

The pedal boat adventurer



Jason's Pacific epic sets record

BY KATHY MORAN

ADVENTURER Jason Lewis inched into the record books yesterday after a 5,500-mile Pacific Ocean crossing in a pedal boat.

He arrived at Port Douglas on Australia's Queensland coast in his 26ft wooden craft Moksha around 6am and promptly celebrated with a cold beer.

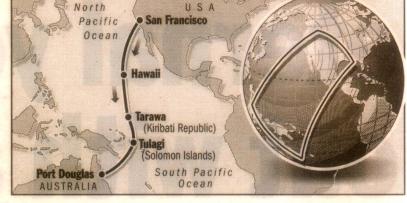
The voyage marked the halfway point in Jason's one-man quest to circumnavigate the globe using only self-powered transport.

Having started at the Greenwich Meridian six years ago, he first crossed the Atlantic in his pedal boat, then traversed America on rollerblades before taking to the water again for the marathon trip to Australia. He has now covered more than 20,000 miles since leaving England.

Jason, 32, from Bridport, Dorset, said: "We had a great reception, with every boat which passed us shouting, waving, honking horns and lobbing beers at us."

With him when he docked was 42-year-old American April Abril, who had accompanied him on the 1,100-mile leg from Tulagi in the Solomon Islands but had to be airlifted off suffering from seasickness. She rejoined the boat for the final eight miles into port.

April, who had never been on a sea voyage before, said: "I'm really



happy and excited to have had the chance to do it. It was such a test of perseverance to hang in there. I lost quite a bit of weight but I never lost my desire to pedal."

Before she fell ill, April and Interesting final

Before she fell ill, April and Jason survived a hair-raising final week of high winds and 20ft waves in shark-infested waters, and had to accept an 11-mile tow to safety when they became lost in the Great Barrier Reef.

"It was either accepting the tow or possibly losing the boat and our lives," said Jason. "But fortunately the tow did not affect the record attempt as it did not take me any nearer the coast.

"It is only just sinking in what has been achieved. It is a huge deal. We have just crossed the biggest ocean in the world by human power."

Apart from the dangers of the open sea, Jason also suffered a broken leg in a collision with a car during the rollerblade section of the trip. That mean an enforced

nine-month rest before he was fit to set off again.

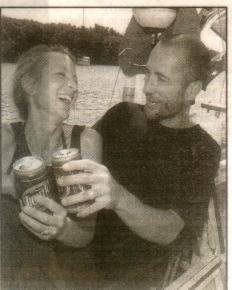
He has also had other companions on the way. Steve Smith, from Wolverhampton, helping to pedal the Moksha from San Francisco to Hawaii on the first 2,200-mile Pacific leg.

And he was joined this summer for the 1,100-mile leg from Tarawa to the Solomon Islands by 34-year-old Chris Tipper, from Brighton, who built the £26,000 Moksha but had never sailed her.

Then April, who had helped with the expedition's schools education programme, joined him for the final leg.

Now Jason plans to cycle and rollerblade across Australia before heading back towards Europe across Asia. He hopes the Pacific epic will generate sponsorship, because the expedition is in desperate financial straits.

Jason's aim is to complete the full circle to Greenwich in another three or four years.



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