

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Rower on Solo Journey Across Atlantic Ocean Rescued From Major Storm

Norwegian doctor had left lower Manhattan in May for trek to Isles of Scilly in the U.K.

A 70-year-old doctor who started rowing alone across the Atlantic Ocean from New York City in May hit a major storm over the weekend and had to be rescued from the violent waves.

Stein Hoff had been rowing for 84 days when his boat was damaged so badly in a ferocious storm that he activated an emergency beacon to call for help.

By his account, Dr. Hoff rolled in the waves with broken oars and a broken rudder for hours, at times his boat turning upside down. Almost 12 hours after his plea for assistance, he was picked up by a cargo ship that was in the area, the Ludolf Oldendorff, which had been alerted by the U.K.'s Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

“I have gone from hell to heaven in a few hours!” Dr. Hoff wrote in a Facebook post shortly after his rescue. An experienced rower from Norway, he had been writing updates on his trip since his May 15 departure from North Cove Marina in lower Manhattan. Children in several city public schools had been tracking his adventure online.

Dr. Hoff's log said he had made it almost three quarters of the way to the Isles of Scilly in the U.K., a trip expected to cover 2,900 to 3,500 miles. Other rowers had made such solo ocean crossings. His aimed to honor two Norwegian-American seamen Georg Harbo and Gabriel Samuelsen, who rowed the route in 55 days in 1896 and were said to be the first people to row across a major ocean.

Dr. Hoff's journey was sponsored in part by Ripley's Believe it or Not!, the entertainment company. A spokesman for the firm confirmed Dr. Hoff's rescue, and that he is on his way to Canada on the cargo ship.

His wife, Diana, posted on Facebook that she spoke to him Saturday night. “He is tired, a bit battered and bruised, a bit disappointed, but very happy to be safe and sound, and looking forward to some proper food!”



Stein Hoff, on his May 15 departure as he passed Ellis Island. PHOTO: MARK LENNIHAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS



Dr. Hoff PHOTO: MARK LENNIHAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS