

Vendée Globe - Initiatives Coeur – IMOCA 60 – keel collision

2 December 2020 'Initiatives Coeur' keel collision, damage to canting keel box, Sam Davie slowly headed to Cape Town.

Having struck something in the water last night Sam Davies this morning is heading out of the worst of the weather and the sea state to further assess the damage to Initiatives Coeur. She spoke to Vendee Globe HQ this morning.

Sam Davies this morning on the audio call, "I was sailing last night I had gybed in the shift in the front, there was 30-35kts of wind for the gybe and that had gone well, and I was happy with where I was. I was sailing on starboard gybe heading east, and obviously the sea state was quite chaotic which it has been for the last two days. And obviously I know I was in these currents and I know these risks are there but I was sailing really nicely, as well as possible given the sea state. So speeds between 15 and 22kts and I was actually just making a hot meal after the gybe and the tack and everything and it was just starting to get dark.

I hit something. I did not see anything. I did not know what it was. It was pretty much dark when it happened. But it was as if I had run aground on a rock at the time. The boat speed went from 20kts to zero. The boat nosedived on the impact with the keel. I knew it was the keel. I heard a crack coming from there. I and everything else flew forwards, including my dinner which has repainted the entire inside of my boat. Everything moved. I went flying into a ring frame, luckily, because that could have been worse. It was really violent. But luckily I have just hurt some ribs. It is not serious but really painful.

But I stopped the boat, dropped the main, and went to check around the keel, the bearings and the bulkhead. The bulkhead, the main bearing bulkheads (which support the keel box) are intact as far as I can see. The keel bearings are intact. The longitudinal structure around the keel box is all cracked. That has taken the shock of the impact of when the boat moved, that is cracked on both sides. The keel ram, because the keel ram goes through the side wall of the keel box, that had all moved and there is a watertight seal on the ram and that was knocked off. There was some water coming in but I have a really good immersion pump which I got going really quickly and permanently to keep the water down.

For me the most important thing is to stabilise the boat. It is still is really bad, 30kts of wind, so I have the boat on a course which will minimise all the strains and effort on the keel and the bulkheads. And then I ran a whole lot of checks with my team who mobilised really quickly, the architects and the structural engineers just to check I was not in immediate danger. We did that really and the news was reassuring, they were really confident that I am not in danger unless I sail fast, so there is no bad noise and the keel is still in its bearings and not moving at all.

I cannot sail at any speed, so I am heading slowly towards Cape Town because that is the nearest shelter and we are continuing to assess the damage and what to do with my shore team who are being amazing."

Analysis showed that modifications to 'Initiatives Coeur' keel box structure before the VendéeGlobe in line with recommendations circulated by Alex Thomson Racing from the 2019 'Hugo Boss' keel box failure had contained the damage.



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