here are some truly amazing circle-the-globe races out there. There’s the Volvo Ocean Race, the Vendee Globe, the Barcelona (doublehanded) World Race and the up-coming Golden Globe Race that will recreate the first solo unassisted round the world contest that happened in 1968, to name a few. But let’s face it, most of us are not going to be surfing down a building-sized wave doing 29-knots in a Volvo 65 or negotiating icebergs while blasting through the Southern Ocean in an Open 60 any time soon, so we watch and live vicariously through the lives of professional sailors.

Ah, but hold on… maybe it is possible to have such an experience without devoting a life to climbing through the ranks of the competitive sailing world. Maybe there’s a way an ordinary Joe or Jane can sail a million dollar race boat and make it happen just the same. There is – it’s called the Clipper Round the World Race and they will not only gladly accept you, but will train you and help you every step of the very long way.

The Clipper Round the World Race is a race for the rest of us. With no prior experience necessary, anyone with the will, the courage and the money for a ticket can climb on one of their 70-foot ocean racing yachts and literally sail around the world just like the pros. And just because it’s for amateurs, the Clipper Race is no joke, it is designed and suited only for those who are up for the ultimate challenge. The ocean has no idea that you paid for an experience. As their site says:

"The sea does not distinguish between Olympians or novices. There is nowhere to hide - if Mother Nature throws down the gauntlet, you must be ready to face the same challenges as the pro racer."

These "same challenges" were exactly what ASA certified sailor Scott Elles, who has completed ASA 101,103,104 and 114, was looking for—a true open ocean racing experience on a fast bluewater racer.

"I saw it as a fast track way to learn real ocean crossing type sailing," says Elles of getting involved in the Clipper race. "And it has been that so far...what I've learned is just incredible."

The adventurous business owner is a member of Team Garmin and is participating in three of the eight legs of the Clipper race. The event allows for crew to do all or some of the legs and he is even considering adding another leg, if he can take a bit more time from work.

When asked what has surprised him most so far on this incredible journey, he scratched his head and speculated that maybe it was the desensitization that he felt after being in seas as high as 12-meters and thinking nothing of it.

"That just becomes the norm," Elles says. "I guess that's a surprise, that you can become so normalized to something that is so not normal for most people."

All in all he said his participation in the Clipper race has been beyond a life changing experience both as a sailor and as a person. He's made friends he knows will last a lifetime, honed his sailing skills like nothing else could and attempted to cook spaghetti sailing upwind in a 30-knot breeze heeled over 45-degrees...unsuccessfully.

For more on how ASA can change your life go to asa.com
The American Sailing Association once again stepped up and got behind the Hands Across the Sea program by spreading the word about their annual sweepstakes. This year, a record was broken when $44,500 was raised, mostly by ASA sailors. Hands Across the Sea was started by a cruising couple, Harriett and T.L. Linskey, who, while sailing the Caribbean, got heavily involved in improving literacy rates in impoverished communities. In their first year, 2008, they shipped 1,750 books to three schools. This year they shipped 107,000 books to 112 schools. All told they have sent 374,112 brand new books reaching 78,660 kids in six countries serving 397 libraries! For more information or to donate visit handsacrossthesea.org.

Hurricane devastation at True Blue Sailing School in the British Virgin Islands

This past hurricane season was like nothing we've ever seen. It was the most destructive season on record with over $316 billion racked up in damages and 42 of the American Sailing Association's 350 affiliates felt Mother Nature's wrath in the worst of ways.

Between Puerto Rico, the British Virgin Islands, Florida, Texas and other spots in the Caribbean, many schools were literally destroyed beyond repair. Some smaller schools were essentially wiped off the map while others emerged from the rubble wondering what to do next.

ASA immediately began a crowd funded charity (asa.com/donate) and raised nearly $30,000 for the schools in need of resources. And while some of the schools needed money to help get up and running, many others just asked ASA to spread the word that they have picked up the pieces, rebuilt and are back in business. These particular schools were hit very hard, but through resilience, tenacity and grit they have repaired the docks, fixed the boats and gotten back to the business of teaching folks to sail. Some of them are:

- Sail Caribe Yacht Charters
  Fajardo, Puerto Rico
- Caribbean Sailing Solutions
  Fajardo Puerto Rico
- American Sailing Academy
  Key Largo Florida
- Sailing Virgins
  Tortola BVI
- Sail Caribbean Sailing School
  Tortola BVI
- Affordable Excellence
  Tortola BVI
- Veteran Sailing Association
  Tavernier, Florida Keys
- Gulf Coast Sailing & Cruising School
  Charlotte Harbor, South West FL

Please check out these schools at asa.com or contribute at asa.com/donate.

Q: I hear talk of "luff tension." I just raise the main and forget about it. What am I missing?

Ash: The general rule is to set the luff tension so the sail's luff is not too tight or too loose. That way the sail will adapt to the shape—it's depth and draft position—designed into it by the sailmakers. When hoisting the sail, tension the halyard until a vertical wrinkle begins to form along the luff. Unless the wind is very light, especially sailing downwind, this crease will disappear once the sail is full and drawing.

Once you are sailing inspect the sail again and fine tune the luff tension. If the vertical crease you put in initially is still there, the halyard is too taut. To slacken it, put the halyard on a winch and ease it gently until the luff smooths out.

If horizontal wrinkles appear between the luff slides, the halyard is not taut enough. To tighten it, put the halyard on a winch, ease the sheet until the sail luffs, then crank the halyard up a little.

Check out ASA.com for great video tutorials!