

Doldrums & poker duels since the start of the 4th leg

Early lead of the Chileans over the “Beluga Racer” melting down

ILHABELA. The first hours of the fourth leg of the Portimão Global Ocean Race amount to a tension-filled waiting game. In the midst of very weak winds, the crews battled for every single meter along the Brazilian coast. An early lead of the Chileans Felipe Cubillos and Jose Muñoz aboard the “Desafio Cabo de Hornos“ over the “Beluga Racer” manned by Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme, respectively from Kiel and Hamburg, dwindled down to a few nautical miles this Sunday (the 26th of April). This duel will remain at the center of attention throughout the 4,700 nautical miles toward the destination of this leg in Charleston (South Carolina / USA), owing to the fact that the Germans have a 4.5 lead in the overall rankings. The sailing regatta around the world will be concluded this June in Portimão in Portugal.

“With five knots at the most, our wind speed barely suffices to fill the sails and push the ‘Beluga Racer’ with two-and-a-half knots through the water,” reports the skipper Boris Herrmann live, “having a countercurrent of one knot, nevertheless, we’re still able to move ahead in the right direction.” That’s how things would proceed throughout first night at sea, following the fulminant start of the field with spinnakers in the midst of a moderate southwest breeze. However, as soon as the fireworks ushering the circumnavigators back to sea started to fade within the blue skies, as the field departed the Ilhabela Channel on the way to the landmark Cabo Frio, some 190 nautical miles away, the wind was simply “turned off”.

Thereby, the Beluga Offshore Sailing Team, together with the British pursuers Jeremy Salvesen and David Thomson aboard the “Mowgli”; chose a course very closely shadowing the mainland to the north of the city of São Sebastião, anticipating a sea breeze stronger than they would have expected further out to sea. As the Chileans initially were caught up in a calm beneath the island, this strategy appeared to function. Nevertheless, four hours after the start, the wind along the coast began to dissipate. Simultaneously, the “Desafio Cabo de Hornos“ was promptly able to sail ahead with a lead of at least twelve nautical miles.

“Whether the Chileans really knew of that, reckoned with it or merely hoped for it, that’s something that I don’t know for sure,” says Herrmann. “At any rate, from our point of view, it was unexpected at such an early stage.” In the evening, it was supposed to be better further out to sea, according to the prophecy of Sven Taxwedel, and the meteorologist as well as weather router in the service of the main sponsor Beluga Shipping GmbH in Bremen proved to be right. Towards midnight German time, the “Beluga Racer” cruised across the path of the “Desafio Cabo de Hornos“ and sought her fortune on the high seas. In the shadow of the night, the trailing distance was cut in half.

Still, Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme weren’t able to fully concentrate on the hunt, other matters fought for their attention. “For several hours, we tinkered with one of the autopilots whose electrical motor was malfunctioning,” the crew noted. Altogether, three autopilots are aboard the vessel, being of great significance to the two-man

crew during the regatta legs covering several weeks. Herrmann: "In the meantime, we were able to remedy the situation. However, it was certainly annoying, and we spent a lot of energy trying to repair it and in changing the sails as well." Henceforth, the duo will try to find its rhythm. Indeed, the race towards the scoring gate of this leg, near the harbor of Recife in the northeastern corner of Brazil, will take place within this first week. The winning crew will receive two points, the second team entering the gate shall become one-and-a-half points.

The scoring gates of the first three legs as well as the first two arrivals in Capetown (South Africa) and Wellington (New Zealand) were won by the "Beluga Racer". After being overtaken shortly before the finish line in Ilhabela, the natives of northern Germany were unable to achieve their straight third triumph. Nevertheless, following their stay of three weeks on the Brazilian sunshine island, the around-the-world sailors and their boats were blessed by Father Leonildo Ferreira Júnior, a Catholic priest from the diocese of Caraguatatuba. An emotional farewell took place, the tough sea bears were touched by the sympathies of their relatives and of the many sailing fans. The regatta sailors are expected to set foot on land approximately on the 20th of May in the United States.

(The end)

Intermediate rankings during the fourth leg this Sunday (the 26th of April) at 11:20 h:

1. **Desafio Cabo de Hornos**, Felipe Cubillos/José Muñoz (Chile) 4,700 nautical miles remain
2. **Beluga Racer**, Boris Herrmann/Felix Oehme (Kiel/Hamburg) 5.7 nautical miles behind
3. **Mowgli**, Jeremy Salvesen/David Thomson (Great Britain) 17.6 nautical miles behind

High-resolution photos and videos are available from the Mediacenter of the Beluga Offshore Sailing Teams at: <http://presse.beluga-racer.com>.

The intermediate rankings, updated initially every hour and then every three hours, may be followed by virtue of the Racetracker via: <http://www.globalracetracker.com>.