

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

Cape Horn awaiting German round-the-world sailors

Herrmann/Oehme begin the 3rd Leg towards Brazil this Saturday

WELLINGTON. The Germans Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme (both 27) will start the third leg of the Portimão Global Ocean Race this Saturday (21 February) in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, as the overall leaders. The double-handed crew of the Class 40 yacht “Beluga Racer” will have to endure more than the sheer distance of 7,200 nautical miles (nearly 13,300 kilometers) full of extremes. Along the route towards the destination of Ilhabela, a Brazilian port north of Rio de Janeiro, the crew shall circumnavigate the legendary Cape Horn along the southern point of South America, a goal regarded by far as the greatest challenge for all offshore sailors everywhere. Following its sensational victories in both of the first two legs of the regatta, the Beluga Offshore Sailing Team intends to – in its coming five weeks at sea – lay the foundation for a triumphant arrival ultimately in Portimão, Portugal in June, after a total of some 30,000 nautical miles.

“After the long pause, we can hardly wait to resume sailing again”, says the north German duo, describing its pleasantly prickling anticipation of a tour that would cause some other robust sea bears to experience anxiety. Without a doubt, shortly after the start, Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme will have to contend with the Southern Ocean, notorious for its inhospitable conditions with turbulent storms and towering waves. Additionally, they will be confronted by temperatures hardly above the freezing point and by the prospects of not seeing any land for several weeks. Certainly, that means enduring not only physical hardships, but psychological challenges as well. “Up until now, we have supplemented one another and motivated each other quite successfully”, reminds Herrmann, cherishing the “1a” cooperation as the skipper, “and we’ll continue to do so.”

Notwithstanding the motivation of the German duo, the Chilean pursuers, Felipe Cubillos and José Muñoz aboard the “Desafio Cabo de Hornos”, are serving as a sort of accelerating incentive themselves. Indeed, Cubillos and Muñoz arrived in Wellington merely a few hours after the “Beluga Racer” at the end of the second leg from Cape Town (South Africa) to New Zealand. Furthermore, in the overall ranking, they are only 5.5 points behind the Germans Herrmann and Oehme, who regard them as their equals. “Presumably, the final third of this stage will be decisive, namely after Cape Horn in their home waters”, predicts Boris Herrmann, quite conscious of the shar-

pened suspension curve in the course of the race. “That’s where we’ll have to go up-wind, tacking in light breezes, and it’s going to be tactically more and more difficult.”

Nevertheless, they still have to defy the rigors of the South Pacific. For reasons of safety, the regatta management has an ice gate along the route. Given the dangers posed by icebergs emanating from the Antarctic, the participants transiting between the 160th and the 100th degree of westerly longitude will not be permitted to steer beneath the 45th degree of southerly latitude. “Still, it’s not going to be fair-weather sailing”, adds Felix Oehme, greeting the perils “with respect, but without fear”, as he differentiates his expectations.

Along the 130th degree of westerly longitude, approximately halfway between New Zealand and Cape Horn, the regatta management has set up a scoring gate between the 35th and 45th degree of southerly latitude. The positions during the transits will be monitored by satellite and by via telephone reporting. The first team becomes two points, the second team receives 1.5 points and the third team earns one point. The awards in Brazil, on the other hand, are much greater (10/8/6); at the close of the regatta, the team having the most points is the winner. “A preliminary decision, however, will not be reached at the gate”, assures Herrmann, and he reckons with the British team Mowgli Jeremy Salvesen and David Thomson, currently occupying third place. The South Africans Lenjohn and Peter van der Wel suffered heavy breakages aboard their “Kazimir Partners” during the second leg. Thus, they were forced to withdraw, and they will not re-start.

Barely 24 hours before the next start, the remaining crews are in a state of intensive preparation. Co-skipper Oehme was responsible for the purchase of provisions. When it came to the question of sweets, the motto “less is more” was persuasive. “We’ve got various candy bars and packages full of rice pudding aboard”, mentions the young sailor born in Luebeck, “but nothing in excess, because it’s important to reduce the weight in every respect. And, you know, the rarity of something increases the enjoyment.” That is an admirable motivational tool for the duo whose daily nutrition resembles the freeze-dried meals of astronauts.

Thursday (19 February), the high-sea artists experienced waves of approval. In the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club, the mayor of Wellington presented Hermann and Oehme with an award for their victory in the second leg. The ceremony of honors extended well into the night.

The starting signal of the third leg will be fired by New Zealand’s Minister of Sports at 14.15 h local time, a quarter past one o’clock early Saturday morning UTC. The start will not be sunny. Steady rains have abruptly replaced the long prevailing summer weather, and the meteorological forecasts for the start day serve as a foretaste of what is to come, namely grey, cold and damp days at sea. At any rate, a moderate to

fresh west-northwesterly breeze is expected to prevail at the start. On the 26th or 27th of March, the yachts are expected to arrive in Ilhabela.
(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

Notice for editors:

Saturday morning, you shall receive a start report, and an extensive press release covering the commencement of the third leg of the Portimão Global Ocean Race will follow on Sunday.

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 as well as 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.