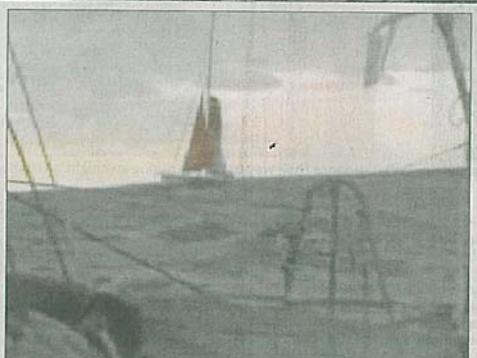


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Sam Davies, left, diverted from her round-the-world race in her yacht Roxy, top, to help rescue Yann Elies, right, in his stranded vessel the Generali, above

Sailor abandons race to rescue friend

CHRIS HASTINGS

A BRITISH yachtswoman who broke off from a round-the-world solo race to help a stricken rival has told of the "horrible" moment that she found out he was injured.

Sam Davies, 33, who is competing in the Vendée Globe event, one of the toughest sporting events in the world, changed course when she was told that her friend, Frenchman Yann Elies, was injured.

His thighbone was broken after his yacht was struck by a large wave in the Southern

Ocean and he was unable to move. On her vessel, Roxy, Ms Davies travelled more than 500 miles in the wrong direction in order to reach Mr Elies, 34.

She was just 40 miles away when he was reached by an Australian frigate yesterday and transferred aboard.

Speaking via a satellite telephone, she told *The Sunday Telegraph*: "The race organisers rang me on Friday to tell me what had happened and asked me to help. It is the phone call you never want to get. It was a



horrible feeling to know he was out there injured and alone. I know him and his family very, very well and I just kept thinking how they must feel knowing that their

loved one is suffering alone on the other side of the world."

Ms Davies, a Cambridge engineering graduate from Hamble, Hampshire, was in tenth place and was the leading British competitor when she got the call to divert to Mr Elies, whose vessel, the Generali, was 800 miles off the south coast of Australia.

She was the second closest vessel to the Frenchman. Fellow competitor, Marc Guillemot, sailing in Safran, was also diverted.

After the arrival of the

Australian warship, Ms Davies resumed the race. She and Mr Guillemot will receive time credits and will not lose their positions in the race.

Ms Davies said: "I was in a weather system where I was going very, very fast. Now I am in a system which is very slow."

The race covers a distance of more than 24,000 miles and has only ever been completed by 44 people. Thirty yachts began the race, held every four years, from the French port of Les Sables d'Olonne last month.