

Press Release, Beluga Offshore Sailing Team in the Portimão Global Ocean Race  
22 February 2009

## **Tough duel for the Beluga crew after the start**

**Herrmann/Oehme trailing the Chileans by 2.3 nm after 330 sailed**

**WELLINGTON.** Match race of the “Beluga Racer” with the Chileans at the beginning of the third leg of the Portimão Global Ocean Race: Since the weekend start, Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme from Germany have been battling with Felipe Cubillos and José Muñoz aboard the “Desafio Cabo de Hornos” for first place. After 47 hours and several lead changes within the first 330 of the total of 7,200 nautical miles along the way towards Ilhabela in Brazil, the German duo were 2.3 nautical miles behind this Sunday (22 February) at lunch time. This longest and toughest leg of the round the world regatta, which concludes in Portugal in the month of June, will continue for some five weeks and lead around the notorious Cape Horn along the southern-most point of South America.

It was a farewell with tears, without a doubt, as the round-the-world sailors freed their mooring lines alongside the pier in the capital city. During the previous five weeks in the enthusiastic sailing nation, the participants were able to recover from the exertions of the second leg leading from Cape Town, South Africa, and they won a great deal of friends in the meantime. Indeed, a Talisman of the Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, has been accompanying the crews since the emotional awards ceremony. Nevertheless, following both sensational triumphs, the two skippers from northern Germany are eager to continue their winning streak around the globe. “We’re highly motivated, but we want to stay cool, because the deciding stretch of this leg will be the last third along the South American coast”, said the twenty-seven-year-olds shortly before their departure.

Beneath wonderfully blue skies, and with strong to stormy northwesterly winds, the German boat darted into the leading position immediately upon the start signal fired by John Morrison, the new Minister of Sports in New Zealand. However, the Chileans, being 5.5 points behind Herrmann/Oehme in the overall ranking and thus holding second place, surprised their rivals with a larger headsail and advanced accordingly to the lead. The Belgian solo sailor Michelle Kleinjans aboard the “Roaring Forty” was third, the British team Mowgli with Jeremy Salvesen and David Thomson followed in his wake.

Shortly after the start, Herrmann and Oehme reported problems with the autopilots and rudder reference units onboard “Beluga Racer”, but the German duo swiftly resolved this potentially dramatic issue. Without the autopilot, the double-handed

crew would have hardly had a chance to run their boat safely and quick enough 24 hours a day.

The first twelve hours of the race belonged to the fiery red South American Class 40. She led her rivals through the Cook Strait which separates the North Island and the South Island of New Zealand from one another. Nonetheless, the royal blue “Beluga Racer” remained in view and fought her way on passing the Chileans in the early morning hours. That was, however, not merely a question of the boat’s speed, it was also a tactical matter. Indeed, the wind had decreased to 15 knots, and backed towards the west. Consequently, the fleet was initially prevented from changing its course towards the ice gate. If the wind comes directly from astern, the yachts are simply too slow. The gate is an imaginary line along the 45th degree of southerly latitude which – owing to the ice danger to the south – may not be traversed. It begins at 160 degrees west and extends up to and including the 100<sup>th</sup> degree of westerly longitude. Only upon reaching this latter point, and not beforehand, may the crews curve to the south in their approaches to Cape Horn.

“Normally, all regatta sailors heading immediately as directly as possible to the south, because they expect the strongest winds there”, explains Herrmann, “but we’re facing a zone of light winds in our way at the beginning of this leg, and they will, according to the mid-range weather forecasts, accompany us for a while.” Without a doubt, he regards it as a pleasant situation not having to face a cyclone at the beginning. In the first 48 hours, he and his co-skipper intended to steer as deeply as possible, but without reducing the boat speed too much.

After being overtaken, the Chileans choose an even deeper course. Thereby, they lost sight of their rivals. Oehme: “It will be strategically difficult to judge when to further bear off, because we will only receive minimized meteorological information during the first four days.” This disadvantage is a result of the reduced satellite coverage in this remote sea area due to a technical new positioning. Sunday morning, when the wind backed further to the west, all crews gybed, and the “Desafio Cabo de Hornos” was again in the leading position. Which tactics will prevail? This question will most likely be answered in the course of this week – as the boats reach the ice gate.

Accordingly, regatta fans are keenly studying the position reports, similarly provided by satellites, which are updated every three hours and appear via the internet site [www.globalracetracker.com](http://www.globalracetracker.com). News and photos aboard the German boat are available at [www.beluga-racer.com](http://www.beluga-racer.com). The arrival in Ilhabela, the Brazilian port of call, is expected to take place between the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, depending upon the prevailing race conditions. Afterwards, the concluding portion of the race extends from Charleston in the USA to Portimão in Portugal, the initial starting point and the final destination of the regatta.

(End)

Standings after 2 of 5 legs of the Portimão Global Ocean Race:

1. **Beluga Racer**, Boris Herrmann/Felix Oehme (Germany) 24 points
2. **Desafio Cabo de Hornos**, Felipe Cubillos/José Muñoz (Chile) 18.5 points
3. **Team Mowgli**, Jeremy Salvesen/David Thomson (Great Britain) 14.5 points
4. **Kazimir Partners**, Lenjohn und Peter van der Wel (South Africa) 6.5 points

High-resolution photos and videos are available in the Media center of the Beluga Offshore Sailing Team at <http://presse.beluga-racer.com>.

Position reports will be updated every three hours, and you may follow via <http://www.globalracetracker.com>.

Additional background information may also be found via the internet sites [www.beluga-racer.com](http://www.beluga-racer.com) as well as [www.portimaorace.com](http://www.portimaorace.com).

The PR crew of the Beluga Offshore Sailing Team is delighted and ready to answer your questions, including interview questions for the sailors, at all times.