

# Paris positive despite rough seas

BY DON BURGESS

HIGH WINDS and high seas have not dampened the spirits of Around Alone Race sailor Alan Paris. The Bermudian helming BTC Velocity was able to gain a bit of ground, but still remains 600 miles behind the fourth place boat with 1800 miles to go in the third leg of the race.

Class 2 leader Tommy Hilfiger Freedom America should cross the finish line either late yesterday or today.

"The last three days have been hard work," Paris said. "I feel as though someone is pushing me around out here. First there was a strong northerly that was correctly forecast and I went somewhat northeast for a day to hedge the fact that this blow would send me south."

Paris said that worked well and caught up 150 nautical miles on the middle of the Class 2 pack.

"It was hard work as keeping an Open 40 at 55 degrees with an apparent wind angle in 35 knots and in these seas that are a bashing and crashing."

He said the next weather

evolved very quickly. It turned into a deep low pressure system.

"My course was straight through the middle," he said. "After being blown south and being in just the right spot I headed north to get around the top of this system. Now remember that I have had 35 knots from the North the day before and the new breeze is filling from the South. 25 - 35 - 40 - 45 knots solid with gusts to 50 knots.

"You can not image the sea state. The old northerly swells were running right into the building southerly gale in the southern oceans which always has a prevailing westerly swell. Ouch. No choice but to steer the safest sea conditions and this was for a time almost due north."

He said the size of the waves this past have been "awesome."

"These seas however were amazing. Breakers were from different angles and coming at different speeds.

Sometimes a line of froth from a breaking wave would come at BTC Velocity's stern and partially fill the cockpit from behind while I am doing

12-17 knots of boat speed in the opposite direction.

"Other times the wave train in front would be so short that my bow would get pushed into the wave and the bow would dip under for a few seconds and pop up and off we would go surfing.

"You don't get those conditions every day." Paris lamented.

He gave great praise to his auto pilot, which worked flawlessly.

"Every few hours or so I would crawl into the aft compartment to bail out some water coming through the upper rudder bearing and tell my auto pilots how proud I was of them, well it can't hurt talking to your pilots can it?"

He said the big 'blow' is over and the wind has calmed down to only 28 to 30 knots.

"The seas are still a little sloppy but should be down in the next 12 hours and my position has again tightened up."

He said the boats in front of him still have headwinds so he hopes to continue to gain ground and maybe pull off another surprise at the finish line.