

## STEPH, ON STEPH

FOR ROLEX YACHTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR STEPHANIE ROBLE, 2014 WAS JUST THE BEGINNING. THERE'S MORE TO COME, SHE SAYS. A LOT MORE.



**STEPHANIE ROBLE** mills around under the tent at Quantum Key West Race Week. Everyone wants to greet her. Roble is petite, fit, and well dressed—especially for a sailor's after party. Her appearance mirrors her blossoming sailing career: meticulous, successful, and energetic. She happily snaps photos with old friends and new fans, enjoying the new notoriety.

Her rise began at Lake Beulah YC in her hometown of East Troy, Wisc. Sailing Optimis with friend and competitor Annie Haegar on the Midwest Optimist Sailing Team, at 13, Roble competed in the 2002

Opti Team Trials. Though Haegar qualified and Roble failed, both girls were determined to continue to professional sailing careers. It was the start of a tenacity that followed Roble to college, into the world of women's match racing, and beyond.

Winning the 2014 Etchells Word Championship and North American Women's Match Racing Championship, and finishing third in the ISAF Women's Match Racing World Championship made her a standout choice for Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year.

With such a resume at 25, it's not a far reach to assume a young woman like Roble might have a bit of an ego.

But, as she hops up onto a barstool next to me and asks, "Well, what do you want to know?" it's obvious that her accolades haven't gone to her head. With a smile and a wave of her hands, we delve into what it's like at the top.

### ON BEING A PROFESSIONAL

This summer, I was on the go for more than six weeks at different gigs. We [boyfriend Taylor Canfield] rented a house in Newport, R.I., for the summer and I think I was there for a total of four weeks the entire time. It was crazy. But, when I got back from trips and had time to myself, I was almost bored. It's important to take time out to just chill, though. It's a lot, between the travel and the sailing, and often at regattas the skippers or owners want to go out afterwards. Sometimes I just have to say 'no.'

I'm paid enough to make a living, but I'm travelling a lot and it's a ton of work. It's like any job—you're going to get out of it as much as you put in—and beyond the days on the water there's training and nutrition and everything else you have to take in consideration when you're a professional athlete. I've looked into sports psychologists on the off-chance that I'll need one down the line. It's important to maintain yourself to be a top-tier athlete. That's the only way you can maintain this kind of career long-term.

### ON BEING NAMED ROLEX YACHTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR

"It's an amazing honor. I'm so thrilled to have been named with Terry Hutchinson for the award. To get it so young is really awesome. I have so much more to do in the sport, and I think this will open up a lot of opportunities for me. The nominee list was incredibly deep, and it's a great end to what was a really awesome year of sailing."

### ON WHAT'S NEXT

"I don't really know what's next. It's hard to make predictions like that, especially in sailing. I want to take match racing to the next level. My team [Epic Racing Team] is really great and we just had a debrief to go over what we want to get done next season. What I really want to do is work more with youth sailing and women's sailing, to inspire

kids—girls—to go out on the water and sail. A lot of professional sailors are already doing it, like Dawn Riley and Sam Davies. What they're doing is really great, for women and for youth in sailing. I think it's important for our sport that those programs continue."

### ON HER INSPIRATION

"My biggest influence and inspiration is Sally Barkow. We both grew up in Wisconsin and when I was younger, I remember her always dominating as a skipper. Her success with Olympic Campaigns and in college sailing inspired me to bring my sailing to the next level. She has been extremely influential and helpful as I jump-started my professional sailing career. There have been so many people along the way who have been inspired me, from my best friends, Maggie Shea, Annie Haeger and Taylor, to the several coaches I have worked with and even other athletes and competitors."

### ON BOYFRIEND AND PRO SAILOR TAYLOR CANFIELD

"We push each other to be better sailors. He's taught me a lot, and racing against him is always really fun. We teach each other to be better sailors. We rarely compete directly against each other, which I think is a good thing. But, either way, most competitors are willing to share their tips with you, so we're able to have those conversations, too."

### ON BECOMING A PRO

"My advice is to network with everyone you know, and get on every boat you can, doing any job you can, big boats and small boats. Make sure to try every position and every kind of sailing so you know what you like.

"When I was first starting out, I would say yes to every opportunity that came up. 'You want to come do mast on a boat this weekend?' Yes. 'You want to come trim the jib?' Yes. And I would do everything I could to help out—pick up water or coffee or sandwiches in the morning. The owners remember that kind of dedication and they'll call on you again and again." ▲