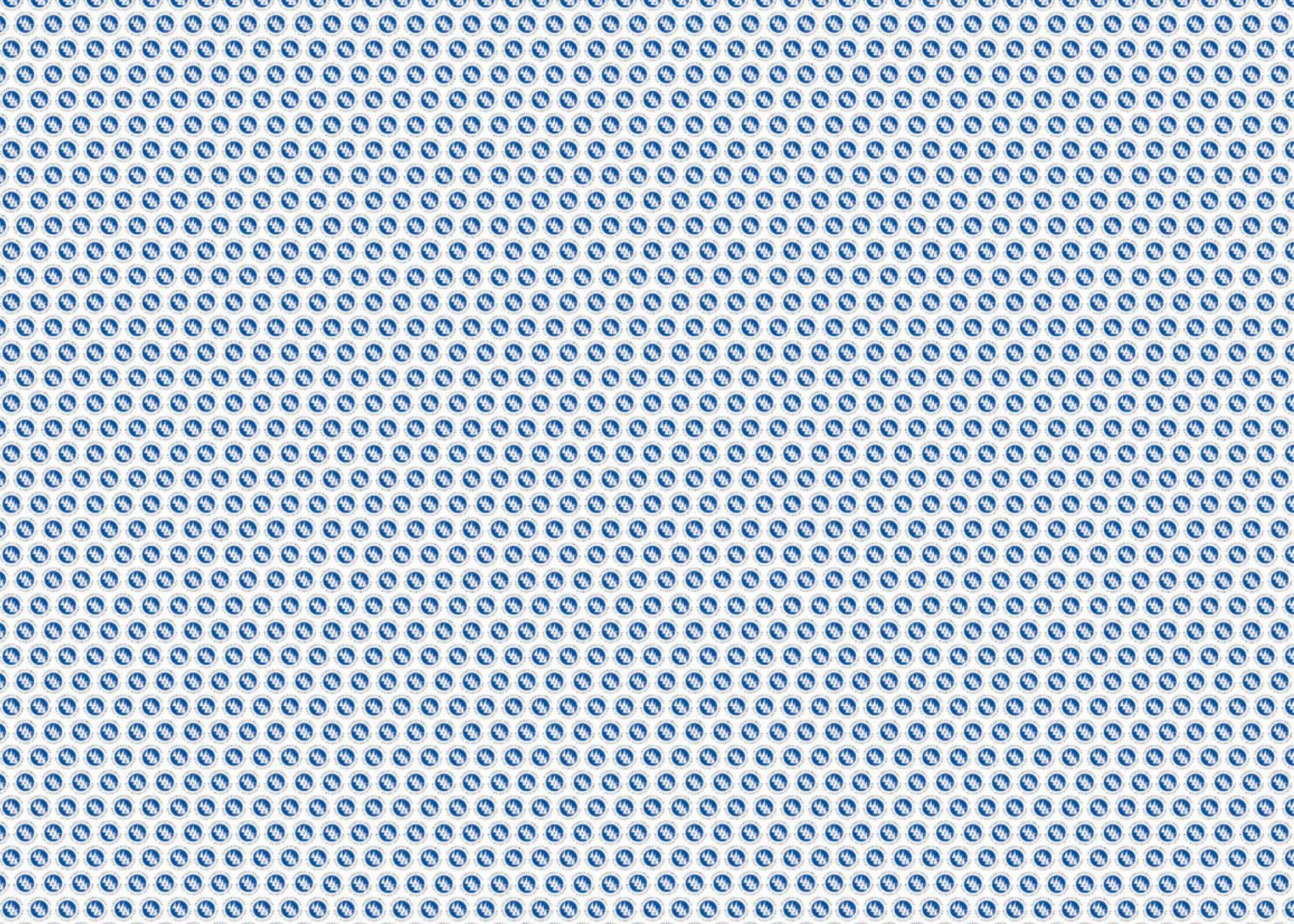
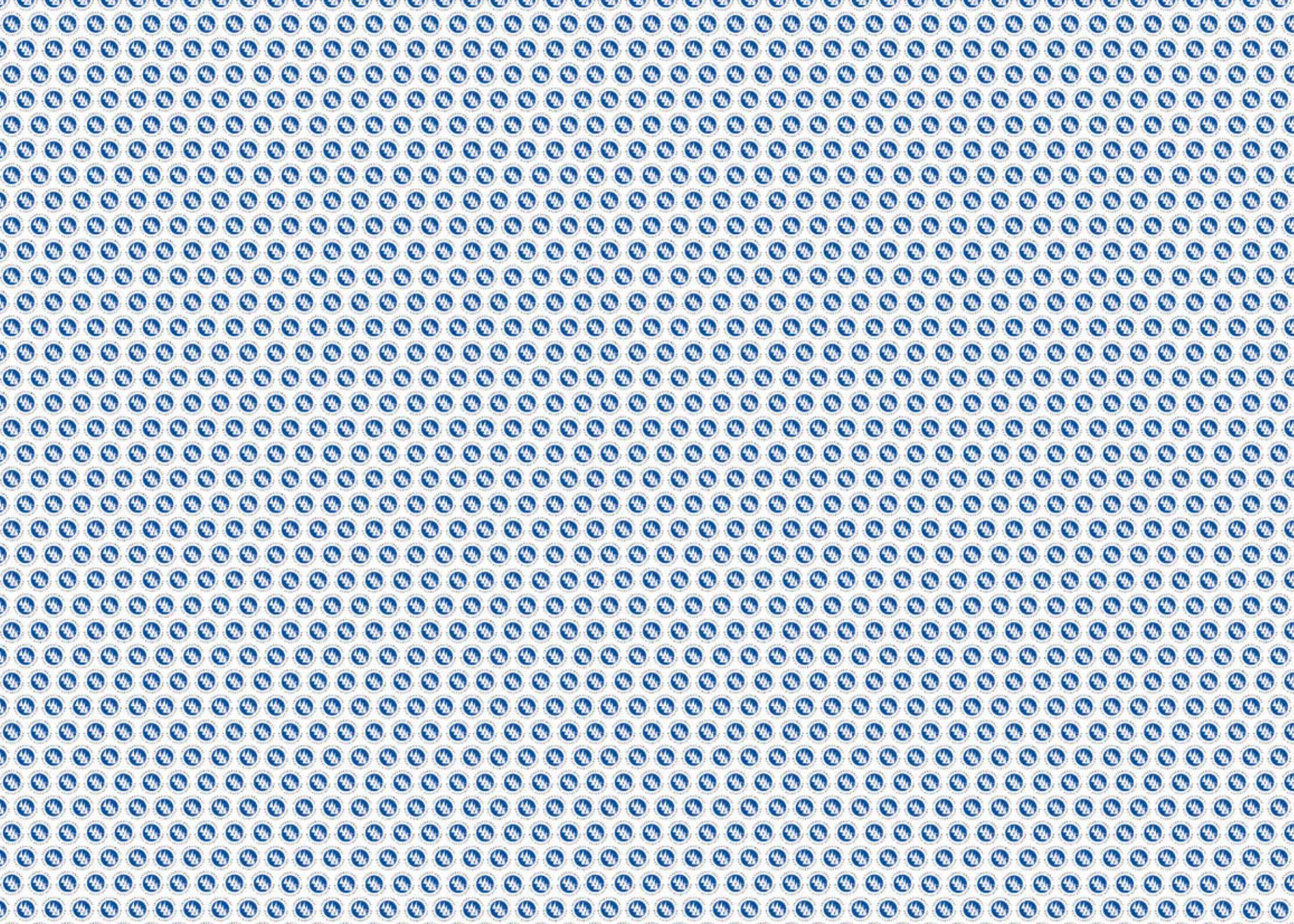










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MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP



ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE



ROLEX FASTNET RACE

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#Perpetual



OYSTER PERPETUAL
YACHT-MASTER 42


ROLEX



EDITORIAL, DESIGN AND PRINT

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The famous fuschia kite on Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou*.
Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget

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Raul Gardini

John B Kilroy

Baron Edmond de Rothschild

William Whitehouse-Vaux

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Peter Bateman

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Harold Cudmore

John B Kilroy

William I Koch

Robert Ian Oatley

*Tough when it goes wrong on a 100-footer – crew scramble to recover their kite.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

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Secretary General

Retired surgeon, Andrew McIrvine is a former Commodore and Admiral of the Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) as well as being a keen yachtsman. He was appointed Secretary General in September 2013. He is responsible for the development and administration of the Association. Based in London, he maintains contact with members, and represents the IMA to international bodies and event organisers.

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Rob Weiland
Association and Event Rules

Following a lengthy career overseeing race boat projects, Rob Weiland moved across to class management, running the TP52 and then the Maxi 72 classes, also advising other IMA class associations on class and event rules. Rob's wealth of experience as sailor, boat captain, project manager, class manager and regatta organiser places him well to help create rules that serve all.

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Maria Luisa Farris
Communications and PR

A trained journalist, Maria Luisa Farris is the longest serving staff member of the IMA. She is in charge of the Association's internal and external communications and PR, and social events. From her office in Sardinia she is responsible for Italian media relations, updating the IMA website and assisting the Secretary General with the day-to-day activities of the Association.

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James Dadd
Association Technical Office

Formerly RORC Rating Office Director and VO65 Class Manager, James Dadd oversees the Association Technical Office (ATO). This reviews and approves all the IMA's rating certificates, recommending class splits, conducting measurement checks and liaising with the ORC and IRC rating offices. It also ensures compliance with IMA Class Rules and provides technical services to IMA event organisers.

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**Donatella Gianni***Accountancy and Administration*

Based in Olbia, Donatella Gianni is the long-term financial administrator of the Association. She looks after the day-to-day administration and accounts of the IMA, as well as keeping track of, and handling, membership fees.

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**Monica Recchia***Race Secretariat*

Monica Recchia comes from a race management and logistics background on professional yacht racing circuits, including the TP52s and America's Cup. Based in Ibiza, she joined the IMA in 2016. Her role is to maintain contact with members and skippers, working with the race organisers on rules and with the ATO on ratings, scoring and results.

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**James Boyd***Media*

During his 40 years as a yachting journalist, James Boyd has been sailing correspondent for the Daily Telegraph newspaper, Assistant Editor of Yachting World magazine and editor of thedailysail.com. He looks after the IMA's press release writing and event reporting and edits its publications. He is also overseeing the introduction of multihulls to the Association.

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Dear IMA members, sailors and followers of maxi racing – welcome to our 2025 IMA Yearbook.

The International Maxi Association enjoyed another great year of maxi yacht racing in 2024, our 45th season since the Association was founded. Competition seems to get ever stronger, most noticeably in the grand prix parts of our fleet, with the former Maxi 72/Maxi 2 class – now rechristened the Maxi Grand Prix class – and the Maxi 1s/Maxi 100s both due new arrivals this season.

While it might seem like our Association's focus is often on the grand prix boats, it should not be forgotten that the IMA represents the full breadth of the maxi fleet, from the 60-footers, such as my own *Wallyño*, to the 100+ft supermaxis. Both these

extremities are still very buoyant: the latter thanks to the latest masterpieces from Swan, Baltic and Southern Wind, among others. The smaller maxis are continuously seeing new additions, mainly semi-production cruiser-racers from companies such as Mylius, Swan, Vismara, Jeanneau, Grand Soleil, Solaris, Maxi Dolphin and Contest, alongside newer arrivals such as Black Pepper, ICE Yachts and YYachts. While many of these are intended for fast cruising, we hope to attract a number to our events, so their owners can appreciate firsthand the excitement, enjoyment, competition and camaraderie only experienced when racing our yachts.

The IMA is guided by its Board and I would like to thank everyone involved for their effort and support: Sir Peter Ogden, our long term treasurer, plus Vice Presidents Hap Fauth, Roberto Lacorte and Claus-Peter Offen, who were joined in 2024 by Pier Luigi Loro Piana, Aldo Parisotto and Maurits van Oranje-Nassau. All our Officers put considerable time and resource into their sailing, so contributing further to help guide our sport is much appreciated.

In 2024 we welcomed new members to the fold. We saw the return of member Bryon Ehrhart, who previously owned the Maxi 72 *Lucky*; his latest *Lucky* is well known to us as the former *Rambler 88*. Similarly, Peter Harrison returns with another Maxi 72, this time *Jolt*, previously Dario Ferrari's *Cannonball*. We are all very familiar with Yacht Club Gaeta President Vincenzo Addessi, who has been racing his *Fra' Diavolo* with us for years, so it is a pleasure that he has joined. Yacht Club of Greece President George Procopiou is a major supporter, and the 2024 winner of the Aegean 600. He is someone we'll see more of having acquired his VO70 *Aiolos* while awaiting the

completion of his new supermaxi. Meanwhile, new member Pascale Decaux has bought the former *Magic Carpet*³, now named *Tilakkhana II*, allowing Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones to focus upon his brand new 100ft *Magic Carpet E*.

Anyone who owns a maxi, wants to race and be part of our sport, should join the IMA. As our membership grows, not only do we become stronger and more influential, but it allows us to enjoy friendships with like-minded maxi owners, which in fact the Association is constitutionally obliged to help develop!

The Association continues to be run day-to-day by our dedicated, skilled team led by Secretary General Andrew McIrvine. A principle aim of the IMA is to organise the maxi racing calendar for our members. We also set out not just to improve the quality of maxi racing, but also to help standardise the way it is organised throughout all the events on our IMA calendar.

To this end, we work closely with our yacht club and race organiser partners all year round. On behalf of the Association, I would like to thank them and all their staff for the huge effort they make to arrange the best racing for our members. Naturally none of this would be possible without the contributions of our members and the valuable backing of our official partner, Rolex, plus HSBC and our new clothing supplier – North Sails.

I wish everyone the very best wishes for 2025 and hope it brings you all the success you deserve both on the water and off.

Benoît de Froidmont

*Benoît de Froimont at the helm of his Wally 60 Wallyño.
Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*





▲ Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup skippers' briefing.



▲ Our racing guru Rob Weiland.



▼ Andrew McIrvine with Carlo Puri Negri.



▼ Hoisting the IMA flag on Bella Mente.



▲ Giovanni Lombardi Stronati, Monica Recchia, Roberto Lacorte and Benoît de Froidmont at our Officers' meeting in Milan.



▲ Vice President Aldo Parisotto in his favourite jacket.

▼ Carlo Puri Negri receives his trophies for winning the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar.



▲ James Boyd, Benoît de Froidmont, Maria Luisa Farris and Andrew McIrvine at the Loro Piana Giraglia prize-giving.



▲ Hap Fauth receives the IMA Trophy for the highest-placed member at the IMA Maxi Europeans.

▼ Hard at work on the IMA Maxi Europeans race committee boat.





2024 was a strong year for our Association as we consolidated cooperation with our major event partners. With the number of active members increasing year-on-year and new owners and boats appearing, the signs are that maxi yachting is avoiding the decline being experienced by other areas of yacht racing.

Our racing programme has remained largely unchanged, although attempts to develop a Caribbean circuit have been mixed. Here, while we successfully ran our first maxi multihull series, won by Adrian Keller's *Allegra*, the loss of Les Voiles de St Barth forces us to put our monohull series on hold.

Elsewhere we look forward to a new independent event in the North Sound Maxi Regatta, which will

take place in the BVI in 2025, organised by the V team. This was pitched as a fresh approach to maxi regattas and we are interested to hear feedback on this. We have also helped create three days of maxi racing as a new feature of the Nelson's Cup Series, held in Antigua prior to the RORC Caribbean 600.

Back in the Mediterranean, the 2023 Rolex Middle Sea Race was won overall, in spectacular fashion, by *Bullitt*. She is an unusual Wally, being modified to race both inshore and offshore, and belongs to long term IMA member Andrea Recordati, Commodore of Yacht Club Costa Smeralda. Due to her combined performance inshore and offshore, *Bullitt* is the 2024 IMA Yacht of the Year.

Our 2023-24 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge was won again by Carlo Puri Negri and *Atalanta II*, while the President's *Wallyño* claimed our inshore series, remarkably, for a third time.

Within the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, we exercised our right to hold an official World Championship for the first time for the Maxi 1 Class, with Joost Schuijff's *Leopard 3* winning the inaugural title, watched over by President of World Sailing, Quan Li. The IMA is permitted to hold two World Championships annually and I'm pleased to announce that not only will the 2025 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup feature the Maxi 1 World Championship again, but we will also hold one for the newly rechristened Maxi Grand Prix class (ex-Maxi 72s/Maxi 2).

In September the membership tasked our Association Technical Office with re-examining the pros and cons of IRC v ORC, with regard to preventing Maxi Grand Prix boats dominating in composite classes. James Dadd recruited a highly experienced panel of

yachting professionals to dive into this in depth. Their recommendation, agreed to by the IMA Board, is to remain with IRC on a rolling three-year basis. You can read about how this decision was reached on p92.

While parts of the maxi fleet are keen to diversify, our view is that the maxi class and the IMA will only remain strong if we stick together. As ever we will listen to and consider fresh viewpoints, but we should all note that our partner yacht clubs and sponsors are constantly pushing to have fewer classes. Our job is to find the least uncomfortable middle ground between these positions.

Looking forward, there are many changes in the pipeline. Excitingly, we are introducing a new series in conjunction with the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, which will combine their Australian Maxi Championship and the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race. On a more technical note, we have introduced the use of robotic marks in all our regattas, making course setting much easier, with added potential for more course variety.

Finally, the Officers have set up a sub-committee to review our by-laws, which were written over 30 years ago for what was a very different organisation then. From this review we will develop new governance of the Association. In addition, many of our Officers have served generously but are technically over their legal terms, so we will be aiming to recruit new candidates to join the Board at our AGM in September.

In the meantime, my thanks go to the Officers, members and our sponsors, for their contributions to the continuing success of the Association.

Andrew McIrvine



IMA members attend the Association's annual AGM at the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi





*Peter Dubens at the helm of his 72ft North Star.
Opposite: Peter Dubens with the IMA Yacht of the Year Trophy he won in 2023.
Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

While all IMA members share a common passion for racing their maxi yachts, few have invested as much in the sport, both as a pastime and in their business, as Peter Dubens. He first campaigned with his 60-footer *Spectre* and has subsequently enjoyed success with his Maxi 72 *North Star*, which in 2023 was crowned IMA Maxi European Champion. Meanwhile, for more than 10 years he has owned, through his private equity company Oakley Capital, one of the yachting industry's most successful businesses – North Sails, along with its many associated companies.

At just 20 years old, Dubens was inspired to embark on his entrepreneurial journey after being introduced by his childhood friend, the Earl of Cadogan, to Jonathan Sieff (of the Marks & Spencer business). Together, they launched their first business, selling thermochromic T-shirts that changed colour with body heat.

Five years in and the duo sold their company for £8 million to Coats Viyella, a manufacturer of thread and components for the clothes and footwear industries. Dubens and Sieff, together with Jamie Barshall, then acquired the UK right to sell Vans, the footwear of choice for the skateboarding and BMX community, and Eastpak bags. This business they sold to Vans for \$16 million. They were just 27 years old.

As an entrepreneur businessman Dubens truly got into gear in the 2000s. He was Executive Chairman of ukbetting plc (sold to BskyB for £102 million) and Chairman of Pipex Communications (sold to Tiscali for £220 million). However, the main event came in 2007 when Dubens, with David Till, set up what today remains his core business: Oakley Capital.

“Oakley Capital is a private equity firm based around what we call ‘founder first’,” explains Dubens. “We do focus on various sectors like education or business services, but my background is as an entrepreneur and backing entrepreneurs is our principal concept. We pride ourselves in partnering with great founders.”

At the time Dubens says his business mentors were David Wolfson, Chairman of the former FTSE-listed company GUS (owner of a giant, diverse group of companies including Burberry, Homebase, ARGOS, Experian, etc) and thread and textile magnate Sir Harry Djanogly.

Over the intervening years Oakley Capital, and its numerous offshoots, have invested in businesses typically of €100 million to €1+ billion value. Today they manage around £14 billion, with 34 companies in their portfolio, the most recent being German insurance company Konzept & Marketing.

In the marine sector they acquired Boat International in 2014 (since moved on), the same year that they bought North Sails. As to how the North Sails deal transpired, Dubens explains: “In 2006 I bought a home in Saint-Tropez. I am not very good at sitting on a beach and doing nothing. I was watching all these wonderful sailing boats and I decided to go sailing. My first boat was a Tofinou 9.5m and every sail on board was from North Sails, and I thought ‘what an interesting brand...’



"So we cold-called Tom Whidden, who told me to get stuffed! But I insisted on trying to meet him – and I did a year later in Newport. By that time I had learned a lot about North Sails and Lowell North and how it had been bought by Terry Kohler and Terry was getting older...so it was very lucky timing.

"People often talk about IQ and EQ – intelligence and emotional quotient – but I have coined the phrase LQ, meaning 'luck quotient.' LQ reflects an honest recognition of where luck influences outcomes in life and business. While IQ and EQ are

vital for decision-making and leadership, LQ highlights the humility to acknowledge external factors and the agility to seize opportunities when luck comes your way. Together, these quotients form a balanced framework for navigating success. If we hadn't happened to have made that call when Terry was thinking about retiring...it was lucky timing.

"I met Terry during the America's Cup in 2013 in San Francisco and convinced him and Tom that we were the right partner, that we cared strongly as it was a founder business and that it would be in good

hands. We initially bought the US business only and then we bought the European business and carried on from there..." In addition to the sailmaker, there is the clothing brand, plus spar and rigging makers Southern Spars, Hall Spars and Future Fibres.

Last August there were many raised eyebrows when, in a bold move, North Technology Group bought its two principal rivals – Doyle Sails and Quantum Sails (with Amway co-chairman and Quantum's majority shareholder Doug DeVos, now a North shareholder). According to Dubens, this occurred as it was recommended by the executive of North Technology Group, led by its CEO Sam Watson, however there seems to be no intent to merge the sailmakers: "They are all quite separate. Their sails are all made completely differently," says Dubens.

This merely scratches the surface of his business empire, but in addition he has the Peter Dubens Family Foundation, the vehicle through which he supports numerous charities, focussing on education, marine conservation, children's welfare and health.

As to his own sailing, his passion for this was instantaneous when he began sailing the Tofinou in Saint-Tropez: "The minute I stepped on board I thought it was fantastic and I was passionate straight away. I guess, for an entrepreneur, sailing is very intriguing with all the different conditions and currents with different sails. Then, when you start competing, it is fantastic."

It took around a year for him to buy his own Tofinou 9.5 *Jessie*. At this time he met British 470 dinghy Olympic sailor Nick Rogers (who won two silver medals in 2004 and 2008). Rogers took on the role of tactician and coach, which he still holds today.



Dubens' Frers 60 Spectre started out as a picnic boat but soon found its way to the race course. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

On their third attempt in 2011, *Jessie* won her class at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

Immersing himself in the sport, Dubens had been impressed by Jack Setton's 60ft singlehanded day-sailer *Ciao Gianni* (a tribute to the late Fiat boss Gianni Agnelli) and requested a high performance version, able to be sailed by two, from her designer, Mani Frers. While he sailed *Spectre* considerably when in Saint-Tropez, he also began racing her in earnest, albeit unsatisfactorily: "We did everything we could with the team to make her good for racing, but it wasn't really set up for that. I had become quite friendly with King Juan Carlos through sailing and he said 'if you are going to race, then race, and if you are going to go day sailing, then go day sailing, but don't try and combine them'. I have to say, he was spot on."

Nick Rogers adds: "The boat [*Spectre*] is still to this day the most amazing day-sailer and it does that job amazingly well. But she is very, very difficult to race: The winch speeds, systems and the layout are not designed for that."

They contemplated building a new race boat, but in the end opted to purchase the hugely successful 2009 vintage Maxi 72, previously raced as *Rán II*/*Robertissima/Sorcha*, from Peter Harrison. Rogers continues: "It was a little bit of a step up, but quite quickly it became obvious that it was easier to sail than *Spectre* because of the layout. Everything was fit for purpose."

By this time Oakley Capital had bought North Sails and the name of the venerable *judel/vrolijk* 72 again changed, this time to *North Star* – that of the *Star* boat in which Lowell North won the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico. At the time Peter Harrison was



Peter Dubens, tactician Nick Rogers and the North Star crew celebrate their IMA Maxi Europeans victory in Sorrento in 2023. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

MAXI OWNER PROFILE: PETER DUBENS

enjoying racing his TP52 *Sorcha* but in 2023 returned to maxi racing, acquiring Dario Ferrari's all-conquering *Cannonball* (now renamed *Jolt*). As Dubens grimly observes: "Now he's back and he's beating me. We were doing well at the Maxi Worlds until our mast broke."

Unquestionably, over the years Dubens has become an expert in his sport, although his interests have evolved. He once owned *Yorel*, a 83ft neo-classic cold-moulded American motor yacht, sistership to *Black Knight*, famously the committee boat used for the 1987 America's Cup in Fremantle. While his friend Tara Getty might have lured him down the same classic route he has taken with *Baruna*, Dubens admits his tastes have changed: "I used to love old boats, but since I started sailing I now really love the technology –

that is super interesting." He is an eager follower of the America's Cup and was a shareholder in Ben Ainslie's BAR team in 2017.

He acquired *North Star* during the pandemic and, keen on racing with a smaller crew, had *North Star* converted to powered winches; the first Maxi 72 to go down this route. Dubens says he was pleased with this development, even if it makes it noisy on board with the engine running continuously.

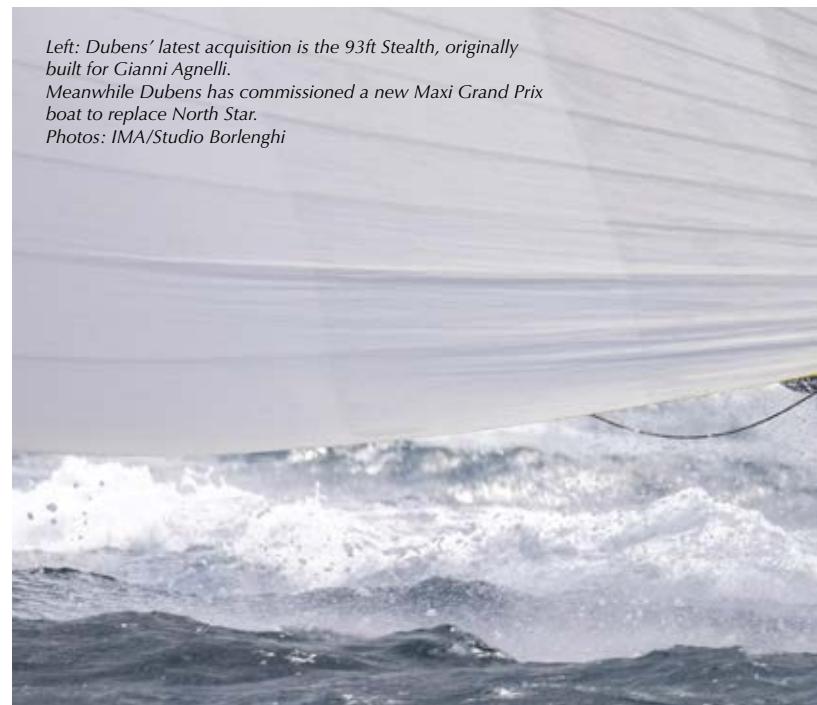
North Star has had water ballast added and in 2023 was fitted with a new 'twisting' rig, with articulating spreaders – an evolution of the set-up used on V5 America's Cup monohulls. Latest iterations of this have been developed by Southern Spars with the first having been fitted to Niklas Zennström's Carkeek CF520 *Rán 8*. It now also features on Alessandro Del Bono's new judel/vrolijk 80 *Capricorno*.

At present Dubens has two new and very exciting developments afoot, both due to come online in the next months. The first is a brand new boat in which to race in the new Maxi Grand Prix class (Maxi 72), although at the time of writing no further details were available about this.

The second is that Dubens has bought one of the most groundbreaking maxi yachts of all time: *Stealth*. This 93ft fully carbon Frers design was one of the first 'all black' maxis; offshore capable and harnessing all the latest mid-1990s America's Cup and Whitbread Round the World Race tech, originally commissioned by Italy's most famous industrialist Gianni Agnelli. While Agnelli's crew trained for, but never accomplished, an attempt on the west to east transatlantic record aboard her, she did win line honours in the 2001 Rolex Fastnet



Left: Dubens' latest acquisition is the 93ft *Stealth*, originally built for Gianni Agnelli. Meanwhile Dubens has commissioned a new Maxi Grand Prix boat to replace *North Star*.
Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



Race and still holds the monohull 'TransMed' Marseille to Carthage record.

