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Mid-Atlantic rescue as Force 11 sinks one yacht sinks, others dismasted and damaged in OSTAR Race



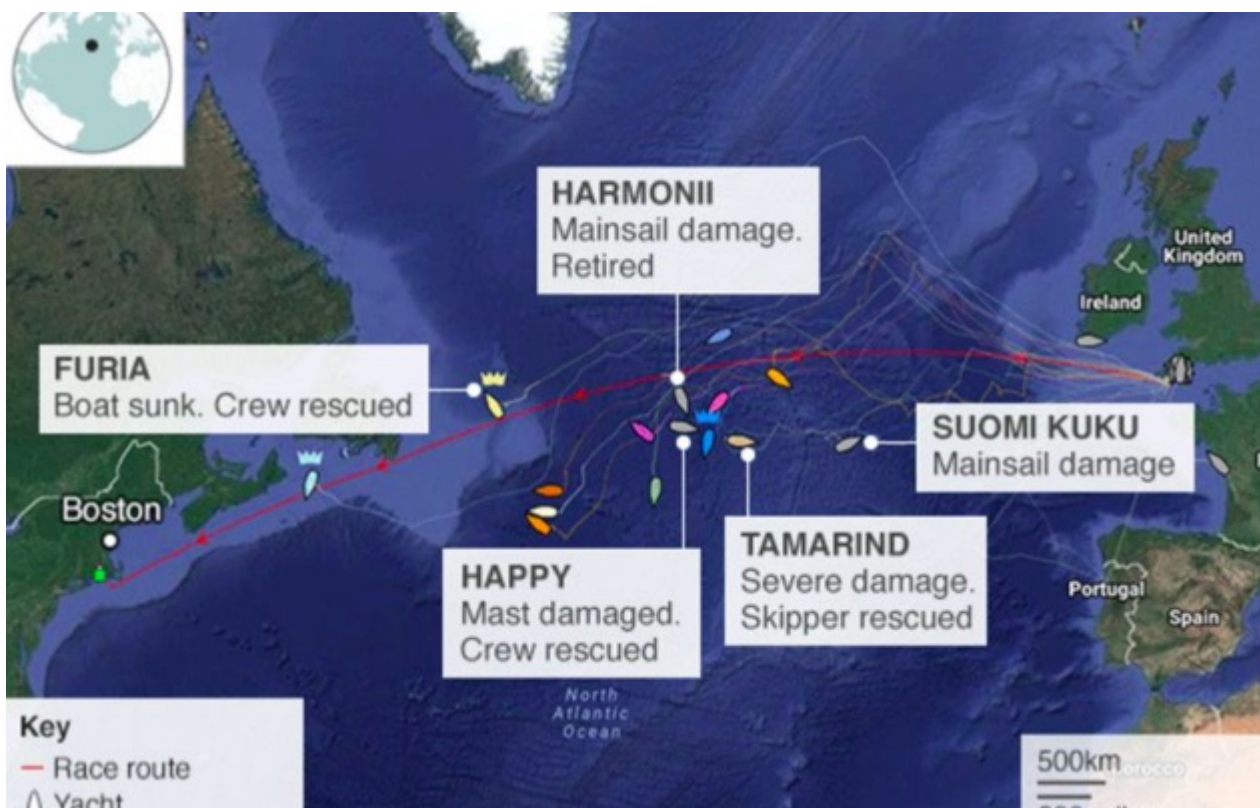
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Rescue mission saves yachtsmen battered by over 60 knots and seas of 10-15 in the OSTAR and TWO STAR shorthanded transatlantic race

