

Driving down a mine

Team Australia's navigator Josh Alexander this morning described careering eastwards to Auckland with a 40 plus knot WNW wind on their aft quarter and not being able to see the waves as like driving the trimaran repeatedly down a mine.

The six-man crew weathered the worst of the overnight conditions without breakages or sea sickness. They are now deep into the Tasman Sea and more than a third of the way across the 1,260nm passage record attempt which began from Sydney Harbour at 12.09pm yesterday afternoon.

"It was a rough night, 40 knots plus for a good 3-4 hours and mainsail only for a while. We are still in 30-32kts WNW with a triple reefed main and small headsail. It's still rough," Alexander advised at 8.20am.

"There was a good moon early on but by 2am we couldn't see the waves, we just drove it down the mine. It was scary.

"We haven't broken anything but the boat's leaking like a sieve. It's wetter than on the way to Hobart. In fact it's the wettest ride I've had on this boat. The bunks and the back end are dry but the water is coming in through the escape hatches from the pressure. Last night we were averaging 30 knots of boat speed for 15 mins to half an hour at a time.

"It's looking like a good 24 hour run," Alexander added.

The soggy crew managed to get some hot food down while the trimaran was bucking and leaking saltwater through the front end, something pulled from the fridge labelled 'Tasman Tuna' that worked a treat for the hungry horde and even better for the Kiwi navigator once soaked with Tabasco sauce.

The wind and seas are expected to back off which may foil skipper Sean Langman's plan to reach Auckland inside three days. Forecaster Roger 'Clouds' Badham has advised that following a truckload of breeze all night there will be a steady ease all day today, with an even slower left trend.

"Looks like the hard work for me is tomorrow, to find you a way around and down the east coast of NZ. This is where we have to be smart," Badham has forewarned the team.

Team Australia is not gunning for a magic number to beat. Surprisingly there is no World Sailing Speed Council sanctioned record, just hearsay of five days being the best time for the popular ocean passage.

If they slow down too much the issue of food supplies could come into play. Many an ocean crossing has finished with rationed drinking water and bags of lollies the only sustenance left.

Sleep is sporadic with all hands needed to keep the beast on a leash. Having fulfilled his media duties Alexander handed over to skipper Sean Langman and hit the rack at 8.30am after a long stint driving in the dark on only a half hour power nap.

Temperatures are pleasant enough, the six crewmen in thermals and wet weather gear and no “bear suits” dragged out as yet.

Team Australia’s sprint to Auckland can be tracked via the website <http://teamaus.net.au/>

Updates posted regularly on the official [Facebook page](#)

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