Stealth has been in storage for the past 17 years. Acquiring her came about when Dubens met Agnelli's grandson and heir John Elkann, as they both support the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez's sailing school in Canoubiers. Elkann, a keen sailor like his grandfather, is behind the 'Ferrari' 100ft foiling maxi currently in build that will be skippered by Giovanni Soldini, with whom he regularly sails. Elkann was also on *Stealth* with Agnelli when she was first home in the Rolex Fastnet Race. "Before we could take *Stealth* sailing for the first time, we had to get some old black 3DL North Sails out of the container. They had lots of holes in them, so we had to patch them up!" recounts Dubens. "We worked out that we probably had enough time for three sails

before they fell apart completely, as they'd been sitting in the container for so long! I have to say – *Stealth* is amazing to sail."

Stealth is now undergoing a full refit in La Ciotat and, in a further piece of poetry, the work is being managed by *North Star's* trimmer Pom Green, son of the late Bill Green, *Stealth's* original builder. Similarly, German Frers' yacht designer son Mani has been advising on the work too. The refit will include a new rig and a full change of the water ballast system – there is currently too much of it (reflective of the trend in mid-1990s Open 60s/VO60s), while the transfer system is ancient by today's speedy standards. Her interior is being treated to a full refit to a design by Vripack's Marnix Hoeksra, with the inclusion of a small owner's cabin. Dubens says he is unlikely to alter her exterior. "It is really cool what we've been

doing. I am waiting to show it to John [Elkann] before I make any changes."

While *North Star* largely races inshore, Dubens is excited about the prospect of racing *Stealth* offshore. Her programme has yet to be fixed, but will probably include events in the Mediterranean, such as Loro Piana Giraglia, with the possible aim of going transatlantic in 2026 to compete in the Caribbean. "And there is also Miami-Cuba," muses Dubens, provided the organisers lay on another edition.

As to the IMA and maxi racing generally, Dubens observes: "The racing is obviously great, but I think we could do more for the owners shoreside at events. There are new boats being built and I think there is lots to do to make it more fun and more exciting. There is certainly going to be a lot of 70-77 footers in Sardinia..."



2024 Season Round-up



*Wendy Schmidt's 85ft Deep Blue has a busy programme ahead in 2025.
Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget*





Setting off from Naples on the Regata dei Tre Golfi. Photos: Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi

For a third successive year, the IMA Maxi European Championship was held out of Sorrento as part of Tre Golfi Sailing Week. As usual it comprised the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore followed by four days of inshore and coastal racing on the Gulf of Naples and around Capri, run by the Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia in conjunction with the IMA and supported by Loro Piana.

While 25 maxis competed in the offshore, 20 raced the inshores, making themselves eligible for the

Europeans title. While the full fleet results determined the IMA Maxi European Champion, the fleet was also subdivided in four by rating, ranging from the trio of former Wallycentos in Maxi 1 to Giuseppe Puttini's Swan 65 ketch *Shirlaf*, lowest rated in Maxi 4.

Maxi 1 comprised the former Wallys Chris Flowers and David M Leuschen's *Galateia*, the PalmaVela victor, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet*³ and Karel Komárek's *V* plus Andrea Recordati's 93ft *Bullitt*, overall winner of the 2023 Rolex Middle Sea Race.

Favourites for the IMA Maxi Europeans title were again the former Maxi 72s in Maxi 2. These included reigning IMA Maxi European Champion Peter Dubens' *North Star*, Sir Peter Ogden's 77ft *Jethou*, Hap Fauth's *Bella Mente* and Peter Harrison's *Jolt*.

Maxi 3 included four Mylius yachts – the 60 FDs Franz Wilhelm Baruffaldi Preis' *Manticore*, Jean-Pierre Dreau's *Lady First III* and Maurits van Oranje-Nassau's *Sud* plus Guido Paolo Gamucci's well-travelled canting keeler *Cippa Lipa X*. They were joined by Paul Berger's Swan 80 *Kallima* and Fabio Cannavale's Baltic 78 *Lupa of the Sea*.

Aside from *Shirlaf*, the two favourites in Maxi 4 were the old rivals, IMA President Benoît de Froidmont's 60ft *Wallyño* and Riccardo De Michele's Vallicelli 78 *H2O* plus Vincenzo Addressi's Mylius 18E35 *Fra' Diavolo*, the Andrea Fornaco-skippered Swan 60CR *Sea Quill* and Luca Scoppa's Dehler 60 *Blue Oyster*.

The Regata dei Tre Golfi was the CRVI's 69th edition and also scored towards the IMA's 2023-24 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge. As usual it started from Naples' Porticciolo di Santa Lucia, then headed out of the Gulf of Naples WNW to Ponza, before returning past Ischia, Capri and Punta Campanella, at the tip of the Sorrento peninsula, to the Li Galli islands turning mark off the Amalfi coast. New this year was the finish line being located back in Naples, increasing the course length by 15 miles to 156 miles.

At the 16:00 start, *Galateia* got away best, closely followed by *Magic Carpet*³ and *Bullitt*, as *V* was called OCS and *North Star* hooked a lobster pot. The leaders reached the Ponza turning mark at 23:00 with *Galateia* still ahead followed by *V* and



Magic Carpet³ crosses tacks with ARCA SGR.

the line honours favourite, Furio Benussi's 100ft ARCA SGR. *Magic Carpet³* and *Bullitt* were trailing some way back, while *Jolt* was leading the Maxi 2 class on the water.

All was going well until 04:00 when returning back into the Gulf of Naples, while southwest of Ischia, the wind shut down for the frontrunners. Edging south, *Bullitt* and *Magic Carpet³* pulled ahead as the lead Maxi 2s caught up. At 07:30, north of Capri, the wind shut down again, causing a virtual restart. With *Jolt* and *Bella Mente* becalmed north of Capri, *Jethou* and *North Star* took the route around Capri's south side. By Li Galli, ARCA SGR had finally pulled into the lead ahead of *Magic Carpet³* but the front four regrouped for the final crossing of the Gulf of Naples. Here they endured a sudden rain squall with 20 knot gusts. This launched V, which finished second on the water, just four seconds behind ARCA SGR. With *Bullitt* third and *Magic Carpet³* fourth, the first four finishing within just 2 minutes 21 seconds.



ARCA SGR skipper Furio Benussi celebrates another line honours victory.



The well-sailed and equipped Swan 65 ketch Shirlaf won the Regata dei Tre Golfi maxi class.



Above: Chris Flowers and David M Leuschen's 100ft Galateia closes on the Sorrento finish line. Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

"That was one of the best race finishes in my life!" recounted ARCA SGR skipper Furio Benussi. "V passed us three miles from the finish line, but then we caught the last pressure – 25 knots – and passed them again, 200-300m from the line..."

Overall, the start-stop nature of the race benefitted the slowest boats, with Maxi 4 filling the top five spaces under IRC; *Shirlaf* winning by a sizeable 1 hour 23 minutes 6 seconds. "For sure it was a race for small boats because the wind came from behind. We were lucky we managed to do well," said *Shirlaf* tactician Gabriele Bruni.

Winning Maxi 3 was *Manticore*, ahead of *Kallima* and Carlo Puri Negri's 70ft *Atalanta II*, while on corrected time Maxi 1 was won by *Bullitt*, ahead of *V* and *Magic Carpet*³. In Maxi 2 *North Star* prevailed over *Jethou* and *Jolt*.

The second part of the IMA European Championship comprised four days of windward-leewards and coastal racing under PRO Stuart Childerley. Unfortunately a lack of wind on the opening day meant an AP over A was hoisted, but this permitted competitors to spend more time that evening enjoying the IMA's traditional cocktail party hosted on the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria terrace, overlooking Sorrento's Marina Piccola, far below, in which the fleet was moored.

On Tuesday a brisk 15-19 knot westerly meant racing got underway with two windward-leewards on the Gulf of Naples, in a lumpy sea state. To make up for a disappointing Regata dei Tre Golfi, the big boats redeemed themselves with *Bella Mente* scoring two bullets to finish the day second overall to *Shirlaf*, with *North Star*, the defending IMA European Champion, third.

Bella Mente won the first race, despite her crew having not sailed together since winning the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup the previous September. They were followed by *Jolt* and *North Star*, results duplicated in race two, except with *Jethou* second.

There was drama in Maxi 1 when, after rounding the top mark in race one, the spinnaker halyard broke on *V*, her kite falling into the water requiring all hands to retrieve it (see p4-5) as those astern were forced to take rapid evasive action. With a broken stanchion aft *V* retired, but returned in race two to finish second. This left *Galateia* to take the win, ahead of *Magic Carpet*³ and *Bullitt*.

Galateia's tactician Kelvin Harrap commented: "It was pretty hard on the water because conditions were tough and our new water ballast makes the boat harder to sail upwind in the waves. It was a game of inches again. In the second race Jordi [Calafat] and Murray [Jones] got us off the line well, set us up and we just crossed *V*. At the top mark, there were three 100-footers overlapped..." They remained overlapped at the leeward gate with *Bullitt*, taking the...bullet, ahead of *V* and *Galateia*, the trio separated by just 10 seconds on IRC corrected time.

In Maxi 3 competition was fierce: *Cippa Lippa X* leading after a 1-2, ahead of *Lady First III*, with a 2-3, and *Manticore*, with a 3-4. Winner of the second race was *Kallima*. "It didn't start very well," admitted tactician Romain Mouchel of their fifth in race one. "Our jib came out so we were late and then we broke the tack, so we were playing catch up the whole way. Then on the first bear away set we tore the A4, so we had to recover that and put

Full fleet start off Sorrento at the IMA Maxi Europeans.



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up the A2. In race two we had a much better start and went left in more pressure and more left shift.”

Maxi 4 was dominated by *Shirlaf*, which posted a pair of firsts in class, followed in the first race by *H2O* and *Fra’ Diavolo*, and in the second by *Blue Oyster* and *H2O*.

To recover the schedule, on day three two coastal races were held in a sub-10 knot southwesterly. The first was a nine-mile course, comprising a triangle and two windward-leewards. This saw several experience spinnaker issues – in Maxi 4 *Fra’ Diavolo* completed the entire final upwind leg with her kite up and flogging while even the usually immaculate *Wallyño* had been unable to drop hers at the leeward gate. The biggest suffered too, with *Galateia* blowing up a kite on the first reaching leg and *Bullitt* suffering take-down line issues.

The second race was the popular lap of Capri, enabling competitors to take in the famous craggy island and its landmarks, including the Faraglioni rocks and Punta Carena lighthouse.

It was a fine day for V, winning both races overall, ahead of *Bella Mente* and *Jethou* in race one, and *Bullitt* and *Bella Mente* in race two. In both she managed to pull away, leaving those astern stuck in traffic. “It is pretty rare you have a day like that,” commented tactician Ken Read. “Everything we touched turned to gold with a couple of good starts.” Meanwhile *Magic Carpet*³ was hampered by her kite blowing up just metres from the finish of the second race, enabling *Galateia* and *Bullitt* both to pass her.

However, it was Maxi 2 leader *Bella Mente*, whose second and third, the latter counting as her discard



Hap Fauth at the helm of his former Maxi 72 *Bella Mente* en route to her IMA Maxi Europeans victory. Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



▲ Riccardo De Michele's 78ft H2O is a regular competitor at the IMA Maxi Europeans.

▼ Karel Komárek's 100ft V comfortably won Maxi 1.



▲ Jean-Pierre Dreau's Mylius 60 FD Lady First III.

▼ Paul Berger's Swan 80 Kallima beat Cippa Lippha X to the top spot in Maxi 3.





The maxi fleet was berthed once again in Sorrento's Marina Piccola. Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

(introduced after five races were sailed), that pulled into the lead overall. "We had great racing – we love the competition," commented a delighted Hap Fauth. "We peeled off the starts pretty well today and yesterday. It was a dog fight, which we like. We had a very good tactical race. It was my first time racing around Capri, which was fun. I love windward-leeward, but a little variety is good. The boys did a great job. The idea is to 'make no mistakes' which is hard to avoid, either tactically or strategically."

Jethou's third and fourth were enough to pull Sir Peter Ogden's 77-footer up to third place, tied on points with second-placed *Shirlaf*.

While *V* was first in Maxi 1, she was being hotly pursued by *Galateia* and *Bullitt*, which completed the podium in the first race, as *Bullitt* and *Magic Carpet*³ did on the subsequent lap of Capri.

In Maxi 3 *Cippa Lippa X* was rewarded for her consistency, topping the leaderboard after posting a pair of seconds. *Manticore* won the first race in class, while in third was *Kallima*, which went on to win the race around Capri with *Lady First III* completing the podium. But none did well overall, with *Cippa Lippa X* the highest-placed in 11th.

Despite finishing sixth on the lap of Capri, *Shirlaf* remained second overall, but her Maxi 4 lead was looking increasingly vulnerable. After their kite issues in the opening race, *Fra' Diavolo* and *Wallyño* bounced back in the race around Capri, finishing first and second in class (fifth and sixth overall) ahead of the Andrea Fornaro-skippered Swan 60 *Sea Quill*.



▲ IMA cocktail party on the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria terrace.



▲ Members and guests share their experiences on the water.



▲ IMA President Benoît de Froidmont with Kallima's Paul Berger.



▲ My Song owner and event sponsor Pier Luigi Loro Piana.



▲ Maurizio Pavesi with Jean-Pierre Dreau and Gilles Fournier.



▲ Secretary General Andrew McIrvine with Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones.



▲ The IMA's Maria Luisa Farris with Fra' Diavolo's Vincenzo Addressi.



▲ IMA Treasurer and Jethou owner Sir Peter Ogden.



V's Karel Komárek with the Loro Piana Challenge Trophy for Maxi 1, alongside Loro Piana's Giorgio Benussi and tactician Ken Read.

The final day proved tricky with a long wait for the breeze to arrive, but eventually PRO Stuart Childerley was able to stage one race in a light, patchy wind. In this *Bella Mente* sealed the deal, the US team winning Maxi 2 and the 2024 IMA Maxi European Championship title. *Jethou* finished the race tenth, which, becoming her discard, secured her second overall, with defending champion *North Star* completing the podium, making it a Maxi 2 clean sweep.

"She has legs is all I can say," said a beaming Hap Fauth of *Bella Mente*. Latest of the former Maxi 72s, *Bella Mente* is six years old, but has undergone constant evolution and now sports twin rudders, water ballast and a powerboat-style interceptor on her transom. "We had speed against all of the 100-footers," continued Fauth. "The venue is great and the event was terrific – I am so glad that they got a

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race off today even if it required patience for everyone, participants and committee."

Fourth overall was Maxi 1 winner V, despite being OCS in the last race. "We were a little over-exuberant," admitted tactician Ken Read. "We wanted the right, because with a one-mile beat it was going to be super difficult to get left. Plus we expected the 72s to be quicker – so there was going to be traffic." Completing the Maxi 1 podium were *Bullitt* and *Galateia*.

Finishing sixth overall in the final race, *Shirlaf* secured the Maxi 4 win by just two points ahead of the IMA President's *Wallyño*, with *Fra' Diavolo* third. "We are very happy with the regatta," said tactician Gabriele Bruni. "We knew that winning the long distance race would give us a little lead. We tried to consolidate on



Andrea Recordati and his Bullitt team were second overall in Maxi 1. Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

that. *Shirlaf* struggles in light airs, but today we did a good job. We won our class, so we are really happy."

In Maxi 3, while *Cippa Lippa X* won the final race, it was *Kallima* which won the class overall, leaving *Cippa Lippa X* in second and *Manticore* third. *Kallima*'s Paul Berger and his crew sailed a strong event, discarding a third, while *Cippa Lippa X* had no results lower than a second in the inshores/coastals, but had to count a non-discardable sixth from the Regata dei Tre Golfi.

At the prize-giving, Secretary General Andrew McIlrvine congratulated the winners and "the event supporters Rolex and Loro Piana, plus the CRVI, the race committee, jury and organisers who have done a superb job this week."



Hap Fauth and his *Bella Mente* crew receive their prizes for winning the 2024 IMA Maxi European Championship.



Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou* team was a worthy runner-up in the Championship.



CRVI President Roberto Mottola di Amato with *Kallima*'s Paul Berger, Maxi 3's winner.

Wet ride on Hap Fauth's IMA Maxi Europeans winner, *Bella Mente*.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi





Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge



151 MIGLIA-TROFEO CETILAR

While the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar from Livorno to Punta Ala is very often a tactical light wind race, it appeared that this might not be the case for its 15th edition. A powerful mistral wind was blowing to the northwest of Corsica, promising gale force westerlies at the race's usual Giraglia turning mark.

Given the brutal forecast, the organisers of the 151 Miglia – Yacht Club Repubblica Marinara di Pisa, Yacht Club Punta Ala and Yacht Club Livorno – ended up making two pre-race course changes in order to protect competitors. Ultimately the fleet sailed the usual short leg north to a turning mark off Marina di Pisa but then, instead of heading towards the Giraglia rock, they turned their bows onto a more southerly heading in order to pass the islands of Pianosa and Montecristo, respectively southwest and due south of Elba. From Montecristo they would then resume the original course to Formiche di Grosseto before the final sprint north to the finish line off Marina di Punta Ala. This course was marginally shorter than usual at 138 nautical miles.

While this avoided the gale raging to the north of Corsica, it left the fleet once again having to tackle tricky patches of light airs.

From an original entry of 242, 191 yachts eventually set sail from Livorno, including eight 'IRC Over 60' maxis. The two favourites for line honours were Furio Benussi's Trieste-based 100ft ARCA SGR, a repeat line honours winner (and also overall winner in 2022) and the fully foiling 60ft *FlyingNikka* of IMA Vice President Roberto Lacorte, the 151 Miglia's founder and title sponsor.

Aldo Parisotto, another IMA Vice President, was back, having finished second in class in the last two



The 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar after party in the grounds of Yacht Club Punta Ala features a sit-down dinner for 1,800.



Roberto Lacorte's 60ft *FlyingNikka* famously has the highest IRC rating of all time.



editions. There was a welcome return of the 78ft ILC racer *Capricorno*, previously campaigned so successfully by the Del Bono family, including victory in the 2022 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge. Renamed *Nice*, the boat is now co-owned by Marco Malgara, President of ICE Yachts, with his friend, ICE 52 owner Alex Lang from the Cayman Islands. Also back was the Wally 80 *Sud* (ex-*Indio*, *Inti*, *Tonemai* and *Bombarda*), now being campaigned by yet another IMA Vice President, Maurits van Oranje-Nassau, replacing his Mylius 60.

In the moderate conditions of the start *ARCA SGR* was fastest away while *FlyingNikka* was forced to sail hot angles to get up on her foils. When the first transition occurred northeast of Capraia at around 18:00, *ARCA SGR* just managed to find the new pressure and by the time she passed west of Elba she was ahead by 15 miles.

As the boats ran out of wind west of Elba, *ARCA SGR* was still going well but, finally, she too parked up firmly just short of Montecristo. It took her almost three hours to cover the last three miles to the race's southerly turning mark, allowing those astern to close on her. It was only on approaching Formiche di Grosseto that the breeze filled in and *ARCA SGR* was able to sail downwind in 16 knots of wind, making 16 knots of boat speed.

Ultimately *ARCA SGR* crossed the finish line at 07:19:38 after 17 hours 14 minutes 38 seconds. "After Capraia it was really tricky because the conditions were really different to what the weather models predicted," commented Furio Benussi of *ARCA SGR*'s third 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar line honours victory. "Then at Montecristo it was really stop and go.



Race founder, sponsor and *FlyingNikka* owner Roberto Lacorte.
Photo: Studio Taccola

"It was important for us to win the line honours. We are happy and the guys worked really hard, especially Alberto Fantini, who is an amazing person and an amazing sailor." During the leg to Formiche di Grosseto two headsail halyards had become crossed and it was the wizened Italian pro who had ventured aloft to untangle them.

While the light conditions in 'the bubble' in the lee of Corsica destroyed *FlyingNikka*'s line honours chances, she made a superb comeback en route to Formiche di Grosseto. Sixth on the water at Montecristo, a long gybe south into stronger breeze enabled her to hit speeds of 30+ knots, elevating her comfortably to second. This she held, reaching Punta Ala just under an hour after *ARCA SGR*, despite having sailed almost 40% more miles to stay on her foils.

"Once again we demonstrated that *FlyingNikka* only needs to be flying 30% of the time to overtake every kind of fast boat," commented Lacorte. "Like last year we were affected by very, very light winds and it was impossible to find a way out. Our race was crazy – stopping a lot and accelerating a lot."

Conditions were especially lively heading to Formiche di Grosseto when the sea had built up, but was fortunately from astern.

Having barely had any sleep (*FlyingNikka* has two bunks, but her motion makes sleep almost impossible) Lacorte was pleased with the latest developments made to *FlyingNikka*'s foils and sail plan.

Almost two hours after *ARCA SGR*, Carlo Puri Negri's 70ft *Atalanta II* was fifth home, winning the 'IRC Over 60' maxi class by just 2 minutes 43 seconds

from Guido Paolo Gamucci's canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*.

"It was fantastic – I really enjoyed it," commented Puri Negri, who steered for all but three hours of the race. "The greater part of the race was upwind and this boat, even though she is 20 years old, is good at that. Downwind, *Cippa Lippa X* – with a canting keel, even if she is only 60ft – is gone. We made SO many sail changes..."

Completing the podium was *Nice*, living up to the successful regatta record of the Del Bonos, despite this ILC maxi being 29 years old and it being the first race under her new owners Marco Malgara and Alex Lang. "The boat was fantastic. We need to learn how to use her, but her potential is excellent," said Malgara. In fact, *Nice* had been leading until halfway into the race when, off Elba, she stopped for an hour. Malgara said he enjoyed the close racing with other maxis, especially *Cippa Lippa X*. "It was a lot of fun – we reached a top speed of 16.5 knot under gennaker."

Second for the last two years, Aldo Parisotto's Mylius 65 FD *Oscar3* lost the third place of the podium by less than a minute. "There were less transitions – perhaps just three – but we still stopped three times and it was very complicated," admitted Parisotto. "It was exciting to sail the new course with no Giraglia rounding. I am tired – I didn't sleep because we were racing with a reduced crew."

With the maxis safely berthed in Punta Ala, the crew could attend the traditional spectacular sit-down dinner for 1,800 guests, held in the magnificent grounds of the Yacht Club Punta Ala with top class entertainment, including a firework display.



Secretary General Andrew McIrvine presents overall maxi winner Carlo Puri Negri with his prizes.



Francesco Ettore, President of Italian Sailing Federation (middle) presents Furio Benussi (left) with his prizes for ARCA SGR winning line honours.

LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA OFFSHORE

With support from new sponsor Loro Piana, four days of inshore racing was followed by the event's cornerstone offshore race from Saint-Tropez to Genoa via the Giraglia rock off northern Corsica.

For this edition, organised by the Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, the forecast was for gale force winds en route to the Giraglia, followed by a more familiar light tactical finish. Sadly, as a result of the brutal forecast, many of the maxis entered chose not to start. As *Jethou's* Sir Peter Ogden put it: "The last forecast showed 25-32 knots which is dangerous since we can't reef the main. I do love the race, so it is a big disappointment, but better safe than sorry." Ultimately just 12 maxis, from an original field of 28, set off.

Ironically the Loro Piana Giraglia offshore start from the Golfe de Saint-Tropez was in ultra-light

conditions and the following morning in Genoa it was the same as a thunderstorm had passed by creating a lull for the first arrivals. It was difficult to believe that in between competitors had experienced a big breeze sleigh-ride to the Giraglia rock and beyond. What, for the more inshore-orientated maxis, would certainly have been boat breaking conditions, for others were potential record breaking ones and in the early hours of Thursday morning, race followers were anxious to see if the 100ft *Black Jack 100* could set a new time for the race. In theory she had the potential – in her first incarnation as Neville Crichton's *Alfa Romeo II*, she set the race record in 2008. Then, as Igor Simčič's *Esimit Europa 2*, she established the present record time of 14 hours 56 minutes 16 seconds in 2012. Ultimately, thanks to the light start and finish, and despite being more 'turboed' compared to her 2012

configuration, *Black Jack 100* arrived at 03:23:43 on the Thursday morning in 15 hours 11 minutes 43 seconds – a frustrating 15 minutes 27 seconds short of the record.

The race favourite for line honours, having achieved this just a few days earlier in the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar, was the Furio Benussi-skippered *ARCA SGR*. However the Trieste-based 100-footer was forced to retire after suffering hydraulic issues. This left the race for line honours principally a two-boat affair between *Black Jack 100* and event sponsor Pier Luigi Loro Piana's own ClubSwan 80 *My Song*.

To avoid a military exercise that was taking place, the race committee amended the course: after an offset mark, the fleet headed northeast to Le Chrétienne mark, east of Fréjus, and then on a fetch southeast to a mark off L'Escalet before resuming the



Competitors reached the famous Giraglia rock in record time. Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

Black Jack 100 found the conditions to her liking, although her new crew remained cautious.





LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA OFFSHORE

regular course to Giraglia and Genoa. This shortened the course slightly to 241 miles.

The gybe-free broad reach to the Giraglia rock was epic for all involved with several maxis notching up record speeds. For *Black Jack 100*, built to withstand the Rolex Sydney Hobart, the conditions were not unusual, nor were her 28-30 knot speeds. "It was balanced and going really well – we always aim to be up to wind speed with our boat speed, until it gets up to around 40 knots..." remarked Mark Bradford, skipper of *Black Jack 100* for previous owner Peter Harburg and who has remained on board. "There was a short sea state, but everyone is invited to come and do the Sydney Hobart if they want to see sea state!"

Bradford continued: "Before the race the forecast was just doom and gloom and everyone was panicking a bit, but to be honest it was a pretty easy race. There was some wind off Corsica when we had 37 knots, but it was downwind and this boat is made for it, with the right systems on board. We were in good shape." Despite this, they still played it safe and sailed beyond Giraglia into lighter winds before gybing north for Genoa.

Loro Piana Giraglia was *Black Jack 100*'s first event under the new ownership of Dutchman Remon Vos, who was sadly not on board due to an unrelated injury sustained before the start. Several of Vos' regular crew, including his son Ruben and owner's representative Tristan Le Brun, were on board, being taught the ropes by several *Black Jack 100* regulars. Wisely, *Black Jack 100* had been training with her crew of old hands and newcomers in the mistral prior to the start, so they knew what to expect.

In terms of the record, at Giraglia *Black Jack 100* was rivalling *Esimit Europa 2*'s record pace. "In fact we were up with the record until about eight miles out from the finish," commented Le Brun. Off Genoa the wind had gone flukey and turned on the nose for them. This, Bradford reckoned, cost them 30 minutes.

My Song did an admirable job hanging on to the coattails of her 20ft longer rival; 10 minutes behind at L'Escalet, by Giraglia they were still only 40 minutes astern. However here, in 28-30 knots, they executed an unlucky gybe in which the lazy runner caught around the end of the boom and, unable to be released, their mainsail split in two. Undeterred, they continued on with the mainsail dropped. Tactician Tommaso Chieffi commented: "The wind was going to be aft of the beam most of the way to Genoa, so we sailed the last 90 miles without main and still scored a reasonable result under IRC..."

Ultimately the maxi competition in the Loro Piana Giraglia was claimed by Frenchman Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina*, offshore specialist and winner of the 2021-22 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge. *Spirit of Lorina* also topped Maxi B's results, combining Loro Piana Giraglia's four days of inshore/coastal racing and the offshore.

Spirit of Lorina was third to finish on the water behind *Black Jack 100* and *My Song*, her elapsed time of 19 hours 37 minutes 42 seconds a colossal improvement upon the 43 hours 36 minutes 35 seconds she took in 2022. On corrected time, the smaller yachts in IRC One claimed the top places overall in the offshore race with only *Spirit of Lorina* making an impression on the top 10, finishing eighth.



My Song made great progress until splitting her mainsail in an unlucky gybe.
Inset: Pier Luigi Loro Piana (left) with tactician Tommaso Chieffi.
Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

"It was an incredible race and it was the first time that we were able to discover the boat in these conditions," commented a delighted Barjon. "We clocked up our highest ever speed for the boat – 29 knots and I achieved my own personal record of 27.7." Barjon paid special tribute to his boat captain Benjamin Enon as well as tactician, 2021 Solitaire du Figaro winner Pierre Quiroga. "We have an old team and they are all loyal. Benjamin did a great job with the preparation. Pierre was tactician and navigator for this race for the first time and it is incredible to sail with him."

Trimmer Antoine Joubert added of their race: "The fun part was from L'Escalier to Giraglia: There were no gybes until we reached Giraglia. The most wind

we saw was close to Corsica, when it got up to 30 knots. We had some good surfs. I think we tried all of the sails because the wind was shifting, especially at the end. In fact the forecast was really good and was exactly what we expected. We stopped between Giraglia and Genoa but not for long, only 40 minutes."

Among the maxis *Black Jack 100* was second under corrected time and Jean-Pierre Dreau's *Mylius 60 Lady First III* third, still taking less than a day to complete the 241 mile course. "It was quite nice, but difficult because of the sea – it was not rough, but short and from different directions, so it was not easy," explained Dreau. "It is the first Giraglia I have raced with wind from the beginning to the end."

