

Limerickman Edwin O'Connor is rewarded on VOR sailing world stage

Sailing peers honour the Limerick man's work during the mammoth round the world race



At the Volvo Ocean Race prize-giving ceremony in Singapore, Ed O'Connor from Team Delta Lloyd receives his award from Jane Krishna

The Foynes native and only Irish man currently on board Ger O'Rourke's Volvo Ocean Race entry, guided the stricken Team Delta Lloyd to Singapore after their racing yacht succumbed to a major structural failure early in leg 3 of the race when the keel ram was ripped from the bulkhead. His efforts earned him the

Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics Seaman-ship Award. The crew considered diverting to a nearer port, but were able to affect a repair sufficient to enable them to sail the remainder of the leg and finish under sail just before Christmas.

THIS weekend sees the seven remaining crews of the Volvo Ocean Race return to the sailing at the extreme where arduous conditions hamper even the simplest of tasks. But that is off-shore sailing at the very best and Edwin O'Connor, pictured on the left receiving the Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics Seaman-ship Award last week, will be in the thick of it as the ship's engineer on board fellow Limerick man, Ger O'Rourke's Team Delta Lloyd yacht.

Following the damage that the boat endured in the early part of the leg from India to Singapore, the on-shore repairs list for the crew was always going to be long a tedious one, especially with Christmas looming.

Nonetheless, all jobs were completed and just in time for the boat to shake off any cobwebs and get back in the water ahead of the leg 4 start that would take the boat to China for the first time in the history of the race.



The in-port races last weekend, to be fair to the team, were more of an exercise in testing their repairs more so than anything else.

There's an over-riding goal of getting the boat to China where a new mast is awaiting in Qingdao.

In saying that, a race is always a race, and race they did. Good boat speed kept the flavour of the day sweet as did Edwin's award so their seventh place in race one and having to retire from race two may not leave as sour a taste as other may have thought.

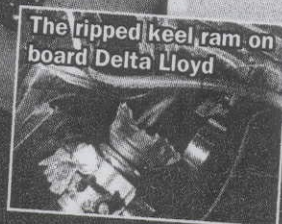
The focus now turns to the upwind battle that all the super yachts face on the race to China where both man and sailing machine will be put to their limits of sailing and manufacturing ability.

This is about the survival of the fittest and some are fitter than others.

Limiting breakages will be key to winning or staying involved in this race and those that manage it will see a podium finish as their reward.

The leading boats will find the going tough, but those that slip off the pace early will find it even harder.

Having spoken to the Delta Lloyd magnate, O'Rourke is confident that the boat and crew are ready to face the bitter challenge of freezing winds and mountainous seas. This is sailing at the limit and beyond and there's a proud Limerick man at the forefront it.



The ripped keel ram on board Delta Lloyd

All leagues throws up the story so far

AS close as you could get to a mid week point in the season, we turn to the statistics of the leagues and have a snap shot look at the AIB leagues so far.

Following seven rounds of the league, you'll find that the top Limerick club is SHANNON and indeed they held the same accolade for the Mun-

ster this stage last season. Boh's have yet to play five Leinster clubs, but three of them will be in Limerick. But Boh's will take fortune for being able to pick up a bonus point in three of their four losses, but testing times are ahead as they have yet to field a side against the three clubs presently at the top of the table.



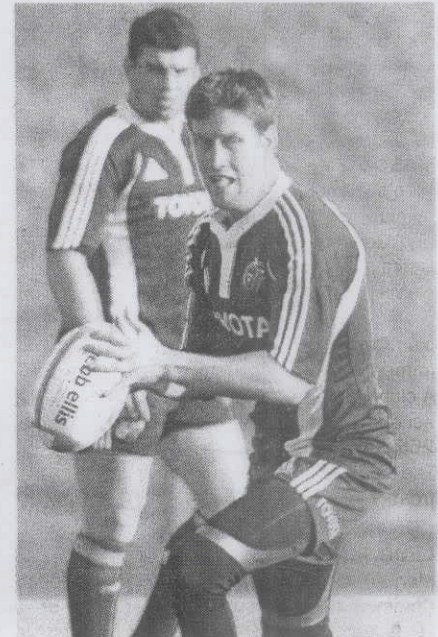
Munster Rugby A sideline view

SOMETHING tells me that this weekend will be all about a number of key factors. Obviously I'm talking about the visit of Sale, the inclusion of O'Gara, the withdrawal of Tipoki and the return to form of the Munster side.

I haven't said anything too shocking there but we all know where the key links are and where the small sections are missing.

The Christmas and early January form was a little suspect as was the requirements of the crowd that supported them. We demanded results, we demanded blood and our pound of flesh. As I said before, there's nothing wrong with any of those metaphorical requests, but we need to move back to the time when we held Munster in the greatest of esteem for the team they are, they team they came from and the team they continue to be. A return to passion please.

On the field, the man with the ball, pictured below, will be the man that wins the match for



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