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# Richmond

Magazine

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Tom (left) and Roger in training



## Indian spring ahead

Never mind the *University Boat Race*. Two Teddington men are about to row the Indian Ocean. **Emily Mayer** sticks her oar in

There are many things that one could say about the Indian Ocean. The third largest sea in the world, it covers 20% of the surface of the earth and boasts a bumper crop of paradise islands.

Even so, with its 50ft waves, 10 varieties of whale, 17 species of shark and Somali pirates tough enough to make Blackbeard look a sissy, not even its greatest admirer could describe it as a rower's delight.

Not that Teddington duo Roger Haines and Tom Lee care. Instead, the pair are one of 30 teams about to compete in the inaugural *Indian Ocean Race*, staged by rowing race organiser *Woodvale Challenge*.

Departing from Western Australia on April 19, the teams are expected to take around 105 days to reach the finish line at Mauritius, off the African coast.

And the Teddington two are in serious danger of being caught with their trousers

down. Inspired by Ben Fogle and James Cracknell's effort in the *Great Atlantic Rowing Race*, Tom and Roger plan to row the distance naked to avoid the risk of chafing from the sea salt.

"I like to do a major challenge for each major birthday," explains project manager Roger, who turned 50 this year. "I did a parachute jump for my 30th and the UK Swimathon for my 40th, but this is my biggest thing yet."

The duo's self-built, plywood rowing boat took 750 hours to make at the *Sea Cadet Unit* at Twickenham. And the plucky pair, who will row throughout the day in two-hour shifts, are hoping to raise over £100,000 for their favourite charities: *Asthma UK* for Roger, who suffered from the illness as a child, and for Tom, his own project giving students full scholarships to University in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown.

"I have had some challenges in my life, like serving in Iraq, but this is taking things to a new level," says the ex-Royal Navy diver.

Having trained tirelessly off the South Coast, Tom and Roger are confident of coping with the rigours ahead. But what if the sharks or pirates have other ideas?

"We have contingency plans," says Roger, "but for strategic reasons we can't let on."

Stealthy stuff. And the chances of victory?

"Well, we're both very competitive. I think you can safely say that we are in it to win it!"

■ For more information or to donate visit: [www.indianoceanrace2009.com](http://www.indianoceanrace2009.com)