Arriving in Genoa is usually difficult because even if there is a gale outside, generally off Genoa it's calm. This time we didn't stop coming in."

On *Lady First III* the most wind they saw was around 30 knots, in which, Dreau said, it had been exciting to steer. They benefitted from having had much experience racing offshore, augmented by the tactical skills of French pro Christopher Pratt, who commented: "I have never finished a Giraglia on a Thursday! We usually arrive at the same time...but on the Friday! During the race we had some damage to the jib top and main. We really needed the jib top for the eight hours around the Giraglia. The average wind speed was around 25-28 knots, so a bit less than forecast. I think everyone was cautious – reefing early and not pushing too much – but I think the boats that were pushing normally did the right thing..."

Fourth maxi was Carlo A Puri Negri's *Atalanta II*, fresh from her overall maxi class victory in the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar and enjoying her 20th birthday season.

"We started very well, but it was very tough – especially the first part," said Puri Negri. Despite her age, *Atalanta II* also scored a new speed record. "26.4 knots – but it was just for one second!" recounted Puri Negri, who relished helming, even if his boat is not a fat-sterned reaching machine like her newer opponents. "It was fun, but this boat is not really designed for this. When the wind gets up the newer boats start [to plane] before us and maintain a good average." *Atalanta II*'s chances were hampered by being becalmed – she arrived on Thursday at 11:25, having been within five miles of the finish since 09:00.



Spirit of Lorina's Jean-Pierre Barjon collects his silverware at the prize-giving outside the Yacht Club Italiano. Photo: IMA/James Boyd



*Spirit of Lorina set new speed records during the Loro Piana Giraglia offshore.
Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi*



Popular winner – George Procopiou's newly-acquired VO70 Aiolos (ex-Puma mar mostro).
Photo: Aegean 600 HORC/Deea Buzdugan

AEGEAN 600

45

In just four years, the Aegean 600 has become one of the world's 'classic 600 mile' offshore races. It is known for its complex course, starting and finishing off the southern tip of the Attica Peninsula, 25 miles south of Athens. Essentially, it is an anticlockwise lap of the Aegean, passing dramatic scenery steeped in history. Even the start/finish line is located beneath the Temple of Poseidon (dating back to 700BC) on Cape Sounio. From here the 605-mile course heads south towards the southwesterly turning mark of Kasos, turning east to round Rhodes before meandering its way up the Turkish coast to the northeastern turning mark of Agathonissi, then returning west to the finish. On the way competitors pass numerous landmarks of great beauty, antiquity and mythology, including the Santorini caldera and Mykonos.

The Aegean 600 is also fast gaining a reputation as a challenging strong wind race thanks to the local meltemi wind: The 2024 edition did nothing to lessen this.

Run by the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club, the event is supported by Olympic Marine, with Rolex becoming the event's official timepiece for the first time in 2024. For its fourth edition it attracted a strong maxi yacht entry of seven within its record-sized total fleet of 69.

Hunting for line honours and the race record were two heavily turboed, flying, former MOD70 trimarans: *Argo* of American double Melges 32 World Champion Jason Carroll and *Zoulou* of France's Erik Maris, a former Mumm 30 World Champion and Swan 45 European Champion.

Favourite for monohull line honours was Bryon Ehrhart's 88ft *Lucky* (ex-Rambler 88), making her first



The heavily turboed VO70 L4/Trifork.
Photo: Alen Photography/Nikos Alevromytis



▲ Jason Carroll's *Argo* led for the first half of the race but, ultimately, it was Erik Maris (below, fifth from left) and *Zoulou* that won the flying MOD70 match race, setting a new race record. Photos: Aegean 600 HORC/Deea Buzdugan



AEGEAN 600

outing with her new rig after her unfortunate dismasting in the previous autumn's Rolex Middle Sea Race.

Also competing were several ex-Volvo Ocean Race yachts: the VO65 *Sisi* and Jørn Larsen's VO70 *L4/Trifork*. However, all eyes were on the local team of the Aegean 600's chief supporter George Procopiou, President of the Yacht Club of Greece, whose Olympic Marine in Lávrion berthed the majority of the fleet. His VO70 *Aiolos* (ex-*I Love Poland/Puma mar mostro*) is an interim step towards his new 54m performance superyacht, due for launch in 2026. In 2024 the Greek shipping tycoon's busy multi-boat race programme had included the Cyclades Cup on his 37m *Sea Joy* and winning the Spetses Classic Yacht Regatta aboard *Flamingo*.

With the America's Cup just weeks away in Barcelona, Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli team principal Patrizio Bertelli had entered his 70ft S&S classic *Ulisse* with a crew including many friends from his past America's Cup campaigns, including Brazilian five-time Olympic medallist Torben Grael.

Other maxis competing included Guido Paolo Gamucci's canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*, which had competed in the previous year's Aegean 600, plus Rainer Anders' Costa Rican crew aboard the Ker 63 *La Pecadora* and Philip Rann's Swan 80 *Umiko*, with a largely South African crew.

As expected, well out in front were the duelling flying former MOD70s *Argo* and *Zoulou*. They enjoyed a blistering match race, culminating in *Zoulou* finishing just 1 minute 21 seconds ahead after 605 miles of dramatically varied conditions, from flat calms to 45+ knots in the passage between

Mykonos and Delos. *Zoulou* established a new race record of 37 hours 18 minutes 52 seconds, demolishing the previous 45 hours 5 minutes 25 seconds time set in 2023 by the 100ft maxi monohull *Leopard 3*.

Essentially *Argo* led for the first half of the race and *Zoulou* the second. “We had a small speed deficit initially downwind,” commented *Zoulou*’s English crewman Ned Collier Wakefield. “We were on the back foot by the time we got to the bottom; but the nice thing about having such changeable conditions is that there are lots of park-ups and opportunities to reshuffle the pack.”

But the varied conditions meant endless changing of gears. “The holes were not really forecastable, so you’d have 30+ knots landing on you and the next minute nothing. We did about 125 sail changes – it was bonkers! Reef 1, reef 2, reef 3, full main, repeat...I don’t think we have ever wound the pedestals so much...”

The experience was similar on *Argo*. “It was incredibly hard,” commented Chad Corning. “Everyone on board – and we have all been around the block – said it was one of the toughest races we’ve ever done. It was blowing 35 knots, then it was blowing 3 knots. You never seemed to have the right set-up, trying to transition out of a light spot or riding depowered because you knew it was about to blow 40. And it blew 40 a lot...in that it becomes a matter of surviving, not racing...”

While *Zoulou* held a good lead out of the Mykonos gate, the split around the island of Giaros delivered a last roll of the dice. *Zoulou* went north around its windward side while *Argo* split south. “On the



First monohull home was Bryon Ehrhart’s 88ft *Lucky* – a breezy first race with her brand new rig. Photos: Alen Photography/Nikos Alevromyitis





Secretary General Andrew McIrvine and Anna Andreadis present George Procopiou and his team with the George Andreadis Challenge Trophy for the race's highest-placed IMA member. Photo: Alen Photography/Nikos Alevromytis

windward side you'd expect there to be breeze but there was nothing, while there were 30 knots behind it – so *Argo* made a huge gain on us. But that made it fun; for the last hour we were neck and neck at 30+ knots,” recounted Collier Wakefield. Corning agreed: “For the last 30 miles, we were both pushing full main and J1 WAY out of range. No one could blink to reef or change a sail because that would have lost them the race. It was ‘hair on fire’ stuff!”

While the race may have left their crews broken, impressively neither of the nimble MOD70s experienced breakdowns, a fine indication of the level of their preparation and the skills and experience of their crews. “There is not a dent in a fender on either,” continued Corning. “And the abuse we were hurling at them was amazing.” While *Zoulou* may have achieved the all-important line honours, the lower-rated *Argo* won under MOCRA corrected time.

Finishing in 47 hours 31 minutes 6 seconds, Bryon Ehrhart's 88ft *Lucky* claimed monohull line honours, although short of *Leopard 3*'s record time. *Lucky*'s crew found the winds equally erratic, but the ride less hair-raising than it was for the trimaran crews, with wind into the high 30s but never enough to reduce down to her ultimate J6/three reefs combination. On board they saw peak speeds of 30 knots and sustained speeds of 26-27.

“It was a very tough race both on the crew and on the boat,” recounted tactician Joca Signorini. “It was windy at times and not windy at all at others and very unpredictable. It was very complicated passing to the lee of some islands with their big shadows. The wind would change strength often and dramatically, so it was hard to find the right set-up. Sometimes you'd have to take it easy if you didn't want to get caught out with the wrong set-up.”

Lucky's main competition came from Signorini's former Volvo Ocean Race winner *Ericsson 4*, now *L4/Trifork*, and in fact it wasn't until they were heading north up the eastern side of the course that *Lucky* broke free. However she then lost her advantage, becalmed in the lee of Icaria (east of Mykonos). Signorini explained: “We were ahead of the record for most of the race, but in the end we found ourselves in completely no wind. There we easily lost four hours just drifting in a very bad sea state. So we missed the record, but we are very happy getting line honours.”

Upon finishing *L4/Trifork* was ahead under corrected time, but ultimately it was George Procopiou and his mostly Greek team on *Aiolos* who, as first-timers to the race, defied the odds to win the race's Maxi class under IRC. Fourth overall in the Aegean 600's full IRC fleet, *Aiolos*' time corrected out to 24 minutes 27 seconds ahead of *L4/Trifork*, in turn 1 hour 26 minutes 43 seconds ahead of *Lucky* in third.

“The Aegean 600 is one of the most challenging races worldwide. It is of course a hobby, but it is one which has a lot of synergy for tourism, for Greek seamanship and, as Greece is first in shipping worldwide, we are trying to also make it the first in yachting...” said Procopiou, adding that he was proud of this year's record entry and its international make-up.

The result also meant Procopiou and *Aiolos* won the IMA's newly-created George Andreadis Challenge Trophy for the highest-placed IMA member in the Aegean 600. With the blessing of his wife Anna, this trophy was created by the IMA in tribute to George Andreadis, who died in 2023. Andreadis' endeavours on the water, twice representing Greece

at the Olympic Games, followed by numerous championship victories across a wide range of keelboat classes, were only matched by his huge contributions to the sport ashore, including helping to steer World Sailing, the ORC and also as a long-term member and IMA committee member.

On board *Aiolos* the most wind they saw was 55 knots between Mykonos and Tinos. “From the beginning we knew that we were a bit inexperienced compared to the competitors in our class,” commented tactician, Rio Olympic 470 bronze medallist Panagiotis Mantis. “We hoped for medium winds so we could play with our opponents. When the wind dropped between the islands, our tactics paid off and we gained a lot of time, especially from Kasos [the southerly turning mark] to the end.”

Of racing *Aiolos* in 55 knots, Mantis added: “We were under storm jib and full reefed main and trying to slow the boat down. There was a lot of wind – you couldn’t look forward without goggles. The water hit your face at what seemed like 100km/h. I was wondering if we were going to finish as even small damage in that amount of wind grows to huge damage...”

VO70s, built for racing around the world, certainly proved the right vessel for the Aegean 600, claiming the top two Maxi spots. “It was like an Ocean Race in two days,” commented Jens Dolmer, *L4/Trifork*’s skipper. “It is special – the changes are enormous throughout the whole race, going from 20 knots to suddenly 35, or even 45, and then to nothing. The race course is difficult to read. Everything is about the timing when you get to the islands: You can get



Lucky crosses the Aegean 600 start/finish line beneath the Temple of Poseidon. Photo: Alen Photography/Nikos Alevromytis

stuck in some places, but one hour later or one hour earlier and you could slip straight through.”

According to Dolmer, the most wind they saw was 40-47 knots on the approach to Rhodes and again after Mykonos, just before the finish. Like *Lucky* ahead of them, they parked up for three hours in a

big wind hole south of Ikaria (the island due east of Mykonos).

Certainly, the Aegean 600 is gaining a reputation to rival the Rolex Middle Sea and Rolex Sydney Hobart for being the most brutal of the world’s 600-mile offshore races.

Continuing the trend of our offshore races seeing typically more wind than usual, was August's Palermo-Montecarlo, the concluding event of our 2023-24 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge.

Organised by the Circolo della Vela Sicilia (CVS) in partnership with the Yacht Club de Monaco (YCM) and Yacht Club Costa Smeralda (YCCS), this took the fleet away from the Sicilian capital bound for a gate off Porto Cervo, overseen by the YCCS, where competitors then had the choice of either passing through the Strait of Bonifacio and up the west coast of Corsica, or taking the slightly longer route leaving Corsica to port, en route to the Monte Carlo finish.

Among the 44 entries were five maxis, with *Black Jack 100*, under new Dutch owner Remon Vos, favourite for line honours and the Giuseppe Tasca d'Almerita Trophy. While *Black Jack 100* came to the race from having won line honours in Loro Piana Giraglia, personally Vos had not been able take part in that, meaning Palermo-Montecarlo would be his first race on board. To get up to speed as quickly as possible, his largely Franco-Dutch crew were being shown the ropes by several of previous owner Peter Harburg's Australian crew, including former skipper Mark Bradford. With Harburg they had claimed line honours in 2023, but the boat was already familiar with the race track having claimed line honours four times prior when sailed as Igor Simčić's *Esimit Europa 2*, under whose ownership she had established the race record of 47 hours 46 minutes 48 seconds in 2015.

With a strong mistral blowing in the Golfe du Lion off to the northwest, prior to the start all eyes were on the routing and whether – finally – the record might fall. Tristan Le Brun, Vos' skipper on *Black Jack*

100, thought this possible, but warned of the high uncertainty of the forecast, indicating fast upwind conditions with 10-14 knots at the start, but a slower race between Bonifacio and the finish, with the potential for a large wind hole approaching Monaco. The northwesterly mistral would also create a lee to the east of Sardinia.

However, keener still on a brisker than usual forecast was American Bryon Ehrhart and his celebrity team of America's Cup and Volvo Ocean Race pros on board *Lucky*, their well-regarded 88ft steed (previously George David's *Rambler 88*). This was the second outing for *Lucky* following her dismasting in the previous autumn's Rolex Middle Sea Race. Between the two, line honours favourite – given her length and the forecast – was *Black Jack 100*.

Another first in the race was for the Balcaen family, this being the first race under their ownership of their former Maxi 72 *Balthasar*. Previously known as *Alegre/Caol Ila R/Notorious*, the Balcaens had carried out extensive modifications to make her more offshore-orientated, adding one tonne of water ballast, changing to hydraulic winches, plugging the numerous holes in her deck and removing some of her specialist inshore racing kit. Skippered by Louis Balcaen, the team was led by his former Volvo Ocean Race skipper Bouwe Bekking, who previously won line honours in the race on *Vera* in 2019.

Ultimately the race turned into a tight battle between the canting keelers – *Lucky*, the beamy, elongated VO70 and the slenderer, longer and older *Black Jack 100*, featuring her own unique features such as a steerable canard up forward and a tiny bulb made

A breezy Palermo-Montecarlo saw Remon Vos' *Black Jack 100* win line honours and set a new race record.
Photo: Studio Borlenghi







Lucky approaches the Monaco finish line, second home, but winning on corrected time. Photos: Studio Borlenghi



from tungsten (70% denser than lead). During the race *Lucky* performed better upwind and reaching when the breeze was up and stability required, while *Black Jack 100* came into her own when the wind turned light and finally swung aft in the latter stages.

While the mistral was raging to the west of Sardinia, the fleet, during the first night of the race, went east of the rhumb line to the Porto Cervo turning mark, to stay in the best pressure and avoiding the lee immediately off Sardinia. For the most part *Lucky* gained the upper hand here. "Our plan was to be north of them," explained her Brazilian tactician Joca Signorini. "We knew it would be tricky. On starboard, on the final approach to Sardinia, we were in a good position and then got the best out of the big left hand shift there."

After Tuesday's start, *Lucky* passed through the Porto Cervo gate at around 16:00 on Wednesday with *Black Jack 100* seven minutes astern. The two headed up 'Bomb Alley', between La Maddalena archipelago and the Sardinian mainland, although it wasn't until they started tacking off southwest Corsica that finally *Black Jack 100* passed her rival. Conditions between Corsica and Monaco improved for the leaders, defying the pre-start forecast: They experienced the most wind of the race – 25-28 knots – and a lumpy sea off northwest Corsica, permitting *Lucky* to recover miles on her rival.

Ultimately it came down to the last transition. In this *Black Jack 100* made it through first, enabling her to extend away to finish at 08:34:14 on the Thursday morning. Her elapsed time of 44 hours 34 minutes 14 seconds took more than three hours off *Esimit Europa 2*'s record.

“What more could we ask for?!” commented delighted skipper Tristan Le Brun. “This was the first race with the new owner and we put on an amazing show. He is over the moon.”

Of their race against *Lucky*, Le Brun continued: “We were hanging on to them; we knew they were going to be faster in these conditions upwind and reaching and they were for the first two thirds of the race. We knew it was all about staying close to them; we couldn’t pull away because we don’t have their righting moment and as soon as there is 15 knots they go like a rocket. When the wind got complex, we had our opportunity and pulled away from them...twice. They came back when the wind picked up, but the second time we did it in a way that they couldn’t come back...”

Lucky finished at 09:18:57 but won the maxi prize under IRC corrected time by 46 minutes. They, too, enjoyed the tight competition, commented Brazilian tactician and Volvo Ocean Race winner Joca Signorini: “It is always great when you have these big boats in long battles. We are very happy. The crew did a fantastic job. We managed to sail our boat very accurately and in the way we needed to, but *Black Jack 100* sailed well and deserved their win. We were trying our best to get in their way, but the last transition zone was difficult for us to manage in the light breeze.”

Once again, *Lucky* was being sailed by her all-star crew. Signorini continued: “Congratulations to Bryon [Ehrhart] who put a lot of effort into getting the boat together for this season. We are all pleased with the effort we put in, setting up the boat to be competitive against *Black Jack 100*. It was very



The Louis Balcaen-skippered *Balthasar* finished third in the Palermo-Montecarlo's maxi division. Photos: Studio Borlenghi



The jubilant crew of *Black Jack 100*, with skipper Tristan Le Brun and owner Remon Vos (second and third from the left).

good race.” Compared to their Aegean 600 set-up, *Lucky* was fitted with her longer canting keel and lighter bulb configuration for this race.

Balthasar claimed third place, finishing almost five hours behind *Black Jack 100* under IRC corrected time, with the VO65 *Sisi* fourth.

ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE

The 14 maxi competitors got to use their entire sail wardrobes during the opening event of the IMA's 2024-25 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge – the Rolex Middle Sea Race, featuring one of its most competitive fleets ever.

Taking place in the autumn in the Mediterranean, the Royal Malta Yacht Club's 606-mile anticlockwise lap of Sicily is renowned for its highly varied conditions, but the 2024 edition was more extreme than usual. During the first night, competitors received a pummelling with violent localised thunderstorms and 60+ knot gusts. Then, just 24 hours later, they were all but becalmed as they tried to claw their way along Sicily's north coast.

The brisk conditions on the first night took their toll, with many reports of sail damage and several dismastings. Despite being furthest down the race track, the lead maxis to the east saw 40-45 knots, causing two to retire, including the race's defending champion, Yacht Club Costa Smeralda Commodore Andrea Recordati's Wally 93 *Bullitt*.

After the dramatic start from Valletta's Grand Harbour, leaving Malta behind, there was an awkward sea state which initially cost the 2023 victors a kite. Then, as Joca Signorini explained: "We had a major broach and ripped another kite, damaged the jib and a bit the mainsail and some stanchions. So we decided it was better to turn around, because we had damaged some key sails. It was a full-on thunderstorm. It increased quickly. Fortunately nothing major broke and no one got injured."

In IRC 2, Luigi Sala's Vismara 62 *Yoru* had not progressed as far up the course and so caught the brunt of the big conditions that included 60+ knot



*Black Jack 100 passes the active volcanic island of Stromboli.
Photo: ROLEX/Kurt-Arrigo*





SHK Scallywag crosses the finish line in Valletta's Marsamxett Harbour to collect line honours.
Photos: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo

winds and three water spouts. “We could see the storm coming from the north, but we dropped all the sails,” commented main trimmer Claudio Valessi. “It hit a lot of boats and many retired. Fortunately everyone on our boat were okay.” The Italian team valiantly stood by *Hagar V*, the Aegean 600-winning Scuderia 65 of Gregor Stimpfl, after she dismasted and remained with the Hungarian yacht for two hours until her crew had jettisoned their broken spar and sails. Sadly, in the interim *Yoru* suffered a hydraulics issue, forcing her, too, to limp back to Valletta.

Up ahead, the 100s – Remon Vos’ *Black Jack 100* and Seng Huang Lee’s *SHK Scallywag* – encountered slightly less wind. *SHK Scallywag* skipper David Witt reported that they had seen 40 knot gusts and a sustained 35 “which in a 100-footer is enough.” In this their A3 had flapped itself to destruction as its middle came unfurled.

Similarly, *Black Jack 100* saw 42 knots while under three reefs and J4, enabling them to rocket downwind at 30 knots. It was beautiful – at night, we had thunderstorms...everything you can imagine. It was Mother Nature expressing herself!” commented skipper Tristan Le Brun.

By staying west, *Black Jack 100* had built a solid lead entering the Strait of Messina, but here she encountered foul tide, enabling the others to catch up, including Louis Balcaen’s 72-footer *Balthasar*.

At 03:30 on the Sunday morning, there was a restart for the frontrunners as they attempted to exit the Strait. Again, by staying west *Black Jack 100* edged ahead and she led around the course’s famous northeasterly turning mark, the active volcano island of Stromboli, at 07:00.



Bryon Ehrhart's 88ft Lucky did well against the 100-footers.



Louis Balcaen's modified Maxi 72 Balthasar won the maxi prize overall. Photos: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo

Pain followed as the wind went soft for the front runners as they clawed their way along Sicily's north coast. Here Bryan Ehrhart's 88ft *Lucky* briefly took the lead by edging south, before the four front runners tacked north in search of pressure.

As dusk fell the leaders floundered while *Balthasar* found the breeze and closed in, but so did the 50 and 60-footers behind. Overnight *SHK Scallywag* made steady progress to lead *Black Jack 100* past the notoriously tricky headlands of Mondello and San Vito Lo Capo, west of Palermo, the duo having put 18

miles on *Lucky* and *Balthasar*. Later, approaching the island of Favignana, *SHK Scallywag* managed to find pressure by being slightly west and led her rival onto the leg south to Pantelleria. Here *Black Jack 100* found pressure in the east while *Lucky* and *Balthasar*, still locked together, came from behind with pressure, closing yet again.

Black Jack 100 led around Lampedusa, the race's southwesterly turning mark, but here there was a change of tactic between the two frontrunners that would decide the line honours battle. *SHK*

ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE

Scallywag's David Witt explained: "Rounding that island I thought we were going to tack, but Juan [Vila, navigator] said 'we are going into that cloud – it will look terrible, but we will come out on the othering tack and we'll be 30° high'. When Juan Vila says that, you do what Juan Vila says. And *Black Jack 100*, for the first time in 550 miles, let us go." Vila's prediction came to pass, the wind veering from northeast to southeast, leaving *SHK Scallywag* to windward and laying the Comino Channel, while, to the north, *Black Jack 100* was unable to do so.

On a starboard fetch *SHK Scallywag* led on to the upwind final leg along Malta's north coast to the finish line at the entrance to Valletta's Marsamxett Harbour where she arrived at 09:43 on Tuesday morning, followed by *Black Jack 100* at 10:01. With a race time of 69 hours 33 minutes 29 seconds, the race record set in 2021 by *Comanche* of 40 hours 17 minutes 50 seconds was under no threat.

"It is a huge relief for me, for the owner and the team, after our bad luck in the Rolex Sydney Hobart breaking the bowsprit twice," commented a tired, but delighted, Witt. "So much work and money go into these campaigns. To come here for our first effort and get this result is absolutely fantastic. This is one of the toughest races I've done in a 100-footer. We had the 40-knot rain squall when we were trying to keep the boat in one piece and not tip it over. Then we had 90° wind shifts and glass outs. I am very proud of the team and navigator Juan Vila – what a decision to get him for this race. If he wasn't on board, we'd still be out there..."

Lucky, with her increased stability over the slender 100-footer, relished the final fetch back from

Lampedusa, enabling her to close on the 100s. Tactician Brad Butterworth said on the first night they had seen 47 knots and spent an hour sailing with two reefs and nothing else. "It was squally and a bit of an eye opener for us. It kept building as the rain came through. And it lasted longer than we thought..."

Afterwards, in the light winds that weren't the beamy 88-footer's conditions, *Lucky* did well to keep up with the long slender 100s and the nimble *Balthasar*. "We have sailed the boat in a lot of light airs, but it is not easy. *Black Jack 100*, especially, is incredibly fast in that stuff," continued Butterworth. According to owner Bryon Ehrhart they 'had a moment' approaching Pantelleria, the scene of their unfortunate dismasting in 2023.

Ultimately the top maxi was *Balthasar*, which won IRC One and was fourth in IRC Overall. "The first day was difficult, as it was for most boats," commented owner Louis Balcaen. "We had the big squall and then we broke a kite, but otherwise we managed to protect the gear quite well and we were able to stay in front of the low and sail in a straight line doing 20 knots to Messina."

Being the chasing boat benefitted them in the light conditions, able to see how the boats ahead were fairing. According to Balcaen, *Balthasar* – which isn't as beamy as some of the more recent 72s – proved herself in the light conditions of 3-7 knots. "It is very slippery in that, which was surprising. The whole stretch across the north of Sicily we were still in touch with the 100s."

They, too, had blown up a kite on the stormy first night. In torrential rain, "the breeze started building and there was some lightning, but then the breeze



SHK Scallywag skipper David Witt receives the line honours prizes from Malcolm Lowell (left) and RMYC Commodore David Cremona (right).

kicked in instantly, in 10-15 seconds," recounted tactician and round the world race veteran Bouwe Bekking. Their anemometer was reading 40 knots until it blew up. But the move that kept them up with the bigger boats that night was a beneficial shift as the kite blew. "We just tacked around and sailed the course and hoisted the jib and we did pretty well compared to the big boats ahead of us."

Jean-Pierre Barjon's 65ft *Spirit of Lorina* was racing among the speedy 50-footers in IRC 2, along with the Vismara 80 *Luce Guida* and the Nacira 69 *12 Nacira*

69. *Spirit of Lorina* ended up top maxi in class, finishing fifth in IRC Overall. During the race they'd faced 44 knots on the first night and had then experienced another gale while rounding Lampedusa. "It was an epic race," commented a very tired Barjon. "The first night was not good...nor the last."

They, like others, blew a kite on the first afternoon thanks to the lumpy sea state. "It was really interesting because we had all conditions: strong wind, beautiful weather, Brittany weather!" concluded co-skipper Benjamin Epron.



Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge



Kite drop on Pier Luigi Loro Piana's My Song.
Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget



The IMA's 2024 Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge set sail with an event originally set up 20 years ago as the Mediterranean season opener for the maxi class: the Real Club Náutico de Palma's PalmaVela. While no maxis took part in the event's offshore race, La Larga, five competed in the subsequent four days of inshore and coastal racing in and around the Bay of Palma.

The five competing were diverse, ranging from the 143ft/43.6m J Class *Svea* to the Wally 80 *Rose*, but competition was the closest it has ever been here.

Having won the last two editions of PalmaVela and in 2023 winning every race but one, Americans Chris Flowers and David M Leuschen's Wallycento *Galateia* was favourite, keen to make it a hat-trick. But the going was tough for the white-hulled 100-footer. At the end of the second day they were tied with their fellow former Wallycento, Karel Komárek's *V*. Winning Saturday's coastal race left them with a slender one point advantage, but then on the final day's coastal race it was *V*'s turn, taking her second win of the regatta. This left the two giant maxis ending the regatta tied on points. Ultimately, with her three bullets to *V*'s two, *Galateia* prevailed on countback to claim the maxi class for a third consecutive year, but by the most slender margin.

"Our third time winning PalmaVela – this is becoming one of our favourites!" commented a delighted David M Leuschen, who helmed *Galateia* this week. "I didn't get the practice day in because it was too windy, so the first day [of racing] was my first day in the boat for seven or eight months. It was blowing in the low 20s and was quite sporty, but I enjoyed it very much."

Both *Galateia* and *V* were turboed significantly over the previous winter. *Galateia* was fitted with two tonnes of water ballast which, by enabling her to shed lead from her keel, lightened her. Also upgraded was her spinnaker retrieval system so her kite drops were now lightning fast, in line with her competition. Meanwhile *V* had also become water ballasted and been fitted with a lightweight tubular pivoting boom and a rope vang arrangement.

Galateia tactician Kelvin Harrap acknowledged how the field had closed up among the 100-footers but was concerned that it was too early to determine the effectiveness of *Galateia*'s extensive winter upgrades. "They [*V*] are going better with all the changes they've made. With us – it is early stages. There are some times when we were better, but we just have to learn about the water ballast and when to use it."

