

Up and down

Preparations for the Route du Rhum, which takes the gun off St Malo on October 31, have their ups and downs for solo sailor Conrad Colman.

FOR THOSE who followed my preparations for the Mini Transat, the cycles of highs and lows will be familiar. Now with a bigger boat, and more famous race, the cycles have a higher amplitude and the pace of my preparations is ever more frenetic.

While I have been able to convince some partners to join my campaign for the Route du Rhum, I am still working hard to find an 11th hour angel to realize the benefits of what I offer and become a title sponsor for the project. Thus, I am currently split four ways between preparing the boat for the race, studying the route and the complex North Atlantic weather scenarios, writing and producing video to raise the profile of my project, and looking for sponsorship.

This activity is bearing fruit as I recently filmed an athlete introduction video for the US cable channel Outside TV, and will do the same for a French equivalent next week. My story as the sole non-European entrant has been picked up by the papers, and the race organisers are briefing the competitors on our media responsibilities while at sea.

As with all sailing, it's time on the water that counts and I'm having to count on quality, not quantity, as the countdown continues. I have just returned from a three day crewed regatta where I was able to line up against 13 of my Rhum competitors in a friendly match. This was my first race as skipper of the new boat so I was nervously optimistic, but mostly hoping to avoid dings before the Transat! Nerves, glassy calms and fluky shifts pushed us down the pack on the first day and I became worried that this might be a foul harbinger for when I was solo. Perhaps I had finally taken on too much, too fast?

However my team, comprising Global Ocean Race winner Boris Herrmann and

other veterans of solo transatlantic races, learned the strengths of the boat and shook the rust out of our manoeuvres. We fought the pre-starts, found great speed upwind and sailed consistently clean races to finish third overall, and by the last day we were fighting with Nicolas Troussel, considered to be the favourite in the Rhum.

Coming off this successful weekend, I feel confident that I have a tool that, depending on my routing, will allow me to be competitive in the Rhum race. However, just as all was looking rosy I discovered that both rudders were compromised structurally and must be rebuilt before racing again.

After the high, the low is knowing that I am pulling the boat to pieces instead of polishing off the details. Friends are starting to lend a hand and I have set up a donation button on my website for those who are able to help from afar. I know that I can do this, will do this and do it well. In the words of Sir Peter Blake, "it won't be easy. The best things never are".

"I know I can do this, will do this and do it well..."



Support Conrad

Go to www.conradcolman.com

Back a Kiwi going places

Conrad is using the Route du Rhum as a stepping-stone to next year's Global Ocean Race. Get behind the 26-year-old by becoming an official member of his Support Crew for as little as \$20

\$20

You get a postcard sent from Guadeloupe and Conrad gets a day's worth of freeze dried food. Yummy

Corporate clout

As the only non-European in the The Route du Rhum, Conrad is sure to attract plenty of media interest that will undoubtedly spill over into his GOR campaign

\$100

You walk around in your new Conrad Colman Ocean Racing t-shirt while the sailor buys a new jib sheet

\$2000

You'll be able to wear your new CC Ocean Racing Technical Jacket while enjoying a sail with Conrad on his Class40! Look up - he's spent your contribution on half the new spinnaker that's propelling you along

\$200

You get a CC Ocean Racing fleece, your name on Conrad's boat and website and Conrad slips into some cosy new thermal longjohns!

