

Vendée Globe - SeaExplorer – IMOCA 60 – collision

27 January 2021 'SeaExplorer' collision at night with fishing vessel

Shortly before the finish of the Vendee Globe Race, things took a dramatic turn for German sailor Boris Herrmann. His vessel, Seaexplorer – Yacht Club de Monaco collided with a fishing trawler 85 nautical miles from the finish line in Les Sables d'Olonne, France. The collision damaged the race yacht, so Herrmann could only continue at a reduced speed.

Boris himself was uninjured, and there were no casualties on the fishing trawler either.

"Suddenly I saw a wall next to me, the boats got tangled up, I heard men shouting," Herrmann reports. His vessel's bowsprit was broken off, its headsail torn, and the starboard hydrofoil was damaged. Most critically, the starboard shroud broke off, the cable that secures the mast and stops it from falling over. In the hours following the collision, Herrmann worked feverishly to replace the shroud in order to reach his final destination safely.

In a video message, Boris Herrmann recounts the collision that shattered all dreams of a German victory. "I have never experienced anything like this at sea before," Herrmann said, "but the most important thing is that no one was hurt."

The collision is another test in the toughest race in the world, but not one that will keep Boris from seeing it through to the end. On Thursday morning, the 39-year-old skipper from Hamburg plans to sail his ship across the finish line off Les Sables d'Olonne, after 81 days atsea. Onshore, his wife Birte, his daughter and his team are already eagerly awaiting his return and proud of his great achievement.

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Boris Herrmann has revealed that he has had a phone conversation with the captain of the Spanish fishing trawler that he collided with in the darkness in the closing stages of his Vendée Globe.

Herrmann was just 90 miles from the finish, with a likely second or even first place in the race on the cards, when his hopes – and those of his many supporters – were shattered by the collision.

He suffered serious damage to the boat including to one of the foils. He nursed the boat home at seven knots and missed his podium place.

The fishing boat and Herrmann's yacht drifted apart in the night, but speaking to the IMOCA class association, Herrmann said he had since spoken to the captain.

"We got on very well," he said. "We are both working at sea, so we are kind of colleagues.

"I apologised for giving them a stressful moment and they were really deeply sorry for what happened.

"They follow the Vendée Globe – the captain is a Vendée Globe fan – and they were really devastated that we lost places because of it and they were worried about me. They are good people."



Yvan Zedda / Alea#VG2020