"The first day was full on and everyone was very nervous because the boat has had so many changes. *V* and us – we traded first and second places in a lot of races."

Harrap's counterpart on *V*, North Sails President Ken Read was very pleased with their winter upgrades. "It is always nice to win, but in many ways we are all here to practice and prepare for the rest of the season. We were late, but the 'laundry list' [ie the modifications] is done and we can see results, which is all we can hope for. She sails like a different boat now, but we needed that because we were seven years behind in our updates, which we've had to make in one winter."

According to Read all the former Wallycentos (*Magic Carpet*³ included) are now racing in a lightened mode with water ballast. This effectively



*Galateia en route to her third PalmaVela victory.
Photo: Laura C Guerra/PalmaVela*





Joost Schuijff's 100ft Leopard 3. Photo: Nico Martinez/PalmaVela

gives them more 'gears' – a light mode with no ballast for downwind or light conditions, but now with the ability to pump on board three tonnes of water ballast (the equivalent of putting on an extra 30-35 crew on the rail) when upwind or reaching in conditions which require more stability. Previously the transfer speed of water ballast has been an issue, but as Read stated: "There is no disadvantage of using it now from a manoeuvring standpoint. It is as fast as a canting keel." Other mods made to V included changing to more aerodynamically efficient elliptical rigging and a longer bowsprit.

With the wind slightly left of due south on the final day, V won by claiming the pin at the start and then the left. "It was stunning – Palma at its best," said Read.

Over the course of the four days, three of the five maxis won races under IRC corrected time. Joost Schuijff's *Leopard 3* had podiumed in both races on the opening day, but perhaps most remarkable was the mighty *Svea*, which won Friday's first windward-leeward.

Svea tactician Bouwe Bekking commented: "It was really good for us, even though it was apples and pears – they [the other maxis] are 100+ tonnes lighter than us, but we can still race against them. And it is good practice." The race they won was in 18 knots of breeze and the eminent round the world race veteran reckoned their winning had come from performing a gybe-set at the top mark.

Even Sven Wackerhagen's *Rose* came close to winning a race. The Wally 80 (ex-*Tango*), scored a 4-2 on the second day of windward-leewards and in

the latter finished just six seconds astern of V under IRC corrected time.

“We are getting to know the boat now – you can see where we need to improve,” commented Rose’s Danish tactician, former match racing champion Jesper Radich. “Rose is good for her rating on windward-leeward but not so good reaching. Our owner is a good driver – he has been sailing all his life – but we are not at the level of the others in terms of our total package.”

At the prize-giving at the Real Club Náutico de Palma’s clubhouse, among his haul of silverware for winning the maxi class, *Galateia*’s David M Leuschen was presented with the prize for finishing top IMA member.



David M Leuschen and his *Galateia* crew at the prize-giving.
Photo: Nico Martinez/PalmaVela



The Swedish *J Svea* lines up with Karel Komárek’s former *Wallycento V*. Photo: Laura G Guerra/PalmaVela

LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA INSHORES

The Giraglia race underwent a transformation in 2024: In addition to the Italian luxury clothing and textiles company Loro Piana becoming title sponsor, there was also no feeder race from Sanremo to Saint-Tropez. In place of this the inshore racing prior to the start of the famous offshore race from Saint-Tropez to Genoa, was extended from three to four days. The event race village was located on Saint-Tropez's Môle d'Estienne d'Orves where, from 16:00 daily, it was possible to entertain up to 1,200 guests with food and drink at the daily prize-givings. As ever, the race was organised by the Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez.

One of the mid-sized events in the IMA calendar, the inshore racing featured 24 maxis (with a few more entered in the offshore) competing in IRC 0 and further subdivided into two classes.

Topping Maxi A in terms of rating was Roberto Lacorte's 60ft foiler *FlyingNikka*, although the main competition was between the 100s – Chris Flowers and David M Leuschen's *Galateia*, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet*³ and Karel Komárek's *V* – plus the Wally 93 *Bullitt* of Andrea Recordati and the longest entry, the Swan 115 *Jasi*. Pier Luigi Loro Piana's ClubSwan 80 *My Song* was hoping to line up with Alessandro Del Bono's much anticipated *Capricorno*, but ultimately the new judel/vrolijk 80 was not ready and didn't compete.

The hottest competition in Maxi A was again expected to be between the former Maxi 72s: Sir Peter Ogden's 77ft *Jethou*, Peter Dubens' *North Star*, Peter Harrison's *Jolt* plus *Balthasar*, the former *Alegre/Caol Ila R*. Now campaigned by Belgian father and

son Filip and Louis Balcaen, *Balthasar* was fresh from being upgraded with twin rudders, water ballast and push button hydraulic winches.

A previous owner of *Balthasar*, Alex Schaerer was back, racing in Maxi B with many of his old crew on board the Swan 90 *Strathisla*. But class favourites were IMA President Benoît de Froidmont and his Wally 60 *Wallyño*, Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina* and Guido Paolo Gamucci's canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*. Other Maxi B runners included the two-year-old Maxi Dolphin 62 *Ekita* of Bruno Marin, Jerome Bataillard's Shipman 63 *Sao Bernardo*, the Vismara 80 *Luce Guida* of Jean-Michel Caye and Raphael Laurenty's Y7 *Mystic*, plus the Swan 65 *Marlin* of Enrico Aureli.

On the opening day two windward-leewards were held on the Bay of Pampelonne in a 6-13 knot easterly, the sun coming out for the second as the sea breeze built. In these *Jolt* came out on top in Maxi A posting a 3-1, followed by *Jethou* which had got off to a good start in the opening race and held on to win it ahead of the 100ft *Galateia*. With a 5-2, Karel Komárek's *V* was third overall.

If competition was tight in Maxi A, this was less the case in Maxi B, *Wallyño* winning both races, remarkably continuing the IMA President's track record of having been unbeaten in Saint-Tropez, after finishing the previous autumn's Les Voiles with a perfect scoreline. As de Froidmont explained: "Saint-Tropez is definitely the place for *Wallyño*." In the first race, the slippery Wally 60 corrected out to 3 minutes 15 seconds ahead of *Cippa Lippa X* with *Spirit of Lorina* third. In the following race, second and third places reversed.

Spinnakers set as the maxi front runners exit the Golfe de Saint-Tropez.
Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi







Alex Schaerer's Swan 90 Strathisla was sailed by many of his former Caol Ila R crew.



The IMA President's Wallyño put in another resounding Saint-Tropez performance, convincingly winning Maxi B. Photos: IMA/James Boyd

LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA

Conditions increased on day two with winds in the high teens and a violent short chop, making the going tough even for the biggest maxis. Several yachts had technical troubles such as *V*, which won the first race by 10 seconds from *North Star*, but then suffered a hydraulic failure in the second race, forcing her to abandon.

There was a lead change in Maxi A. *Jethou's* 3-1 made her the top scoring boat (alongside *North Star's* 2-2) and prising *Jolt* from the top spot, both teams enjoying the lively conditions. As *Jethou's* tactician Ian Walker explained: "We saw 20 knots – not hugely windy, but there was a big short sea state. It was really uncomfortable, especially when the wind went right – you were punching into the waves on starboard tack. It was punishing but great fun downwind. Today was a big work out for the grinders."

After *V's* retirement, among the 100s *Galateia* came out on top with a 5-3, having started well in both races, although tactician Kelvin Harrap admitted they had gybed prematurely on the first run, which meant they had had to put in an extra gybe compared to *V*.

Finally *Wallyño's* stranglehold on Maxi B eased; these lumpy conditions were not typically her strong suit, with her crew admitting they sailed conservatively to avoid any breakage or sail handling errors. She won the opening race, albeit by just one second from *Cippa Lippa X*, but in the second the Italian canting keeler finally prevailed. "Upwind was like being in a washing machine – it was very tough, especially in the first race," said Gamucci, but adding that they had made 18 knots surfing downwind in the waves.

For day three the maxis were sent off on a short upwind leg before heading off on a longer coastal course, starting and finishing in the Golfe de Saint-Tropez. Maxi A sailed 30 miles to Cavalaire-sur-Mer and back, while Maxi B sailed 20 miles to a mark off L'Escalet before returning.

In flat water conditions that slowly built to 25 knots, *FlyingNikka* finally got to show off her potential, finishing more than 30 minutes ahead of the first Wallycento, but making no impression on corrected time – she has IRC's highest ever TCC of 3.444 (compared to *Galateia* on 1.795). *Magic Carpet*³ led around the top mark, followed by *Jasi* and *Jethou*. Eventually V and *Galateia* caught up with *Magic Carpet*³ only for V to tawl her spinnaker severely, leaving *Galateia* first of the 100s, ahead of *Bullitt*.

Jethou consolidated her position at the top of the leaderboard with a second consecutive bullet, albeit by just 12 seconds from *Jolt* on corrected time. According to *Jolt*'s tactician Michele Ivaldi, *Jethou* had done a better job avoiding traffic. "*Jethou* was in our gas – they tacked away and then at the top mark were 15 boat lengths ahead!"

In the lively conditions, *Wallyño* was again deprived of a race win by *Cippa Lippa X*. A third place for the IMA President's team left her leading, but by just two points. Ahead on the water, *Cippa Lippa X* and *Spirit of Lorina* were match racing, with *Spirit of Lorina* first home but, less than a minute astern, *Cippa Lippa X* winning on correcting time. "We made some mistakes, so we are not very happy," admitted *Spirit of Lorina*'s Jean-Pierre Barjon. "The conditions today were amazing, but twice we lost the spinnaker..."



Event sponsor Pier Luigi Loro Piana at pace on his ClubSwan 80 My Song. Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi



Sir Peter Ogden's Jethou came out on top again to win Maxi A ahead of Peter Harrison's Jolt. Photo: IMA/James Boyd

Spirit of Lorina crosses the finish line off Saint-Tropez.
Photo: IMA/James Boyd



For the final day, the maxi fleet was sent off on a 20-mile coastal course, to a turning mark off L'Escalet and back, a shorter course than the previous day's due to the trickier conditions: the prevailing westerly was fighting with a southeasterly causing numerous transitions and shut-downs, meaning the fleet endured a day of 'snakes and ladders'.

Galateia and *V* were first to exit the Golfe de Saint-Tropez, but by the time the next boats – *Jethou* and *North Star* – followed, the lead duo were already exiting the Bay of Pampelonne. The race between them culminated in *Galateia* winning by just five seconds from *V* on corrected time. Competition was similarly tight between *Jethou* and *North Star* with *North Star* correcting out ahead, but 24 minutes slower than *Galateia*.

The result was enough to give *Jethou* the overall Maxi A win. "Now we are more consistent and in the hunt. It is nice to be back in the mix," commented Sir Peter Ogden of the successful modifications they had made over the winter. Third overall in Maxi A, *Galateia* won out ahead of *Bullitt* and *V* among the 100s.

A final bullet for the lower-rated *Wallyño*, as *Spirit of Lorina*, *Cippa Lippa X* and *Strathisla* fought it out ahead of her, secured the IMA President's Wally 60 the Maxi B top prize, ahead of *Cippa Lippa X* and *Spirit of Lorina*.

"It was a very complicated week in terms of the weather, but that's usual in Saint-Tropez and also why we like it," commented de Froidmont. "Today the breeze was very difficult, but flat sea and 10-12 knots were really good for the boat."



Maxi B overall winner Benoît de Froidmont with his Wallyño crew and Pier Luigi Loro Piana (right). Photos: Loro Piano/Studio Borlenghi



A delighted Sir Peter Ogden and his Jethou crew, celebrate winning Maxi A.

MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP

The biggest, grandest event in the maxi calendar continues to be September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. This was the 34th edition organised out of Porto Cervo by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in conjunction with the International Maxi Association.

Racing was due to take place on a mix of windward-leewards off Porto Cervo and coastal races around the magnificent La Maddalena archipelago and south to the islands of Soffi and Mortorio. Unfortunately Mother Nature had other plans for the 43-boat fleet, as a strong westerly mistral played havoc with the schedule to varying degrees throughout the week. With winds gusting 50+ knots on the opening Monday, racing was impossible even to contemplate. On Tuesday, hopes of a coastal race were dashed with the wind even in the marina still 28+ knots.

Ultimately, of the five days scheduled, racing could only be held on the Wednesday and Saturday, the final day of the event.

New for 2024 was the addition to the event of the Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship. Being a World Sailing-recognised class means the IMA is permitted to hold two official world championships annually. In the past World Championships under the IMA's auspices have been held for the Mini Maxi, Maxi 72 and J Class.

As Maxi 1 – defined as yachts of <30.50m/100ft LH with an IRC TCC of 1.700-2.200 – in Europe in 2024 represented the largest and most competitive class within the maxi fleet, the IMA chose to allocate a World Championship to them.

There were 10 contenders for the new World Championship, including five 100-footers: the trio of

*The giants in Maxi 1 set sail on their inaugural Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*





Hot competition in Maxi 4 between Wallyño, Fra' Diavolo and H2O.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi





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▲ Wet ride on George and daughter Christina Sakellaris' Proteus, the eventual Maxi 2 victor.

▼ Vincenzo Addressi's Mylius 60 Fra' Diavolo won the first race in the Maxi 4 class.



▼ Alois Neukirchen helms his smart Mylius 66 Schorch. Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



former Wallycentos – Karel Komárek's *V*, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet*³ and the event's defending champion, *Galateia*, campaigned by joint owners David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers. They faced the upgraded *Leopard 3* of Joost Schuijff, while up from 'Down Under' was Malaysian Seng Huang Lee's *SHK Scallywag*, the highest rated in Maxi 1.

At the smaller end of Maxi 1 were *Bullitt*, the Wally 93 owned by YCCS Commodore Andrea Recordati; Pier Luigi Loro Piana's ClubSwan 80 *My Song*; Wendy Schmidt's 85ft racer *Deep Blue* and Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's 82ft *Django HF* (a previous class winner here as *Highland Fling XI*). All eyes were on the brand new 82ft *Capricorno*, campaigned by Alessandro Del Bono's highly experienced team, winners of the IMA's 2022 Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge.

The rest of the maxi class was divided between Maxi 2-4, plus the Super Maxi and Multihull classes competing under ORCs and ORCmh respectively.

When racing finally got underway on the Wednesday, Maxi 1 raced two windward-leewards. *V* got off to the strongest start, winning race one, but followed this with a ninth in the second. These results were mirrored, in reverse, by *Capricorno*, whose crew were thrilled to win the second race. But at the end of the day *Deep Blue* led with a pair of thirds. Tactician Rob MacMillan commented: "It comes as a welcome surprise! We felt pretty good coming into this regatta – we've made a few small modifications and did some training in the Caribbean with our core team, which has been together since the boat was launched – so the crew

mechanics are really good. We have been working on upwind boat speed relative to the bigger boats. We have gone down in sail sizing and optimised our rating. The level of racing in this fleet keeps going up and up – it is super fun to be part of..."

For the final day, Maxi 1 class was set a coastal race, with a windward leg before turning south to round Mortorio and Soffi. They then returned north to join the remaining classes on a clockwise lap of La Maddalena. During the race *Deep Blue* damaged a batten pocket, which, despite her crew effecting a repair, put them out of contention. Instead Joost Schuijff's *Leopard 3* came to the fore, winning the race. With her two fourth places on Wednesday, this launched them into first place to claim the inaugural Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship by three points over *Django HF*. *V* finished third, but tied on points with *Deep Blue* and *Bullitt*.

"This is a dream come true," enthused Schuijff. "We have been working hard for years on the boat, on the team and on the quality of my helming. We've trained frequently and had a training week in July when we ironed out some problems we had. Last year we had issues with several of the big sails, which we didn't have this year. Now the quality of our equipment is good and nothing failed..."

While their numbers were down, the Maxi 2 fight was as competitive as ever between the four former Maxi 72s: Peter Harrison's *Jolt* (winner in 2021 as Dario Ferrari's *Cannonball*); twice runner-up, *Proteus*, campaigned by George Sakellaris and his Olympic sailor daughter Christina; Peter Dubens' *North Star* (ex-*Rán 2*, *Robertissima*, *Sorcha*) and Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou*, the longest at 77ft and race favourite

after strong performances at the IMA Maxi Europeans and the Loro Piana Giraglia inshores earlier in the season.

To make up the lost schedule, on Wednesday Maxi 2 sailed three windward-leewards. Scoring a 2-1 in the first two races meant *Proteus* was leading until a fourth in the third race propelled *Jolt* into the lead, by a point.

On the last day Maxi 2 followed the same coastal course as Maxi 1. Winning this nudged *Proteus* back up, leaving her tied on points with *Jolt*, but winning overall on countback. "*Proteus* likes wind; it was great racing, great competition. That is why we keep coming here," said Sakellaris, of his victory after years of trying.

Sadly *North Star* was forced to retire from the final race after her innovative 'twisting' rig broke in the big conditions.

The smaller Maxis were split into two classes – Maxi 3 and Maxi 4, including all top 10 finishers from 2023. Maxi 3 favourite was the previous year's runaway leader, Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Spirit of Lorina*, an offshore specialist, known to enjoy strong conditions. But she faced solid competition from Alex Lang and Marco Malgara's *Nice* (formerly the Del Bono family's highly successful 1995 vintage *Capricorno*); Aldo and Elena Parisotto's *Mylius 65 FD Oscar3*, which finished tied in second place in 2023. Then there was former IMA President Thomas Bscher's Baltic 68 Café Racer *Open Season*; Paul Berger's Swan 82 *Kallima*; the Wally 80 *Rose* of Sven Wackerhagen; Massimiliano Florio's Southern Wind 82 *Grande Orazio* and the 68ft *Pelotari Project* of Spain's Andres Varela Entrecanales. Finally, there



Joost Schuijff's Leopard 3 chases Django HF en route to becoming the first Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Champion. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

was Craig Clifford's chartered Vismara 80 *Luce Guida*, most of whose crew had flown in from Australia and Tasmania.

Maxi 3's first day of racing was a 30-mile clockwise lap of La Maddalena. In this *Oscar3* came out on top ahead of *Rose* by almost two minutes on corrected time with *Grande Orazio* third. "We had the perfect conditions today for *Oscar3* and I drove quite well, especially upwind in the canal of La Maddalena [Bomb Alley]," said *Oscar3*'s Aldo Parisotto. "Then downwind we didn't do too many gybes – we sailed directly..."

Completing another clockwise lap of La Maddalena on the final Saturday, Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Spirit of Lorina* took first place, but, by coming home second, *Oscar3* finally secured the class win, after years of trying. "I can't believe it," enthused Parisotto. "It was very high stress, but I am very happy with the boat. Today was not easy – the wind was very strong. I preferred the previous race, because I drove better." *Oscar3* also won the event prize for the top-scoring IMA member.

Maxi 4 featured a strong line-up, many frequent competitors such as Riccardo De Michele's 78ft *H2O*, a multiple class winner here, and Giuseppe Puttini's Swan 65 *Shirlaf*, lowest rated, but a strong contender having won the Regata dei Tre Golfi earlier this year. Luca Scoppa's Dehler 60 *Blue Oyster* and IMA President Benoît de Froidmont's Wally 60 *Wallyño* – the only two-time winner of the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge – would face Luigi Sala's Vismara 62 *Yoru*, seeking redemption after her collision the previous year. Inter-Mylius rivalry was provided by Vincenzo

Addressi's 18E35 *Fra' Diavolo*, against Franz Wilhelm Baruffaldi Preis' 60 *Manticore* and the newest contender, the 66RS *Schorch* of Alois Neukirchen. Rounding out the class were Matteo Fossati's 64ft *Stella Maris* and Gerard Logel's Swan 601 *@rob*.

Maxi 4's first race was the same clockwise rounding of La Maddalena as Maxi 3, with Benoît de Froidmont and his team on *Wallyño* sailing an exceptional first beat to lead into 'Bomb Alley'. Although she was later overhauled by *Manticore* south of Caprera, *Wallyño* surged back alongside *Fra' Diavolo* and Luigi Sala's *Vismara 62 Yoru*. Eventually, on corrected time *Fra' Diavolo* prevailed, with *Wallyño* second and *H2O* third.

"We got a very good start and the conditions were perfect for the boat – light with a flat sea," said de Froidmont. "Around La Maddalena the wind got up to 15 knots, which isn't the ideal conditions for the boat. We lost it to *Fra' Diavolo* on the last leg when they were faster – they were sailing very well."

On the final Saturday Maxi 4 undertook the same 34-mile course around La Maddalena. In this *Wallyño* was fifth, while *H2O* stormed to first place, followed by *Yoru* and *Shirlaf*, leaving Riccardo de Michele's Vallicelli 78 to clinch the class win overall by three points from *Wallyño* and with *Shirlaf* third.

This left Riccardo de Michele, who has competed at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup every year since 2007, with six class Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup wins, one short of Niklas Zennström's record. "It was very beautiful," commented de Michele. "The wind was at the upper limit for this boat. We broke our gennaker, but we had another..."



Spirit of Lorina leads former IMA President Thomas Bscher's Baltic Cafe Racer 68 *Open Season*.



Luigi Sala's *Vismara 62 Yoru*, in big seas north of La Maddalena. Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



▲ Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Champions: Joost Schuijff's Leopard 3.

▼ George and Christina Sakellaris after Proteus' Maxi 2 victory.

▼ Niklas Zennström with the prize for Svea's Super Maxi class win.



▲ Multihull class winner Gaetana's Riccardo Pavoncelli.



▼ Victory once again to Riccardo De Michele and his H2O.



▼ At long last – Aldo and Elena Parisotto's Oscar3 comes out on top in Maxi 3.



The Super Maxi class, for yachts over 30.50m/100ft LH, featured five entries including two Js – Ronald de Waal's *Velsheda* and Niklas Zennström and Filip Engelbert's *Svea* which, at 43.6m, was the longest yacht competing. They were joined by more modern supermaxis: Former IMA President Claus-Peter Offen's Wally 101 *y3k*, alongside Juan Ball's Swan 115 *Moat* and Vittorio Moretti's Maxi Dolphin 118 *Viriella*.

Historically, when Js have previously competed in the Super Maxi class, they have won every race. However, on the Wednesday, in their first race around La Maddalena, it was *Moat* which prevailed after a strong battle against *y3k*. But the Js were not far behind, settling for second and third, with *Svea* beating her rival by just 17 seconds on corrected time.

The status quo was rectified in the final race, another lap of La Maddalena, when the Js came out on top, *Svea* coming through to win. She matched *Moat* at the top of the leaderboard on points, but won on countback, marking the Swedish J's third consecutive victory here.

"It was very exciting – good fun," commented *Svea*'s tactician Bouwe Bekking. "Today was really nice. We had 18 knots in 'Bomb Alley' and around 22-23 knots on the reach – it wasn't honking." Of racing *Svea* (a 1937 design) against newer boats, Bekking added: "If you have a proper run it favours us, but reaching is quite tough against the modern boats."

For a second year the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup featured a multihull class, once again including the catamarans Adrian Keller's 84ft *Allegra* and Lord Irvine Laidlaw's Gunboat 80 *Highland Fling*

XVIII, while new this year was Italian Riccardo Pavoncelli's freshly acquired Gunboat 66 *Gaetana*, whose team was led by British offshore multihull specialist Brian Thompson.

Last year *Allegra* and *Highland Fling XVIII* both won two races, with victory going to *Allegra*. Given the strong forecast, which her heavier design prefers, *Allegra* was predicted to have the upper hand again – both boat and crew being renowned offshore specialists, also with many more miles under their hulls.

On the first day's racing *Highland Fling XVIII* truly relished the light to medium flat water conditions, romping around the course to finish a massive 18 minutes 38 seconds ahead of *Allegra*. However, under corrected time, *Gaetana* won. This outcome was repeated on Friday, ensuring the first-timers took the class win convincingly.

"I am very pleased," said Pavoncelli. "We didn't know the boat at all. We were very cautious, but it went very well. The boat was designed for racing and I have a very good crew. We had some breakages, but that happens to everyone. We have never sailed the boat before in this much wind. We were doing 25 knots – I was very nervous!"

The regatta concluded with the usual well attended prize-giving on Piazza Azzurra, immediately outside of the YCCS clubhouse, where Rolex timepieces were awarded to the owners of the first-placed yachts. The Maxi line honours prize for the boat with the shortest elapsed time over the coastal courses went to *SHK Scallywag*. Oscar3's Aldo Parisotto received the prize for being the highest-placed IMA member.



The J *Svea* beat *Moat* in the Super Maxi class, to score her hat-trick. Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



1960s film star Brigitte Bardot welcomes crews to the famous Port de Saint-Tropez.
Photo: IMA/James Boyd

LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ

An ever-popular conclusion to the Mediterranean inshore racing season, in 2024 Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez was again the final event of the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC). Organised by the Société Nautique de Saint Tropez, the maxi racing was run out of neighbouring Pampelonne Bay over six days with a layday after day two.

Among the 250 yachts taking part at Les Voiles were the 'Modern' class for smaller yachts and the 'Classics', for which the event is historically famous, plus the Maxi class, featured 41 entries sub-divided into four classes, all racing under IRC.

The fastest maxis in Maxi A included race favourite Peter Harrison's *Jolt*, seeking a third consecutive class win here, alongside Sir Peter Ogden's 77ft *Jethou*, Alessandro Del Bono's 80ft *Capricorno*, Wendy Schmidt's 85ft *Deep Blue* and the 72ft *Balthasar* of Louis Balcaen. Largest in this class were Remon Vos' 100ft *Black Jack 100* and Claus-Peter Offen's Wally 101 *y3k*, plus Pier Luigi Loro Piana's ClubSwan 80 *My Song* and the VO65 *Sisi*.

Favourite in Maxi B, which, alongside Maxi A, was the equal largest class with 11 entries, was Terry Hui's Wally 77 *Lyra*, which during Hui's ownership has never been beaten in Saint-Tropez. This year her rivals included Paul Berger's Swan 82 *Kallima*, Maurits van Oranje-Nassau's newly-acquired Wally 80 *Sud* and Matteo Groppo's new Grand Soleil 72 *Bianca*.

Longest was Christian Oldendorff's elegant Spirit 111 *Geist*, while Peter Dubens entered his 60ft day sailor *Spectre*, following the dismasting of his 72ft *North Star* in Porto Cervo.

Lining up in Maxi C were the 60-footers such as Jean-Pierre Dreau's Mylius 60 FD *Lady First III* and IMA President Benoît de Froidmont's Wally 60 *Wallyño*, the latter favourite as defending champion, not just of the event but also the MMIC in 2023. The 10-strong class also included Luigi Sala's Vismara 62 *Yoru*, Marco Tursini's Advanced 80 *Mindfulness* and Jacques le Barazer's 78ft *Zampa*.

In Maxi D, the smallest class, there would be top competition between three past winners: defending champion Matteo Fossati on his 65ft *Stella Maris*; Jurg Schneider aboard the Swan 65 *Saida* and François Benais' Shipman 63 *Bambo*.

The first day brought sunshine and a moderate southwesterly as Maxi C and D sailed a coastal course to Cavalaire-sur-Mer and back, while Maxi A and B raced two windward-leewards on the Bay of Pampelonne.

As expected, Maxi A was dominated by race favourite *Jolt*, which scored two bullets, the first by 1 minute 48 seconds on corrected time from *Jethou*, with Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's 82ft *Django HF* third. These results were replicated in the second race, but in this *Jolt*'s win was all the more remarkable, after she fought back from being OCS to win by 57 seconds.

In Maxi B the defending champion was similarly hard to dislodge, *Lyra* also returning to Saint-Tropez with two firsts. "We did well," commented owner Terry Hui. "We got a good shift on the second race. Nicolai [Sehested, tactician] did a great job. You need to know the boat. We feel smoother and faster this year." *Geist* posted two thirds, with *Kallima* and *Sud* each scoring a second.

In the coastal races, Maxi C was tightly fought between *Wallyño* and *Yoru*, the latter winning by just 21 seconds under IRC with Jerome Bataillard's Shipman 63 *Sao Bernardo* third.

Peter Harrison's *Jolt* once again put in an exceptional performance to win her class. Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget







Anthony Ball's 1979 vintage Swan 65 *Six Jaguar* claimed the Maxi D race. "We sailed closer to shore," explained Ball of their win. "The wind angle was better there for us and we reached the layline before anyone else. We didn't make any mistakes, there wasn't any traffic and we didn't try and push it."

Day two was a case of the rich getting richer. The race committee again opted for a coastal race for the Maxi C and D and again *Wallyño* and *Six Jaguar* cleaned up in their respective classes, the Maxi C podium rounded out by *Yoru* and Karl Pisec's *Solaris 72 Black Pearl*. In Maxi D Luca Scoppa's Dehler 60 *Blue Oyster* was second, followed by *Bambo*.

Maxi A and B again sailed windward-leewards on Pampelonne Bay.

