



BRITON CONTINUES ROUND-THE-WORLD JOURNEY AFTER PARTNER ABANDONS SHIP

How solitary pedal power is keeping an adventure afloat



By ROGER SCOTT and NICK CRAVEN

AS HE battles storm-force winds and 20ft ocean swells, many would say that Jason Lewis has taken all the pleasure out of pedaloos.

The 31-year-old adventurer from Bridport is pedalling his way across the Pacific in a craft not much bigger than the jaunty beach boats.

Using only muscle power, he is making an epic 29,000-mile journey around the world across land and sea.

Five long years into his adventure, he is facing yet another challenge - going on alone after his companion decided he had had enough.

Yesterday, he was pressing on towards the tiny atoll of Tarawa in the central Pacific, 2,000 miles west of Hawaii, where fellow pedaller Steve Smith decided to stay put.

The pair set off together from Greenwich, South-East London in 1994. After pedalling across the Channel they mountain-biked to Portugal.

From there they travelled 4,500 miles to Miami in 111 days - the first east-west pedal crossing of the Atlantic.

Mr Smith then cycled 3,000 miles east-west across the U.S., with Mr Lewis making the trip on in-line skates - suffering two broken legs when he was hit by a car.

Mr Smith, 32, from Wolverhampton ran out of enthusiasm for the task after they had tackled the first leg of the Pacific from San Francisco to Hawaii, arriving in November.

Yesterday Mr Lewis, struggling to keep afloat and with a solitary 70 days at sea before him, insisted the parting had been amicable.

'He decided the long periods on the ocean and the nomadic lifestyle were not for him any more,' he said, speaking by satellite phone from his craft, the Moksha. 'There was no animosity

about it. We get on now better than we've ever done. I admire and respect his decision because with all the expectations on us it would have been easier for him to go on pretending he was still enjoying it.

'It is definitely more risky now,' he added as he pedalled through the night by the light of a full moon.

'I have fallen asleep a couple of times and when I wake up I realise there was no one watching out for shipping.

'It's a strange feeling and I'm intrigued about what lies ahead of me and how I will feel about being on my own.'

The expedition has its own Internet website, Pedal The World, which includes extracts of the pair's daily journal.

They describe the brutal reality of a cramped and cold life on the ocean waves, supplemented by soy chilli and rice, peanut M&Ms

and Mars Bars. 'Water sloshes back and forth on the floor, along with an empty packet of hot chocolate and a wool sock. Outside the wind howls across grey, rolling swells and it starts raining,' Steve Smith wrote in one entry.

'To make enough water for a cup of tea requires pumping the little

'I'm going to see it through'

plastic machine for 20 minutes, but I don't want it that much.

'This is dreadful. Then a wave squeezes through the slightly open canopy, injecting half a gallon of cold water on my head, most of which trickles its way inside the sleeping bag.'

Jason Lewis added: 'We long for the sun, for its warmth so we can get out and swim. I smell pretty

Above: A solitary life on the waves

Left: Jason Lewis has vowed he will complete his round the world journey

Top right: The cramped interior of the craft he now pedals alone

THE ROUTE SO FAR



bad already - no chance to wash, or desire to either. It's just too damn cold.' The £26,000 wooden self-righting craft was built at the Exeter Maritime Museum.

Although it has a simple pedal-pushed propeller, it is far from basic.

Along with the satellite phone, there is a global positioning system, a small desalination plant and a separate system for collecting rainwater.

The plan is to travel thousands of miles across Indonesia, Asia and Europe and finally pedal back to England across the Channel.

At the current pace, that will happen sometime in 2003.

Originally Mr Lewis hoped to raise an ambitious £500,000 for the Council for Education in World Citizenship, a charity which promotes international understanding.

But a member of the back-up team said he had settled for

helping out smaller educational projects along the way.

Lacking a major sponsor for the £60,000 it cost to set up the journey, both men have been forced to take jobs in boatyards and leisure parks to pay for each new leg.

Mr Lewis said he would spend between a month and six months on Tarawa, depending on the typhoon season, and then decide whether to recruit another expedition member for the two-man boat.

His next stop will be Australia, around 2,300 miles away, which he hopes to reach in time for the millennium.

Before that he plans to break his journey with a quick return trip to Britain for his sister's wedding in August. Then it will be back to the pedalling.

'One thing I'm sure of,' Mr Lewis said. 'I'm definitely going to see it through.'