

Purpose of Ocean Challenge Live!

On May 31, 2004, Captain Rich Wilson will embark on an international sail race called The Transat. This race is a grueling, single-handed (solo) race from Plymouth, England to Boston, Massachusetts. With forty other boats and captains in the event, Rich will race against other boats in his class. As he prepares for the race and while he races across the Atlantic Ocean, Rich will bring you the online educational program *Ocean Challenge Live!*. This program, which will allow Rich to communicate the excitement of the race with schools and classrooms, is designed to encourage students to learn academic and life skills through the use of the sitesALIVE! website (<http://www.sitesalive.com>) and this Teacher's Guide.

A Brief History of The Transat


On May 31, 2004 of this year, Rich Wilson will set sail on a new challenge. Rich will participate in the 2004 edition of the famed Transat (short for Trans-Atlantic) race, generally considered one of the greatest challenges in sailing. Along with more than 40 other skippers, Rich will attempt to sail his boat, the *Great American II*, solo across the frigid North Atlantic Ocean from Plymouth, England to Boston, Massachusetts.

The Transat was established in 1960. It was originally called the OSTAR after the London newspaper, *The Observer*, which sponsored the original race. In the first-ever solo race across an ocean, Sir Francis Chichester, Blondie Haslar, and three others set forth from Plymouth. At that time, many believed that the course was an impossible one. The skippers would have to sail 3,000 miles across the often-stormy North Atlantic against prevailing winds and ocean currents. Drifting icebergs from the north and freezing fogs would be a constant danger.

Somehow all five competitors managed to complete that first race, with Chichester crossing the finish line first in 40 days and 12 hours. Since 1960, the Transat has been held every four years. New technologies and improved tactics have resulted in substantially faster voyages over time. The current record crossing time is 9 days and 23 hours, accomplished by Francis Joyon of France in 2000.

The sailing ships in this year's race are competing in four different classes: 50-foot monohull, 60-foot monohull, 50-foot multihull, and 60-foot multihull. Monohulls (boats with one hull) use a heavy underwater keel to remain upright. Multihulls (boats with more than one hull), which include catamarans and trimarans, spread their weight across a wide area and rely on buoyancy rather than a keel to stay upright. The multihull boats have a large weight advantage over monohull boats due to their lack of a bulky keel and their construction from lightweight materials. Rich will be competing in the 50-foot multihull class with the trimaran *Great American II*. The record crossing time for this class of ships is 16 days and 12 hours, accomplished by Herve Cleron of France in 1992.

Since Rich and *Great American II* are from Boston, they will depart for England in mid-April. This apparent inconvenience is, in fact, an advantage, as they will have a long solo practice



session to the Azores Islands. Once he gets to the Azores, Rich will take on a crew member to help him get *Great American II* to Plymouth, England where they will complete the outfitting and provisioning of the boat prior to the race. Starting May 31, Rich is on his own again as he races across the Atlantic Ocean for Boston, Massachusetts with the Transat fleet.

Rich likes to say that the reason he does these long voyages is because “there is so much to learn and that is what makes it so interesting.” And with this sitesALIVE! program, you can learn right along with Rich. Welcome aboard!