

both were beyond the constraints of time and money. The last minute grab-bag addition of a jumbo bucket of underwater epoxy was now most welcome in its repair. 'They think it's all over!' - the race committee and Falmouth coast guard were alerted to standby, but I was determined to finish the race.

The thrill and exhilaration of streaking through the night at an effortless 12-15 knots is enough to bring a smile to the face of any sailor, cold wet or tired. If I was in danger of becoming a convert to multihulls at the beginning of the qualifier, it was confirmed by the end of the race.

I spent 24hrs trouble-shooting the autopilot; I made negative progress for two days under storm jib; I scaled the jib foil 4 times, to replace missing screws and un-jam the sail; I had no choice but to haul the old jib up the foil with one hand, while sitting on the bow feeding the foil with the other. But would I do it all over again? As the American's say, 'Hell Yeah!' and if I was glad to step off *Shockwave*, to de-humidify in Newport, it hardly showed. And, after barely a week and a half on dry land, shore crew Abraham Treadwell and I were off to Florida to deliver the Antrim 40, *Zephyr*. With New York chef/friend Phil producing gastronomic masterwork in the galley, our 800 mile ride up to Newport, was just that; a ride! Courtesy of the Gulf Stream we had 2.5 knots of current in our favour. We experienced no more than ten knots of breeze, but it was a warm downwind run and under mast head kite *Zephyr* matched wind speed with boat speed; the Holy Grail of multihulls.

Try as I might to ship *Shockwave* back across the Atlantic, her 28ft beam confined her to deck cargo only and at a premium price. It was hard to think about sailing *Shockwave* back when I had only just arrived. But while reality was dawning, the offer to drive *Zephyr* in 'The Black Dog' Dash, a multihull pursuit race which starts at anchor from 'The Black Dog' pub in Martha's

Vineyard, was as irresistible as they come. *Zephyr*, all carbon with carbon-Kevlar sails, holds the record for the Ford Lauderdale-Florida Keys feeder race. Racing her made my departure from fully-crewed professional monohull racing seem thoroughly worthwhile. The 'Buzzards Bay' regatta was up next on the NEMA (New England Multihull Association) calendar, so I stayed for that too. Tempting though it was to race Nick Bryan-Brown's F31 in yet another race, hurricane Irene was a wake-up call. The clock was ticking and if I delayed any further, I would be crossing back in the thick of hurricane season.

The forward beam to hull bulkhead had cracked open on *Moxie* in the 60 knot wake of Hurricane Kyle in 2002 - the same storm which saw the catastrophic devastation of the multihull fleet in the 2002 Route de Rhum. I am still amazed we made it safely to the Azores. So, when the path of Katrina was uncertain, the fear of being run-down was very real and I was extremely fortunate to enlist the expertise of weather guru, Bill Biewenga. I hurtled down to 40 degrees latitude and the Azores high, which outrageously shifted ever so slightly to leave me becalmed for seven days - with only 4 books to read. I re-built the petrol generator nearly every day, in vain attempts to hear the reassuring putt-putt of electricity being generated once again; I took up mast climbing as a recreational activity and finally with tan lines completely ironed out, began the remaining 1200 mile passage to Plymouth hand-steering for some 14 hours straight and relying on wind generator alone.

Move over Dr Atkins! Crossing back, I aimed to avoid the massive weight-loss I experienced during the race, by eating a whole bar - 1000 calories of dark chocolate a day (fat), flat-packed tuna in oil out of the packet (protein) and mashed potato (starch) for dinner! Disgusting though it might sound, I hope to put 'The Transatlantic Diet' to the test once again, when I race Round Britain & Ireland in 2006. I have yet to announce the boat. www.LiaDitton.com Watch this space.

