

PRODUCTS IN ACTION

Conquering Drake's Passage



The two sailors set out on their epic journey.

After an 82 hour sailing marathon, Brazilian Roberto Pandiani and South African Duncan Ross became the first sailors to cross the Drake's Passage on an open 21-foot catamaran. The Drake's Passage, which is infamous for its shipwrecks, monstrous waves, unpredictable storms, icebergs and freezing temperatures, presented a formidable challenge for the two sailors. It stretches from Cape Horn to the Antarctic Peninsula, a distance of over 500 miles.

The vessel, which was based on a Hobie 21 hull form, was constructed and engineered by DIAB's Brazilian agent, Barracuda Technologies. The hulls were built from Kevlar and carbon fibers over a 12mm Divinycell foam core using an epoxy resin infusion system. The end result was a 'bulletproof platform'.

The expedition started out from the most southern city of South America, Ushuaia, Argentina. The first leg involved sailing westward down the Beagle Canal, across Nassau Bay to reach a small cove just a few miles from Cape Horn. From here, choosing what Roberto called 'a perfect weather window', the intrepid pair set off for Deception Island 500 miles away. The Drake Passage served up a mixture of conditions ranging from dead calm to 25 knots with seas running at up to 5m. Seasickness, freezing air and water temperatures left the sailors exhausted to point of experiencing mild hallucinations before they reached the island. On the final leg to the Melchior Archipelago 120 miles away, the monster awoke and left the duo on the limit of survival. Although 4 to 8 knots of wind were forecast, they actually experienced 37 knots. The sea conditions were unbelievable. A near collision with a whale, snow and the constant threat of floating ice made this a day to be remembered.

