

Editorial Andrew Hurst

Omelettes and eggs



HECTOR PHOTO

Another contentious month for ocean racing. The new Volvo 70 Class blasted off on their first oceanic leg – setting new world records at will and seemingly breaking down just as readily.

Meanwhile, the oft-troubled (but still wonderful, at least most of the time) Orma 60 multihull class were experiencing another of their

November reality checks, this time at least improving on their pitiful finishing record of 16 per cent of starters in the 2002 Route du Rhum – to 40 per cent finishing the 2005 Transat Jacques Vabre. But then the weather this year was nothing like as bad as in 2002 and in the TJV they are sailing double rather than singlehanded.

So what to make of it all? Well, for the new Volvo 70 Class there is much to celebrate. Indeed, just as the start of a hindsight muttering campaign appears from the blue blazer corner, ‘that the Volvo Race should have used Open 60s’, so *Seahorse* would now thump the table and say absolutely the opposite.

Look at the performance of these new boats. Incredible. Listen to one who knows, 1993/4 Whitbread Race winner (on *Yamaha 2*) Jeff Scott, now sailing on ‘*Brunel et al.*’: ‘The boat is absolutely fantastic, unreal. The speeds they do! And after sailing all year on the 100-footer, *Maximus*, these things are actually a lot safer because the gear is manageable...’ A hard man, Mr Scott.

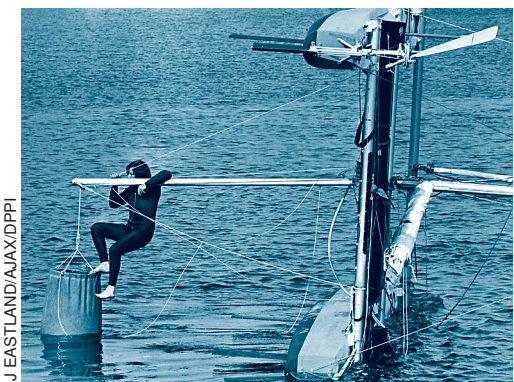
Yes, there have been technical disasters already in this great race. Only five of the fleet made it to Cape Town under their own power. But look at the pace when they are in one piece: 500-mile days, regular as clockwork. On a monohull.

Chris Nicholson on *MoviStar*: ‘We were steady at 34kt, but there was a little flat water so I decided to heat her up...’ From 34kt. *Sacrebleu, mes amis!* No wonder the boats keep breaking. If you’ve been in a sailing dinghy while being towed in at speed from the racecourse you will know how nervy and thoroughly ‘inappropriate’ a light monohull feels at 25kt plus!

Of course things are falling apart, we are at a new frontier here, people. Bursting through it. After a Volvo 70 the Open 60s are going to feel tame. Fantastic as the ultimate shorthanded machine, but fully crewed an Open 60 will, by comparison, feel like a motocross bike on a grid of Moto GP screamers.

In hindsight, many of the problems seen in the V070s to date, and there will be more, are directly associated with the fact that designers and engineers have necessarily approached these projects from a sailing perspective. However, as Peter Heppel explains (pg10), it is powercraft philosophy to which we should start referencing our engineering, as well as elements of both design and indeed sailing style. Start from the basis that speed is relatively unlimited, only structure and people will hold you back. For a wind-powered craft this is a new ballgame in every respect.

The boats are scary, fast monsters. They are very dangerous and we hope and pray that nothing bad happens in the Southern Ocean in particular. But they personify the phrase cutting edge.



J EASTLAND/AJAX/DPPPI

Don't get too excited about offshore multihull safety in 2006. Here Ambrogio Fogar demonstrates his self-rescue technique to scrutineers ahead of the 1976 OSTAR. His boat name... *Spirit of Surprise*

I am not sure if the Volvo organisation ever dreamt that the boats they were creating would be this fast, this edgy, this experimental. I doubt it. But they have done the sport a service and, strife or not, in a few years we will all see benefits from lessons that are being learnt in the 2005/6 Volvo Ocean Race.

A look back

While working the seam of hindsight, perhaps it wasn't an altogether bad decision that the previous ‘new generation’ of VO60s were launched with Kevlar mandated for primary construction. Given all you will read in this edition of *Seahorse* about rigid carbon skins' vulnerability to high-speed impact, at least with Kevlar you knew that when your foam or Nomex core gave up there was an odds-on chance of the water staying outside the boat!

Identification

Most racing sailors will at some time have experienced a dinghy slot-gasket failure. Remember the spout of water up the back of the plate case (pre-daggerboards here!) that alerted you to the problem? Quite a spurt too, even on an FD or 5^o5 going at just 8-10kt. Now imagine you're sailing at 30-35kt, and your slot gasket is immersed about 4ft below the surface... not so funny. Welcome to *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Men of taste

‘We are now well into leg one and a few items of contraband have started to appear, a *Seahorse* magazine, some Oreo cookies. The odd treat comes as a nice surprise and so far these “luxuries” have been shared out equally...’

– *Thanks to Seb Josse and the boys of ABN AMRO 2* □

There will be some keel failures

– Rob Greenhalgh, *ABN 1* (in Vigo)

– Mike Sanderson, *ABN AMRO 1*, heading south

There are sure to be more problems

– Jason Carrington, *Ericsson* (in Cape Town)

HONEST
Boat breakages are down to the crew as much as the designer
– Juan K

It's like an aeroplane, they fly around all the time until suddenly one falls down and you think, Oops! Why did it do that?

– Bouwe Bekking, *MoviStar* (back in Vigo)

BRAVE & HONEST
You cannot design these boats not to break
– JK

BRAVER STILL
MoviStar pushed too hard
– JK

PAYBACK
A mile ticks by every three or four minutes

– Steve Hayles, *Ericsson*

BYE
We are very pleased with our result
– Adrienne Cahalan, Cape Town (just before she heard)

Fast, man! We were 2,000 miles behind and 4 days later we're here!

– Jeff Scott, *Brunel* (Cape Town)

LAST WORD
Being young and not knowing when to slow down was a big factor
– Sebastien Josse and *ABN 2* set a new world record

If Juan K were here I'd hug him

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