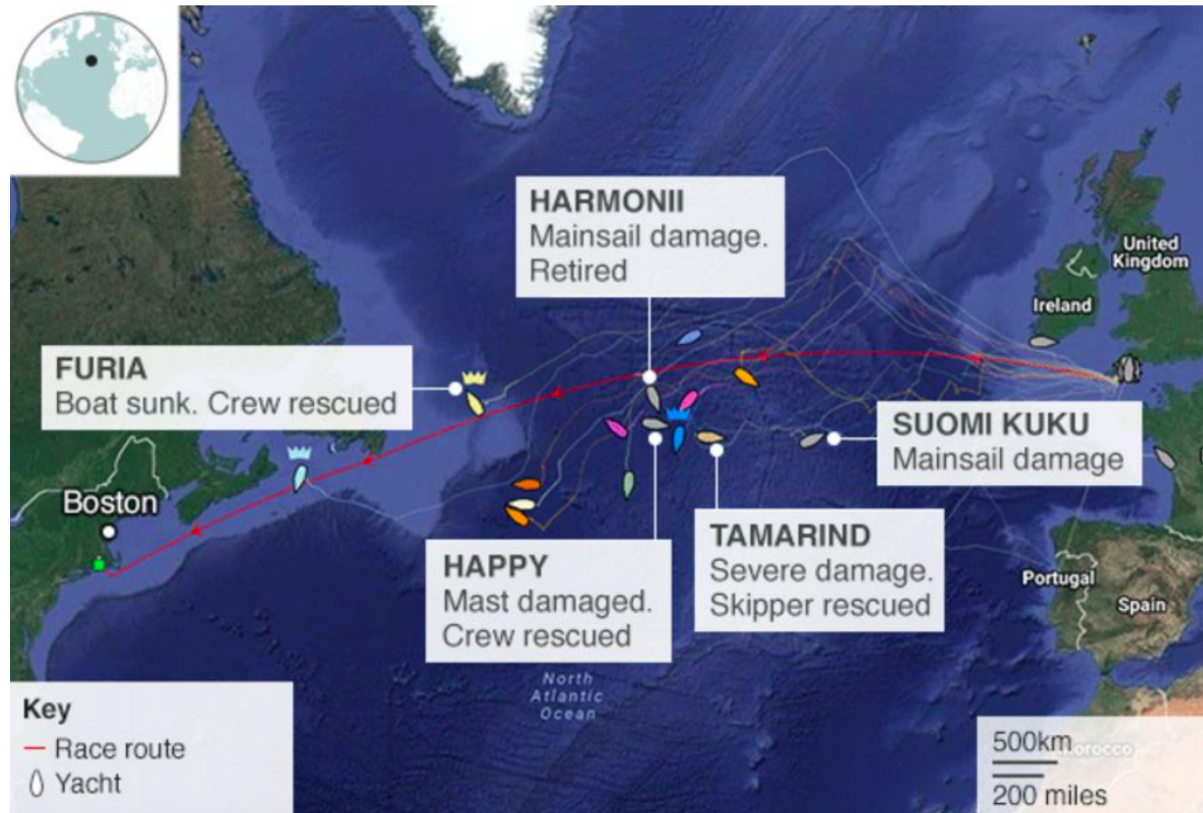


TAGS: OSTAR (<https://www.yachtingworld.com/tag/ostar>)

One yacht has sunk, another has been dismasted and two crews have been rescued in the North Atlantic after crews in the OSTAR and OSTAR races were battered by Force 11 winds on Thursday.

The sailors were taking part in the solo and double-handed races, which left from Plymouth heading for Newport, Rhode Island on 29 May. The race, one of the sailing's classic short-handed ocean events, is organised by the Royal Western Yacht Club.

Leading competitors met a deep low pressure on Thursday. The depression, 967mb at its centre, produced winds topping 60 knots and very big sea of 10-15m.



OSTAR incidents. Map source Yellow Brick and BBC

The yacht Furia, a Danish-built Luffe 37.09 sailed by Bulgarian Finn champion Mihail Kopanov and co-skipper Dian Zaykov, sank, the club reported. Both sailors were rescued by the survey vessel Thor Magna, in a rescue co-ordinated by Halifax MRCC.



Mervyn Wheatley, solo skipper of Tamarind (pictured below, as is his yacht), is reported to have suffered severe damage and was rescued by the Queen Mary, en route to Halifax.

Wheatley is one of the OSTAR's best known skippers, a hugely experienced sailor, a former Royal Marine who has sailed over 260,000 miles, was a skipper on the first ever Clipper round the world race and has done five Round Britain & Ireland Races, seven Azores and Back (AZAB) races and many previous OSTARS.

This was Wheatley's 19th Atlantic crossing and worth noting is that his yacht, Tamarind, which he has cruised and raced for over two decades, is a Formosa 42, a strongly built, very traditional long keeled double ender.



The yacht Happy is reported to have dismasted. The 37ft Jeanneau Sun Fast was being raced by Dutch sailors Wytse Bouma & Jaap Barendregt, two experienced offshore sailors who have previously done an AZAB race.

They were evacuated on to the oceangoing tug APL Forward. No injuries were reported. The yacht has been abandoned.

Meanwhile, other skippers have reported serious damage and have retired from the race, but have not sought assistance.

British sailor Keith Walton, sailing a Najad 490, Harmonii, has mainsail and track damage and is making for the Azores under engine.

Peter Crowther, another British solo sailing legend, also reported mainsail damage but is said to be uninjured and not seeking help, and heading back to the UK.

This was Crowther's 10th OSTAR race; he took part in his first in 1972 and holds the record for the most campaigns (also the slowest ever back in 1972, 88 days in Golden Vanity). He is sailing his Swan 38, Suomi Kudu, again a very well-found, seakindly and comparatively traditional design on which Crowther has sailed many tens of thousands of miles.

Organisers from the RWYC said that the Canadian coastguard responded after receiving distress alerts from three EPIRBs on Thursday and that the rescues were carried out in the early hours of Friday morning.

They stated: 'The RWYC would like to thank all personnel at the Halifax Coastguard for their immediate and magnificent response to this emergency situation. All seafarers owe them a debt of gratitude.'

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