our team".

THE BOAT OF THEIR DREAMS: THE 49ER IS THE OLYMPIC SPORTS EQUIPMENT OF CHOICE

The 49er first competed in the Olympics at the turn of the millennium in Sydney. The New York Times once described the skiff thus: "If Batman had been a sailor, he might have considered the 49er as a Batmobile." For Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel, the tippy but so dynamic double trapeze dinghy is the ultimate Olympic piece of sports equipment. The helmsman says: "For us, the 49er is the best boat because it's the most fun, challenging and technically difficult to master and also tactically demanding." Co-pilot Plößel "loves to fly across the water in the 49er". The "flow" when everything fits, the boat is 4.99-metre-long and with its 2.90-metre-wide projectile wings it flies over the water in perfection, this is the driving force behind Plößel's commitment at Heil's side. The 49er, says Plößel, requires "quick decisions, a portion of courage and a certain ruthlessness".

The Olympic boats of the impressively synchronised German 49er acrobats are always called "Gyde" after the wife of their sponsor, NRV Olympic Team founder Gunter Persiehl, even if the name is not allowed to be seen in the Enoshima area according to Olympic regulations.

TAILOR-MADE FOR THE GERMAN 49ER- ACES: AN OLYMPIC DISTRICT FOR ALL-ROUNDERS

Anything is possible: the Olympic waters of Enoshima, as the weather experts predict, could serve up the whole range of wind and weather conditions, from typhoons to total calm. The Japanese



Olympic waters with their many faces suit the German skiff all-rounders well. "The more difficult and unpredictable the winds, the better for us," says Heil. Sagami Bay is equally well known for its wave conditions popular with sailors. The Olympic regatta will be held for a total of ten sailing disciplines from 25 July to 4 August. The 49er sailors are challenged in the same time frame as the 49erFX women from 27 July to 2 August, for the final medal race in the programme.

THE MOST IMPORTANT DATA ON THE SECOND OLYMPIC PARTICIPATION OF ERIK HEIL AND THOMAS PLÖßEL AT A GLANCE:

The team

Team D, German Sailing Team

The Crew

Erik Heil (31), born in Berlin, lives in Kiel, Norddeutscher Regatta Verein (NRV)/Tegeler Segel-Club (TSC)

Thomas Plößel (33), born in Berlin, lives in Hamburg, Norddeutscher Regatta Verein (NRV)/Tegeler Segel-Club (TSC)

The boat

49er (skiff mens), in the Olympic programme since Sydney 2000, two German Olympic medals since then:

2008: Bronze for Hannes and Pit Peckolt

2016: Bronze for Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel

The greatest successes

Bronze Olympic Games 2016, World Championship runner-up (2019), World Championship place 3 (2020)

The Olympic Regatta

25 July - 4 August 2021

The 49er Olympic Race Days (4 + Final)

27 July, 28 July, 30 July, 31 July, 2 August (Medal Race)

The circle of favourites

- Peter Burling/Blair Tuke (New Zealand, defending champions, 6 x world champions)
- Erik Heil/Thomas Plößel (Kiel/Hamburg, Vice World Champions 2019 + World Championship Third 2020)
- Diego Botín/Iago López Marra (Spain, Vice World Champions 2020)
- Dylan Fletcher/Stuart Bithell (Great Britain, World Champions 2017)
- Benjamin Bildstein/David Hussel (Austria, World No. 1 November 2020)



- Jonas Warrer/Jakob Precht (Denmark, Olympic Champions 2008)
- Sime Fantela/Mihovil Fantela (Croatia, World Champions 2018)

The time difference

Japan is ahead of Germany in terms of time, by seven hours in summer. If the regatta day in Japan starts at 12 noon, it is only 5 a.m. in Germany. When the regatta days are scheduled to end at 6 p.m., it is 11 a.m. at home in Germany.

Olympic regatta on TV

Both ARD and ZDF will broadcast the races on their Olympic channels, which can be found via the media libraries (ard.de; zdf.de). There is a live tracker of the races on the German Sailing Team homepage (germansailingteam.de).

The partners that make Erik Heil & Thomas Plößel (HP Sailing) strong alongside their families, friends and fans:

Red Bull

Two of the 14 international sailors currently supported by Red Bull are from Germany: Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel. The 49er duo is part of the Red Bull family, which also includes the Olympic champions Santi Lange/Cecilia Carranza (Argentina), America's Cup winner Jimmy Spithill (Australia) and the Austrian Olympic champions Roman Hagara and Hans-Peter Steinacher.

German Sailing Team

The national sailing team (German Sailing Team) is the team home port of Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel, who received early and intensive support here. In 2004 they started out in the Berlin D squad; today Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel are members of the Olympic squad and receive support in many areas such as training and logistics.

Norddeutscher Regatta Verein + NRV Olympic Team + Tegeler Segel-Club

Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel grew up sailing at the Tegeler Segel-Club in Berlin and found each other there in 2001 under the direction of their youth coach Michael Koster. They have been members of the Norddeutscher Regattaverein for more than 15 years and are supported as a top crew by the NRV Olympic Team.

SUSE

The internationally operating software company (Linux specialist) SUSE is a proud partner of the German medal hunters, supporting Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel on their way to their second Olympic appearance in Japan.

Salzbrenner Würstchen

Loyal and reliable: The Salzbrenner Würstchen company, also a partner of FC St. Pauli and Hannover96, among others, has been supporting the Hamburg NRV Olympic Team and sailors Erik Heil and Thomas Plößel for almost as long as they have been members of the NRV.

Cleanhub

The crew's latest partner is Cleanhub. The company's goal is to establish strong plastic collection



systems because it is the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to protect the oceans. As Cleanhub ambassadors, Erik and Thomas want to help protect the oceans and generate more awareness about plastic litter in the oceans. For every nautical mile the 49er duo sails at the Olympic Games, Cleanhub will collect ten kilograms of plastic. This will result in 1.5 tonnes of plastic from the Olympic event alone, which will no longer pollute the environment.

American Pistachio Growers

The American Pistachio Growers company supplies the Olympians with delicious and nutritious pistachios - an ideal snack for competitive athletes and people who like to eat healthy and tasty food. Because pistachios contain large amounts of valuable polyunsaturated fatty acids, they can help prevent high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease.

Zhik

Zhik's outdoor and sports clothing is highly regarded by Olympic sailors. The Australian company is regarded as an innovative trendsetter for performance-supporting functional clothing worthy of the

name. Top athletes such as Alex Thomson, the Dutch Olympic champion Marit Bouwmeester and double Olympic champion Robert Scheidt trust Zhik. With Erik Heil, Thomas Plößel and Laser World Champion Buhl, three of the most successful German Olympic sailors are currently sailing in Zhik.

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