



A MAN TO MAURITIUS

ATLANTIC SUPPORTS RECORD ROWING ON THE INDIAN OCEAN





Brave, mad, and so completely whacky that he might just pull it off. This is the only way to describe Simon Prior, of Bedfordshire, and his extraordinary mission.

Simon hopes to become the fastest and youngest person to row across the Indian Ocean from Australia to Mauritius, in what is widely acknowledged to be the most challenging rowing race in the world. In doing so, he is aiming to raise £25,000 to help provide special days for seriously ill 16 to 40 year olds.

In support of this incredible challenge, Atlantic Corporate Relocation is sponsoring Simon, shipping his seven metre boat and equipment from the UK to the start line.

The race starts on the 19th April 2009, and Simon hopes to complete it within 90 days. In those grueling three months, he will row more than 3,500 miles, rowing every single day for around 6 hours, without laying eyes on another human being – there are no support boats on this race. To avoid getting cuts from his clothing, he will be rowing completely naked, apart from a sun hat and thick slathering of sun block. At night, he will sleep in his boat for 40 minutes at a time, coming up to check that there are no tankers threatening to plough into him in the darkness. Only two people have ever successfully finished the race. Simon hopes to make it a third.

On Friday January 9, at 10.30am Simon launched his fundraising efforts when he rowed up the Thames in his 7m boat towards the Houses of Parliament from The Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich. He was greeted at the London landmark by a host of supporters and media who were keen to find out more about his incredible escapade.

Also in attendance on the Thames were Arsenal legend Bob Wilson and his wife Megs, representatives of the charity for which Simon has undertaken this feat, the Willow Foundation. Set up by Bob and Megs in memory of their daughter, Anna, who died of cancer age 31, the charity provides special days for seriously ill 16 to 40 year olds throughout the UK. To date the Willow Foundation has provided more than 4,000 special days not only for people living with cancer but also cystic fibrosis, motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy and Huntington's, amongst other conditions.



Simon chose to support the Willow Foundation after his best friend's mother sadly died of cancer. Witnessing the impact of a serious illness, Simon understands the importance of special days during these tough times. "I am fortunate enough that I am able to even consider taking on a challenge like this. There are so many people who would want to do this; some people lack the courage whilst there are those young adults who are physically not able to contemplate this, through no fault of their own. It is these people that I am trying to help through this row."

One of only four people to take on the solo row in the 2009 Woodvale Challenge, Simon will be taking on an enormous physical test. He is expected to lose around a third of his body weight during the race. At 6'6 tall, and currently at the low weight of 90kg due to illness over winter, he will have to pile on a few pounds before he leaves in April, in order to cope with a diminishing body mass.

Simon spoke of the challenge he faces: "This race is marketed as the World's Toughest Rowing Race, it will be a great achievement to just finish, but deep down I know I want to win. I know there are going to be some tough days in the middle of that ocean, but I am a strong believer that life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage. Whatever happens out there it will be one amazing experience.

"This is a very expensive venture and it would otherwise cost me up to £60,000 just to get to the start line. I am really grateful for the support from Atlantic Corporate Relocation in helping me ensure that the maximum amount of money goes towards the charity.

Bob Wilson, of the Willow Foundation, spoke of Simon's adventure: "This has got to be the toughest challenge that anyone has ever chosen to take on for the Willow Foundation and we're honoured that Simon has chosen us. We wish Simon all the best for the thousands of miles he'll be rowing for us, and for so many seriously ill young adults," said Bob Wilson.

Throughout his journey, Simon will be sending pictures and video back from the ocean, so keep checking the Atlantic website for these regular updates.



LINKS

www.amantomauritius.co.uk
www.willowfoundation.org.uk

FACT FILE

- ➔ Only two people have ever managed to row solo across the Indian Ocean from Australia
- ➔ The Woodvale Challenge starts in Western Australia on April 19 and finishes in Mauritius and covers 3,500 miles
- ➔ Only four people will attempt Woodvale Challenge Indian Ocean Rowing Race on their own
- ➔ Simon expects to raise £25,000 for the Willow Foundation
- ➔ Simon expects his record breaking attempt to take 90 days

ABOUT THE WILLOW FOUNDATION (Registered Charity No. 1106746):

The Willow Foundation was founded by Bob Wilson and his wife Megs as a lasting memorial to their daughter, Anna, who died of cancer aged 31. Bob is the former Arsenal and Scotland goalkeeper and TV presenter.

As one of the most vibrant charities in the UK, the Willow Foundation is committed to making a difference to the lives of 16-40 year olds living with serious illness at a time when they, and their families, most need an escape from the day-to-day pressures. To date, the charity has provided more than 4,000 special days for young adults with life threatening illnesses such as cancer, motor neurone disease, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and organ failure – 1,350 in 2008 alone.

For some their special day is the last chance to fulfil a dream. For others it provides the opportunity to return some normality to their lives. But for all a special day creates precious memories for the future.



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