



On 12th December, 28 teams consisting of 88 rowers set out from San Sebastian harbour in La Gomera with the same goal - to row 3,000 mile across the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean island of Antigua.

After an incredible two weeks of preparations, inspections and farewells to friends and family, our very own Atlantic Albatross set off with the fleet in their boat, Blue Steel. For the first few days progress was good. Rowers were in good spirits and coping well with the challenges of rowing for 12 hours a day, the initial sea sickness experienced by all and saying farewell to land as they passed the last of the Canary Islands, El Hierro.

The first rule of ocean rowing is often quoted as being "everything breaks on the ocean" and on the fourth day that is exactly what happened to the electrical systems on board. The team were unable to fully recharge their batteries during the day using the solar panels and as such were left unable to run vital safety systems at night that would enable them to be visible to other larger vessels in the surrounding area.

Following a difficult night on para anchor to keep the boat as stationary as possible and operating a watch system to keep lookout for passing cargo ships, the difficult decision was made to cut the race short and be evacuated from the boat to the race safety yacht. To carry on without being able to fix the electrical problems on board would have put the rowers' safety further at risk and their chance of a successful crossing.

After a further 24 hours on para anchor the race safety yacht, Skye, arrived and the team took their first swim in open water as they left their boat behind and headed for the yacht. With themselves and all their personal possessions safely on board they said a sad farewell to Blue Steel. Just a few hours later, as if the ocean knew the pain and loss that they were feeling, the team was rewarded with one of the most memorable experiences of their journey - a visit from a pod of dolphins that swam with the yacht for several miles.

The sailing yacht made its way down to the Cape Verde Islands off the west coast of Africa and from there the team were able to fly back to the UK to be home with family for Christmas Day. During that time, their boat was recovered by a salvage company and made it safely back to the start in La Gomera where she is waiting to be shipped back to the UK.

The team would like to say a massive thank you to everyone for their support as they prepared for the challenge and are hugely disappointed that they were not able to complete the crossing and do more to support their chosen charities, Eikon and the RAF Benevolent Fund. However, it has been an incredible adventure and a huge personal journey for both rowers. We believe that "stepping into the ring is always the hardest step to take" and we feel so grateful that we were able to make it to the start line and able to put our all into such a unique challenge.

