



BORIS HERRMANN

NONSTOP
SÜCHTIG NACH SEGELN
DRIVEN BY THE SEA



DELIUS KLASING



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01

BORIS HERRMANN START!



In constant use for success.

PROLOGUE

BY

JOCHEN RIEKER

It would be easy to believe that Germany's best sailors are related, as all of their names end with »-mann«. There's Wilfried Erdmann, the extreme sailor, one of fewer than a dozen people to have circumnavigated the globe against the prevailing winds without making a single stop. There's Jochen Schümann, three-time Olympic champion and the sole German America's Cup winner to date. And there's Boris Herrmann, high-sea professional, recordchaser and solo skipper.

The youngest of the top sailors, he has turned what could have been written off as a coincidence into a minor series, a kind of unwritten law. And it's not just his name that positions him snugly between the other greats, one of whom he admired even as a child for his sailing feats, while teaming up with the other as a navigator and winning renowned high-sea regattas - more of which later on. And even if he's very different, both as a person and a top sportsman, he has been operating for some time on a similarly rarefied level as these exceptional seamen.

A NEW ERA?

»Maybe,« news magazine »Der Spiegel« wrote in 2008, »a new era has begun with Boris Herrmann.« He had just made his Class40 début and taken a sensational second place in the Artemis Transat, a notoriously tough single-handed race across the North Atlantic. And this was just the beginning.

In the past ten years, the native of Oldenburg has made first- and second-place finishes by the dozen. He is the first German to have won a round-the-world regatta. The first to have gained

international recognition in the Imoca60 class. The only one to have sailed non-stop around the world three times, the first time in 100 days, and the second in an unbelievable 47 and now in 80 days.

He could even have been the first German to win the Jules Verne Trophy with the fastest circumnavigation under sail power in a fabulous 40 days. But shortly before the winning passage of Francis Joyon's *Idex Sport*, on which he was due to sail, he signed off. A decision he didn't make lightly - that's not his style - he had no alternative.

The fact was that Boris Herrmann's first Vendée Globe project was starting at the same time, and this was his big dream, his ultimate goal and his true destiny.

It is one of the stories told in this book. The greatest challenge he has ever faced: single-handed, non-stop around the great capes, through doldrums and storms, pitching back and forth between total exhaustion and indescribable euphoria on a lightning-fast, incredibly complex, inhumanly sparse carbon-fibre yacht on foils.

What kind of person aspires to such a goal? What's required to pass such a test? Or rather: to pass with flying colours? Where does a drive like this come from? The book also grapples with these questions.

It's Boris's own story, in his own words, bolstered by appraisals and anecdotes from his most significant companions. A very personal, exceptionally open and manylayered sailing book that adds a number of facets to the public and published image of the 39-year-old sailing hero.

LESS LINEAR THAN IT SEEMS

It doesn't skirt around the trepidation that can be triggered at the start of a solo race, the huge stress factors to which the skipper is exposed, nor why even a man such as Boris can struggle with seasickness at times. A biography whose supposed linearity doesn't prevent it from showing how erratically some situations in Boris Herrmann's life have followed one another.

Everything seems logical in hindsight, almost as though there has been a master plan. A young cruiser and dinghy sailor reads in »YACHT« about the MiniTransat race on short 6.50-metre high-sea racers, is gripped by the idea, finds sponsors, somehow makes it to the starting line upon finishing school and makes a very acceptable crossing of the Atlantic. Carries on sailing his dinghy while studying business. Is already planning. Moves up to Class40 after his exams. Closes in on the best in the world, in particular gaining entry to the high-sea scene dominated by the French. Makes the jump to the Imoca class, in which he also impresses in the Barcelona World Race. Joins up with Giovanni Soldini and sets records on *Maserati*, a modified VOR70. Becomes a crew member on *Idec Sport*, one of the fastest maxi-trimarans. And now, the climax, a Vendée campaign on *Malizia2 - Yacht Club de Monaco*, one of the most advanced and best Imocas ever built.

