

Pick up - updated

Wednesday, 10 June 2009

Desiderata alongside

A long but almost incomprehensible message was on our answerphone when we got home tonight. From what we were able to decipher with some corroboration from Simon's girlfriend Sam who had got to speak to him earlier, I have compiled the following. It may not be 100% accurate but should be pretty close.

The support boat Desiderata came alongside as night was falling over the Indian Ocean. A transfer in the dark was an unnecessary risk so Simon is spending one last night aboard Old Mutual Endurance. Tomorrow he will transfer to the mother ship with as much equipment as he can manage. They are going to try and tow OME but if it breaks loose or has to be cut loose then they will not be going back for it.

Simon is obviously very disappointed that he has not been able to finish the challenge and gave three main reasons for abandoning the race.

The frustration at the frequent difficult weather systems that made forward progress difficult and prevented him from displaying his undoubted rowing ability.

A loss of confidence in his ability to continue to fix the increasing number of mechanical and electronic failures that were occurring. Given that 12 months ago, a hammer and nail were the limits of his technical ability, I think he had already done very well on that score.

The third reason was something like burble, burble, burble....

What we did understand was his wish to give sincere and heartfelt thanks to everyone that had supported him over the last eighteen months, To everyone who donated money to the Willow Foundation or helped him raise money. To all his sponsors, particularly Old Mutual of course. To everyone who gave him equipment or know how or helped him on the boat. To all those that sent him encouraging messages, again particularly Old Mutual colleagues and members of Biggleswade Athletic Club as well as friends relatives and up until now, complete strangers.

He (and we) could not have had better support from the race organisers, Woodvale who were very professional but compassionate too. Thanks to Tony, Chris, Simon and all the rest of the team.

He apologises for letting you down, which of course, he has not.

The race goes on. All the boats still out there deserve our support. I will continue to watch all their progress with undiminished interest. They are all very brave and very special people.

Update

A phone call from Woodvale at 10 am on Thursday morning confirmed that Simon was safely aboard the support vessel and that he was thinner, hairier (no doubt smellier too) but OK. OME was in tow. The navigational instruments have all been left on board in case a decision has to be made about cutting her loose later on. Simon would still have the option to row her in if necessary. They are heading for Mauritius and expect to be there in about 16 days time.