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Scuttlebutt News:

Stan Honey - Setting Records

Interview by Scuttlebutt - Photos courtesy of Cammass-Groupama.com

(November 4, 2009) At fifty-two years of age, Stan Honey (USA) will be the most senior member on the 105-foot maxi trimaran Groupama 3 during their 2009 attempt to win the Jules Verne Trophy, a fully crewed round the world record attempt under sail. Stan is a new member of skipper Franck Cammas' team, but hardly new to navigation. However, his commitment to the role dramatically increased in 2004 when he joined ABN AMRO's winning campaign for the 2005-6 Volvo Ocean Race. Stan is currently the Technical Director for Team Origin, and here provide some insight into his latest project:



• Explain the preparation for this record attempt.

The preparation is extensive. The shore crew goes through the boat entirely for the physical preparation. For sailing team preparation we did a TransAtlantic record attempt (3D 18H), and also a training trip from Lorient to Istanbul. There have been various other 1-5 day training passages. Recently the sailing team spent a week mountaineering in the Alps for team-building. That was more beneficial than I could have imagined, not having participated in a team-building exercise before. I also enjoyed seeing the Alps and learning something about rock climbing and climbing on snow, ice, and glaciers.

As for your role, what you have done to prepare?

I've been working with the highly skilled Yann Riou on Groupama's electronics and setup, and I've spent many days with Sylvain Mondon at Meteo France in Toulouse France working on the weather. Sylvain is our shore meteorologist with whom I work both before and throughout record attempt passages on Groupama 3. It is a delight for me to be able to work with such a skilled meteorologist and one who has the extensive resources of Meteo France at his disposal.

• Explain the process to determine when to begin.

Getting around the South Atlantic High can go be time consuming if that High has a big lobe extending to the West at the time a boat is trying to pass. So you try to pick a departure time where the weather structure in the South Atlantic will provide for a clean passage pass the South Atlantic High and into the Southern Ocean. Of course you also need for that departure time to provide for a reasonably fast passage to the equator.

• What is the ideal time of year for a Jules Verne Trophy attempt?

Typically JV attempts have a standby period that extends from mid November through late March. That takes advantage of the Southern Ocean summer.

• What are your preferred tools of the trade?

For global weather the widely used weather models are the US GFS and the European ECMWF (aka CEP). These days the CEP has been working great, although for our TransAtlantic attempt the GFS actually worked slightly better. For detailed European weather in the start area, the Meteo France Aladin mesoscale model is terrific. In the past for onboard routing I have used both Dfw and Expedition software. Each program has its own strengths. On this project however I have been also using the Adrena Tactique software that has a number of capabilities that are particularly useful for multihulls such as the consideration of the effects of seastate and particularly cross-seas into the routing. Of course the Adrena Optima product is also useful for sail chart generation and polar file development.



• How does your job differ on a multihull compared to a monohull?

In general the navigator's job gets more interesting as the boats get faster because you can consider more options as far as picking and changing weather systems. Fast boats can even overtake fronts if done very carefully. While the multihulls are faster and have more options than monohulls, monohulls are getting fast enough so that on boats like Alfa Romeo and Speedboat you have similar considerations. On the 2005-2006 VOR, on ABN AMRO, we were able to overtake a front at one point.

• What is the time you believe Groupama 3 is capable of in the JV?

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With luck on the weather, G3 is capable of a 45 day passage.

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