

Four points and 7th place for Ger and Delta Lloyd

ROUGH and ragged from 23 days at sea, Ger O'Rourke's Delta Lloyd arrived in Cape Town at 23:03 GMT on Monday night to claim seventh place in leg one of the Volvo Ocean Race. And all of this with a battered and bruised boat, but with a crew full of spirits and desire to take on the next leg of this marathon race.

After roaring out of Alicante in 40 knot winds, to stall in the Doldrums and to then tear up the course as they crossed the southern Atlantic, Ger had to nurture his boat through Table Bay as the last couple of miles took longer than expected - what had been a strong evening breeze suddenly eased with the team just a couple of miles from the finish line. But eventually, after a painful final hour, Delta Lloyd crossed the line, and claimed two leg scoring points to add to their in-shore race score from Alicante. They now sit in seventh spot with a four point total and just one point away from Ericsson 3 and their two boat campaign.

Attention will now turn to a long job list for the shore team. As a last-minute entry, the Delta Lloyd team had to scramble to make the start, but has impressed with a solid performance on the first leg.

The team's participation in the 10th Volvo Ocean Race was confirmed as late as September 11, just one month before the start of leg one. As such, the team has had a steep learning curve over this first leg to Cape Town.

"A Volvo 70 is a different thing, it's a totally different animal; a huge step,"

'A fantastic race and we'll build on this'

STEPPING off a boat following a long passage at sea will bring huge emotion, but above all it will give you a certain grounding - pun aside.

When Ger O'Rourke stepped off his Volvo open 70 yacht on Monday night he was grounded and glad to be on solid ground at that.

But this man's vision and determination got him to the startline of the Volvo Ocean Race - the toughest, most extreme off shore ocean race in the world. It's a marathon and nothing short of that as the race brings the eight boats on a 37,000 nautical mile navigation of the globe over ten gruelling legs.

Dockside, Ger spoke of the last 23 days that both he and the crew spent battling God and man to get to Cape Town and to cross the finish line of leg one.

"We had a good trip, a bloody hard trip, but a good trip nonetheless. We got here and that was our objective. After getting off to a flying start we then slowed out of the Med. We were all caught in the Doldrums and that was frustrating. Staying to the left hand side of the course as we went to Cape Verde was a mistake and one that we paid for. It was a gamble and one that didn't pay off. I'll know to stay with the fleet in the following legs, but considering that we damaged the rig and the mistakes we made, finishing in seventh with such a tightly packed fleet is reasonable enough. This was a late campaign so ya, I'm happy with that - we're all here and I can't complain."

In a new departure for the race, each crew could appoint a media man to travel with the yacht but not assist the crew with the race itself. Ger pointed out that their man slotted in just fine.

"This is a fantastic race and we are part of it and the people back home get to follow it more and see much more footage from the boat. Our man was great - he's a good guy and slotted in well with this bunch. He got stuck in with the banter of the crew and it just went from there."

"From the high seas and huge waves of big boat racing to the midnight showers we took on deck. Hey, there's a bunch of smelly lads and the boat is not fitted out with the latest mod-cons you know. Smelly lads need to shower too but it was probably a bit much for ye all to see."

Together with the fun came the pain and Delta Lloyd suffered some damage to their rig when a mast jumper was ripped from the rig during a late night tack just eight days into the race. This dealt the team a huge blow as they could not utilise their full sail inventory. But battle on they did knowing that Cape Town would be a welcome stopover for repairs.

"We have a three week jobs list that needs to be done in one week, but sure this is a lastminutecampaign.com. We've a lot of work to do and I will stay with the lads for the week to get it done but I have to return home for prior commitments. I should be back for China and I'll link up with the lads until then. Stu (Wilson) will slot in and run the ship for the Asian legs."

The crews will now carry out whatever repairs or changes are required and prepare for the next leg of the race that is scheduled to leave Cape Town on November 15 next and head to Cochin in India. The eight boats will tackle a notoriously rough piece of water and the 4,450 nautical miles that face them on their passage to India.

O'Rourke said when safe on the dock in Cape Town.

"The loads are huge and you need 10 or 11 big, strong guys. It's been a big learning curve and it's not going to come overnight. I'm looking at this as a stepping stone for 2011. We're learning how to improve every day."

O'Rourke had acquired the winning boat from the 2005-06 Volvo, ABN AMRO ONE, and refitted the first generation Volvo Open 70 to bring it in line with the new Rule.

O'Rourke said on announcing his team back in September that he felt they would use the first leg as a platform to build upon and that they would be more competitive in the third and fourth legs.

Now, the next race is to get the boat ready for leg two, as navigator Matt Gregory confirmed dockside in Cape Town. Everyone is tired, but there's not much time on the schedule to relax.

"No rest at all. We've broken some things and we have a big job list. I might go for a little wine tour tomorrow and then it's straight back into it. We still have to figure out how to get to India. Nobody on board has ever done that before!"

Delta Lloyd skipper Ger O'Rourke on his final approach to Cape Town on Monday evening



Green Dragon the second Irish collaborative entry, arrived into Cape Town on leg 1 of the Volvo Ocean Race and took third place on the podium. The Irish-Chinese entry crossed the finish line at 07:12:35 GMT scoring 5 points, leaving them with a total of 11 points overall.

Rick Tomlinson/Volvo Ocean Race

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