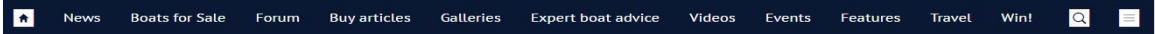




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Pictures: Plans for first Portuguese Volvo Ocean Race team in 2020

Katy Stickland
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The chairman of the Mirpuri Foundation has announced he plans to register the first Portuguese team for the Volvo Ocean Race 2020, and has just completed his first transatlantic sail

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As part of preparations for the Volvo Ocean Race 2020, the chairman of the Mirpuri Foundation has just finished his first transatlantic crossing.

Following his announcement to register the first Portuguese team to take part in the race, Paulo Mirpuri skippered his crew the 2,300 nautical miles from Cape Verde Islands to Barbados on board a 21-metre VOR70.

The yacht, which is now called Mirpuri Foundation, was formerly Green Dragon which came fifth in the 2008-09 Volvo Ocean Race, skippered by Ian Walker.

It was designed by Reichel/Pugh and built by McConaghy Boats.

Although this was his first ocean crossing, Mirpuri has sailed since a teenager.



Skipper Paulo Mirpuri. Credit: David Branigan/Oceansport

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"My debut on an ocean crossing taught me a lot, especially the importance of the spirit and union of the crew on board and also how the ocean shows us the need to be patient," he said.

"Now I know exactly how to select the Portuguese sailors for the future Mirpuri Foundation team in the Volvo Ocean Race 2020 and I will personally participate in the selection process of the men's and women's teams that we intend to form, so we can decide the final crew," added Mirpuri.

View pictures of Mirpuri Foundation's arrival in Barbados below

Crew manager, Enrico Civallo, said the voyage served as a lesson to all.

"We had strong wind and big seas, which provided an exciting experience for the guests on board. The trip was good, the power of the boat is evident and we always sailed safely," he said.

"We were so well positioned in the trade winds that we traveled 1,200 miles on the same tack (representing more than half of the 2,100-mile route from Cape Verde to Barbados)," continued Civallo.

"The VOR 70 is very sensitive, capable of accelerating or decelerating at the slightest trimming of the sails, daggerboards, canting keel and water ballasts as well as the precision at the rudder. The organisation of the watches on deck worked very well, with 6 hours of work during the day and 4 hours at night, with the crew divided into two groups," he explained.

Legends to return to mark 45 years of the Volvo Ocean Race

The Mirpuri Foundation is a non-profit foundation set up in Portugal by the businessman and philanthropist Paulo Mirpuri as a vehicle to manage his family's charitable donations.

It supports specific projects in aerospace, medical research, marine conservation, wildlife conservation and social responsibility.

Already, dozens of Portuguese sailors have applied to be part of the Volvo 2020 crew, with the final selection expected to be announced by the end of 2017.

Mirpuri, who plans to sail the last leg of the 2020 race, warned that selection will not just be based on sailing skills.

"It is not enough for them to be very good technically. It is essential that, as future ambassadors of the Mirpuri Foundation, they share its values," he said.

"Our main aim will be to publicise worldwide the foundation's work on raising awareness about and conservation of oceans and marine ecosystems," added the philanthropist.

Once the team has been announced, sea training will begin and will continue for nearly three years until the round-the-world race in 2020.