It has the appearance of a smooth run. And in many ways it has been. But there have also been breaks, loose ends, unexpected diversions. These things are typical in an extreme sport that relies heavily on both sponsoring and patronage and isn't merely a business case, albeit a very good one, but also demands the lifeblood and passion of its promoters. High-end sailing is a sport whose successes are also accompanied by precarious dry spells.

THE WAIT

This book should really have appeared quite some time ago. Boris Herrmann planned to write it in 2011 after his success in the Barcelona World Race, where he came fifth on an old boat, his »apprenticeship for the Vendée Globe« as he once put it himself. At the time, he was aiming to take on the Mount Everest of solo sailing in 2012. But things didn't turn out that way. Not in 2012, and not in 2016 either.

And maybe he was the first to suspect this. Halfway around the world on *Neutrogena*, in his mind already almost back in Barcelona, he writes in an email: »A left turn around Cape Horn,

then across the Atlantic and home. The descent from the peak. But this'll be an emotional, winding journey too. What's coming afterwards, when I'm on the landing stage with my bag beside me?«

The first thing is a great emptiness.



A race we must win! Protecting the oceans is an additional goal for me.

Weeks of exhaustion after this incredible feat of strength. Months of searching - for the next sponsor, the next project, and even to an extent for himself. He has always set the bar extremely high. At one point rejecting, almost categorically, the idea of jumping from one boat to the next as a professional, hiring himself out as a mercenary sailor when there's no big project on.

At that time, having reached this plateau but not yet the peak, Boris Herrmann's ascent could have come to an end. The man whose boyish looks and cultivated manner were misinterpreted as signs of vulnerability and lack of grit came very close to failing due to his own incredibly high standards.

INNER RETREAT

Then, once again, his stubbornness, his strength of will, but above all his boundless love of the sea prevailed. To this day this love remains his strongest motivator. It enables him to hold on when the going gets tough and to find alternatives when a direct course is not possible.

Anyone who has sailed with him for a while senses this before they really understand it. One time, in the middle of an Atlantic crossing, he crouches down on deck on the lee side, looks along the spinnaker sheet rope into the huge sail and on to the horizon. A haven of peace in the midst of the wind and the crashing waves. He sits on his haunches for minutes on end without saying a word, his face aglow in the low sun. It would be interesting to know what he's thinking, what's going on inside him, but he's so immersed within himself that it would seem insubordinate to interrupt his inner monologue with a question.

»I like to withdraw into myself sometimes, to dream and find inspiration while I'm steering or trimming,« he says. It's like a little break for his soul and his brain, overflowing with impressions, as the boat tears unstoppably through the seas.

MULTI-TALENT

It seems practically impossible to overestimate the challenges that the single-handed sailor has to deal with on an Imoca60. He has to be skipper, boatswain, trimmer, navigator, ship's cook and PR manager in one, 24 hours a day for 70 to 80 days at a time. This requires intelligence, intuition, meticulousness, multi-tasking skills, fitness and an almost superhuman resilience in the face of setbacks.

So maybe it's a good thing that Boris Herrmann is taking on the Vendée Globe only at his third attempt, in 2020. Because qualities such as these have to develop - hardly anybody has this much experience and maturity at a young age. He wouldn't have been nearly as good, as complete, as he is now.

The resident of Hamburg, who will race for the Principality of Monaco, has even more to offer. Not only can he sail, he can also share his extreme experience with others: in three languages, with a style of his own and a talent, rare among professionals, for storytelling that goes beyond tweets and posts.

A few years ago he wrote for »YACHT« about chasing records: »State-of-the-art offshore racing boats sail so fast that we have to surmise the optimum course across the seas far in advance. The brain anticipates the formation of the waves, the crests and valleys, projects an imaginary slope before it appears for a few seconds before us at the exact point that we're steering towards.«

This reads like a metaphor of his life as a navigator and solo skipper who has plotted a course from the small, inland Zwischenahner Meer to the Olympus of high-sea sailing, from the Optimist to the Open60. This course doesn't even exist. Boris Herrmann still found a way.



After all these years at the finish line - the joy is indescribable.



02

VENDÉE GLOBE



After years of working towards participation in the Vendée, the hours of start delay due to fog no longer matter.