

# O'Rourke's Delta Lloyd

## looking to build on improving form as world's biggest yacht race heads for Ireland and the Galway stopover

"THIS leg is fraught with danger."

It's not an unusual comment to make when one is talking about off-shore yacht racing at the highest level. All you have to do is look back through the history books to find stories and tales of boats that were lost to the depths of the sea as the endeavoured to harness the power of the wind and the ocean to propel themselves from port to port. But when a hardy sailor with years and miles of experience says that you might want to double or even treble his sentiments to get a real grasp of what lies ahead.

The Volvo Ocean Race, the 37,000 nautical mile ocean yacht race that is doing it's lap of the world, is about to embark on the last real off shore leg as it takes "the short hop across the Atlantic" and race from Boston to Galway. The seven campaigned yachts will depart this Saturday and are expected some eight

to 10 days later in Galway, weather permitting and dictating of course.

But it is the Limerick connections that we look to and Ger O'Rourke's yacht campaigned by Team Delta Lloyd, who have a hit a rich vein of form of late, will look to add to that and possibly take a podium finish too.

The "short hop" as they call it, is not one without its fair share of trouble.

Jules Salter, the Ericsson 4 navigator, is reclining into his chair, so relaxed in his general manner that you half expect him to start snoring. "It'll be challenging, a pretty rude awakening after a nice, cushy stopover here in Boston."

Salter is speaking at the team brief ahead of the leg but he is relating the news that all the navigators will be offering to their respective teams and the manner of potential obstacles waiting in the 2,550-nautical mile track separating

America from Ireland.

Maps highlight the regions that show the ice populations and the level of data and information is the highest you can expect and it is updated every single day.

Salter, during his brief, points to a map of the Atlantic waters off Newfoundland, a Canadian province just six degrees north of Boston. Highlighted within is a zone, more than 300,000 square miles in area, that shows where ice has been cited in the water. In a particular one-degree box of longitude and latitude there are no fewer than 48 icebergs.

"It is quite close to where the Titanic went down." Has reality kicked in? To safeguard the yachts from the ice on their track the race organisation has added a second exclusion zone to the leg, keeping the fleet sufficiently away from the known populations.

The team navigators are quick to point out

that other dangers await. There's the debris of course as there's a lot of stuff in the water. There is always plenty of debris out there because of the shipping.

It seems more likely from early routing options that the fleet will stay further north, skirting the southern boundaries of the ice exclusion zone

before getting free of restrictions and charging north-east to Galway.

"It's probably an eight out of 10 in difficulty, they say and thus rank-

ing it above legs four and five. "There's a bit to worry about."



Above: Delta Lloyd makes a passing move over fellow Irish entry, Green Dragon as the Limerick owned yacht takes its second consecutive podium finish in the in-port races of the Volvo Ocean Race

Below: The Limerick connection, Ger O'Rourke, yacht owner and sailor and Edwin O'Connor, the county Limerick man that won a seamanship award for his efforts on the earlier legs when the yacht suffered structural damage. Edwin now heads up the shore team for the campaign.

Below left: Delta Lloyd ahead of Green Dragon as the yachts race in Boston last week



World Champions return to Limerick for BDO Challenge