



The hatch dodger on ABN Amro Two slides forward for spinnaker take-downs, but locks in place aft at other times. The hatch board arrangement folds up inside the dodger, always remaining ready for instant use.

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race—could be expected to survive long enough in the water for a well-handled boat to effect a rescue.

On a conventional boat, the standard Quick-Stop man-overboard maneuver in this situation calls for rounding the boat up hard, plastering the spinnaker against the rig and stopping the boat. This is a risky thing to do, given the wind and seas. You would almost certainly destroy the spinnaker on a normal boat, and perhaps entangle it so badly that the boat could become unmanageable.

In a VO 70, such a maneuver would likely prove catastrophic. There is a huge risk that the boat would end up on its side, with a shredded spinnaker and perhaps with a broken rig. With no standing backstay, but three or four sets of runners and checkstays and a massive amount of sail horsepower, there is a lot that can go wrong in an emergency maneuver that involves tacking or gybing.

Instead, the emergency procedure calls for dousing the spinnaker and tacking the boat back upwind under main and staysail, turning on the engine for additional punch once it has been determined that there is no running rigging in the water to foul the prop.

A VO 70 has a fairly small engine for its size and windage, and getting back upwind in those conditions would usually require a fair amount of time. The Jon Buoy tossed over the stern is equipped with a 121.5-MHz emergency transmitter that broadcasts to a direction-finding antenna mounted on the stern of the boat.

With an astonishing display of seamanship,

ABN Amro Two found the missing crew and had him back aboard within 40 minutes. If you think that sounds simple, I would suggest you try to sail your boat upwind in 15-foot seas against 30 knots of wind on a pitch-black night, looking for a small, flashing light that might be somewhere near a man in the water.

Unfortunately, it was too late. Horrevoets was dead. The broken-hearted young crew carried on toward England, but their ordeal was far from over.

Not far away, the Spanish VO 70 *Movistar* was soon to be in deep trouble, little more than 24 hours after ABN's disaster. A major component of the keel support structure emitted an ominous crack, and the 12,000-pound lead keel and its 1,000-pound steel fin were suddenly only very tenuously attached to the hull.

Movistar's crew passed lines around the bulb to stabilize it, but it was clear the boat was going into survival mode rather than racing mode, with the weather deteriorating and the boat 1,000 miles from harbor. As the closest boat to *Movistar*, ABN Two was asked to stand by in case assistance was required. It soon was.

Although conditions were light by this time—the veritable calm before the storm—the weather forecast called for winds increasing to 50 knots later in the day. There was a very real possibility that *Movistar's* keel would drop out of the boat completely. Without the righting moment provided by the keel, the weight and windage of the rig would cause her to capsize.

A Volvo 70 is divided into multiple watertight compartments, and the boat will float even with the large midships compartment flooded. A helpless, capsized boat is no place to be in a Force 10 storm, however.

Movistar's Danish skipper Bouwe Bekking—one of the most experienced



ABN One skipper Mike Sanderson, right, inspects his office. A short tether enables him to hook to a soft padeye in the hub of the wheel, preventing him from losing his grip on the wheel when water rushes aft.

offshore racers in the world—made the call to abandon the boat. With ABN Two standing by, the crew of *Movistar* took to the liferaft and transferred to the Dutch yacht. The Spanish yacht's crew took food and water with them to minimize the burden on ABN Two, as well as transferring their second, unused liferaft to the rescuing yacht.

Bekking was the last to step off *Movistar*, securing the interior watertight bulkhead hatches as well as the main hatch. The generator was left running to power the yacht's data transponder, allowing the boat's position to be tracked by race headquarters.

After several days of horrendous weather, *Movistar's* position beacon stopped transmitting, and the boat was officially missing. As of this writing, it had not been located.

Just how tragic Horrevoets' death truly was became obvious when it was revealed that he was not wearing a life jacket or harness, despite the deteriorating weather conditions. At the time he was lost, the other crew members had just gone below to kit up, but Horrevoets had remained on deck, untethered to the boat, while trimming the spinnaker.

It belabors the obvious to say that staying attached to the boat is the best way to prevent a man-overboard death. As a rule, VO 70 crews are no less concerned about safety than other offshore sailors. Some of them, in fact, are the most safety-conscious sailors we have ever known. However, you can get it right 95 percent of the time, but if you aren't hooked on when a wave sweeps the deck, you might as well never be hooked on at all.

Overboard on a Volvo 70

ABN 2's heroic efforts go in vain, as extreme sailing lives up to its name.

Offshore sailing is an inherently risky pursuit for anyone, whether it's a husband and wife team on a cruising boat, or a professional ocean racing crew on a Volvo 70. This was brought home painfully in the pre-dawn hours of May 18, 2006, when veteran Dutch sailor Hans Horrevoets was swept from the deck of ABN Amro Two in heavy North Atlantic weather west of England.

ABN Two was at about 46.5 degrees N, 35 degrees W. Seas and winds were building, with 25-30 knots of wind from well aft and seas of about 15 feet. As frequently happens with a VO 70, ABN Two stuck her bow



An ABN crewman models the safety gear racers wear offshore.

Horrevoets was gone. The Jon Buoy man-overboard gear (similar to the inflatable MOM familiar to American sailors) was launched, the navigator hit the MOB button on the GPS, and all hands got on deck to head back upwind for the missing crew.

The boat was sailing under reefed main, staysail, and fractional spinnaker at the time Horrevoets went over the side. Given the wind velocity and wind angle, the boat speed probably varied 20 to 25 knots or more.

At 20 knots, ABN Two would cover some 2,000 feet per minute, taking it away from the man in the water at a frightening pace.

The sea temperature was about 59 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the transponder data we examined a few hours later. While this is extremely cold, a man in foul weather gear supported by a PFD—inflatable PFDs are required for the

Despite the pitch-black night, skipper Seb Josse realized almost instantly that