



CRUISING CLUB OF AMERICA AWARDS ROD STEPHENS TROPHY TO BRITISH SAILOR MIKE GOLDING

New York, N.Y., USA (January 15, 2008) – British sailor and ocean racer Mike Golding was selected by the Cruising Club of America to receive its 2007 Rod Stephens Trophy for Outstanding Seamanship for his heroic rescue of Alex Thomson in the Southern Ocean during the 2006 Velux 5 Oceans Race. The trophy will be presented at the club's annual Awards Dinner at the New York Yacht Club in Manhattan on January 15, 2008. This is a perpetual trophy made possible by shipmates and friends of the late Rod Stephens to recognize "an act of seamanship which significantly contributes to the safety of a yacht or one or more individuals at sea." Making the presentation of the award to Maureen Davis of ECOVER, Inc. on behalf of Mike Golding was CCA Commodore Ross Sherbrooke of Boston, Mass.

"I am delighted to accept this prestigious reward," said Mike Golding upon receiving the news of his selection. "The rescue of Alex Thomson from *Hugo Boss* was an incredible experience for both of us and something that I would like to think anyone in the same position would have done. Alex and I were located deep in the Southern Ocean competing on the Velux 5 Oceans Race solo around the world race, but when you take up the gauntlet of this type of racing we know the risks involved. We also know that we are each others best chance of rescue in such hostile regions. Whilst we are competing in a serious and professional yacht race, in such situations all competitive considerations have to be put aside in favor of straightforward human concern for our fellow sailor's wellbeing."

The drama began on November 26 during the Velux 5 Oceans Race, deep in the Southern Ocean, 1000 miles to south east of Cape Town. *ECOVER* was sailing hard in strong winds and leading Thomson's boat *Hugo Boss*. Golding's close observations of the position polling of his near rival made him aware *Hugo Boss* had slowed from 19 knots to about 8 knots. Suspecting that his rival was in trouble he slowed *ECOVER* down, and then was informed that the top of *Hugo Boss*' canting keel had broken and was swinging loose. With a position 90 miles downwind and with darkness approaching, Golding set the boat up to retrace his course upwind into the big seas towards *Hugo Boss*' position, sailing into uncomfortable 35-40 knots of wind. While crashing through freezing waves at 9 knots, Golding's ongoing problems with the fuel supply to his engine meant he had to set up an external fuel supply to the engine, which was sure to be needed for the pickup.

Conversing regularly with Thomson by satellite phone, the pair spent a considerable time discussing the options and the best method of retrieving the stricken English skipper. When he was close to the *Hugo Boss* position, he requested Thomson send up a flare. From that he identified *Hugo Boss*' masthead strobe light. They had always agreed that a pickup in the

dark was absolutely too dangerous so both skippers prepared to wait for daylight by resting, eating and, in Golding's case, tinkering further with the engine to make it more reliable. The plan was for, not long after a watery dawn, Thomson to get into his life raft, pay out the painter (ie let out the rope fastening the life raft), then shoot a line to *ECOVER* using a line gun. Four attempts were required. The line gun failed, the engine shear pin broke, *ECOVER*'s engine controls stuck, and – ultimately – the scary decision was taken for Thomson to cast himself adrift to give *ECOVER* more room to maneuver, but the pick up was made. Thomson's liferaft was winched alongside *ECOVER*. Within minutes he had to watch as he was forced to bid farewell to his boat for the last time.

Six hours after the transfer, in an icy squall, *ECOVER*'s carbon fiber mast exploded just above the lower spreader for unknown reasons. This created another crisis but working together, Golding and Thomson were able to cut away the damage and create a jury rig, a task made more difficult by more squalls, more snow and icy decks. Golding said, "Ironically, it was a job that I could not have been done alone." Once organized for continuous sailing, they headed northwest for South Africa, arriving in Cape Town one week after the rescue. Golding had to retire from the race as he was unable to continue once the mast broke.

About the Cruising Club of America

The Cruising Club of America is dedicated to off shore cruising and voyaging and "the adventurous use of the sea" through efforts to improve seamanship the design of seaworthy yachts, safe yachting procedures and environmental awareness. Now in its 85th year, the club has 10 stations throughout the U.S., Canada and Bermuda, with approximately 1200 members who are qualified by their experience in offshore passage making. In even-numbered years, the CCA organizes the Newport to Bermuda Race in conjunction with the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. It also sponsors several Safety at Sea seminars and hosts a series of "Suddenly Alone" seminars for the cruising couple.