



# Irish lose water in heavy seas

Force-seven winds from exactly the wrong direction have pushed the boats in the Atlantic Challenge rowing race backwards. Gearóid Towey and Ciarán Lewis reported yesterday that powerful south-easterly winds had forced them onto sea anchor for 24 hours, and by last night they had lost six miles.

Although some of the boats in the race from the Canaries to the West Indies have taken a much more northerly course than the Irish crew, they were also affected.

Towey and Lewis were both in good form last evening and prepared to wait out the squalls. Lewis, who suffered a chest complaint early in the race, has also had to deal with losing his MP3 player overboard. The players are effectively the crew's entertainment.

The Irish pair intend to use their satellite phone to call their fellow adventurers Paul Gleeson from Limerick and Tori Holmes of Canada to wish them a happy Christmas.

Gleeson and Holmes are much farther back – officially logged at 378 miles to the 546 of Lewis and Towey – but they were also driven back yesterday and lost two miles.

The pattern was repeated across the fleet. Liz O'Keeffe, who partners Richard Mayon-White in the double Row 4 Cancer was reported on the official website as saying: "Weather rather savage overnight – gusting up to 50 knots, accompanied by big seas. Have been at sea anchor for 24 hours and there seems to be no immediate promise of getting underway again."

The low pressure is not due to shift until later today.

Back on dry land, the Irish Indoor Rowing Championship drew 218 competitors to the Sports Hall at UCD yesterday. In the men's open category, Dave Kealy of Lady Elizabeth retained his title.

Caroline Ryan of Garda outdid her new colleague in the Ireland camp, Helen Walshe of UCD, in the women's open competition, while Jonny Devitt of UCD was the fastest lightweight man.

● Details in SPORTS ROUND-UP

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