In Maxi A, while *My Song*, *Deep Blue* and *Capricorno* had started well on the gun, just minutes later the all-conquering *Jolt* had crossed ahead of the larger trio and never looked back, rounding the top mark first ahead of *Django HF*. She went on to finish ahead of *Jethou*, *Django HF* and *My Song*. In the second race, *y3k* led at the top mark, but again *Jolt* pulled past to win, 1 minute 42 seconds ahead of *Jethou* with *Deep Blue* third.

This victory was all the more amazing for *Jolt*, accomplished despite having neither electronics nor hydraulics. "In the pre-start we had a major shut down, so we just went old school," explained tactician Hamish Pepper. Sailing giant maxi yachts without hydraulics is usually not possible: "We were lucky that when it shut down we had things in a good place – if the vang was on we wouldn't have been able to get around the top mark because we couldn't

*Black Jack 100 leads Deep Blue, Balthasar, Jethou, Sisi and y3K away.
Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget*



▲ The 82ft Django HF crosses ahead of the Wally 101 y3k.

▼ Terry Hui's Wally 77 Lyra continued her Saint-Tropez winning streak. Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget



LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ

ease it, so we sailed around with the settings we had. We were lucky to get away with it."

Lyra similarly continued to dominate Maxi B, also preserving her perfect scoreline. The giant classic *Geist* finished second in the opening race, with *Sud* third, while in the second race the podium was completed by Andrés Varela Entrecanales' *Vismara 68 Pelotari Project* and *Spectre*.

Following Wednesday's layday, racing resumed on Thursday, but with the courses swapped – the slower classes now sailing windward-leeward on the Bay of Pampelonne and Maxi A and B classes dispatched on a 28-mile coastal to Cavalaire-sur-Mer and back. The breeze was light and, unlike the first half of the week, was northerly to begin with, resulting in those on the coastal having to contend with a transition zone where the wind died before filling in from the opposite direction.

After dominating Maxi A so convincingly, it all came to a sudden halt for *Jolt*, when she hit a rock exiting the Bay of Pampelonne. While the crew were bumped and bruised, she continued but her scoreline had been tainted, finishing an uncharacteristic sixth. With the field cleared, *Black Jack 100* came through to fill the void, winning both on the water and under IRC corrected time. "It was headland racing – good fun," commented tactician Mark Bradford. "We had good crew work and good manoeuvres in the transitions: There was a southerly in the final bay, while it was blowing from the north or northeast in the other bays. There were obvious lines on the water, but how you managed that was pretty

difficult. In the last transition we made it through in pretty good shape while the others stopped."

Jethou finished second for a consistent fifth time in the event, while *Django HF* was third. However as this was the first occasion discards could be applied, despite their bumpy start to the third day, *Jolt* remained at the head of the leaderboard, four points clear of *Jethou*, with *Django HF* a further four behind.

Surprisingly, in Maxi B *Lyra* also came unstuck, breaking her winning streak after she finished second to *Kallima*, the Swan 82 romping home to win by 12 minutes 18 seconds on corrected time. "We were a bit lucky from time to time, but the boat is fast in light wind, compared to over 15 knots when *Lyra* is much faster," explained French veteran Vincent Fertin, Paul Berger's coach on *Kallima*. "Our heavy weight is important especially on flat water: When we arrive in light wind areas with some speed our weight carries us through impressively compared to the light boats."

But with a discard applied, *Lyra* still retained her four-point lead over second-placed *Geist*, albeit with *Kallima* now just a point behind.

The windward-leewards for Maxi C saw the battle between *Wallyño* and *Yoru* continue, the former winning the first race before the latter came back to win the second.

As a result, at the end of the day *Yoru* led *Wallyño* by two points, with *Lady First III* five more behind. Nonetheless, *Wallyño*'s results were exceptional considering she'd completed the race with her electronics inoperable and after she had broken a mainsheet pulley just prior to one start.



Benoît de Froidmont's Wallyño only finished second in class, but this was enough to secure her the IMA's MMIC for a third time.
 Photo: IMA/James Boyd



Traditionally Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez is as much a sailing festival as it is a sailing regatta. Photos: Kurt Arrigo/Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez



LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ

Another perfect scoreline was broken in Maxi D with *Six Jaguar* losing the second windward-leeward to *Blue Oyster*. "We had 1-2 today, so we are going alright," commented Anthony Ball's son George, who helms *Six Jaguar*. "The wind today was much better than we were expecting, but that's been the case throughout the week. I think we are well trained with a young crew and we are gelling well." *Six Jaguar* finished the day leading Maxi D overall by three points from *Blue Oyster*, with Rob Conn's CNB60 *Expression of London* just one more point behind.

Unfortunately the wind on Friday was inadequate causing racing to be cancelled. Thus the final races on the Saturday wrapped up the event, also deciding the winner of the IMA's 2024 Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge. Maxi A and B were sent on another coastal race while Maxi C and D raced a single windward-leeward.

In Maxi C, Benoît de Froidmont's *Wallyño* claimed the final race, winning by 1 minute 7 seconds from *Yoru*, but this was not enough to topple Luigi Sala's *Vismara 62*, which won by a point, with *Lady First III* third.

Yoru was originally designed to cruise doublehanded and has taken a while to be turned into a dual-function cruiser-racer. "We are very happy because this was the first time we have won such a major event," said Sala. "It comes after 18 months of improvement to the boat and working with the whole team. And it has happened in such a nice place like this. We will celebrate tonight!"

Wallyño's result was enough to win the IMA President his third IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge title. "It was a nice finish – conditions were perfect with 10-12 knots and a flat sea,"

commented de Froidmont. “Windward-leewards are extremely good fun for this type of boat. The level of our fleet is very high and the crews on these three boats [*Wallyño*, *Yoru* and *Lady First III*] are extremely skilled, which makes the racing very challenging.”

In Maxi D, Luca Scoppa’s Dehler 60 *Blue Oyster* topped the podium again, but similarly it was not enough to hold back Anthony Ball’s Swan 65 *Six Jaguar* which ended the regatta first, three points ahead overall, with *Expression of London* third. “We were second today even though windward-leewards aren’t our forte as modern boats can point better,” commented George Ball. “It was just about making sure our manoeuvres were great. We’ve greatly enjoyed it – it is our first time here and we’ll definitely be back.”

In Maxi A, Peter Harrison’s *Jolt* overcame the damage sustained during Thursday’s grounding (including gouging her keel and blowing the top off a water ballast tank) to finish the final coastal race second to Sir Peter Ogden’s *Jethou*. With this result *Jolt* sealed her first place overall, three points ahead of *Jethou* with Giovanni Lombardi Stronati’s *Django HF* in third, a further eight behind.

“We had a great week,” commented Harrison. “The first two days we had four bullets, but windward-leewards have always been our strong suit. Overall the boat is going really well. The improvements we’ve made in windier conditions are enormous for us. We had one bad day when we had a ‘coming together’ with the mainland, which was sad and the boat wasn’t really the same after that. But today was great – we maintained our place and are very happy with the result.”

On board *Lyra*, owner and crew were delighted to add another first place to their score to secure yet another overall class win in Saint-Tropez. Owner Terry Hui commented: “It has been good. *Kallima* has been very competitive – when there is no wind, wind holes can scramble it. You could be 20ft away

from someone who is gone, while you can be left waiting. We were lucky to get out, but Nicolai Sehested, [*Lyra*’s tactician] found wind.” Claiming second place in the Maxi B class was Paul Berger’s *Kallima* with Spirit 111 *Geist* rounding out the podium.



IMA President Benoît de Froidmont receives Wallyño’s trophies.



Sir Peter Ogden’s Jethou was runner-up in Maxi A.



Luigi Sala’s Yoru won Maxi C, the Italian team’s first major victory.



Another strong performance by Terry Hui’s Lyra won them Maxi B.
Photos: Guilain Grenier/Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez



MMOC WINNER – ATALANTA II/ CARLO PURI NEGRI



Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi and Studio Taccola

For the 2023-24 season, Carlo Alessandro Puri Negri and his 70ft *Atalanta II* became the first ever two-time winners of the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge (MMOC) trophy, having previously won over 2017-18.

Competing in three events, along with Bryon Ehrhart's 88ft *Lucky* (winner of the MMOC's first edition in 2015-16 as George David's *Rambler 88*), *Atalanta II*'s top result was winning the maxi class in the tactically challenging 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar. She also put in solid performances in the Regata dei Tre Golfi and the breezy Loro Piana Giraglia offshore race.

"Winning the 151 Miglia, followed by a lovely lunch on board," says Puri Negri of the highlight of his 2023-24 season. "And the beautiful Giraglia. We raced only the long offshore race there and set a

new record – we reached 26 knots while planing! This was an amazing result for *Atalanta II*, a boat that was launched in 2004. It was a good way to celebrate her 20th birthday this year."

Puri Negri's sailing programme in 2023-24 was exclusively offshore. "Personally I do love, and very much prefer, offshore races rather than inshore ones. That is why in 2025 I am planning to race at least the Regata dei Tre Golfi and Aegean 600 and I might compete in La Larga for the very first time," he says of the newish offshore race of PalmaVela.

Atalanta II benefits from a stable crew which is half family and friends and half professional, including Elio Petracchi, who has raced with Puri Negri for the entirety of his sailing career. Watch out for the silver 70 and her enthusiastic owner in 2025 as they try for their MMOC hat-trick.



MMIC WINNER – WALLYÑO/BENOÎT DE FROIDMONT

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Photos: Aurélie Crao-de Froidmont and IMA/James Boyd

The IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) has been gaining traction in recent years. In 2024 five of our members took part in four inshore events and an additional six raced in three, the minimum required to qualify for the series.

Running into the final event it was close between the two former Maxi 72s – *North Star* of Peter Dubens and *Jolt* of Peter Harrison – but, ultimately, they were unable to catch Benoît de Froidmont's Wally 60 *Wallyño*. The MMIC has only been held four times but, incredibly, the IMA President has won it three times.

Always strong in Saint-Tropez, with her largely French crew led by tactician Cédric Pouligny, *Wallyño* competed in four events during the season. She won her class at Loro Piana Giraglia and otherwise had a supremely consistent season,

finishing second in class at the IMA Maxi Europeans as well as at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup (despite the event being breezy – conditions that don't normally suit her) and Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

"The level has been very good and the crew on the leading boats are extremely skilled – it makes the racing very challenging," observed a delighted de Froidmont, adding: "Cédric [Pouligny] and the crew have done a great job again this year."

Aside from de Froidmont, Pouligny and boat captain Benjamin Redreau, *Wallyño's* crew this year included: Olivier Douillard, Arnaud Vasseur, Robinson Hiesch, Nicolas Lemoigne, Benjamin Redreau, Quentin Lucet, Philippe Buchar, Mathieu Frei, Solune Robert and Emile Amoros. De Froidmont was joined occasionally by his wife Aurélie and daughter Capucine.

Despite the America's Cup in Barcelona and other events taking up the time of some IMA members in 2024, this did not translate into a quiet year in the IMA calendar. In fact, in the technical office, there was no let up at all. A number of measurers, particularly Pablo Ferrer, spent an ever-increasing amount of time through the winter and early spring not only measuring new builds, but measuring winter modifications across the fleet too.

Water ballast and crew numbers

The start of 2024 saw a large number of competitors testing water ballast for the first time, often tied in with the reduced crew rating benefits. This modification appears to have taken hold, with more competitors heading in the same direction for 2025 as the wide, shallow sterns of the modern IRC hulls are proving particularly appropriate for adaptation. While it can take time to adjust to the change, it became clear through the last season that the benefits in performance using the rapid transfer systems were not only seen on longer races, but on short courses as well.

Linked with this is the continuing discussion about the processes of applying the reduced crew rating, where if the IRC value is reduced to 70% then a rating benefit is seen. We continue to investigate whether this is the best approach and are now looking to simplify it, with the possibility of having a fixed number reduction across the fleet – irrespective of size. This is because it appears that whether racing a 60-footer or a 100-footer, reducing the crew number by more than five or six makes handling the yachts a struggle. As such, we are looking to use this standard value across the fleet, although it needs further investigation before we

recommend any changes. One thing that is confirmed for 2025 is that the rounding of this number will be up, as per other values used in IRC, to ensure consistency.

The great debate: rating systems

During the AGM in Porto Cervo in September 2024, the members present clearly indicated their concerns of racing in combined classes, usually at events when the full fleet is not present. This is an unavoidable consequence when fleet sizes reduce, and the question was asked as to whether the chosen rating system for the Maxi fleet (IRC) was doing enough and was it the best choice? As a result of this, the Officers and Secretary General asked the ATO to assemble a group of professionals with wide-ranging experience and knowledge, not only to review the choice of rating rule, but to look at the wider issues and recommend ways to improve racing where possible.

This group was formed in October 2024, comprising designers involved in the maxi fleet and active in IRC, ORC and one-designs (judel/vrolijk, Botin Partners, Mills Design and Juan K Design). Sailors who raced under both systems and other industry experts (Gavin Brady, Rob Ouellette, Nick Rogers, Chris Sherlock and Mark Somerville) also added their experience. The discussion was open, but the views were unquestionably consistent.

Fundamentally, while IRC and ORC have their advantages and disadvantages, they are both based on the same physics and understandings of naval architecture. Therefore the approaches may vary slightly but, in the end, simply dual scoring the existing fleet (which has been gradually optimised to



Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

IRC over the last decade and a half) will not tell you the answers you need. Really, the questions are: what would need to be done to the existing fleet to optimise them for ORC? Would they then remain competitive against a new boat designed, built and optimised purely to ORC? And – the big question from the floor – would the Maxi Grand Prix (ex-Maxi 72) fleet still win?

The simple answer is that no one knows what an ORC-optimised maxi looks like, as no one has yet designed and built one, examining the full extent of the ORC software. However, from several forays into ORC in the USA by both *Bella Mente* and *Vesper*, they appear to maintain their position on the podium under either rule. This is no great surprise. We see the same dominance from the TP52s around the world under both systems, despite being

designed for neither. It appears that both systems are doing their jobs accurately. The reason that both the TP52s and ex-Maxi 72s are so dominant is that both have been developed, refined and examined to a far higher level as a fleet than any individual boat could. With such refinement to design and execution, it would actually be strange if a unique approach came out ahead, from the outset. To reach their level of refinement not only means starting with the empirical knowledge gained from their predecessors, but investing the time, money and technology available to them all, at a pace equal to the number of boats in their fleet: A virtually impossible task. We also know that the ORC optimum will not look the same as the IRC optimum. As such, to simply switch would result in the whole fleet having to be modified to meet a new set of optimisation criteria. Under IRC the changes generally result in an improvement in performance each year. In a switch to ORC, this is not certain. Therefore the group did not want to recommend to the members a change that increases costs, while potentially reducing the value of the assets and potentially the performance of their yachts. Crucially, in the end, the results are most likely to be similar across the fleet under both systems, with the ex-Maxi 72s still dominant.

One request that came across very clearly was that this should not be an annual discussion as starting a maxi campaign from scratch takes years with planning ahead critical to success. As such, all in the group agreed on a recommendation to retain the current rating rules used for each class (Maxis: IRC, Supermaxis: ORCsy, Multihulls: ORCmh) for the next five years. Then, following an in-depth

discussion with the Officers, the decision was to revise this, with the status being maintained for a minimum of three years, but with the ATO providing recommendations at each AGM as to whether this period should be extended for a further year or not. This ensures, for the first time, that everyone will know what rule they will be sailing to for the next three years, at all times: A big step forward. In addition, changing rating systems would likely cause instability at a time when there is strong growth in the maxi fleet.

This was not the only item on the agenda, or the only recommendation to come from the group. The group is continuing to do further research in these two particular areas in order to help answer the questions posed by members:

1. **Race courses:** when there are insufficient numbers to allow each sub-division (Maxi 1-4) to race separately, there is a need to combine them. Historically we have seen that the highly optimised ex-Maxi 72 fleet are extremely hard to compete against in this scenario; after all, they are heavily optimised from inception to IRC for short course, windward-leeward racing. Many of their opposition has been optimised towards IRC, but as with the WallyCentos, which began their lives as cruiser-racers, their origins are not as purely defined towards this goal, i.e. they did not start from the same stage of development towards their current purpose. At 30% the displacement of the 100-footers, throwing a 70-footer around these courses and getting up to speed after each tack will always give the latter the edge. As such, the recommendation is, when



The IMA measurers at work prior to the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup start.
Photo: IMA/James Boyd

fleets are combined, to look at different course types and lengths, allowing the larger boats more time and clearance to race their own course, without being dictated to by more optimised racers by the time they get to the first windward mark. The ATO will continue to research this, working with our PROs and race organisers to find the best balance to ensure everyone has the fairest chance to stand atop the podium.

2. **Class splits:** For the Maxi 1 and Maxi 2 subdivisions, this seems fairly settled and we are not

looking to change the simple division based on performance (TCC) alone. However, for Maxi 3 and 4 we see a wide range of boats of all sizes and types battling it out on the same course. Lengths here range from 60 feet to over 90 feet, with ratings from less than 1.100 to 1.599. For these groups, it is recommended that we revert to a simple formula based on both TCC and length to divide the fleet. Extending this, it may be wise to include boats that fit the criteria of Maxi 2, but not the ethos of Maxi 2, into this group. The approach being that if the TCC is above 1.600,

but the formula gives a value below a certain level, the boat is moved into Maxi 3. Similarly, Maxi 3 and 4 will be divided based on this formula. This will keep boat types and sizes racing together and hopefully remove some of the frustration when such different boat types cannot race head-to-head on the water, for example when a building breeze shoots much smaller slower boats up the leaderboard, or vice versa.

Both of these areas will be researched and developed through the 2025 seasons, and we will continue to proactively chase the best solutions for all.



The smaller maxis may get fairer class splits if they are divided by a revised formula incorporating length, rather than just IRC TCC.

Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

Coming up in 2025

Looking ahead, we have a lot to do although stability needs to be maintained. This is true particularly as a number of IMA Officers come to the end of their terms.

While there is a huge amount of knowledge among the current Board, it is great to see a number of technically knowledgeable candidates stepping forward. Working with a Board that has high technical understanding ensures discussions are detailed and informative for all, meaning the final decisions made are well considered.

Through the spring, the ATO will continue to update measurements for the current fleet and complete those of the newest additions. This year we anticipate some long-awaited yachts making their debut on the race course, reflecting an area we can take pride in – supporting yacht design innovation and evolution.

I, for one, was concerned how yacht design would continue to develop after the America's Cup moved to foiling multihulls (and now foiling monohulls), while the Volvo Ocean Race moved to one designs over a decade ago and now into foiling IMOCAs. However it is now absolutely clear that members of

the IMA and owners of maxi yachts have not only picked up this baton, but they have allowed designers, sailors and the industry at large to have a far more open brief than these events ever have. This is also partly thanks to the openness of the IRC rating system that permits considerable freedom.

Once the maxi fleet used to be the place to which lessons of the America's Cup and Volvo Ocean Race were passed down, now it is our maxi fleet that is the hotbed of innovation; the state of the art that can provide the 'trickle down' effect benefitting smaller race boats.



YACHT CLUB ITALIANO PRESIDENT: CARLO COMELI

In December 2023, at their scheduled four-yearly regime change, by unanimous decision, the Yacht Club Italiano in Genoa welcomed a new President in long term member Carlo Cameli, alongside Vice Presidents Gregorio Gavarone and Nicolò Caffarena.

As a family, the Camelis have long ties to Genoa and in Italy are well known for their shipping interests. Compagnia Marittima Carlo Cameli was established



Carlo Cameli – firm hand on the Yacht Club Italiano helm.
Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

in the 1920s by the present Carlo's grandfather. Post-WWII the company rebuilt itself with the aid of the Marshall Plan, at which time its activities included salvaging ships sunk during the war. It grew rapidly: from the 1950s until the 1970s, the company was the largest shipowner in Italy and one of the largest privately-owned shipowner groups in Europe. At its peak the Cameli fleet of 50 comprised oil tankers, bulk carriers and ferries. The former included the world's largest of her day, the *Carlo Cameli* (LOA 868ft/265m and 90,000dwt) launched in 1964. Her 12-cylinder Fiat engine, weighing 1,068 tonnes and producing 32,500bhp, at the time was the world's largest diesel (now on display at Genoa's Promotori Musei del Mare). Their ferry service, Navigazione Toscana SpA, ran between the mainland and the Tuscan Archipelago and was the first in Italy to use ferries with opening doors at both bow and stern.

While the present Carlo's tenure with the family firm was relatively brief, before it was split up and sold off, he subsequently enjoyed a long illustrious career in the shipping industry, both as a broker and ship owner. This saw him based in Rome for 30 years before returning to his native Genoa three years ago.

Throughout this time the Camelis have also enjoyed sailing and for decades have had close ties to the Yacht Club Italiano. Most notably, the President's uncle, Filippo Cameli and Guido Giovanelli owned *Ea*, a slender 20m cutter built by Baglietto, inspired by a Laurent Giles design. Launched in 1952 *Ea* famously won joint line honours in the first Giraglia race in 1953 – crossing the line neck and neck with another yacht, *Amity*. She went on to win line honours in all of the important races of the day, including the Giraglia again in 1956 and 1959.



YACHT CLUB ITALIANO
2025

Of the Camelis, Carlo was the most enthusiastic racer. He began competing when he was just eight years old and during his childhood raced Flying Juniors and other dinghies, J/24s and various IOR boats – always under the YCI burgee. "I raced on *Ea* as well as a young boy," he recalls. Today his preferred sailing is on board his beloved Hallberg Rassy 45 *Blue Indy*, which although a blue water cruising yacht, he occasionally races. Naturally though, now he has a full time job within sailing, he has no time to sail. "I have my boat here – I can see it from my window. In the last two months I've been out only once. It is terrible, because I love it. I've even raced it – I did a couple of Giraglias and I did well here in the Millevele," he says, referring to the race the YCI holds every September, coinciding with Genoa Boat Show.

However, occasionally he ventures out on one of the club's J/70s for casual racing and, recently, in a fleet of 16, he was pleased to have finished one race in third: "which means that the rust has not set in just yet!"

2025 will be a significant year for the President, celebrating 60 years of his being a YCI member. Past members of the Cameli family have also been YCI flag officers, so this is a case of maintaining a family tradition.

"When I was asked to take this role – I did it only when I knew I could give it the time," Cameli



The Yacht Club Italiano (YCI) clubhouse in the Port of Genoa was opened in 1929.



President of the Yacht Club Italiano Carlo Cameli makes his address at the Loro Piana Giraglia prize-giving. Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

confides. "I am not looking for any medals for it – if I take on a task like this, it is because I know I can do it and because I've relaxed my work. I am here every day full time, which I think is very useful: I believe you can be told things, but it is much better to see them for yourself. My door is always open – if there are any problems, people can come to me and involve me. I always listen to everyone, but then I try to make the right decisions. It is easier to run the club this way. They haven't kicked me out yet!"

Originally founded in 1879, the Yacht Club Italiano is the oldest sailing club in Italy. It was made a

'Royal' yacht club during the reign of HM King Umberto I and remained this way up until 1946, when Italy became a republic. In 1880, the club held its first event on the Gulf of La Spezia and moved into its present clubhouse within Genoa's Duca degli Abruzzi marina in February 1929, coinciding with the club's 50th anniversary. This clubhouse was partly destroyed during WWII and wasn't rebuilt and reopened until 1953.

The club was responsible for helping set up other yacht clubs around Italy and ultimately the establishment of Italy's own national sailing

federation, the Federazione Italiana Vela (FIV). The YCI was the Italian club that challenged with *Italia* for the 1987 America's Cup in Fremantle.

The YCI is also famous for its past Presidents – the Croces: former Olympian Beppe Croce, who served from 1958-1986, was also the long term President of the FIV and of the International Sailing Federation (from 1969 until 1986). Surprisingly, his son Carlo followed almost identically in his footsteps, also President of World Sailing (until 2022), the FIV and was at the helm of the YCI for 20 years up until 2017.

Today the YCI has 1,000-1,100 members. "This is a big war machine – it is not a simple thing. There is a lot to do..." muses Cameli. The club's busy staff have the Genoa clubhouse to run, plus the club's own marina berths immediately outside and their sailing school (Scuola di Mare Beppe Croce) with its own fleet of 52 boats. Remarkably the club is unique in the world for owning a maxi yacht: the 18.79m *Grampus* (entrusted to the club by Carlo Puri Negri) as well as a smaller racing yacht, the 13m *ELO II*.

Cameli is most proud of their young sailors. Unlike clubs in other countries which typically cater for either dinghies or keelboats, the YCI, as is the case with many sailing clubs in Italy, caters for both. This makes the club relevant to sailors throughout their lives, as has been the case for Cameli himself. "We have a bunch of very young aggressive athletes," he notes. "Recently, for example, one of our boys won the 420 class at the Palamos Cup in Spain ahead of 100 competitors, which was fantastic."

“They are a bunch of really nice kids and represent the future of the club. So my biggest ambition is to increase youth participation, not only on the sea but also within the life of the club – that is very important: They need to understand the traditions of our club and that is something I want to continue.”

Some famous YCI members occasionally make themselves available to help inspire the youngsters, including Italian America’s Cup heroes Mauro Pelaschier and Tommaso Chieffi.

Among the maxi community the YCI is best known for Loro Piana Giraglia. Like many of the best ideas, this was famously conjured up over dinner in a Parisian bistro. This meeting, back in 1952, was between the YCI’s Beppe Croce, René Levainville, President of Yacht Club de France and Franco

Gavagnin. Aside from being good for the sport, the bigger aim of the race between Saint-Tropez and Genoa was to help thaw relations between France and Italy following WWII. Over the years, the finish port of the race has changed, but its regular course is from Saint-Tropez to Genoa via the Giraglia rock.

The event underwent significant change in 2024 with the arrival of Loro Piana as title sponsor (Pier Luigi Loro Piana himself competing on board his ClubSwan 80 *My Song*). “They are a great partner – they are very good, very professional and they are tough,” reflects Cameli. “But now the relationship is perfect and very constructive. In Saint-Tropez they did a lovely job and this year will be even better.” The race’s previous sponsor Rolex remains a principal sponsor of the club, along with other partners.

Cameli confirms that the format of Loro Piana Giraglia will remain the same in 2025 with four, rather than three, days of inshore racing in Saint-Tropez.

“That was appreciated by all the competitors. And the conditions were good, until the long race...” With 30-40 knots forecast, a large part of the maxi fleet chose not to race the offshore, but as Cameli states: “I was having nightmares about damage, but there was not one boat that got seriously damaged – *My Song* finished with a broken mainsail, but they still finished. And every arrival we celebrated with a bottle of champagne – which was quite a surprise for the boat that finished last...” At present, he says, there are no plans to resume the feeder race to Saint-Tropez from Sanremo.



Library and bar on the upper floors of the YCI's clubhouse – both well stocked!



Regular Loro Piana Giraglia competitor, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet*³ ghosts towards Genoa. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

The 2025 race will be significant as one of Loro Piana Giraglia's most faithful competitors, repeat line honours winner and past overall winner Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones, returns with his latest Maxi, the newly-launched *Maxi Carpet E*. Already Cameli has spotted the Guillaume Verdier-designed 100ft replacement for Owen-Jones' previous *Magic Carpet*³ out training, when he visited Saint-Tropez for a meeting in the autumn.

Maxi yachts also regularly take part in the YCI's Regate di Primavera, held out of their summer clubhouse/restaurant in Portofino each spring and open to yachts of 50+ft. "That is more of a glamour event," continues Cameli. "It is a lovely place and people seem to like it. It is at the start of the season so it can be difficult for some to make it if their boats are still in the yard." Typically, berthing in Portofino's tiny picturesque harbour is limited, so maxis tend to moor in nearby Santa Margherita Ligure with the newly-reopened marina in Rapallo also now an option.

Since the YCI handles both dinghy and big boat racing, naturally it hosts events for each. For example, in 2025 their season starts with the International Genoa Winter Contest, which takes place over three weekends catering, respectively, for Optimists, ILCAs (Lasers) and the final one for the H22, J/80, J/24 and 5.5mR classes. This is followed in March by Genoa Sailing Week 70th Coppa Andrea Alberti for IRC and ORC yachts; in April by the Gentlemen Challenge, using its J/70 fleet; Trofeo Porto Carlo Riva for IRC, ORC and Libera class yachts as is May's Regata della Gillinara Trofeo della Cappelletta, plus the Trofeo SIAD Bombola d'Oro dinghy event. After a summer break, there is the



It takes a small army of staff to run the YCI, its clubhouse, marina and sailing school. Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

previously mentioned Millevale, then the J/70 Members Cup, before dinghy racing resumes with the 61st Coppa Poggi for the 420 and ILCA classes in October. The club even hosts the Lowrance Fishing Tournament.

Naturally the YCI also hosts high profile championships which recently have included the Melges 24 Europeans in 2022 and the 8mR Worlds in 2023.

In addition to nurturing the YCI's youth membership, Cameli is keen to increase the footfall through the clubhouse and generally make it more accessible to members. "There have been times when the club was 'a bit distant', if you know what I mean, and I am trying to change that."

