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Bullimore announces title sponsorship

We've been waiting for weeks to learn if Tony Bullimore was really going to set off on his attempt on Ellen MacArthur's Round the World record, but now we find that he may have been on standby but he hasn't been idle. Listen to the press conference - click the media links below.

As observers were questioning when, or even whether, he was going to leave, Bullimore was tying up a sponsorship agreement with Blue Ocean Wireless and Inmarsat that will see his attempt called the Blue Ocean Wireless Round the World Challenge.

Tony Bullimore said: "I am 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."

Blue Ocean Wireless is an Irish company that provides a GSM communication system to merchant ships, while its partner Inmarsat is the leading provider of global mobile satellite communications.

Blue Ocean Wireless is using its sponsorship of Team Bullimore to promote the launch of the world's first GSM network for merchant maritime vessels.

Domhnal Slattery, Chairman of Blue Ocean Wireless said: "Our commitment, at Blue Ocean Wireless, is to provide seafarers and crews of merchant maritime vessels with the capability to use their existing GSM handset in deep ocean water. Tony will be sailing across the world's deepest oceans in the most remote locations. Our service will provide Tony with access to a satellite-enabled GSM network in these locations, connecting to the Inmarsat services with a standard handset, for voice calls and SMS messaging."

Robert Johnson, Director of Maritime Services for Inmarsat, said "Inmarsat has championed the benefits of crew communications for many years and, as a Master Mariner and someone about to embark on this challenging record attempt, it will be very close to Tony's heart too. We are pleased to join with Blue Ocean Wireless, who are developing some truly innovative uses for Inmarsat services, in this exciting sponsorship. We hope it not only raises our profile and that of Tony's record attempt, but also sends a message about the positive impact on morale that crew communications can offer".

At the press announcement conducted by conference call from Inmarsat's headquarters in London, Bullimore said he expects to leave Hobart at Easter.

From Tasmania, the 27,000 mile course will take Bullimore straight down into the Southern Ocean where the westerly winds in the Roaring Forty latitudes will slingshot him across the first 5,000 mile stage to Cape Horn. He will then follow the South American coast northwards to the Equator, from where he must pick his way through the calms of the Doldrums and those associated with the Azores high pressure system, to round the island of Flores before returning southwards to the Cape of Good Hope.

In the Indian Ocean, the British yachtsman will rely on weather router Lee Bruce to help him to avoid the worst of the Roaring Forty winds at the start of the Summer Ocean winter that will speed him towards Cape Leuwin marking the western tip of Australia and past the point where he famously spent five dark days capsized during the 1997/8 Vendee Globe Race. Once across the Australian Bight, he must navigate his way around Bass Strait and back to Hobart.

The course has been sanctioned by the World Sailing Speed Record Council, which will time Bullimore's start and finish from Tasmania and monitor his progress around the world. The officially measured distance is exactly the same as if he started from Ushant on the north west tip of France where Dame Ellen Macarthur, the current record holder began her 71day 14hour 18 minute voyage last year.

However, Bullimore has calculated that while the official distance is measured along the 56° South latitude, the actual route round the world record hunters follow is further north, meaning they sail a longer distance in practice, than the official distance. By starting from Hobart, Bullimore actually saves some distance on the actual route, thus giving him an advantage. The time saved could become crucial if Bullimore proves he is able to handle his 102 foot catamaran single-handed and sustain the average speeds he needs to have a chance on the record.