

Portimão Global Ocean Race:

German duo Herrmann/Oehme wins first leg

„Beluga Racer“ crosses finish line in Cape Town after 35 days on the high seas

Position 33°55.14S – 18°26.33E – Cape Town, South Africa.

Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme onboard the Class40-boat „Beluga Racer“ have won the first leg of the inaugural Portimão Global Ocean Race. 35 days after the starting signal was fired in Portimão at the Portuguese Algarve – and since about a week faster than initially estimated – on Sunday at 11.58am local time (10.58am German time) the two speedy Germans called in the Royal Cape Yacht Club in the port of destination Cape Town, South Africa as tired yet happy champions. Blue sky and warm sun shine welcomed the two sailors. A team of sponsor Beluga Shipping GmbH held champagne, beer and fresh fruits ready while the race organisers let sound the horn when “Beluga Racer” crossed the finish line.

The closer the six participating double handed and solo sailors from Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Great Britain, South Africa and Chile approached Table Mountain, the more this first leg converted into a true thriller on the high seas: At the end of an about 6900 nautical miles long stretch Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme on their “Beluga Racer” finished the blink of an eye of about 30 nautical miles ahead of the Chileans Felipe Cubillos and José Muñoz on the newest boat in the race, “Desafio Cabo de Hornos”. British Team “Mowgli” was expected to come in third later that day.

“Winning the first leg of the inaugural race means something very special to us. And now, we are looking forward to relaxing a bit“, said Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme added: “It was great fun that the race tightened up towards the end so that we enjoyed a real match race final with the lucky end being on our side.”

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A week ago, “Beluga Racer” was leading their closest hunter in the field with about 400 nautical miles, shortly after the race’s gate two at Recife offshore Brazil it had been 600 nautical miles; this was only at the beginning of November. But then “Beluga Racer” followed a further northerly course towards Cape Town compared to “Desafio Cabo de Hornos” and “Mowgli”, yet this courage remained unrewarded. A weak wind zone, squally and shifting winds or straight headwinds – in an area where just a few days before new 24 hours distance records were established during the Volvo Ocean Race – posed tremendous obstacles for the German team.

Throughout Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme had to study the weather, jump off the navigation seat, operate the winches, trim the traveller and hope the activity yields good results. Strategically separated from the rest of the field by sailing on a different course, the Germans were fallen in the trap of a high pressure system on the Atlantic Ocean. Only near Africa the weather gods smiled at them again. On the website www.beluga-racer.com fans and friends from all over the world sent their compliments in the minute cycle. In the Royal Cape Yacht Club Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme enjoyed the applause of the spectators and the congratulations of Portimão Global Ocean Race Directors Josh Hall and Brian Hancock. “Boris and Felix have sailed a masterful race, they are the deserved winners of the first leg”, said the two initiators of this new Round-the-World-Race.

Now Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme are given three weeks time in Cape Town to arrange the most exceptional things: cut down the beards that have grown, sleeping in a bed, having a hot and extensive shower, cooking a fresh meal, relaxing their minds or for the maximum of luxury perhaps eating a steak and drinking a beer. However, the first leg is just the beginning of a great challenge which only is accomplished with passing the finish line in Portimão in next year’s summer. So quite soon already all their attention and energy will be concentrated upon the second leg: the “Beluga Racer” has to be prepared for the way from Cape Town to Wellington, New Zealand, which is the longest leg of the race with about 7500 nautical miles. The supplies on board have to be restocked – not only because Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme will celebrate Christmas and New Year’s Eve somewhere in the south of the Indian Ocean.

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On Sunday, 7th of December 2008, the round-the-world-race will be continued. Then, the curtain is raised again for the next act. The next hopes, the next fears, the next dramas and the next triumphs will most certainly follow.

Please check www.beluga-racer.com for high-resolution photos and videos, which Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme shoot during the Portimão Global Ocean Race onboard „Beluga Racer“. Once you are registered, you are invited to use the footage material free of charge.

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