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Hi-tech phone link during record bid

By Paul McLennan

Round-the-world sailor Tony Bullimore will use new communication technology for his latest record breaking attempt - so he can be found more easily if he capsizes like he famously did in 1996.

He hopes to stay in touch with his team for the duration of his upcoming round the world recording breaking attempt, thanks to pioneering new equipment. The Bristol yachtsman has attracted two new sponsors, which will supply him with mobile phone technology that links up to a satellite, meaning it never goes out of range.

The latest news coming from the Bullimore camp is that the record-breaking attempt will now take place either during, or just after, Easter. Bullimore was lost at sea for several days in 1996 during the Vendee Globe solo non-stop race when his keel broke off and his boat capsized.

Blue Ocean Wireless, a GSM specialist firm, and Inmarsat, a provider of global mobile satellite communications, announced their sponsorship of Bullimore's attempt this week. As part of the deal, the attempt will now be called the Blue Ocean Wireless Round the World Challenge.

His spokesman Barry Pickthall said: "There is no favourable weather in the next 10 days but there is something coming after that.

"The new technology is a mobile phone with a chip in it which acts as a GPS that you can send texts with. It is the first ever and they are launching it worldwide next year. Normal mobile phones run on cells and go out of range but a satellite phone is never out of range. Inmarsat has nine satellites in the world and that will be how we get our video and audio messages across."

Mr Pickthall said the new technology would also enable his team to contact Tony at any time.

Bullimore said: "I'm delighted to have the support of both Blue Ocean Wireless and Inmarsat in my attempt to break the round the world record.

"It will be a challenge and it is important to have the most robust communications systems on board.

"Knowing that I have both access to the Inmarsat system and the Blue Ocean Wireless network means that I can maintain contact with my support team throughout the journey in any conditions and from any location."

Bullimore is currently in Hobart, Australia where his 102ft catamaran, the Doha 2006, is stuck in port due to a succession of high-pressure weather systems.

He is attempting to break the 70-day barrier for sailing solo non-stop around the world. Dame Ellen MacArthur has the current record of 71 days 14 hours.

