

Sports

Gannett Newspapers/Friday, March 27, 1998

Rye's Belsky goes around the world in Whitbread Race

EF Language leads pack

By Leslie Beth Feffer
Staff Writer

Spending up to nine months in a 64-foot boat and enduring Spartan living conditions while racing around the world isn't most peoples' idea of a fun time, but it's a way of life for Josh Belsky.

Belsky, who grew up in Rye, has spent the last decade competing in various boat races around the world. He has sailed in two America's Cup races — on-board "America 3" in 1992 and "Stars and Stripes" in 1995. Now, he is a member of the EF Language crew, racing in the 1997-98 Whitbread Round The World Race.

"We've got quite a bit of sailing left to

go and we have a comfortable lead," said Belsky, "but certainly not one we can sit on."

The Race has nine legs which run from the United Kingdom to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, the United States, France and back to the starting point. Two weekends ago, the boats left Sao Sebastiao, Brazil, to begin the sixth leg of the race, which ends in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. From there, the participants will head to Baltimore, Md.

While difficult, the next couple of legs won't be nearly as daunting as the previous one, which included a trip through the Southern Ocean, near Antarctica.

"We were sailing around down by the South Pole a couple of weeks ago, in the snow," the 31-year-old Belsky said. "It was very cold, very windy and very

dangerous, but it was probably the most exciting sailing I'll ever do in my life."



Josh Belsky

Fortunately — or unfortunately, depending on your perspective — most of the Whitbread is not like that.

"Twelve grown men are living on a 64-foot boat for as much as 30 days at a time," Belsky said. "We eat regular meals (freeze-dried food) three times a day. Out of every 12 hours, you probably sleep three or four hours at a time. The boat is always moving or lurching, and you just get used to your world existing on a slant."

Actually, much of Belsky's life has been on a slant. For the last 10 years or so, he has been sailing full-time and hasn't spent more than a day or two at a time back home with his parents, who live in Harrison.

His family has been involved with boating for many years, and he taught sailing and competed in some lower-level races before hooking up with someone who took him sailing in some important regattas.

"I guess it's a small world and I developed a bit of a reputation, and that opened a lot of doors for me to higher levels of competition," said Belsky. "One thing led to another. I was racing a lot in Europe and all over the world. That led to America's Cup sailing, which eventually led me to doing the Whitbread. It's kind of been a hobby turned

career, by accident."

During his stopovers in the U.S. next month, Belsky hopes to spend a little time with friends and family, but he won't have as much time to do so as he would like. Whenever they hit land, the crew has to rebuild the boat for preventative maintenance purposes.

In the rare times that he's not sailing, Belsky enjoys wind surfing, skiing and rock climbing, which he thinks will be his next big challenge.

"After this is over, I'll be doing the next America's Cup," he said. "When that's over, I'm kind of contemplating retiring from sailing and getting into something else."

To follow Team EF Language's progress, or the race in general, the web site is: <http://www.whitbread.org>