

Portimão Global Ocean Race:

The “Beluga Racer” being conditioned for the South Polar Ocean

Boris Herrmann and Felix Oehme prepare themselves and their boat for the 2nd leg

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

The agonies, which are thoroughly worth enduring, experience enthusiastic regatta sailors like Boris Hermann and Felix Oehme out there on the high seas. Looking ahead as frontrunners participating in the Portimão Global Ocean Race, they still have yet to confront the largest portion of the circumnavigation. A total of 30,000 nautical miles and eight months at sea, that means withstanding various hardships and perilous adventures. It also encompasses, nevertheless, witnessing uniquely beautiful sunsets, having close encounters with whales and dolphins and gaining new perspectives amid the constant expansion of their horizons. The initial stage, extending from the Portuguese Algarve towards the Brazilian coast and reaching back across the Atlantic within five weeks, was mastered by the two Germans as they cruised victoriously across the finish line along the Cape of Good Hope on the 16th of November. Within the coming week, this thrilling race will be resumed. Indeed, it will lead into the legendary Wild South, crossing into the heart of the proverbial “Roaring Forties”, the domain geographically beneath the 40th degree of southerly latitude where storms and waves are more tempestuous than just about anywhere else on earth.

Cape Town-Wellington (New Zealand) – With a distance of 7,500 nautical miles, the second stage of the race will simultaneously be the longest. Accordingly, Boris Hermann and Felix Oehme can not indulge in much recreational activity, as they grant themselves a few days of relaxation and rest. Naturally, a little bit of “Braai”, the South African national sport of grilling, and some kite surfing, but they are preoccupied with keeping their representative appointments as well as with the inevitable preparations being made to keep the Yacht “Beluga Racer” – their 40-foot long home and means of transportation – in good shape.

Dr. Christine Keitsch
PR-Kontakt

Beluga Offshore Sailing Team
P.O. Box 10 72 69
D-28072 Bremen

M +49 (0) 151 - 11 469 360
E christine@beluga-racer.com
W www.beluga-racer.com

“We weren’t even able to visit Table Mountain. Although we had made an effort to keep the weekends free, we wound up spending the time from morning to night in the yacht club or aboard the ship”, recalls Felix Oehme, thoroughly knowing that the coming week, the last one before the start of the second stage, would mean nothing less than “full action with a rising adrenaline level”.

Boris Hermann and Felix Oehme claim to have a “good feeling” with respect to their boat. Last Wednesday, the 3rd of December, they were at sea, having tested the new mainsail. Additionally, other maintenance tasks were undertaken here and there in recent days, for example, the overhauling of two winches, the replacement of the mooring lines even cleaning the racing yacht fore and aft with a high-pressure water blaster. Without a doubt, the constant search for an appropriate expert for sailing equipment, located somewhere among the two-and-a-half million residents of Cape Town, received great priority throughout the entire work schedule. “And that is precisely one of those wonderful and thrilling experiences we had during our time here”, says Felix Oehme. “As we arrived in Cape Town, we still felt like tourists. Meanwhile, we travel directly to diverse specialty shops whose locations are among the best kept secrets of the local residents.”

Next Thursday, the feeling of being a native of Cape Town will fade away, and emotions will rise like the flood tide. At the “Farewell BBQ”, supplemented by pictures and music taking their toll on tear ducts, as Felix Oehme presumes, the sailing teams will officially dispatch their respective crews after their short land holidays. Barely two days later, the sailors are expected to enter into the arduously demanding South Polar Ocean. Convivially, although without tears, Boris Hermann and Felix Oehme received their prize, an engraved crystal carafe, during a ceremony in the Mayorie Banqueting Hall in the municipal heart of Cape Town. Solemn speeches, flowers for the women left behind by the crews and words of praise by the mayor himself, Cllr. Grant Haskin, were among the highlights. Notabilities, all finely dressed in twine, applauded warmly – and the guests of honor, the ten casual sailors from six different countries, were standing there in their “walking-out uniforms”, consisting of creatively collected or rented apparel, and noticeably enjoying the attention.

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It is unlikely that the carafe will find its way aboard the “Beluga Racer”. “It is chic, but it is simply too heavy, and we have to reduce the total weight of the boat to an absolute minimum”, explains Felix Oehme. Indeed, the trophy will probably follow the skippers around the world in a container. At any rate, the two Germans were able to receive a preview of the object which they certainly would not stow away in some container in the coming summer. It is an abstracted sailing ship created by an artist from Portimão – the prize for the overall victory in the first Portimão Global Ocean Race. Indeed, a worthwhile award in appreciation of the agonizing feats.

The website www.beluga-racer.com contains a constantly updated Media Center for representatives of the press. Following your registration, you are permitted to download high-resolution photos taken by Boris Hermann and Felix Oehme directly aboard the “Beluga Racer” in the course of the race.

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