

# PIER REVIEW

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Serving Deerfield Beach, Pompano Beach, Hillsboro Beach and Lighthouse Point

## Lighthouse Point welcomes solo ocean rower



Man completes a 5,000-mile journey that started in Portugal

By Emmett Hall

One never knows what the ocean current will wash up along the South Florida shoreline. On this occasion the Pompano, Deerfield and Lighthouse Point community welcomed Julen Sanchez who traveled through the Hillsboro Inlet after completing a 5,000-mile journey in a rowboat that started in Algarve, Portugal.

The emission-free adventure was an opportunity to show how it is possible to have a sustainable planet by protecting the environment and tackling climate warming.

All of the power was emitted by Sanchez, 26, who took 131 days, nine hours and 30 minutes to cross the Atlantic Ocean in a rowboat.

"The idea was to do everything by just using human power and to show how we can bridge oceans together and make anything possible," he said. "The mayors from Paris and Pittsburgh got together about five years ago and agreed to make the planet more sustainable. We didn't want to wait for governments to make the decision as we are striving to have renewable energy by 2030. I liked the idea of building bridges to act proactively to combat climate warming, so I biked from Paris to Portugal before the rowing adventure and will finish with a cycling trip from Lighthouse Point to Pittsburgh."

The arduous task required years of training and preparation. Physical and rowing training, nutrition plans, mental and navigation preparation required sea survival and seamanship courses. The first part of the journey was a 1,740-mile cycling trip from Paris to Portugal before taking on the

The solo Atlantic Ocean row was zero emissions by being human powered by Julen Sanchez Zerow in order to bring attention to sustainable energy. **JULEN SANCHEZ/COURTESY**

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## Journey

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rowing adventure.

Sanchez became the youngest person to ever row 5,000 nautical miles in open water and the youngest to row from mainland Europe to mainland North America.

"There has only been one other person who has rowed from mainland Europe to the USA, so the focus was to just make it over," he said. "I lost contact with my people on land for 68 days when my satellite phone broke on day 63, but they were able to follow me on my GPS device without knowing what my plans were. I navigated through the shallows of the Great Bahama Bank and got bumped and lifted up by a curious whale near the Bahamas. I really rowed hard against the Gulf Stream and came out further south than I expected. It wasn't easy."

Coming through the tricky Hillsboro Inlet, Sanchez was directed by a marine patrol officer to the Lighthouse Point Marina where he received a warm reception from Peter Capello. The boating community is a close-knit group, and they welcomed the foreign seafarer with open arms and assisted him with his ongoing journey. The Dettor family helped make the Zerow-Emission Project a success.

"I spent a week here in Lighthouse Point and the people were incredible," Sanchez said. "The owners of the marina offered me a spot for the week. Everyone treated me great, and it was such a pleasure meeting so many nice people. It was pretty cool meeting all these people and I'm extremely grateful for all their help. I got a chance to meet the locals who welcomed me with open arms."

Sanchez brought 400 pounds of food onboard and was eating the weight of the boat away on his journey. The safety equipment was powered through solar panels and drinking water was generated by desalinating



ing salt water that was used for the rehydration of food meals. The loss of 30 pounds of body weight during the quest helped lighten the load.

"I have been kind of overwhelmed by the assistance I received from so many people," he said. "I've made a lot of friends. Now I have another 10 to 15 days of bike riding up to Pittsburgh. I don't have any more weight to lose. With rowing and cycling, you burn up the most calories."

The first 15 days of the journey was the most challenging with the high waves off the coast of Portugal creating some damage to

the boat equipment. Dealing with those 20-foot swells proved to be difficult and dangerous before repairs could be made.

"It was quite a good test in the beginning of the row and the rest of the ocean was smooth in comparison. I really enjoyed it as it was very meditative and peaceful. I have a major in psychology and I'm really interested in the mental aspect of sports and would like to coach extreme athletes in the future. I chose this adventure because there is nothing in comparison to what I have accomplished. The mental part outweighs the physical part. It was an

incredible experience."

Sanchez was out to prove that anything is possible and convert the skeptics into believers. He had never rowed on water before coming up with the idea to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The goal was to prove that energy sustainability is possible.

"Anything can be done in a sustainable way and I encourage people to think beyond what they think is possible. People don't believe you can cross an ocean with just human power and I even convinced my parents that it was possible. Now they are remodeling the house and putting solar panels on the roof. I'm really happy about that."

As an ice hockey athlete, there was a special attraction to the city of Pittsburgh and its NHL team, the Penguins. The hard-working, blue-collar city was a polluted steel city in the 20th century and has worked hard to transform itself into an environmentally friendly and sustainable community. The final leg of the journey will encompass a 1,300-mile bike ride from Lighthouse Point to Pittsburgh.

Visit [zerow-emission.org](http://zerow-emission.org).

Julen Sanchez Zerow spent his Christmas, New Year's and 26th birthday at sea during his solo trek across the Atlantic Ocean. JULEN SANCHEZ/COURTESY

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