

**Ocean Challenge Live!—The Vendée Globe**  
Solo, non-stop, around-the-world race

WEEK

# 4 Environment: Water & Air

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**By Rich Wilson, Skipper**  
**Aboard *Great American III***

What better symbol could there be for the interconnectedness of the world than the Vendée Globe, a non-stop around-the-world sailing event? As a skipper in the race, I can see that each salty wave is connected to the next in the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. The same interconnectedness is true for every breath we breathe.

These global connections show that pollution from one place, whether it is water or air pollution, can end up in any other place. We are all responsible for the environment of our neighbors—be they next door or around the world—and we should be aware

of the waste we create and how it might affect other people (and other life) on the planet. With awareness comes understanding and action.

My friend and rival Raphael Dinelli, sailing *Ocean Vital Foundation*, has an intriguing wind charger aboard his vessel and new thin solar panels covering his boat. These may allow him to sail around the world without ever turning on his gas-powered generator, thus using no fossil fuel at all. It is a worthwhile goal.

In the Vendée Globe there is a race rule requiring the competitors to keep all their garbage aboard their boats for proper disposal at the finish. In the absence of universal morality, regulation is needed for our common good.



## **Asthma at Sea**

**By Dr. Chris Fanta**  
**Brigham & Women's Hospital**

While the challenges that Rich Wilson and the skippers of Vendée Globe face are enormous—managing a large sailing vessel by yourself, day after day, without break, and without a “time out” for bad weather—Rich Wilson has another obstacle to overcome that may not be shared by other skippers. Rich has asthma.

Asthma is a very common disease. In the United States approximately seven million children under age 18 have asthma, and an additional 16 million adults have the disease. In asthma, the breathing tubes in the lungs can become narrowed in two ways: (1) the bands of muscle that encircle the tubes

squeeze down on the tubes, and (2) the tube walls can swell and fill with mucus. The result can be difficulty breathing (like breathing through a narrow straw), tightness in the chest, and wheezing.

So how can Rich Wilson, who needs to be capable of peak performance at any moment, avoid an asthma attack while circumnavigating the globe? The key is prevention. Rich takes several asthma medicines every day to prevent asthmatic reactions in his airways. Periodically, Rich will take additional medicine (a bronchodilator inhaler) before strenuous exertion. This medicine keeps the muscles from contracting in response to exertion.

Lastly, since Rich is far out to sea, it is unlikely that he will experience asthma attacks caused by pets, cigarette smoke or air pollution.

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