Matteo Perucchini, ocean rower for Sogno Atlantico & experienced athlete, decided to row across the Atlantic Ocean in December 2015 for two good reasons: raise funds for charity and to achieve the biggest challenge of his life. To row over 3,000 miles solo and completely unassisted, Matteo made it in 52 days, winning the solo category and setting a new race record.

What made you take up this challenge?

I have been rowing since I was a teenager but I discovered the world of ocean rowing by accident. It was actually while writing a book on ocean rowing with Kenya Taita (a highly experienced trainer) who had previously supported police explorers and international athletes. He developed an intense and challenging programme which enabled me to improve my fitness while at the same time allowing me to have enough time to focus on all the other aspects of preparing for an ocean crossing. Something I really loved about the programme was how it changed all the time and incorporated a wide range of activities, from cycling to crossfit and boxing. I clearly couldn’t avoid long sessions on the rowing machine though, which in some cases lasted for more than 24 hours.

Although physical preparation was very important for a challenge like mine, it was not essential. The key to a successful crossing was mental preparation. Both yoga and meditation played a very important role. Short sessions that I could continue to do on the boat despite the 18/20 hours of rowing per day that I had to sustain during the crucial parts of the race. These allowed me to find the right mental balance and overcome the myriad of obstacles, which you have to face on a daily basis during an ocean crossing.

As for the technical preparation, I attended a number of navigation and sea survival courses and the boat was for more than 12 months at Cantiere Costantini on Lake Maggiore in the north of Italy, where she was fitted and prepared.

How did you prepare?

There are many aspects when it comes to training for a challenge like this; you need to prepare mentally, physically and technically. Physically I worked with a highly experienced trainer who had previously supported police explorers and international athletes. He developed an intense and challenging programme which enabled me to improve my fitness while at the same time allowing me to have enough time to focus on all the other aspects of preparing for an ocean crossing. Something I really loved about the programme was how it changed all the time and incorporated a wide range of activities, from cycling to crossfit and boxing. I clearly couldn’t avoid long sessions on the rowing machine though, which in some cases lasted for more than 24 hours.

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Being out at sea alone for over 52 days must have been difficult. What was your most challenging moment?

Being out at sea alone for over 52 days was a true privilege and I feel very fortunate to have undertaken this challenge but it was also very hard. Storms were the worst part of the crossing, especially when they hit at night. They left quite deep emotional scars and set a new record during the crucial parts of the race. These allowed me to find the right mental balance and overcome the myriad of obstacles, which you have to face on a daily basis during an ocean crossing.

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What would you recommend others if trying to undergo crossing the Atlantic?

What’s your next challenge?

Other than this one, what has been your most memorable shipping experience?

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