

A Dräger X-am 7000 multi-gas detector constantly monitored the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in Godson's container.



ing? As underwater training for the Tour de France? For a Guinness World Record certificate? The record wasn't his primary motive. Instead, he wanted to draw attention to a now seriously endangered marine habitat and "show children that you can achieve a goal if you're just determined enough," said Godson during a half-hour break from pedalling, three days before the end of his stay. Technicians had installed a line for phone and Internet service in his underwater dwelling.

Fresh food every three days

The children were thrilled. During the two weeks in which Godson made his attempt, more visitors gathered in front of the large tank where the red container was submerged than at any other part of the aquarium. Engineers had installed glass windows in two sides of the cube-shaped container, which allowed Godson to wave enthusiastically to the visitors and look at his 1,300 gilled companions in the tank, including sharks and rays.

Fresh air was delivered to the one-man power plant through a tube from outside. A diver supplied him with water and food at least once every three days—via the bottom door through which Godson entered the container at the start of the experiment. And the electronic umbilical cord to the outside kept him in contact with his community of fans on the Internet the whole time. Via webcam, Facebook and Twitter, he gave real-time updates on the status of his world-record attempt. Between noon and 1:00 p.m., visitors also had the chance to contact the aquarium's sole two-legged inhabitant di-

rectly by means of an intercom system. The most urgent question posed by the children: Where did the man go to the toilet? No, he didn't have to swim outside; he couldn't anyway without jeopardizing his attempt to set a record. Instead, he used a small camping toilet in a concealed corner of his living space, equipped with curtains to ensure privacy.

According to the schedule he formulated at the outset, Godson had to pedal four to five hours per day in order to achieve his kilowatt objective. And of course there wasn't much diversion anyway—except for watching fish and visitors, heating up his ready-to-eat meals, and keeping an eye on measurements. After all, the extended submersion was intended to benefit science too: Godson regularly spoke by phone with a bio-engineer from the U.S. space agency NASA who researches the effects of spending long periods underwater. In addition, the Divers Alert Network, an organization of diving physicians, studied the characteristics of Godson's blood flow. To ensure his safety during the two weeks, he had a dedicated line to rescue personnel of the German lifesavers group DLRG as well as a multi-gas detection instrument. The Dräger X-am 7000 recorded the carbon-dioxide and oxygen content of the air he breathed, and it would have triggered an alarm if the oxygen content had fallen below 19 percent by volume, or if the carbon dioxide had exceeded 0.5 percent by volume.

Godson had planned his world record attempt for one and a half years. In the end, almost 100 people were involved in the endeavor. This time, he was deter-

mined to succeed. In 2007 he made a similar attempt in an Australian lake. After 12 days, he had to call it off, however, because the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air he was breathing became too great.

Would he make it?

Despite meticulous planning, the record hung in the balance until the last minute. Godson had miscalculated. He had to pedal much longer than planned every day in order to reach his target. On the ninth day, he had generated only slightly over half of the amount of energy required. So for the last five days, he worked out a stringent program. From morning to evening, his agenda called for 30 minutes of cycling, then a 15-minute break, time that he used to stretch his muscles and eat energy bars, nuts, and other concentrated nourishment. He had also underestimated the humidity in the container and the tropical water temperatures of 25 °Celsius. Recalibrating the ventilation system seemed to him to be too risky: "Never change a running system." He waved to the spectators valiantly in the final days, and spurred on by comments on his Facebook page, he struggled from watt-hour to watt-hour.

Not even a professional screenwriter could have injected more drama into the event. Shortly before Godson's time elapsed, the current meter reached the target mark of 2,500 watt-hours. Two hours later, the marine biologist departed the container and sent out a short greeting to all his supporters on the Internet: "Relaxing, on my back, breathing 100 percent oxygen." **Werner Bauer**