

[Home](#)[Race Viewer](#)[News](#)[Weather](#)[Daily Log](#)[Letters](#)[Teams](#)[Gallery](#)[The Race](#)[About](#)[Tools/Help](#)[Feedback](#)[Join](#)[Press Centre](#)

Headline Feature

Green Rabbits on Friday

Superstitions play a big role in some sailors' lives.



Copyright ©2001 Kingfisher

13 Aug 2001 07:09 GMT You can't get more high-tech than an Open 60, so you would suspect that the sailors live in a high-tech world too, and to a certain extent they do.

Helena Darvelid, skipper aboard *AlphaGraphics*, is a familiar figure while at the docks, pacing around with a mobile phone almost strapped to her ear. Navigators would have a hard time keeping the boats on course without the electronics on board, although they have had to resort to old paper charts at times when the equipment has failed.

So one would suspect that superstition plays no part in their lives.

Not so.

Darvelid is adamant about green. When she met with sponsor Andrew Pindar of *AlphaGraphics*, she said to him, "If your company had a green logo I wouldn't be here. If that red had been green, I'm not here!" And she was very serious about it.

Some greens will get by if they are more blue than green. "It has to be a certain shade of green," she laughed. "Oh, and we don't say rabbit on the boat."

The naughty rabbit idea appears to be universal around the fleet, even with the shore crew. Joff Browne, shore crew from *ECOVER* said that when Mike Golding left on the *Vendée Globe*, his girlfriend Andrea put a fluffy bunny on board.

"It was on board when they won the *BT [Global Challenge]* so we thought it must be lucky." He went on, "The day Mike lost his rig in the *Vendée Globe* we couldn't decide what to do with the door key so we took it off, thinking it would just get lost, and I was wearing an Yves Parlier shirt."

The rig came down and "after that we left the key on the boat, the fluffy bunny got the kick and I didn't wear Yves Parlier shirts ever again; and the rig stayed up."

Latest Features

Prize Giving Br...	30 Aug 2001
A Skippers-eye ...	21 Aug 2001
What Do They Ea...	17 Aug 2001
Green Rabbits o...	13 Aug 2001
Hey, Who's On F...	12 Aug 2001
Leg 5 Results: ...	10 Aug 2001
Leg 4 Results: ...	9 Aug 2001
Weather Analysi...	8 Aug 2001
Boston -- Port ...	3 Aug 2001
Weather Strateg...	3 Aug 2001



Copyright ©2001 Challenge Business

[Weather](#)

[Race Viewer](#)

[Archive](#)

Perhaps one of the most superstitious of all the crew is *Gartmore's* co-skipper, Spaniard Javier Sanso. Part of a very international crew, he is adamant about the colour yellow.

"It is a Spanish thing. You never use yellow tape on a mast, never, never, never," he explained. "Anything yellow on the mast, you take it off."

He is also full of other superstitions. "If you wear a T-shirt inside out, is very, very bad luck." But you can "kill the bad luck" if you change the shirt to the right way.

But does he really believe these things? "I don't really believe these but [I honour them] just in case it's true."

There were times during the last leg when the crews might well have tempted fate and whistled on deck. At least long enough and loud enough to bring them some breeze in the holes they all encountered. But beware whistling while there is a breeze -- it might turn into a gale.

"Whistling gets the wind very mad," Sanso claimed. If there is no wind, a good scratch can work, and if you know the direction you want the wind to come from, stick a knife in the mast from the right direction. This could prove a problem though, with the carbon fibre masts on these boats!

Paulo Manganelli, the navigator on *Gartmore*, was quite emphatic about not believing in anything like that, but said, "I tend to respect the French ones, like rabbit. You never say the word, you never name the name of the animal, you have a nickname for it, like hare's cousin."

He did admit that he has some lucky charms he never sails without. "I've got one thing, it's a ball cap, it's been with me for years, it's sailed across the Atlantic with me," he said, "Oh, and a Swiss knife."

Stalwart skipper Josh Hall wasn't having anything to do with such things, and the *Gartmore* yacht definitely defies some of these omens, with her brilliant colouring, both yellow and green.

"I'm not a superstitious person at all.=", Hall said. "Some people say it's bad luck to have green on a boat and here we are with a totally green machine."

He said, "I believe in making my own luck."

Sanso, so serious about yellow, shrugged and said, "If you get on a boat that is yellow, you can't change everything."

Adrienne Cahalan, the navigator on *Kingfisher*, said rather than being superstitious she thinks "there is someone looking out for you up there, for sure." Echoing that idea, *Gartmore's* Brad Van Liew said, "Don't let anyone tell you they haven't prayed out there."

Even though he isn't wearing it for this race, Nick Moloney said he wore a jumping kangaroo necklace during the entire *Whitbread* project he was involved in. "A friend gave it to me and I wore it the whole time. When it was over, and I was sitting at my Mum and Dad's, I took it off and packed it away with all the other gear."

And Challenge Business Logistics man, Johnny Malban, said his Mum tucked a little teddy bear in his bag the first time he went on an overnight because she knew he wouldn't take it voluntarily. After that it went on all his trips with him. "Silly isn't it?"

Leaving port on a Friday is a well-known superstition and one that, although they don't always admit to it, is observed by almost all seafarers, including the *Open 60* skippers.

In the 19th century the British Navy tried to dispel this superstition. The keel of a new ship was laid on a Friday, she was named *H.M.S. Friday*, launched on a Friday, and finally sent to sea on a Friday. Neither the ship nor her crew were ever heard from again.

Most of these myths and superstitions can be traced back to early seafarers and over the years have been tweaked and taken on new meaning.

So perhaps for this next leg across the Atlantic, the crews will whistle up some steady winds, scratch the aft section of the mast, and leave the bunnies

ashore and have a fantastic, fast ride to St Malo.

Susan Colby editor@edsatlanticchallenge.com

[©2001 Challenge Business](#) - [About](#) - [Terms of use](#) - [Privacy](#)

[Back to top](#)