While it is technically close to the centre of Genoa, the YCI clubhouse is physically located within the Port of Genoa and this means there are a number of security hurdles to cross to enter the area. Nonetheless Cameli is keen to alleviate this and has been encouraging attendance by laying on regular events, such as a members' lunch every Wednesday, which has been proving increasingly popular.

Despite its enormous maritime heritage, being the birthplace of Christopher Columbus and Genoa being the largest port in Italy (based on cargo volume), the local Genovese can be ambivalent when it comes to yachting. However not so the former Mayor of Genoa, now the President of the broader Liguria region, Marco Bucci. It was due to his enthusiastic support that the

city hosted the Grand Finale of the Ocean Race in June 2023 and Genoa will again be a stopover during this year's Ocean Race Europe. Although not a member, his son is and Bucci regularly sails from the club. "He loves it and is a great guy," says Cameli. The YCI has little involvement with the Ocean Race other than providing some support in terms of marks, RIBs, etc.

It is also largely thanks to Bucci that much development work around Genoa's giant port is happening, including knocking down its colossal breakwater and rebuilding it, a project that will take years.

In the meantime, under the watchful eye of her President, the Yacht Club Italiano looks set to have a buoyant future.



*Magic Carpet E is the first maxi yacht fully from leading America's Cup and IMOCA designer Guillaume Verdier.
Photo: SailingShots by María Muñia*

MAXI 1 UPDATE

It would have been hard to imagine, even just a few years ago, that the 100-footers today would be one of the most dominant classes in the maxi fleet. In the Mediterranean this only gained traction with the demise of the Wally class, with the Wallycentos and Claus-Peter Offen's 100ft *y3k* subsequently consolidating in the Maxi 1 class at the 2021 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. After some hesitancy over how they might survive in the wider IRC fleet, the Maxi 1 newcomers at that event ultimately occupied the entire podium, with *Magic Carpet*³ first ahead of *y3k* and *Galateia*.

Since 2021 the competition has come on fantastically with the former Wallycentos shedding more and more of their cruiser-racer encumbrance. This culminated last year in the IMA granting permission for the class to hold its first ever World Championship during September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. This was contested by 10 boats ranging in rating from Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's Wally 82 *Django HF* with an IRC TCC of 1.700, up to the scratch boat, the 100ft *SHK Scallywag* at 1.8670.

Currently the fleet comprises the trio of former Wallycentos – Pascale Decaux's *Tilakkhana II* (previously Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet*³); *Galateia*, now campaigned jointly by original owner David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers; and *V* (ex-*Tango*) of Karel Komárek. The fourth former Wallycento, the 107ft *Spirit of Malouen X*, (ex-*Hamilton/Open Season*) is currently for sale.

They are joined by two offshore 100-footers, both heralding from 'Down Under' and conceived for collecting Rolex Sydney Hobart line honours: Seng Huang Lee's *SHK Scallywag 100* (previously the late

Syd Fischer's *Ragamuffin 100*) and *Black Jack 100* (originally Neville Crichton's *Alfa Romeo II*, then the all-conquering *Esimit Europa 2*), acquired from Peter Harburg in 2024 by Dutchman Remon Vos.

Among the 100s the odd man out is *Leopard 3*, the only Farr design, originally campaigned by Mike Slade and now by Joost Schuijff, who has turned it back into a thoroughbred racing machine. As she was designed principally to race offshore it was slightly ironic that she beat all the hotshot inshore racers to become the first ever Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Champion, albeit following an unnaturally breezy Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, with *Django HF* and *V* completing the podium.

Bullitt, the Wally 93 of Yacht Club Costa Smeralda Commodore Andrea Recordati, is similarly unique among the former Wallys in this group in having more offshore potential than her big brothers. As if to prove this, she underwent a massive refit and emerged to immediately take part in the Rolex Middle Sea Race in 2023, in which she not only won the maxi race but the race overall across the full IRC fleet.

Then there are the 'hot' 80-footers, including the 82ft *Django HF*, which, as Lord Irvine Laidlaw's *Highland Fling XI*, was winner of the highly competitive 13-boat Maxi class at the 2022 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. Launched in 2020, Wendy Schmidt's 85ft *Deep Blue* continues to undergo development to get up to speed. The newest of the group, completed last year, is Alessandro Del Bono's 82ft *Capricorno*, which is still in the process of being worked up by Del Bono's hugely experienced team which features many familiar faces from the Del

Bonos' 1995 Admiral's Cup-winning *Capricorno* crew. Prior to the new acquisition, Del Bono and his crew were performing exceptionally on their previous 78ft ILC maxi *Capricorno*, winning the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge in 2022. Similarly great things are still to come from Pier Luigi Loro Piana's speedy looking ClubSwan 80 *My Song*, the replacement for his Baltic 130 of the same name, which was so tragically lost.

The biggest news of 2025 will certainly be the advent of Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones's brand new 100-footer *Magic Carpet E*, designed by renowned



Proud owners – Sir Lindsay and Lady Owen-Jones at Magic Carpet E's launch.



Magic Carpet E's rudder blades can be raised and rotate within substantial drums – an idea seen previously on Ellen MacArthur's *Kingfisher* IMOCA and the Henderson 30 sportsboat. Photos: Studio Borlenghi



First mark action during the Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

Emirates Team New Zealand designer Guillaume Verdier. Verdier co-designed the 100ft *Comanche* and also designed the boats which finished first and third in the Vendée Globe. While the new *Magic Carpet E* is not a foiler, there are clearly aspects of her futuristic design that have come from this, the most groundbreaking of monohull classes. While she underwent sea trials in the autumn, at the time of writing *Magic Carpet E* had returned to Persico for completion of her interior and finish and was scheduled for relaunch in March. Her first event was due to be PalmaVela in May, followed by Loro Piana Giraglia, Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Her appendage configuration will be unique in the maxi world, with a keel that not only cants but articulates in a way that will permit her draft to be reduced, allowing her to moor stern-to in Saint-Tropez (where Owen-Jones resides).

"If you look at the 80-100ft range [Maxi 1], it is reasonably well organised right now," observes North Sails President Ken Read, tactician on the 100-footer *V*. "We have done a better job of communicating between each other in terms of goals, events and general game plans." This is

particularly true in the Caribbean, where Karel Komárek and his *V* team have generously backed and set up the new North Sound Maxi Regatta. "That is a perfect example of everyone getting on the same page and wanting to go and have fun," Read continues. "Hopefully that is a model that the group can use to work together better in the future and create better racing everywhere we go."

This season *V* begins with the four-day Nelson's Cup maxi event in Antigua as well as the St Barths Bucket, in a special class for the 90-100 footers that also includes *Galateia*, before heading back to the Mediterranean. According to Read, while *V* had some major modifications over the 2023-24 winter, work over this last winter has focussed on smaller items and fine tuning.

Read, who is one of the most experienced maxi crew out there, a veteran of multiple Volvo Ocean Race and America's Cup campaigns, via many of the top maxis – from *Rambler* and *Comanche* to the *J* class, believes an annual championship that comprises two events in the Caribbean and four in the Mediterranean is vital going forwards. "We are moving in a direction where competitors can see an

MAXI 1 UPDATE

advantage to make this a real season championship that's worth sinking their teeth into.

"The goal of a lot of us is the health and well-being of the class and it having a real future. The owners are starting to get on the same page, going to dinner with each other from time to time and getting to know each other, which is super important. The crews need to stop thinking about ourselves as individual programmes and start thinking of ourselves more as a group – which is happening."

At the beginning of the year, Bryon Ehrhart's *Lucky* picked up another rare piece of silverware that his 88-footer hadn't previously acquired when she was George David's *Rambler 88*. While a decade ago Ehrhart won the west to east Transatlantic Race from Newport to Cowes via the Lizard on a previous *Lucky* overall, this January he added line honours going in the opposite direction in the RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race, setting a new record time of 7 days 20 hours 34 minutes 41 seconds, 1 hour 26 minutes 23 seconds quicker than *Comanche's* 2022 time. Ehrhart was presented with the IMA Trophy for his efforts by Secretary General Andrew McIrvine at the finish in Grenada.

Lucky was going on to compete in the RORC's Nelson's Cup maxi racing and Caribbean 600 before heading up to the North Sound Maxi Regatta at the end of March. She was then heading to California for the first of her two major events of the season: the Transpac, then continuing on to Australia for the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race (as *Rambler 88* she was third home in 2015).

"It is pretty much the same set-up," says her tactician, Volvo Ocean Race winner Joca Signorini. "There will

probably be a few changes for the Transpac since we race under ORR in that – it opens up the possibility for some different configurations, so we are working on that. In the Transatlantic Race we were gathering data because there were similar conditions.”

Being a sought-after crew, Signorini was due to step off *Lucky* to spend the rest of the Caribbean season on Andrea Recordati’s Wally 93 *Bullitt*. Their programme also included Nelson’s Cup, RORC Caribbean 600 and the North Sound Maxi Regatta, before heading back to Europe to compete at the IMA Maxi Europeans, Loro Piana Giraglia and the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

“It is really nice to see so many big competitive boats – it is all happening,” Signorini continued. “Already last year we had 10 very competitive maxis at the World Championship in Sardinia. This year it shouldn’t be any different. Plus there’s the new *Magic Carpet E*. It will be great.”

The ‘offshore’ 100s all have differing programmes. While *Leopard 3* is also doing the Nelson’s Cup and RORC Caribbean 600, followed by North Sound Maxi Regatta, she will then be heading back to the Europe initially for the RORC’s centenary Rolex Fastnet Race, then down to the Mediterranean to defend her title in the Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship in Sardinia, finally wrapping the year up at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Meanwhile *SHK Scallywag* was taking a different path to Cowes, spending the early season in the Mediterranean competing in the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore and Loro Piana Giraglia. Post-Rolux Fastnet Race she will be shipped ‘Down Under’ for the Rolex Sydney Hobart. She was set to meet Furio

Benussi’s *ARCA SGR* at the beginning of the season in the Tre Golfi and Giraglia, the Trieste 100-footer also entered in the Yacht Club Italiano’s season opener Regata di Primavera in Portofino, plus the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar, the Viareggio-Bastia-Viareggio (VBV) race in late June, before returning to the Adriatic to compete there.

After a strong first season with *Black Jack 100*, Remon Vos’ team returns with a programme that also features the Rolex Fastnet Race. This was going to be preceded by the historic west to east Transatlantic Race beforehand, but only if time allowed, following a comprehensive nut and bolt refit. “We want to give a new lease of life to the boat. We’re making a couple of structural modifications in order to improve the sail area of the boat, so we will have some new sails delivered for

the 2025 season, different to the previous ones,” explained *Black Jack 100*’s skipper Tristan Le Brun. Plan B was to head to the Baltic to compete in the Round Gotland Race. Post Rolex Fastnet Race they were heading back to the Mediterranean to repeat the Palermo-Montecarlo race, having won line honours and set a new record in 2024. There is also the possibility of their competing in the newly-announced race from Cannes to Malta in October, which acts as a feeder race for the Rolex Middle Sea Race and is organised by the Cannes Yacht Club and the Royal Malta Yacht Club.

However, the highlight of the season is certain to be the Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship where at least 10 yachts with a rating of over 1.700 are expected once again. Let’s hope this year Mother Nature permits more than two days of racing.



Alessandro Del Bono’s new 80ft *Capricorno* is expected to find her legs at the bottom end of Maxi 1 in 2025. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



After the excitement and intense racing of 2024 for the J Class, this 2025 season looks set to see owners enjoying cruising their yachts or completing refit programmes, with a little ad hoc racing for some.

Without doubt the showcase event of last year was the 2024 J Class Barcelona regatta, which was run during the America's Cup events on the same waters. It was somewhat magical to take the J Class yachts and their crews back to the very heart of the America's Cup arena; to marvel at the sheer contrast between the modern, ultra-fast AC75 foilers with their semi hidden cyclors, compared to the majestic, powerful J Class yachts, where success on the race course is so much down to choreographed crew work, trimming and controlling the huge sail areas.

Pleasingly, there was considerable public interest, with daily docking in and out of the Marina Port Vell a popular spectacle in of itself. However, most of all the regatta exhibited some spectacular, close racing between *Svea*, *Velsheda* and *Rainbow*, who proved very evenly matched.

This pinnacle event had been planned several years in advance and each team had built up to it in their different ways. With Barcelona on the horizon, *Svea* and *Velsheda*, to varying degrees, did as much racing as they could over the last couple of years. Meanwhile the freshly refitted, reinvigorated *Rainbow* only really debuted at Palma Superyacht Cup.

So, while there is no doubt the J Class Barcelona Regatta was an outstanding success, it seems almost inevitable that, in its wake, some owners are taking time out to cruise. As it stands, *Velsheda* was set to compete in the Caribbean at the 2025 St Barths Bucket, racing in an ORC Superyacht handicap

division. Then *Velsheda* and *Svea* plan to cruise on the northeastern seaboard of the USA this summer, sometimes together. *Rainbow* has not, as yet, announced any plans for 2025. Elsewhere, *Hanuman* is in refit and is reported to be going cruising after. In the Mediterranean, *Topaz*, the extensively refitted *Shamrock V* and *Lionheart* are all following cruising itineraries.

On their 2025 programme decision, *Svea*'s boat captain Paul Kelly commented: "We are very much taking a year off and I think others are too, just regrouping a bit after what has, for us, been quite an intense period building up to Barcelona. It was pretty punishing, really enjoyable, but hard work. I think in the class we often see this cycle after the America's Cup, but I am sure we will see the resurgence of interest in 2026 when we look forwards to events in Cowes and Sweden at least."

Looking back at 2024

2024 saw the successful implementation of the ORCj Rule which has been developed in collaboration with the ORC. It is based on the ORCi Superyacht VPP and an agreement is in place on a protocol for the management and development of the rule which was used first at Superyacht Cup Palma. It certainly proved successful in Barcelona, where deltas were mostly slender and did very much seem to reflect performance on the race course.

The season started with the duo of *Velsheda* and *Hanuman* at the St Barths Bucket. Celebrating the owner's birthday, *Hanuman* was racing in a simple, fun mode with no spinnaker pole and, correspondingly, *Velsheda* won all three races sailed in the Les Elegantes division, with *Hanuman* all seconds.

Swedish-flagged *Svea* started their season racing at PalmaVela on the Bay of Palma, where they took



Long term maxi skipper Neville Crichton has returned to the race course with the J Rainbow. Photo: Sailing Energy

third place in her class. Tactician Bouwe Bekking commented at the time: “It was really good for us, even though it was apples and pears – they [the other maxis] are 150 tonnes lighter than us, but we can still race against them.”

After a major refit to bring her up to modern racing shape, June’s Superyacht Cup Palma saw *Rainbow* return to the race track for the first time since 2014. Looking towards Barcelona this was very much a testing tune-up event for Neville Crichton’s team, led by J class veteran Erle Williams.

Scoring three wins and a third over the mix of windward-leewards and coastal courses, *Svea* won the regatta ahead of both *Velsheda* and *Rainbow*, both tied on points. *Velsheda* finished first and second over the coastal courses while *Rainbow*, on their debut, scored three second places and a third to finish on even points with *Velsheda*.

The Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup is an annual highlight, not least because it is a full week of racing in Porto Cervo on beautiful coastal and windward-leeward courses, and there are usually at least one or two big days.

In 2024 there were only the two J Class yachts racing – *Svea* and *Velsheda*. Nonetheless, they had some great boat-on-boat match racing and the breezy coastal races outside La Maddalena islands saw both boats at full power – a memorable highlight for many on board. It is days like these that will surely see the Js return to Porto Cervo, time and again, for this event.

Races went to the wire – at one time *Svea*’s margin over *Velsheda* was a slender 17 seconds – but in the end *Svea* won the class to complete her Porto Cervo hat trick, winning three times in a row.

Niklas Zennström and Filip Engelbert’s *Svea* won in Barcelona and for a third time in Porto Cervo.
Photos: Sailing Energy



J Class Barcelona Regatta

In early October came the event we had all been preparing for: the J Class Barcelona Regatta. It was worth the wait. There was great excitement all the way through the whole 'Cup' community, including the growing number of visitors inbound to watch the America's Cup match.

The talk pre-regatta was to expect only light winds, but Barcelona really did offer up a good range of breezes.

While the idle dockside chat was that *Svea* would run away with it, it really wasn't that simple. Day one saw 20 knots, with honours evenly shared between the newest and the oldest of the trio, a hard-won victory apiece to *Svea* and *Velsheda*.

On the second day two more races were sailed, led by *Velsheda* although only on tie break. *Svea* won the first race, but – with the winds building to 25 knots for the day's second contest – it was *Velsheda* who triumphed, keeping the scores absolutely even.

On day three it was *Rainbow's* turn to put a win on the scoreboard, their first in class racing since the boat was last raced, but sadly they were denied another win when the second race of the day was abandoned in a fast-fading wind.

Overall, it was *Svea* who triumphed, a worthy winner as most would agree the team had worked hard over the preceding seasons, training more and racing more, to achieve this result.

Over the whole season *Velsheda* won the Kohler Cup, which is aggregated over the St Barths Bucket, Superyacht Cup Palma, Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and Barcelona.



From left to right – Lionheart, Velsheda and Svea enjoying the big breeze off Barcelona.

It is exciting times within the big catamaran community. While at present participation at events can be thin, new owners are joining the racing fleet this year and at least three more new builds are in the pipeline. It could be that in the next two to three years we will see as many as 10 performance catamarans out on the race course on a regular basis, their owners truly able to enjoy testing the speed of their palatial high-performance craft and pushing them in a race environment.

In the Caribbean two brand new multihull teams were competing this spring, one British, and the other Irish.

Adrian Lee, an Irish asset manager based in London, has long been a fan of racing in the Caribbean, especially out of Antigua. He previously campaigned the Cookson 50 *Lee Overlay Partners* and then the Swan 60 *Lee Overlay Partners II*, enjoying great success in both. In the former he went down in the history books by being the outright winner of the

Royal Ocean Racing Club's first ever Caribbean 600 in 2009. Subsequently, on the Swan his accolades included winning his class at Antigua Race Week.

Lee has now acquired Todd Slyngstad's HH66 *Nemo*, last year's winner of the Caribbean Multihull Challenge and of the Performance Multihull division at the BVI Spring Regatta. Renamed *Lee Overlay Partners III*, she was due to compete at the Caribbean Multihull Challenge in St Maarten followed by BVI Spring Regatta and then Lee's favourite – Antigua



Adrian Keller's 84ft *Allegra* versus Lord Irvine Laidlaw's *Gunboat 80 Highland Fling XVIII*.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

Sailing Week. With the latter event he is actively attempting to attract more multihull participants for future editions, which is fine for US or Caribbean-based teams, but too late for other teams needing to return to Europe in time for the Mediterranean season.

Elsewhere, experienced multihull sailor Will Alloway of Doyle Sails UK is leading the race crew on the Gunboat 72 *Layla*. Her owners are keen to try racing aboard their brand new, state-of-the-art catamaran, in addition to a cruising programme around both the Mediterranean and Caribbean. Alloway has rounded up a crew of British A-list multihull racing royalty in tactician (and Doyle UK Director) Brian Thompson and navigator Jonny Malbon, with James Crampton on bow and Adam Kay on pit, in addition to *Layla*'s permanent crew and her owners.

Their programme in the Caribbean this spring started well, winning their first event, the Caribbean Multihull Challenge. BVI Spring Regatta was set to follow for *Layla* before she headed back across the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. At the time of writing Alloway and *Layla*'s owners were feeling their way with their racing on the understanding that, if they enjoyed it, they might well scale up their race programme on the magnificent blue catamaran in 2026.

In the Mediterranean our Multihull Championship has evolved since last year (see p140), with a new event being added in May, running alongside the IMA Maxi European Championship as part of the Circolo del Remo e Vela Italia's Tre Golfi Sailing Week. Later in the season, the catamaran competition at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup looks set to reach its maximum of five boats. However the



Allegra's Adrian Keller receives the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series trophy at September's IMA Members' Dinner. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



The new Gunboat 72 Layla entered her first races in the Caribbean this spring.

stand-out event, in terms of participation, looks set to be the Multihull Cup in Porto Adriano. Given some confidence, the yachts competing here may well be persuaded to extend their race programmes in future seasons.

In fact, the kind of participation we will see at the Multihull Cup is likely to be a taste of things to come. Whether they race or not, catamarans seem to be becoming all the rage. If built strongly but lightly in carbon fibre and equipped minimally, they can be among the fastest boats afloat. This is perfect for the time conscious modern-day cruiser, able to charge from point to point or cross an ocean at motorboat speeds, provided there is adequate wind. With minimum heel, their internal volume –depending upon their design, can be one half to twice that of an equivalently long monohull, albeit with the crucial caveat that if that space is filled then performance suffers. The old adage about multihulls is as true today as ever: you can have performance, accommodation/weight or low cost – but only two of those three.

Minimal heel plus shade and somewhere to sit down and rest in some comfort are features that appeal to Lord Irvine Laidlaw, now on his second catamaran *Highland Fling XVIII*. After a lifetime competing on monohulls, qualities like these have effectively extended the age to which he can continue racing. In fact, at the spritely age of 82, he is still actively campaigning his latest Gunboat 80 and shows no signs of hanging up his sea boots.

Reflecting the growing market, Persico have just launched their first catamaran (see p124), a foiler or semi-foiler, destined to race offshore, while Baltic Yachts have their first ever catamaran currently in



In 2024 Argo and Zoulou enjoyed monumental match races in the RORC Caribbean 600 and Aegean 600. Photo: Tim Wright/photoaction.com

build. This is a 32.9m long by 13m wide catamaran from Berret-Racoupeau Yacht Design, conceived as a blue water 'explorer' cruiser and due for delivery in summer 2027.

Meanwhile the MOD70 trimarans are also hopefully about to enter a new era. The 2024 Aegean 600 saw Jason Carroll's *Argo* and Erik Maris' *Zoulou* match race their way around the course, but the race on the nimble, but seaworthy, trimarans (despite the conditions neither experienced a breakdown) was brutal, possibly causing both teams to pause and reflect. While they might have headed to the Caribbean on their usual circuit, including the RORC Caribbean 600, Carroll has acquired the second Gunboat 80 (after *Highland Fling XVIII*) and has been cruising her over the winter. Meanwhile *Argo* has

been berthed in Cowes and was looking forward to undertaking some records during the spring, such as the old Fastnet Race course from Cowes to Plymouth, Channel Record (Cowes to St Malo), Round Ireland and Plymouth to La Rochelle – all in the build-up to the Rolex Fastnet Race. It seemed like *Zoulou* was possibly going to join them.

At present many MOD70s are on the market awaiting new owners: *Snowflake* (with her enlarged rig) and *Orion* are both situated on the US West Coast ready for a Transpac race, while back in Europe Giovanni Soldini's *Maserati* is up for sale. If anyone is looking to go fast across an ocean or get involved in some ultra-competitive high speed, high adrenaline sailing against the experienced *Zoulou* and *Argo* teams, then these are turnkey projects.



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TEAM GEAR ENQUIRIES

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Final deck dry fit of the ClubSwan 80.

What do Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli's foiling AC72s, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' latest *Magic Carpet E* and a state-of-the-art 72ft semi-foiling catamaran have in common? They were all produced recently by one of world's foremost composite boat builders: Persico Marine.

Once upon a time boat builders were chosen because they showed flair for creating a fair hull, had a good eye and held knowledge passed down through generations. Sadly such talents and skills are slipping away and today boat builders are instead chosen for their know-how in operating state-of-the-art machinery. But for clients this represents a considerable advance as their yachts can now be constructed to millimetre accuracy and an engineering exactness never previously possible.

This is perhaps why Persico Marine, uniquely, has been commissioned to build some of the top maxi yachts. While other successful companies like Baltic Yachts and Nautor Swan started building yachts with the advent of GRP construction in the 1960-70s, Persico was set up in 1976, in Nembro at the foot of the Italian alps, as a wood moulding factory, mostly supplying the automotive industry. Its breakthrough into the 'new era' came in 1990 when it invested in a computer-controlled CNC 5-axis milling machine, the first of its kind in Italy. This enabled moulds to be made with unprecedented accuracy for such purposes as car interiors. However, it was their 25m long milling machine which caught the attention of Raul Gardini's Il Moro di Venezia team which they used to sculpt their first IACC hulls and keels for the 1992 America's Cup.

Subsequently Persico gained a reputation throughout the marine industry for the quality of its mould-making, producing tooling for leading builders such

as Ferretti, Azimut and Riva. It wasn't until the company again got involved with the America's Cup, in 2007, when renowned Kiwi race boat builder Richard Gillies moved in to build Patrizio Bertelli's Luna Rossa V5 America's Cup Class boats, that afterwards Persico began building boats themselves.

In 2010 New Zealander Mark Somerville was recruited, following 10 years at Oracle Racing that had culminated in the build of their 33rd America's Cup-winning mega-trimaran. At Oracle Somerville had worked with similar milling technology at Boeing supplier Janecki Industries, to create female tooling from scratch (rather than from a male plug). This resulted in greater accuracy, all but eliminating the labour and filler required for fairing.

Originally used just for big ticket items, the milling machines were soon producing moulds even for the smallest parts. As Somerville, today Chief Technical Officer and Marine Race Director, explains: "That way you can guarantee the geometry of the parts, their weight and the accuracy of the surface finish. They then clip together extremely well, minimising all the glue lines."

Persico Marine's first major commission was the Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing's VO70 *Azzam* for the 2011-12 Volvo Ocean Race. This then led to their joining the consortium of builders creating the race's fleet of VO65 one-designs. For these Persico's build accuracy was vital, constructing the moulds, hulls, structural bulkheads, cases and daggerboards, leading to a weight variation of just 20kg for a 12,500kg boat, overseen by the VO65 Class Manager, today the IMA's Technical Officer, James Dadd. As Marcello Persico (right), CEO of Persico Marine, states "there hasn't



Marcello Persico, CEO of Persico Marine.



Persico Composite Technologies is at the heart of both Persico's Marine and Aerospace departments.



Preparing for resin infusion.



Demoulding from precision in-house tooling.



The ClubSwan 80 My Song nears completion.

CRAFTERS OF CARBON

been a one-design boat ever in history built at that size to those tolerances..."

Persico Marine's glory moment came when they successfully repaired *Team Vestas Wind* after her encounter with an Indian Ocean reef. Persico and the consortium leapt into action, resolving the complex logistics to fix her in just four months, enabling her to compete in the last two legs. As Somerville recalls: "One good thing about being here is that the Bergamaschi are hard workers – first here in the morning and last to leave. By the time the boat arrived here we'd just finished her new hull." Persico went on to build *AkzoNobel*, the only new VO65 for the next race.

Their work with the America's Cup continued, building the AC72 catamaran for Luna Rossa and the AC50s for the British BAR team in Bermuda. They returned to working with the Italian challenger for the last two editions in the AC72 foiling monohulls. These are the most sophisticated craft Persico have built, the process akin to building aircraft – so finely constructed that safety margins and engineering tolerances have been reduced to zero. "You need to have very accurate processes, achieved through an autoclave," continues Persico. "We have internal NDT [non-destructive testing] to do internal checks, otherwise it would be impossible."

They have also built boats for the French offshore market: a Multi 50 trimaran (Erwan Le Roux's *Koesio* – a rare build not in carbon fibre) plus IMOCAs: Pieter Heerema's *No Way Back* for the 2016-17 Vendée Globe, then, for the 2024-25 race, Paul Meilhat's foiler *Biotherm* and the two non-foilers for Jean le Cam and Eric Bellion.

Naturally, given Persico's track record, maxis builds were soon being demanded. Their first in 2014 was Peter Dubens' 60ft daysailer *Spectre*, which soon ended up on the race course. The following year were the two Maxi 72 sisterships – Niklas Zennström's *Rán V* and *Momo* for Dieter Schön, sharing tooling. In 2017 they built a Wallycento, *Tango* (today Karel Komárek's *V*), the fourth and last of the genre, which was built at a new Persico facility on the coast in Savona. They followed this in 2020 with the giant 43.5m long *Kauris IV*, which – being too large for their Savona facility – caused them to move into a new site in Carrara.

"*Kauris IV* was very advanced for the whole superyacht market in that the owner wanted to be able to sail around the Med in eight knots of wind, so it needed to be very light, but he also wanted to be able to motor at 16 knots," says Somerville. "That was a hybrid – in its early days – with a lot of electrification and a 300kw battery bank, so it could dock in and dock out and guests could sleep for 8-10 hours without any generators running." An updated version of this technology has been incorporated into the latest *Magic Carpet E*.

Persico has since transferred to another facility by the coast in La Spezia, still in addition to their main factory in Nembro. *Magic Carpet E*'s hull tool was produced in the latter, then shipped to the coast in two halves ready for lamination, but every other composite part was made in Nembro – a similar case for their recent 72ft catamaran (see p124-5).

