

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

Beluga Racer after 1,100 nm chasing the pack

Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme escaped the calm zone too late

A week after the start of the third leg of the Portimão Global Ocean Race from Wellington, New Zealand towards Ilhabela in Brazil, the German “Beluga Racer” is in the unusual position of chasing the pack. On Friday midday (27 February) the overall leaders Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme from Kiel and Hamburg trailed the current leaders on the water by some 18 nautical miles. The two sailors from northern Germany had won the first two out of five legs. Surprisingly, the front runners at the present time are the third-placed British Jeremy Salvesen and David Thomson aboard “Mowgli”, leading 17 nautical miles ahead of the Chileans Felipe Cubillos and José Muñoz sailing “Desafio Cabo de Hornos” (2nd overall). Throughout a period of sustained doldrums, the participants covered merely some 1,100 of the total of 7,200 nautical miles of this longest leg of the regatta which leads around Cape Horn. The race will end in June in Portimão, Portugal where it started last October.

“We’re trapped in our current position, hoping for the wind to shift – regardless of the direction”, reported co-skipper Felix Oehme this Friday morning. In a moderate west-southwesterly breeze, the “Beluga Racer” crew steered a course between 90 and 100 degrees as the most southerly boat. The fleet approached the ice gate along 45 degree south, where the sailing instruction prohibits them from traversing this line towards the south. “But if we were to gybe at the present time, it would be a costly maneuver,” says Oehme, 27 years old, “because we couldn’t gain on the other bow towards Cape Horn, and we’d only fall further behind the competition.”

This particular problem wasn’t plaguing the rivals further to the north so much. They had more space left towards the ice gate, although it melted down, so to speak, this Friday. “The imaginary line could evolve into a strategic trap”, explains Sven Taxwedel, Beluga meteorologist, and no significant wind change appeared to taking place in the short run. The modern racing yachts might slow down along the 45th parallel of latitude with a course not allowed lower than 90 degrees in case the running conditions change into winds directly from the stern. This would force them to gybe away towards the north.

How could the duo from northern Germany land in such a situation? “Our tactics were wrong in the weak winds,” admitted skipper Boris Herrmann via satellite telephone. As the Chilean rivals broke away to the north, following days of neck-and-neck racing in

Beluga Offshore Sailing Team
P. O. Box 10 72 96
28072 Bremen, Germany
info@beluga-racer.com

PR
Dr. Christine Keitsch
M +49 (151) 1146-9360
E christine@beluga-racer.com

Andreas Kling
M +49 (172) 257-8817
E andreas@beluga-racer.com

an easterly direction, the Beluga crew placed its faith in a more southerly course. “Beneath a cloud, we luffed in a classical manner and took-off quite rapidly”, said Herrmann, also 27 years of age, “but our breeze died again later on.” The Chileans tried to find their fortune on the other side of the cloud, and they indeed found it somewhat later, but in the midst of a continually increasing west-northwest wind.

In the meantime, as the distance to the leaders reached more than 40 nautical miles, fans and land rats following the race via internet were increasingly worried, fearing that the German duo would “miss the train connection” as it were. “But that was hardly a reason for getting too nervous and thus risking too much by virtue of extreme maneuvers as a reaction”, said Felix Oehme. As the wind started to freshen, granting even the “Beluga Racer” speeds of 12 to 14 knots, the Germans and their fans were certainly among those once again in a good mood.

Following the stormy start, an unusual weather situation in the southern hemisphere surprised all participants in the round-the-world regatta. As soon as the first weekend, the international dateline was traversed with nice speed (Herrmann: “Unspectacular, we hardly noticed it”), but the wind began to rapidly decrease after the start of the new week. Below decks, the thermometer reported 29 degrees Celsius, the albatrosses bathed in seas as smooth as glass, but hardly any progress was made towards the finish. With a speed averaging less than seven knots, the fleet has already lost more than two days with respect to the previously expected arrival between the 25th and the 27th of March. “Felix had made his purchases for 42 days”, reassured the skipper, “and if truly necessary, we could hold out with these provisions for three months.” At the worst, the truffle chocolates could become an increasingly scarce commodity aboard. (The end)

Positions of the third leg polled on Friday (27 February) at 12.20 UTC:

- 1 **Mowgli**, Jeremy Salvesen/David Thomson (Great Britain) 6,116.4 nm remaining
 - 2 **Desafio Cabo de Hornos**, Felipe Cubillos/José Muñoz (Chile) 17.3 nm behind
 - 3 **Beluga Racer**, Boris Herrmann/Felix Oehme (Germany) 18,1 nm behind
- Kazimir Partners**, Lenjohn and Peter van der Wel (South Africa) did not start.

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 **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 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.

Beluga Offshore Sailing Team
P. O. Box 10 72 96
28072 Bremen, Germany
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PR
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