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Charity Row Across the Atlantic Ends for Duo in Near-Disaster

By The Moscow Times

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Two rowers trying to raise money for Russian orphans in a daring trans-Atlantic race had their quest end in disaster after a huge wave capsized their boat.

Tom Sauer and Tom Fancett, both 23, were plucked from a life raft Wednesday by a cruise ship some 800 kilometers southwest of the Canary Islands, from which they had departed eight days earlier on a trip to Barbados.

Sauer, a Dutch citizen who has lived most his life in Russia and is the son of Derk Sauer, founder of The Moscow Times, said the wave capsized the 8-meter boat just as he was trading places with Fancett, who is British, on Tuesday evening.

"Suddenly our boat was rocked by an enormous wave, the size of which we've never seen before," Sauer said in a message printed on the race organizer's web site. "Our boat was thrown over and capsized. The cabin flooded.

"We desperately tried to turn the boat back up again but to no avail. In fact our PS Vita/TeamTom boat started to sink. We managed to get the life raft and life jackets out during some very nervous and difficult moments. We entered the life raft and saw our dream literally sink in the ocean.

"We floated for about 10 hours in the night on the life raft until we were rescued by the Crystal Cruise ocean liner. We are obviously very disappointed but at the first place very happy to be alive and very grateful to our rescuers. We are now heading for St. Maarten and will come back with a full report shortly."

Sauer told The Moscow Times last month that he was excited to participate in the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge to raise money for the Johan Cruyff Foundation, which plans to build football fields for several Russian orphanages.

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