At the time of writing no further details of *Magic Carpet E*'s design were officially available. Her construction followed the latest in Persico's race

boat building, using all of their impressive machinery. "No time was spared with such tight tolerances on everything, whether it was putting all the pieces together or controlling all the weight of the boat – part of our DNA today," states Somerville. "If you can reduce the tolerances on the fitting, you are reducing weight throughout the boat: that adds up to a reasonable saving."

Somerville notes that modern maxis are now invariably push-button, but the functionality of their PLC (programmable logic controller) has expanded dramatically: while once upon a time these might control the speed and extent of incline of a yacht's canting keel, today this has been extended to winches and the innumerable hydraulic rams controlling all manner of foil, rigging and sail functions. Fortunately, they have benefited from America's Cup controller tech such as the FaRo system used by Luna Rossa, which permits multiple functions to happen at a single button press.

The 72ft Morrelli + Melvin catamaran is destined for offshore racing but has a full cruising interior. Somerville reckons that it will be more than five tonnes, or about 20%, lighter than any equivalent on the market. It was, of course, built in carbon fibre and fully custom. It is absolute state-of-the-art in its materials and engineering, in fact so exacting that lighter weight than normal carbon fibre UD tapes were used in her lamination. "There is a price you have to pay if you want the ultimate performance. This is very refined in every way," states Somerville.

In terms of the raw materials, there has been little development, although Persico continue to monitor this through their own R&D. Their 'go to' carbon



Fitting bulkheads.



Autoclaves for parts provide up to six atmospheres of pressure ensuring full laminate consolidation.



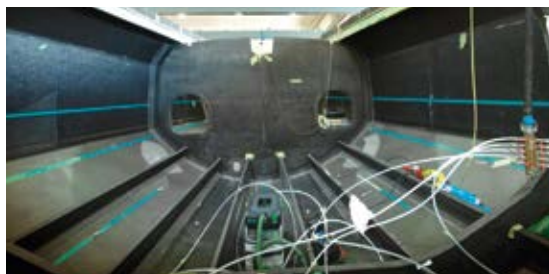
Persico's aerospace-grade clean rooms.



Automated tape laying robot 'Lola' at work.



Prepreg carbon hull creation.



Bow area stringers, bulkheads and frames.



Maxi deck installation.

fibre is typically prepreg intermediate modulus, although they have preferred types and brands depending on its function. They have experimented with nano technologies such as graphene, but not adopted them. Meanwhile the top spec core material used in their latest boats remains Kevlar honeycomb. Typically this is a rigid material, but in-house Persico has developed a means to thermoform it to a desired shape "which is very difficult to achieve," advises Somerville. This they have used as the core in their recent maxi builds.

For Persico, their major developments are the processes and machinery involved in how materials are used. In 2020, for the build of the IMOCAs and the 80ft *My Song*, they acquired an 'automatic tape laying' machine (ATL): a robot that applies prepreg UD carbon tapes to create laminates – aero industry technology similar to how North Sails produce 3Di sails.

The advantage of Lola (as the ATL is named) is accuracy but also "the consolidation of the laminate is much better than what can be done by hand – controlling the angles of the fibres and their orientation is perfect," Somerville explains. "You can decide to have the tools underneath it or you can leave the tool off and have the robot develop surfaces on a flat surface. If we are doing a deck for example, it might be made in three to five pieces, which you then move to the mould."

Another advantage of Lola is its speed and that it permits lamination to begin before a tool is fully complete. This, Somerville says, removes weeks from construction time. Further key equipment is the computer-controlled plotter cutter tool that

chops up the pre-preg into exact shapes, with a vital barcode attached to identify its position and layer within a laminate.

As much as possible is cured in an autoclave, Persico's biggest being 8m long. This allows laminates to be cooked under pressure (up to six atmospheres) at the required temperature for the pre-preg's resin. Whereas once upon a time some exotic laminates were cooked at <120°C, newer resins cook at a much lower temperature, with the advantage of less potential for distortion. The autoclave is an effective guarantee of a laminate's quality, squashing out any micro bubbles.

So has all the art gone from boatbuilding? "You still need people," says Somerville. "With a race boat you always have a flange on a bulkhead which a robot can't do and most prefer doing the tricky parts over all the mundane laminating. Otherwise, the art is in the process. The true boat builder today is an assembler."

A further benefit of carbon fibre construction in yachts is their longevity – typically far longer than ones built to the same spec in Kevlar or GRP. If their design doesn't date too prematurely, carbon fibre maxi yachts can remain competitive for decades. "There is a certain level of degradation," admits Somerville. "Two things affect composites: temperature and humidity, but we cover it up by painting it." Another factor is that the materials, especially resins, used and engineering exactitude was different then. "At Oracle in 2003, we FEAed [finite element analysis, used to compute how a structure will function] parts, but not the whole boat. Then in 2007 we did the whole boat. So

maybe the old boats were built a bit stronger? All the boats we build today, every single part has gone through FEA."

Today the most complex parts Persico builds are foils, from the one-design series of foil arms for the flying AC72s it was commissioned to build, to the complex IMOCA foils. To date they have built more than 100 foils. Marcello Persico says: "You need to be accurate to heat them – sometimes they include different materials and have to be machined/cooked multiple times, so we need to manage any distortion."

Both the engineering and method for building foils has evolved. Originally, one side of the foil would be built up in a mould, the opposite surface then machined. "That approach has basically gone out of the window," states Somerville. "When pitching through the waves the moment the boat heaves out of the water, you reverse load on it, so then you are relying on the resin that is holding the plys together. So they were breaking that way." They successfully prevent this today by rotating some of the UD fibres through 90°.

"They are the most dense parts," Somerville continues. "Any type of foil, the complexity in driving weight out of them increases every year and that involves more steps in the build. We try to automate those as much as we can." At the time of writing Persico was building certainly the world's biggest foils – 20m long and weighing 12 tonnes each – for an 85m sloop.

In terms of sustainability, Persico has yet to build a boat in hemp with natural resin although the worksurfaces on Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 80ft *My Song*

were made from natural fibres. At present there is no place structurally for such materials on full-on race boat builds, although Somerville feels there is in production builds, where performance v weight is less crucial, especially as more are being built using resin infusion techniques.

Beneteau for example is investing in this area with recyclable resin, so that at the end of a boat's life its hull can be heated, causing the resin to fall off and leaving bare fibre. In fact, a very similar process has been in operation at Persico for 10 years, says Somerville: "We work with a company nearby which produce their own furnaces with EU certification. They burn all the resins out of it [the structure], leaving this beautiful natural fibre. Then they put it into a machine and create a short strand carbon fibre mat which they sell to other industries, or we buy it back and put it in our tooling."

At present Persico is a supplier and created the tooling for Giovanni Soldini's new Ferrari-backed foiling maxi and they are completing a 43m aluminium superyacht. Thanks to their highly developed skills and latest machinery, their future seems bright.



NEW MAXI YACHTS

It is halcyon days for the maxi fleet with new launches across the board.

Among the 100-footers launching this year is Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' new Guillaume Verdier-designed *Magic Carpet E* (see photos on p102). It is some seven years since the last Wallycento was launched and it has been a brave call by Owen-Jones to step outside of the usual superyacht comfort zone and choose Verdier. While Verdier has maxi form, having co-designed the 100ft *Comanche* with VPLP, he is best known as the most prolific designer in the IMOCA fleet and has been the long term naval architect for Emirates Team New Zealand. As a result, we can expect to see IMOCA-type features in the new *Magic Carpet E*, although of course designed and engineered for less robust weather than the globe-trotting IMOCAs, given her programme will be Mediterranean-based.

For the former L'Oréal Chairman and CEO, this marks the first time Owen-Jones has ordered a new boat that has not come from Wally Yachts, having shown exceptional loyalty to Luca Bassani's company (now owned by Ferretti) since his first *Magic Carpet* was delivered in 1997. It is also a breath of fresh air for the Maxi 100 fleet, with many getting on in years – for example, *Galateia* is now 10 years old and *Leopard 3* a stately 18 years old, albeit both having had significant refits and upgrades in the intervening years and still highly competitive. There are also rumours of other new 100s in the pipeline. Of the 10 boats that competed at last year's Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship, five were 100s. Imagine if in five years' time we were regularly seeing 10 competing...

Elsewhere among the 100s we can, at some point, expect to see the launch of Giovanni Soldini's Ferrari-



Launched for the 2024 season, Alessandro Del Bono's judel/vrolijk-designed 80-footer *Capricorno* will be a boat to watch this season. Her beamy, ultra low freeboard hull might also give some indication of what the new generation Maxi Grand Prix boats will look like.

backed 100-footer. Another design from Verdier, who penned Soldini's all-conquering Class40 *Telecom Italia* back in 2007, this is expected to be a 100ft IMOCA-type offshore boat. It seems likely she will go after some records and one wonders if Soldini may attempt a fully crewed nonstop monohull round the world lap, like a Jules Verne Trophy equivalent for monohulls – a record which, strangely, has never been established. If he takes this on, Soldini will find it tough to beat the new Vendée Globe record of 64 days 19 hours 22 minutes, set in January – singlehanded.

In France, the increasingly prolific Black Pepper Yachts in Nantes, have preliminary work underway on a 100ft monohull designed by Sam Manuard, due to be built in 2026. An accomplished sailor/yacht designer, Manuard has worked his way up through the French Mini and Class40 classes and finally into the IMOCAs, designing three boats in the 2024-25 Vendée Globe including Jeremie Beyou's fourth-placed *Charal*. The 100-footer follows on from Black Pepper's *Code 2*, a 64-footer designed by the late Marc Lombard, and the *Code 3*, an 82-footer

from Manuard, the first of which was launched in 2021 – both built in carbon-epoxy. This summer the company will launch its first C.69 catamaran, an all carbon fast cruising catamaran designed by François Pérus and Romain Scolari. At Dusseldorf Boat Show the company also unveiled plans to follow this with a new 100ft catamaran, due to start construction at the end of this year.

While they might not have quite the presence of the Js, the larger Spirit Yachts remain breathtakingly beautiful 'spirit of tradition' yachts. We have seen the 100 *Gaia* and the 111 *Geist* competing at our own events, while these two graceful wooden giants even lined up for a memorable match race in Sweden last summer. Spirit Yachts will be holding their own event, the Spirit Med Cup in Palma over 24-26 October this year, with a line-up including the 76 *Nazgul*, the 72s *Gwenhyfar II* and *Elvis*, the 68 *An Mei II* and the 65 *Chloe Giselle*.

In the former Maxi 72/Maxi 2, newly christened the Maxi Grand Prix class, two new boats have been



The giant Spirit Yachts Gaia and Geist match racing in Sweden in 2024.

commissioned, the first since Hap Fauth's *Bella Mente* in 2018. The first to launch and expected on the race course this season will be the new Botin Partners-designed 70ft *Django* for Giovanni Lombardi Stronati. She is set to be followed by a new one for Peter Dubens and it seems likely others may follow. At present there is a trend in this class towards more inshore-optimised boats, with the exception being the Balcaen family's *Balthasar* (formerly *Alegre/Caol Ila R/Notorious*) relaunched after an extensive refit at the beginning of 2024. She was modified to be both inshore and offshore capable, successfully competing in last autumn's Rolex Middle Sea Race, winning the maxi class, and was entered in the 2025 RORC Caribbean 600.

Oddly we hear of no pure race boats being built in the 60-70ft range, although there are several new cruiser-racers, such as Jean-Pierre Dreau's new Mylius *Lady First IV*. Replacing Dreau's present 60, which he has entered in this summer's Rolex Fastnet Race, the new boat will ultimately be sailed to Australia for the Rolex Sydney Hobart.

Emma: judel/vrolijk 80 from Baltic Yachts

The summer saw the launch at Baltic Yachts in Finland of the latest *Emma*, a rosé-coloured judel/vrolijk 80-footer. A keen racer, the owner's previous *Emma* was a Swan 60 in which he won the Swan Mediterranean Challenge Trophy and also raced transatlantic.

Baltic Yachts have built her in carbon-epoxy with foam core and prepreg carbon reinforcements in her hull and bulkheads. Her deck is in prepreg carbon/Nomex. Pushpit, stanchions and pop-up mooring cleats are titanium.

The new *Emma*'s sleek, powerful hull has a beam of 6.27m and features low freeboard, a chamfered reverse bow, twin rudders and lifting keel providing a maximum draft of 5.3m.

Very much a racer-cruiser, the 80 features both tracks for self-tacking jib and removable transverse

tracks for larger racing headsails. There is a large foredeck hatch opening into a spacious sail locker.

The cockpit has a seating area immediately aft of the companionway, with the working cockpit further aft, featuring twin wheels and winch mechanisms laid out to permit operation shorthanded when cruising or by a full race crew.

Her mast, furling boom and rigging are all in carbon fibre, with a hydraulic under-deck furler. She has a captive reel mainsheet system plus a rotating padeye in the bowsprit for code sails and a manual gennaker furler.

Below there is accommodation for six guests in three cabins, with a further cabin for two permanent crew. The full-width master suite is forward while the owner's cabin is aft to starboard and crew quarters to port.



Emma, the new 80-footer from Baltic Yachts, which we look forward to seeing on the race course.

Swan 88

No look at new maxi yachts is complete without an offering from Nautor Swan. The headline news is that the famous Finnish builder, which since the advent of the Swan 65 in the 1960s has built more maxi yachts than any other, is set to transfer ownership, in its entirety over the next four years, from Leonardo Ferragamo, its owner since 1998, to Italy's Sanlorenzo Group. During this period Ferragamo will remain President, but Sanlorenzo's Massimo Perotti will become CEO, alongside existing CEO Giovanni Pomati.

In April Nautor Swan launched its second 88 *SPiIP* from its yard in Pietarsaari in Finland. This design is more performance-orientated than the first 88 *DreamCatcher* and is expected to venture out on

the race track. Designed by German Frers, with Misa Poggi and Lucio Micheletti on interior and exterior styling respectively, this is Nautor's first to feature hybrid electric propulsion, which they have developed in partnership with Torqeedo. Built in carbon/epoxy, the 88 is has a 6.79m beam and features a Wally-style 'beach club' ie a fold down transom that becomes a bathing platform. Thus the twin wheels and the working cockpit are located forward of this. It has twin rudders and comes with three keel options and drafts: standard 4.0m, shoal 3.6m and telescopic 3-4.6m.

Nautor has also added a Frers-designed Swan 80, the smallest in their Maxi range, which now extends up to 128ft.

Maxi Dolphin 63

Botin Partners are well known for their high-end race boats: from the new 70ft *Django* and Wendy Schmidt's magnificent 85ft *Deep Blue*, to all three of the boats that finished on last year's 52 Super Series podium and most recently their work on Alinghi Red Bull Racing's foiling AC72. This is why their involvement with Italian builder Maxi Dolphin should produce some exciting yachts.



Futura's modern, minimalist interior.

Maxi Dolphin was acquired by its present owner in 2016, with Luca Botter becoming its CEO. Since then, they have launched the Mark Mills-designed 75ft *Karma*, a 75ft Bill Tripp design, two MC62ab cruiser-racers designed by Alejandro Bottino, plus a 78ft Ceccarelli design, which is due to launch this year.

Botin Partners designed the 63 *Futura* for Maxi Dolphin. Launched in 2024, she has a beam of 5.2m, her carbon-epoxy construction giving her a light ship displacement of 18 tonnes. Her design and fit-out are minimalist and she has been conceived so she can be sailed by a small crew. Both Partners have also drawn an 80-footer which was still at the design stage at the time of writing, while the company is also contemplating a 100.





Designed by Botin Partners, the 63ft Futura should be highly competitive on the race course.



The latest offering from Ice Yachts is a Felci-designed 80

ICE 80

Ice Yachts has started construction of its new flagship ICE 80 Blue Water Sport model, once again designed by Felci Yacht Design with whom the Italy-based company has worked for the last 10 years, most notably on the ICE 70.

Felci has been responsible for all aspects of the project, from naval architecture to structural design, layout to interior styling, with the design of the coachroof and deck all maintaining the distinctive Ice Yachts style. 24m long with an additional bowsprit, the 80 has a beam of 6.52m with a telescopic keel providing a draft range of 3.2-4.6m.

The hull, deck and structure are made in carbon fibre using infusion. It features wide side-decks and a low, sleek coachroof while there are twin working and guest cockpits. The ICE 80 is due for launch in 2026.



Offshore semi-foiling 72ft catamaran

While Gunboat own the lion's share of the performance cruising catamaran market, and deservedly so having put the genre on the map with their all-carbon, but fully-appointed speedsters, it was inevitable that others would attempt to take the next step up.

The latest Persico-built, Morrelli & Melvin-designed 72ft catamaran is for experienced catamaran sailor, Patrick Benz. Benz requested a boat with a cruising interior that could be raced offshore, with the ability to use a lifting foil to improve performance through increased stability. The idea was born after sailing his first multihull in the 2015 Transpac and soon snowballed into it having righting moment foils, akin to the slender outward pointing 'Dali' foils used on IMOCA monohulls, in addition to straight asymmetric vertical daggerboards, fitted for light wind windward ability, and twin rudders fitted with elevators for pitch control.

While the boat's foils will enable it to fully 'fly', and by necessity are engineered to do this, in fact its regular sailing mode is 'skimming'. Compared with catamarans, the ride will look slightly different with a 3-5° heel to windward (like a foiling Moth). While the perennial Achilles heel of catamarans is that they must sail at the limit of stability for maximum performance, the main aim of this windward heel is to provide some additional safety factor to counter this. As Project Manager Malcolm Park explains: "It gives you a reserve of righting moment, unlike a typical catamaran where you sail at this edge of decreasing righting moment [when they start to fly a hull]." Therefore, between 5° of negative heel and



Patrick Benz's new Morrelli & Melvin-designed Persico-built 72ft semi-foiler is designed to be raced offshore.

level, effectively the righting moment increases, then starts dropping again as the boat begins heeling to leeward. "It provides a huge increase in confidence: As you sit at the helm and you see the windward hull starting to lift clear, then you'd settle it down", states Park.

Naturally the crew have other tools at their disposal: +/-4° of rake can be dialled into the righting moment

foils to regulate the lift fraction up to six times/minute without having to unload them. These and the rake of the rudder elevators are constantly controlled automatically via a 'flight control system' known as the 'blogger' and supplied by Team New Zealand. This maintains the optimum ride height and fore and aft trim (which in turn affects the amount of lift the main righting moment foils produce).

Weight is one downside of the six-foil arrangement. Yet, combined with her full interior from Design Unlimited and four head configuration, her light ship weight is expected to be only around 21 tonnes, thanks to her most exacting engineering and attention to detail by Persico during her build. She will develop around 25 metric tonnes of righting moment with some high compressive loads, such as the 62 tonnes expected on the mast ball.

Her performance looks set to be supreme considering she has a galley (including a 38kg titanium fridge unit), cabin and an internal volume comparable to a 100ft monohull. With sheets cracked, her foils will be working fully in anything above 10 knots, or 12-13 upwind, although it is probable these figures will improve as new sails are developed. A unique problem with foiling boats is that while sailing they have two quite different load cases: displacement mode – where large sails are required to get the boat skimming/flying, then once this state has been reached, much smaller flatter sails which have less drag at higher speeds.

To unravel all of this prior to the build, the team and Morrelli & Melvin have made extensive use of the Gomboc simulation tool, using the full data set from their last catamaran as a basic model. Once trained up, they subsequently adapted the Gomboc model to examine different foil configurations, the six-foil set-up proving optimal.

As with all foiling boats, performance is highly sea state-dependent, but in flat water she is capable of 21 knots in 12 knots of wind, 30 knots in 14 and 33-35 knots in 16. At 20 knots of wind speed they start

to back off, settling the boat down due to the sea state, ultimately ending up firmly in displacement mode if the wind builds further. Upwind is truly impressive, making 28 knots in 18 knots of wind or 17.5 knots VMG. Fortunately, the foil controls are such that they can be made to keep the boat in the water while having the less obvious characteristic of pinning the boat to the water, dramatically reducing the pitching, from which some catamarans can suffer, and roll.

According to Park, much thought has gone into the deck and cockpit layout and the sail handling systems. The sidedecks are wide (ie the cabin top is relatively narrow) to permit unused sails to be dragged aft, while the cockpit is designed so that it minimises the amount of time the crew has to leave it, while ensuring the arc of the boom is nowhere near their heads.

At the time of writing the boat was en route to Pensacola, FL for commissioning, where the American Magic team have been employed to help work up the boat in the fastest time possible, in conjunction with their shore team, who have all the necessary expertise to debug and optimise the boat's complex systems and hydraulics (there are 27 hydraulic cylinders on board). Ironically, while at the American Magic base in Pensacola, Team New Zealand will also on site, as their flight control system is being used on board.

Sea trials are due to start in March for two months, with, if all went to plan, her first event being the Transpac, but with the RORC Caribbean 600 and the world's other 'classic 600 mile' offshore events also on her agenda.



Showing her six foil configuration, including her rake-able righting moment foils.



The Persico-built righting moment foils are works of art.



Despite counting the kilos, she has a well-appointed interior.

2025 Season Preview





*Close quarters action for YCCS Commodore
Andrea Recordati's Wally 93 Bullitt,
the 2024 IMA Yacht of the Year.
Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi.*

2025 is lining up to be one of the best years ever for maxi yachting. Notably, the Maxi 100s and Maxi Grand Prix (ex-Maxi 72/Maxi 2) classes are both looking particularly strong, with boats coming to participate from the US and Australia, and new boats set to join both classes this season.

For 2025, there are few changes to both our usual inshore and offshore programmes in the Mediterranean, with the exception of the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar which has undergone a course change, although still starting in Livorno and finishing in Punta Ala (see p132).

Big breeze 2024

It was interesting to note in 2024 how the season in the Mediterranean was generally very windy; even typically calm events, such as the 151 Miglia and Palermo-Montecarlo, saw breeze. Breaking it down, in 2024 we saw:

- PalmaVela day one – 20-25 knots
- Regata dei Tre Golfi, end of race – 30-40 knots
- 151 Miglia – course was changed to avoid gale force winds off the north of Corsica
- Giraglia inshores day three – 20+ knots
- Giraglia offshore – 30-40 knots for some, less for others
- Aegean 600 – flat calms to 45 knots
- Palermo-Montecarlo – 25-30 knots in the Strait of Bonifacio and west of Corsica
- Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup – an unprecedented four days lost due to 25+ knot winds
- Rolex Middle Sea Race – 40-60 knot winds and water spouts on first evening.

It is unclear whether this is an aberration or part of a longer term shift in weather patterns due to climate

change but, regardless, teams may need to contemplate reappraising the optimisation of their boats and sail wardrobes.

Seeing generally stronger breeze also creates significant problems for race organisers as the owners of yachts designed, structured and equipped to race offshore, will always be keener to race in stronger winds than those with maxis that are more inshore-moded and less 'offshore-capable'. Naturally race organisers will prefer to err on the side of caution, not wanting to make competitors feel they are obliged to race if conditions seem excessive, but this may result in more race days being lost. Of course whatever a race committee decides, it is ultimately the skipper's/owner's responsibility as to whether or not they feel comfortable racing and to act accordingly.

Caribbean

Regattas in the Caribbean remain in flux for the maxi classes, largely caused by the demise of Les Voiles de St Barth. The upshot of this is that we will not be able to run our Caribbean Maxi Challenge for a second year.

At present only the offshore maxis compete in the RORC Caribbean 600. St Maarten Heineken Regatta remains an option, while at the BVI Spring Series there is at present inadequate depth available in Nanny Cay to accommodate racing maxis (although the marina is soon to be extended and deep water berths added, possibly as soon as by 2026).

Antigua Sailing Week is too late in the season for maxis needing to return to Europe in time to start the season, although the event still works for those unconcerned about this (already entered at the time of writing were the classic *Kialoa III*, Roy P Disney's

Pyewacket 70, the VO70 *Sailing Poland* chartered by Philip Rann, etc). Antigua Sailing Week fan Adrian Lee has entered his new-to-him HH66 catamaran *Lee Overlay Partners III* and hopes to attract more like-minded multihull owners to compete in the future. Remembering Antigua Sailing Week in the 1990s, when yachts like *Mari Cha III* took part and Madison Square Garden boss and former IMA President Jim Dolan pitched up with not one, but three maxi yachts (*Sagamore*, *Encore* and *Bravo*) plus a few catamarans on which to accommodate guests and crew, it would be great if maxi racing were to return here in force.

Meanwhile St Barths Bucket is now open to yachts of 90+ft. Among the entries in 2025 are the 100s – V and *Galateia*, the Swan 90 *Nefertiti*, plus the *J Velsheda*.

To address what is perceived as a gap in the racing calendar, maxi owners have stepped up to fill the void. Two teams – Jim Swartz's *Vesper* and Wendy Schmidt's *Deep Blue* – joined forces to organise a maxi race in St Barth in 2024, and they are formalising this collaboration for 2025.

Todd McGuire, a member of Wendy Schmidt's *Deep Blue* team and organiser of La Coupe de St Barth, explains: "Our goal for the event is not to recreate Les Voiles, but to host a smaller, more intimate gathering of five to seven maxis where we can race, enjoy the island, and engage with the community.

"The Saint Barth Yacht Club serves as the organising authority, while the sailors collaborate to determine the courses and schedule on a daily basis. Owners have responded very positively to this relaxed and flexible approach."

Scheduled for 12–20 April, the format includes two days of practice racing, followed by racing from Monday to Saturday, with a layday on Wednesday. Community engagement is a cornerstone of the event. Teams like *Deep Blue* and *Vesper* support the Saint Barth Yacht Club with activities such as boat tours for youth sailors, a community movie night with proceeds benefitting the club, and other support designed to encourage youth sailing and sustainable practices on the island, such as a donation of 10 Optimists and a water filtration system.

This ‘Caribbean-style’, sponsor-free event emphasises three key goals: exceptional sailing, meaningful community engagement, and the simple joy of experiencing the island.

Elsewhere in the Caribbean, the V team has been behind the North Sound Maxi Regatta which is taking place for the first time over 21-25 March. Very much a high-end superyacht grade event, the racing will take place under the watchful eye of world renowned PRO Stuart Childerley. The schedule for this comprises a coastal race on day one and day four; two windward-leewards on day two and day five; and – a unique feature of the event – time trials on ‘triple head Sunday’.

Après-sail entertainment is being laid on at Mosquito Island, Saba Rock, Bitter End Yacht Club and Necker Island. At the time of writing, the strong entry comprised *Balthasar*, *Bullitt*, *Deep Blue*, *Galateia*, *Leopard 3*, *Lucky* and *V*.

It is hoped that both events will be held again in 2026.

Public scoring

From this season we will be publishing the on-going




NOTES

Open to IMA members only. This uses Cox Sprague high points system ie $S=121-(100*\sqrt{P/(n+2)})$ where S = points scored, P = position in class, n = number of entries.

Minimum 3 events must be sailed

includes co-efficients based on course length

2024-25 IM

Pos	TEAM	Boat type	No of IMA events	2024 ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE					2025 LA LARGA					Pos
				Starters	Pos	Score	Coeff	Score*coeff	Starters	Pos	Score	Coeff	Score*coeff	
								X 1.6					X 1.2	
1	Lucky	Juan K 88	1 *	8	2	76.3	1.6	122.0						
2	Spirit of Lorina	Botin 65	1 *	16	4	73.9	1.6	118.2						
	Bullitt	Wally 93	1 *	8	DNF			0.0						
	Yoru	Vismara Mills 62	1 *	16	DNF			0.0						
Non-member														
	Balthasar	Mills Maxi72	1 *	8	1	89.4	1.6	143.0						
	Scallywag 100	Dovell 100	1	8	3	66.2	1.6	106.0						
	Black Jack 100	R/P 100	1	8	4	57.8	1.6	92.4						
	Ambersail	VO65	1	8	5	50.3	1.6	80.5						
	Sisi	VO65	1	8	6	43.5	1.6	69.7						
	12 Nacira 69	Nacira 69	1	16	11	42.83	1.6	68.5						
	Luce Guida	Vismara 80	1	16	12	39.35	1.6	63.0						
	Dinzer Don	VO70	1	8	7	37.3	1.6	59.7						

results from our various challenges. This will enable our members to keep track of how well they are doing as the year progresses and hopefully will result in the challenges realising their original purpose – to entice more maxi yachts out on to the race course.

Figuring out a way to score this so that it adequately rewards maxis that do well in bigger fleets and harder or more prestigious events (and vice versa) is tricky, but we have decided to use what is known in the world of yacht scoring as ‘a modified Cox-Sprague system’, as currently used by the Royal Ocean Racing Club.

