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FROM: INVERLOCH WINDSURFING CLUB

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Going the Distance Local Sailor Breaks World Distance Record

550 kilometres- the distance from Melbourne to Mildura, is a fair hike in anyone's books. It's a sort of distance that some of us would have to plan for, and for some of us with less than reliable vehicles, it may just be too far to go. Spare a thought then, for Inverloch Windsurfing Club member, Craig Hollins, who recently broke the World Sailing record for distance with an impressive 553 kilometres travelled in a twenty-four hour period.

Craig, a Wonthaggi local, started his attempt at Sandy Point, on the Western side of Wilsons Promontory early on Tuesday morning. With favourable Easterly winds, Craig launched at 6am and sailed through to the next day. "I've had this trip in mind for about 5 years, ever since I saw a post about Luke Wigglesworth from NZ doing big distances on a windsurfer while racing against ocean boats" said Mr Hollins. "I wondered how far I could go. The first attempt was a 312k and the record was a bit over that."

Preparation for such an attempt was extremely thorough, taking in considerations such as fitness, injury prevention, safety and nutrition. "I always just go for a sail and stop when the wind does or the light goes, so to do a 24hr is no different to the marathon, just a tad longer. This is why I started playing with the Ay-Up Bike Lights and learning to night sail safely" says Mr Hollins, "Windsurfing for me is my mediation, I don't think about anything else but what I'm doing at that particular moment. So a long sail just leaves me relaxed and full of energy. And, of course, Sandy Point is the best place to sail with it stunning views of the Prom."

In order to accurately measure his attempt, Craig wore two waterproof GPS units, which tracked his position and speed every second. The accuracy and reliability of GPS has led to a resurgence in Speed Windsurfing, where sailors can compete against other sailors across the globe. Craig, one of the early adopters of GPS technology, set out at first light, with a hard physical and mental challenge ahead. "The dawn sunrise was great but the first runs were horrible, not a lot of wind and very gusty" said Mr Hollins, ".I've had many attempts at this 24hr record with some ending at 360k with no wind. This one nearly stopped at 490k when the wind disappeared at about 1.30am. Once the wind came in I spent some time getting into a rhythm and searching for that flatter water that place less strain on your body and board. "



Craig continued sailing for the whole day, gaining sustenance from his supply of drinks and a selection of food that would have nutritionist gasping! "The diet wasn't something I would normally eat, donuts, chocolate bars, glucose tablets, and tinned spaghetti. Anything that was easy to eat in the 15mins I allowed my self for the break. "

As the sun began to dip, the threat of darkness did not dissuade his efforts. Using same AY-Up Mountain Bike lights on his Gath Crash Helmet, and some small low powered light sticks to mark out the sandbanks on Shallow Inlet, Craig's marathon effort continued all through the night. He was also supported by other windsurfers from The Pit Crew Speed Sailing Team, who kept a close eye on his progress.

Early on Wednesday morning, Craig returned to shore, after spending close to a day on the water. "I was stuffed!!! But stoked that after many failed attempts we did it. Sometimes it was the weather other times it was life stuff that took a priory." Said a weary Mr Hollins. "My family has been amazing in giving me the time to pursue this crazy idea. Maybe now's the time to suggest a sail to Tasmania and back. Maybe not."

INTERVIEW WITH SUPPORT CREW

Andrew Daff, of Sandy Point, Victoria

WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS LIKE OVERNIGHT?

Easterly wind around 18-20 eased to 12-15 late in evening and then further dropped to 10-12 knots after midnight making sailing very difficult. Wind picked up to 15-20 again around dawn. and held until 7.30am when Craig quit sailing.

HOW DID YOU SUPOORT HIS ATTEMPT?

I provided an extra GPS which Craig picked up before dawn on his way to the inlet. I checked in on him at regular intervals and sailed with him for 3 hrs from 1pm to about 4pm. Then I checked in with him again at regular intervals until midnight helping him to change fins and sails when needed and talk to him while he had food breaks. I checked back in the morning and copied his GPS data cards when he stopped sailing.



HOW DID HE HOLD UP THROUGHOUT THE ATTEMPT?

He was in great spirits and looked strong and keen the whole time. He got a sting on his foot early in the day but that seemed to dissipate. He had a couple of crashes hitting shallow sandbars which tweaked his back a bit and gave him some discomfort. He also broke a boom in the dark after midnight and had to walk back a couple of KM's to fix it, including a swim dragging his gear across a deep channel!

ATTACHED IMAGES

1_craig_helmet_POV.jpg TAG: A camera on Craig's helmet gives a unique view of sunrise over Sandy Point

2_craig_helmet_POV_set_up.jpg TAG: Ready to hit the water

the following Images to be credited "Courtesy of Whitecaps Photography"

3_craig_on_speedrun.jpg TAG: 553 kilometers is a long way! Craig Hollins, of Wonthaggi recently broke the world record for distance travelled in 24 hours

4_craig_in the air.jpg TAG: Its not always smooth sailing

5_craig_head_on.jpg TAG: Under full sail! Speed sailors have been known to travel in excess of 50 knots or 92 kilometres an hour