In addition, there are a few basic rules for the scoring of our challenges:

- our Mediterranean Maxi Inshore and Offshore Challenges are solely for IMA members
- those wishing to participate must sail a minimum of three events
- those sailing more than three races, get more

points. This changes the previous rule, by which a team could discard its worst results if it sailed more than three events

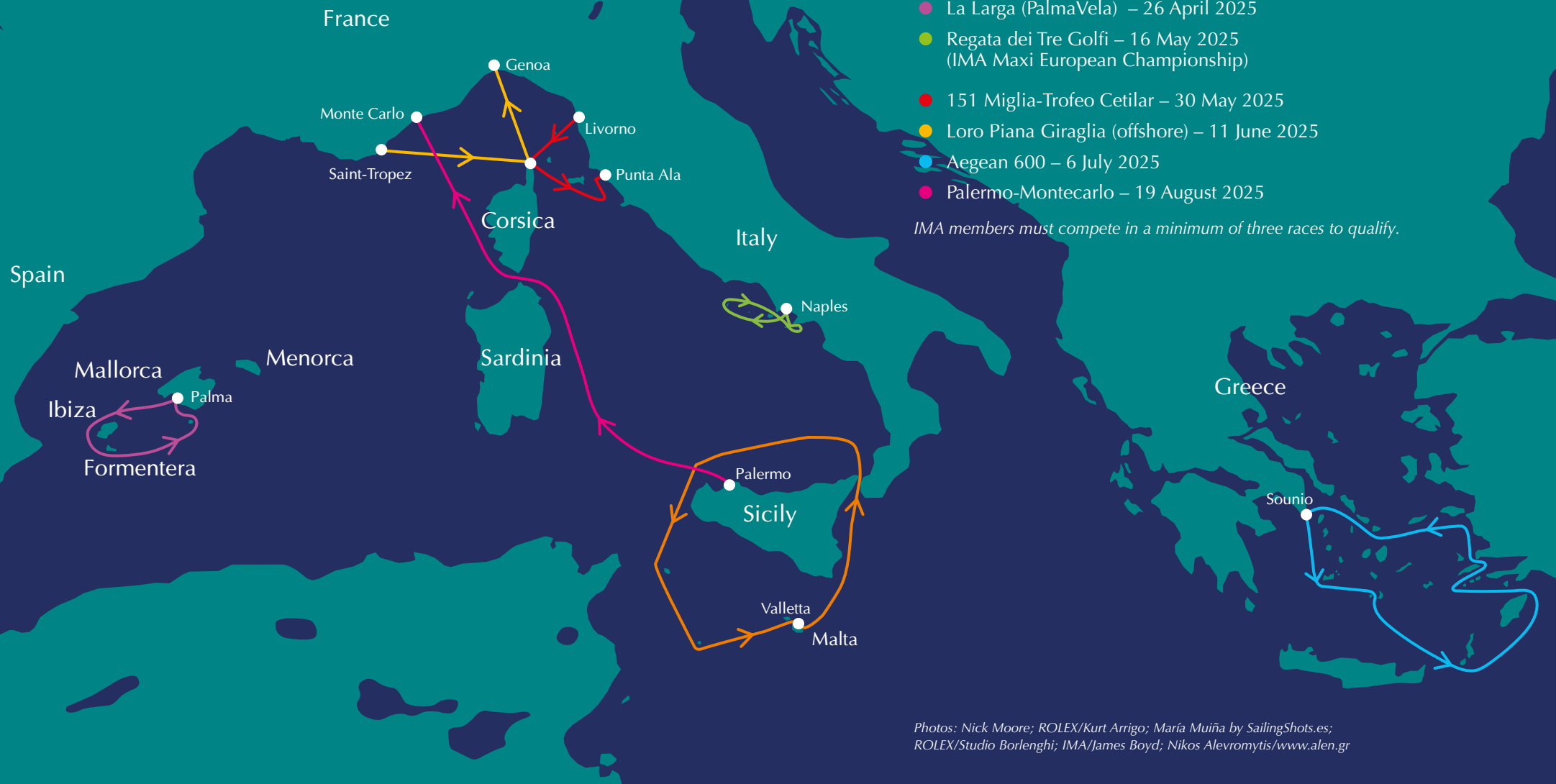
- for the Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) we will use a 1.2x coefficient weighting for the IMA Maxi European Championship and 1.3x for the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup
- to qualify for the MMIC, competing in the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup is mandatory
- for the Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge (MMOC), in addition to the Cox-Sprague system we will use scoring coefficients for each race, based on course length. These are as follows: Rolex Middle Sea Race (600 miles) x1.6; La Larga x 1.2; Tre Golfi x 1.15; 151 Miglia x 1.15; Loro Piana Giraglia x 1.24; Aegean 600 x1.6; Palermo-Montecarlo (437 miles) x 1.44

Updated results from our Mediterranean inshore and offshore series will be published on the IMA website and on our other channels after each event.

IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge 2024/2025

- Rolex Middle Sea Race – 19 October 2024
- La Larga (PalmaVela) – 26 April 2025
- Regata dei Tre Golfi – 16 May 2025
(IMA Maxi European Championship)
- 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar – 30 May 2025
- Loro Piana Giraglia (offshore) – 11 June 2025
- Aegean 600 – 6 July 2025
- Palermo-Montecarlo – 19 August 2025

IMA members must compete in a minimum of three races to qualify.



*Photos: Nick Moore; ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo; María Muiña by SailingShots.es;
ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi; IMA/James Boyd; Nikos Alevromytis/www.alen.gr*





The IMA's first series, the Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge (MMOC) was introduced in 2015 by Secretary General Andrew McIrvine to bring about balance at a time when maxi yacht participation in offshore races was waning compared to inshore events.

The MMOC starts with the previous year's Rolex Middle Sea Race and concludes with August's Palermo-Montecarlo. This enables the series' winner to be presented with the trophy – an antique, silver, half-fluted bowl made in Sheffield, UK in 1913 – at September's IMA Members' Dinner during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in Porto Cervo.

To qualify for a result in the MMOC, IMA members must compete in at least three of its seven races.

After Andrea Recordati's Wally 93 *Bullitt* won the Rolex Middle Sea Race outright in 2023, it was

going to be a tall order to repeat this success in 2024. In fact, severe conditions early in the race resulted in many retirements, including *Bullitt*. Nevertheless, the maxi race was superb (see the full report on p54), especially the line honours tussle between the equally matched 100-footers *Black Jack 100* and *SHK Scallywag*. Ultimately Louis Balcaen's 'offshore' Maxi 72 *Balthasar* came out on top in IRC Class 1 to take an early lead in the 2024/25 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge, ahead of Bryon Ehrhart's 88ft *Lucky*, with the line honours winner, Seng Huang Lee's *SHK Scallywag*, third overall.

The Royal Malta Yacht Club's Rolex Middle Sea Race is a must-do event for all offshore sailors. The send-off from Grand Harbour, beneath the giant ancient ramparts of Malta's highly fortified capital Valletta, is very impressive, attracting large crowds of spectators dotted around the harbour.

Its course is an anticlockwise lap of Sicily, passing two of Europe's few active volcanos – Mount Etna on Sicily and the island of Stromboli, the course's northeastern turning mark. The race is highly tactical with the strong likelihood of both storms and flat calms, so teams must prepare for everything. In addition to tackling the lee of Mount Etna, there is the tidal passage through the Strait of Messina, between Sicily and the toe of Italy. Sicily's northwest corner, especially the headlands west of Palermo, is often tricky before competitors round Sicily's west coast and head south, passing the remote Italian islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa, the former just 37 miles from Tunisia. They then turn their bows back towards Malta and the Comino Passage, before heading on towards the finish line off Valletta.

The prize-giving ceremony is also exceptional, hosted in Valletta's Sacra Infermeria – built in the 16th century as a hospital by the Knights of St John.

Into this season, the MMOC resumes with La Larga, the offshore race of PalmaVela. While PalmaVela is long-established, its organisers – the Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP) – only introduced this offshore element to their traditional maxi yachting season opener in 2021. In 2023 the VO70 *I Love Poland* won the IRC class ahead of Ermanno Traverso's remarkably competitive 1961 vintage maxi ketch *Stormvogel*, but in 2024 there were no maxi entries. The RCNP is therefore keen for this still relatively new, early season event to gain traction.

The course for La Larga is weather dependent. Starting and finishing off Palma, in brisk conditions it can be 350 miles long, taking in Ibiza and Formentera, followed by Isla del Aire off the southern tip of Menorca. Conversely, in lighter winds it might be around 225 miles, passing Dragonera (off Majorca's westernmost point), Ibiza, Formentera and Cabrera (island/national park south of Majorca).

In May, the MMOC heads east for the first of three events in, or around, Italy. First is the 70th anniversary edition of the Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia's (CRVI) Regata dei Tre Golfi.

In recent years, this race has evolved: while once it was famous for its fine dinner at the CRVI's clubhouse by Naples' Castel dell'Ovo preceding a romantic midnight start, today the warning signal is now at 16:30. This enables the most to be made of the remaining sea breeze to get the fleet on their way out of the Gulf of Naples.



The Rolex Middle Sea Race course passes the active volcano of Stromboli off Sicily. Photo: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo

Named after the 'three gulfs' it passes, this 150-mile race is normally an overnigher for the maxis. The course takes the fleet WNW to Ponza, before returning past Ischia. Competitors typically pass north of Capri, but here, during the 2024 race, the leaders were becalmed and gains were made by leaving Capri to port. The southerly turning mark is the Li Galli islands off the Amalfi coast before the boats return to cross the Gulf of Naples en route to the finish line off Naples. While the Tre Golfi is the MMOC's shortest event, it has the greatest maxi participation, being the opening event of the IMA Maxi European Championship.

Exactly two weeks later is the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar off Italy's Tuscan coast.

Some changes are afoot for this race in 2025. Firstly, it has become impractical to send the fleet around the Giraglia rock, as boats then often err into the Traffic Separation Scheme between Cap Corse and Capraia – a large fleet of boats becalmed here in the middle of the night is not ideal. So the 2025 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar will start from Livorno with a short leg up the coast to a turning mark of Marina di Pisa, as usual. The course will then pass the islands of Gorgona, Capraia and Pianosa, continuing to the usual southeasterly turning mark of Formiche di Grosseto, before then heading back north to round the island of Cerboli, south of Piombino. Only then will they continue to the Punta Ala finish.

The race was conceived, and is still backed, by IMA Vice President Roberto Lacorte and his family's pharmaceutical company, PharmaNutra. Taking place in one of Italy's most popular sailing locations, it now rivals Loro Piana Giraglia in terms of participation, its



Approaching the finish of the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar.
Photo: Gianluca di Fazio/Studio Taccola

reputation no doubt enhanced by the parties laid on at the start and finish. Most notable is the lavish party held in the magnificent grounds of the Punta Ala Yacht Club, overlooking the sea. This caters for 1,800 with a sit-down dinner, a stage with live music and a DJ and a fireworks display.

The fifth event in the MMOC is Italy’s oldest race, Loro Piana Giraglia. This was held for the first time in 1953 as a joint enterprise between the Yacht Club Italiano and Yacht Club de France, to help thaw relations after their two nations had been on opposite sides during WWII. Today it is organised by the Yacht Club Italiano (YCI) in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez.

Only the offshore part of Loro Piana Giraglia counts towards the MMOC. The Loro Piana Giraglia offshore starts from Saint-Tropez, heading west to a turning mark, then on to the Giraglia rock off north Corsica, before continuing on to the Genoa finish. In 2024 Ramon Vos’ 100ft *Black Jack 100* was 15

minutes 27 seconds short of breaking her own race record (set in her previous incarnation as *Esimit Europa 2*), while Jean-Pierre Barjon’s Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina* was the maxi winner under IRC.

The newest addition to the MMOC is the Aegean 600. This is rapidly gaining in popularity due to its excellent organisation by the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club, the sheer novelty of racing around the islands of the Aegean Sea, plus the frequently challenging conditions dealt by the powerful meltemi and the lees behind the numerous islands the race passes.

The Aegean 600 starts off Cape Sounio (at the tip of the peninsula south of Athens) by Homer’s sanctuary and beneath the Temple of Poseidon. The race first heads to Milos, the ancient home of the Venus de Milo statue, then on to Santorini caldera, renowned for its white houses and azure domes. The course then turns east, past Kassos and Karpathos, before heading northeast to round Rhodes, where once stood the Colossus – one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, also the mythical birthplace of Athena and residence of Prometheus. Competitors then wind their way north through the Greek islands off the Turkish coast, including Kos and Kalymnos. The northeasterly turning mark is Agathonisi, from where the fleet passes Patmos, the island of Saint John and the Cave of the Apocalypse, bound for Mykonos and Delos, the birthplace of Apollo. Then it is on past Giaros and Kea, and back to finish where where they started.

Due to the toughness of this race it is very often won by maxis, a tradition that was continued in 2024 by popular winner, race sponsor and Olympic Marine

owner George Procopiou and his mostly Greek crew on the VO70 *Aiolis* (ex-*I Love Poland*).

The MMOC concludes as usual with August’s Palermo-Montecarlo. In contrast to the Aegean 600, the race is usually raced in very light conditions. However, in a generally quite breezy 2024 in the Mediterranean, it wasn’t, with boats seeing 25 knot winds off Corsica. As a result *Black Jack 100*, the line honours winner, was able to take more than three hours off her own record (as *Esimit Europa 2*), establishing a new race record of 44 hours 34 minutes 14 seconds.

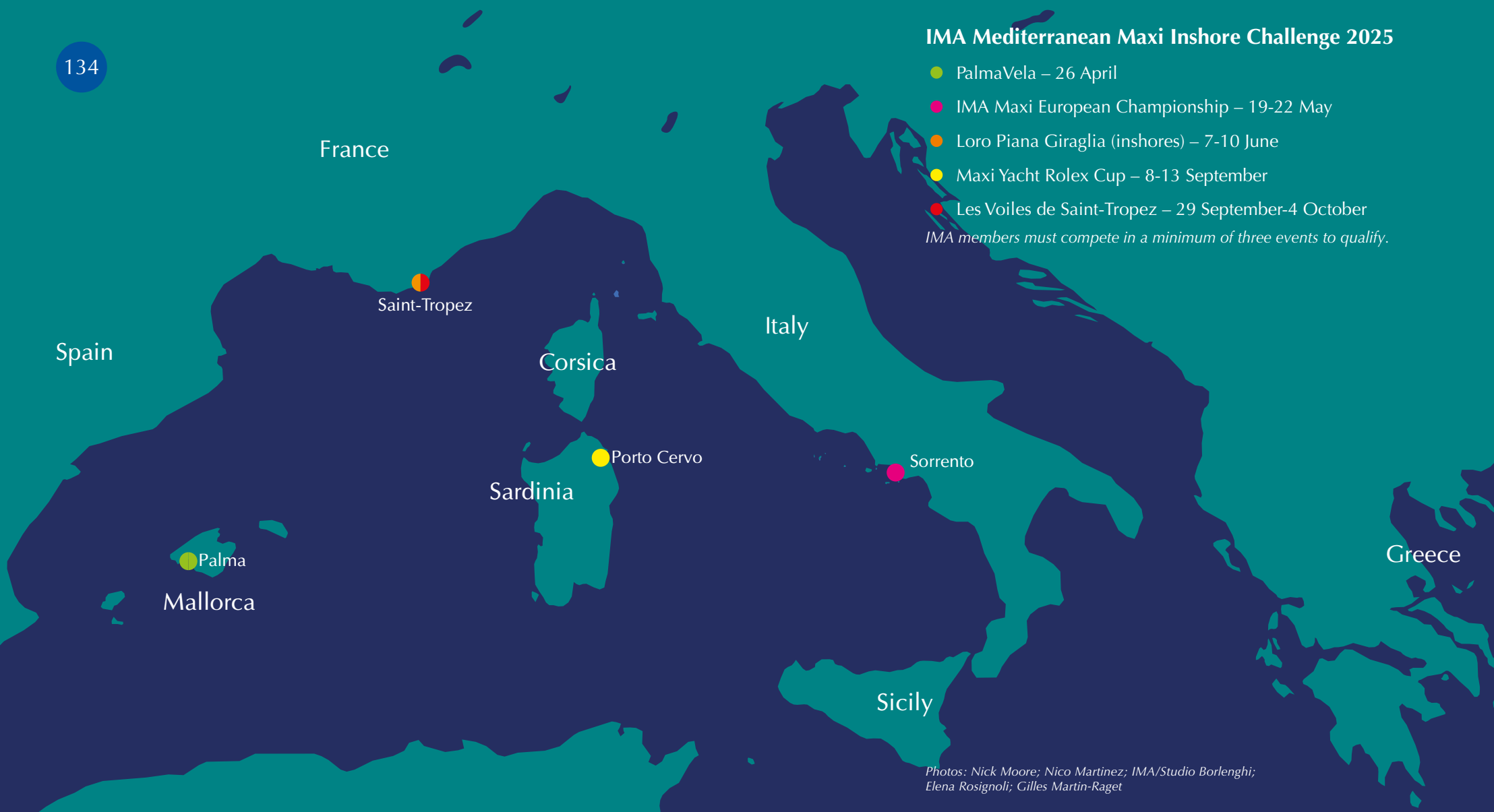
After starting from Mondello, close to the Sicilian capital Palermo, the course passes through a gate off Porto Cervo, monitored by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda. From here competitors have the choice of negotiating ‘Bomb Alley’ and then the Strait of Bonifacio before leaving Corsica to starboard or, if conditions look favourable, taking the slightly longer route leaving Corsica to port. Approaching the Monaco finish, the mountains behind the principality are around 1+km high, frequently causing the wind to shut down just short of the finish line. However the welcome provided by the prestigious Yacht Club de Monaco is worthy recompense.

Past winners

2015-16	<i>Rambler 88</i>	George David (USA)
2017-18	<i>Atalanta II</i>	Carlo A Puri Negri (ITA)
2018-19	<i>Vera</i>	Miguel Galuccio (ARG)
2021-22	<i>Spirit of Lorina</i>	Jean-Pierre Barjon (FRA)
2022-23	<i>Black Jack</i>	Peter Harburg (AUS)
2023-24	<i>Atalanta II</i>	Carlo A Puri Negri (ITA)

IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge 2025

- PalmaVela – 26 April
 - IMA Maxi European Championship – 19-22 May
 - Loro Piana Giraglia (inshores) – 7-10 June
 - Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup – 8-13 September
 - Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – 29 September-4 October
- IMA members must compete in a minimum of three events to qualify.*



Photos: Nick Moore; Nico Martinez; IMA/Studio Borlenghi; Elena Rosignoli; Gilles Martin-Raget





The IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) gathers the five leading inshore events for maxis in the Mediterranean into an annual championship. Unlike its offshore equivalent, this runs over a calendar year, culminating in Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. And the competition is always close: in fact, every edition of the MMIC so far has been decided at the final event, even occasionally in the last race. Only then does the winner get to have their name engraved on the MMIC's vintage silver perpetual trophy: a two-handled cup on a square foot, made by DG Collins in Sheffield in 1911. Traditionally this is presented at the prize-giving of Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

As with our other championships, a significant administrative change is taking place in 2025 as we will be publishing the on-going results of the MMIC

on the IMA website immediately after every event through the season. This will allow owners to see how they are progressing, and may encourage more maxi owners to get out on the race course more often.

As ever, to qualify for the MMIC members must compete in at least three events out of the five. Participation in September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup is mandatory and the results from both that event and the IMA Maxi European Championship in Sorrento are slightly weighted.

The 2025 MMIC fires up with the 21st PalmaVela. Maxi yachting has taken place on the Bay of Palma since the dawn of the sport, but it took root more firmly when the Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP) created the Mediterranean season opener, Maxi Race Week, back in 2004. This has since been renamed PalmaVela and grown to include smaller yachts racing under handicap and other one-design classes.

Post-pandemic this seasonal 'warm-up event' has been slowly growing and remains especially popular with the Maxi 100s. Racing for the maxis takes place over five days, during which two coastal races and four windward-leewards are scheduled. This is an owner-driver event and participating maxis are able to enter with their IRC Reduced Crew rating, based on 70% (rounded up) of the number of crew stated on their IRC certificate. The event concludes with a prize-giving held outside the RCNP.

Although only in its fourth edition in 2025, the IMA Maxi European Championship, run by the Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia (CRVI) and the IMA, has grown in stature to become one of the top fixtures in the annual maxi racing calendar. A mixed inshore/offshore event, the MMIC only includes results from

the four-day windward-leeward and coastal racing part of the Championship. This takes place on the Gulf of Naples and, if British PRO Stuart Childerley feels conditions are suitable, will most likely include the popular lap of Capri, passing all the island's famous landmarks such as the much-photographed Faraglioni rocks. The maxi fleet will be based in Sorrento's Marina Piccola, where special dockage is installed for the duration of the event. During the regatta the IMA will be again hosting their popular cocktail party on the magnificent terrace of the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria overlooking the marina.

While the grand prix racers are naturally favoured for the European Championship title, with the last two editions having been won by former Maxi 72s, the fleet is sub-divided into smaller classes by rating, each of which comes with its own prizes. In addition, yachts racing with a crew of 80% 'amateurs' (or World Sailing Group 1) will be eligible for the European Championship's Corinthian division, which comes with its own prize, the Coppa Guido Imperiali di Francavilla. Similarly for the fastest boats, typically those unlikely to win under corrected time, there is the Coppa Roberto Garolla di Bard, awarded to the yacht with the lowest combined elapsed time across all of the inshore races.

Next up in the MMIC calendar are the inshore races that precede the more famous offshore race of Loro Piana Giraglia, organised by the Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez. When last year Loro Piana took over the title sponsorship of this 71-year-old event from Rolex, a key change upon which they insisted was extending the event's inshore racing from three to four days.



Porto Cervo harbour showing La Maddalena and the famous 'Bomb Alley'. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

This has helped to make it a more significant event, ensuring the maxi fleet sets off on the event's offshore race fully race fit.

Racing for the maxis takes place on Pampelonne Bay, immediately south of Saint-Tropez and off one of Europe's most famous beaches. Here the race committee, led by PRO Georges Korhel, with RO Philippe Faure taking specific charge of the maxis, combines a mix of windward-leewards within the bay with coastal courses that typically take the fleet down to a turning mark either off Cavalaire-sur-Mer to the southwest, or off Saint-Raphael to the northeast, with some races finishing back off Saint-Tropez.

For this event there is a giant entertainment area on the mole, on the seaward side of the Port de Saint-Tropez. Here, every day after racing, crews can meet up for drinks and there is a daily prize-giving.

The MMIC builds to a crescendo for its final events; the biggest two of the season. Pinnacle of the maxi yachting season for the past four decades and counting, is the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, organised by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in conjunction with the IMA. Typically 45-50 maxi yachts participate in this, ranging from 60-footers to supermaxis and the sumptuous J Class, via the Maxi Grand Prix class (Maxi 72/Maxi 2) and Maxi 100s (Maxi 1). In a significant development, for the first time racing in both of these latter two classes have been designated official World Championships by the IMA.

While there are some windward-leewards for the classes that demand them (notably the 100s and the Maxi Grand Prix class), this is almost a distraction from the coastal racing for which the Costa Smeralda is renowned: the magnificent La Maddalena

archipelago; the meandering channel between its islands and the Sardinian mainland nicknamed ‘Bomb Alley’; the azure waters and wind-sculpted sandstone outcrops; the wind which can funnel down here from the Strait of Bonifacio between Sardinia and Sicily. Then there is the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda’s splendid 5+ star clubhouse, built during the 1960s, plus the professionalism of the YCCS team led by YCCS Secretary General and Sports Director Edoardo Recchi. All told, this is why maxi owners flock to Porto Cervo and underpins why the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup is their favourite event.

During the week there is the Association’s Annual General Meeting as well as the popular IMA Members’ Dinner.

The final inshore event of the maxi racing season, and the last in the MMIC, is Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. The shoreside accoutrements of the Cote d’Azur’s most famous hotspot and its glamorous, laid-back, artistic ambience have long attracted maxi owners and their families. In recent years, thanks to the IMA’s input, Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez has evolved to become a more serious end-of-season showdown for the inshore maxi fleet, with improved racing conditions for competitors, including windward starts. These developments have contributed to its growing popularity – the fleet size frequently rivalling that of the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

The latest format for Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez sees a near complete overlap between the classic fleet for which the event is famous (combined with the smaller ‘modern’ yachts) and the maxis, which start and finish a day earlier. As with the Loro Piana Giraglia inshores, the racing takes place out of



Mooring quayside in Saint-Tropez is most desirable but has restricted draft. Photo: IMA/James Boyd

Pampelonne Bay, just to the south of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez, on a mix of windward-leeward and coastal courses. The schedule also features a layday when crews get to enjoy the delights of the town and the surrounding area, with the ‘top ticket’ being the traditional lengthy luncheon at Club 55 on Plage de Pampelonne. On the layday there remains the old tradition of the ‘defis’ – individual challenges between boats. These were the origin of the Nioulargue which then mutated into Les Voiles before it became Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

As with Loro Piana Giraglia, the race village is now fully located on Saint-Tropez harbour’s Môle d’Estienne d’Orves, where the event concludes with

a prize-giving and the presentation of the Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge trophy to its winner. Given how out of the four previous editions of the MMIC, Benoît de Froidmont’s *Wallyño* has won three and will be its defending champion in 2025, it would be unwise to bet against the IMA President’s silver Wally 60.

Past winners

2019	<i>Wallyño</i>	Benoît de Froidmont (BEL)
2022	<i>Capricorno</i>	Alessandro Del Bono (ITA)
2023	<i>Wallyño</i>	Benoît de Froidmont (BEL)
2024	<i>Wallyño</i>	Benoît de Froidmont (BEL)



Photos: Alex Turnbull; Souleyman Titah; BVISR/Ingrid Abery





In 2024 the IMA established its first Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series (CMMS). The idea for it was to complement our three-event maxi monohull series in the Caribbean. Sadly the monohull series had to be put on hold as its centrepiece, *Les Voiles de St Barth*, had no sponsor and so did not take place in 2024 (nor will it in 2025). Fortunately, the four events within our Caribbean multihull series are all still taking place.

The inaugural edition of the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series was won by the 84ft catamaran *Allegra* and her owner Adrian Keller became the first recipient the CMMS's crystal trophy, presented to him at the IMA Members' Dinner during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup last September.

In 2025, the CMMS will be again open to all multihulls of 60+ft LH. As was the case in 2024, it will comprise four events, three inshores and one offshore. Like the rest of the IMA's challenges, it

aims to entice owners out on to the race course, while helping to consolidate the racing calendar and hopefully improving the standard of racing that's laid on.

The 2025 IMA CMMS starts with the Caribbean Multihull Challenge in St Maarten. This event was set up in 2018 by local legend Robbie Ferron, a founder of the St Maarten Heineken Regatta, with Stephen Burzon and Petro Jonker – all members of Sint Maarten Yacht Club, the event's hosts. Racing will see a repeat of the FKG Trifecta™ with a 60-mile sprint around St Barth, a 52-mile dash to Saba and back, and a 27-mile around SXM Circle Race. Over the four days, these, plus two more, will make up the five-race schedule for the large multihulls. The winner will receive the Trifecta Trophy Presented by FKG Rigging & Hydraulics.

From here the series migrates to Antigua for the RORC Caribbean 600. Prior to this, multihulls can take part in the Antigua 360, a lap of the host island on Friday 21 February.

Multihulls have always had a strong presence in the RORC Caribbean 600, dating back to the first race. The current record of 29 hours 38 mins 44 seconds was set in 2022 by Jason Carroll's *MOD70 Argo*. Last year the basis for *Allegra's* CMMS victory was established by a strong performance in the RORC Caribbean 600.

The RORC Caribbean 600 has now earned its position as a classic among the world's 600-mile offshore races. Compared to most of these, its course is highly convoluted and thus extremely challenging: Starting and finishing in Antigua, it weaves its way around 11 islands, from St Maarten in the north to

Guadeloupe in the south. Competitors relish the brisk trade winds and Atlantic swell between the islands, but also the challenging lulls in the lee of the islands.

The CMMS then returns to St Maarten for the 45th edition of St Maarten Heineken Regatta, again organised by Sint Maarten Yacht Club. One of the Caribbean's oldest regattas, competitors will experience the island's crystal clear waters and the prospect of brisk sailing in the northeasterly trades. Daily coastal courses are scheduled, including, conditions permitting, a race around St Maarten, or up to four inshore races.

The event is renowned for its world-class entertainment ashore, with Heineken-backed parties featuring top international acts such as the Black Eyed Peas, UB40, The Commodores and The Jacksons.

The CMMS will conclude once again with the Royal BVI Yacht Club's BVI Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival, held out of Nanny Cay Marina on Tortola's southern shore over the first week of April.

The event starts with the Round Tortola Nanny Cay Cup, the first of two races in the BVI Sailing Festival. The following day is the Scrub Island Invitational where competitors race to this idyllic Scrub Island Resort off the east end of Tortola to enjoy a BBQ, live entertainment and awards. There is then a layday followed by three days of windward-leeward races on the BVI's magnificent St Francis Drake Channel. Contenders for the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series' crystal trophy must complete a minimum of two events.

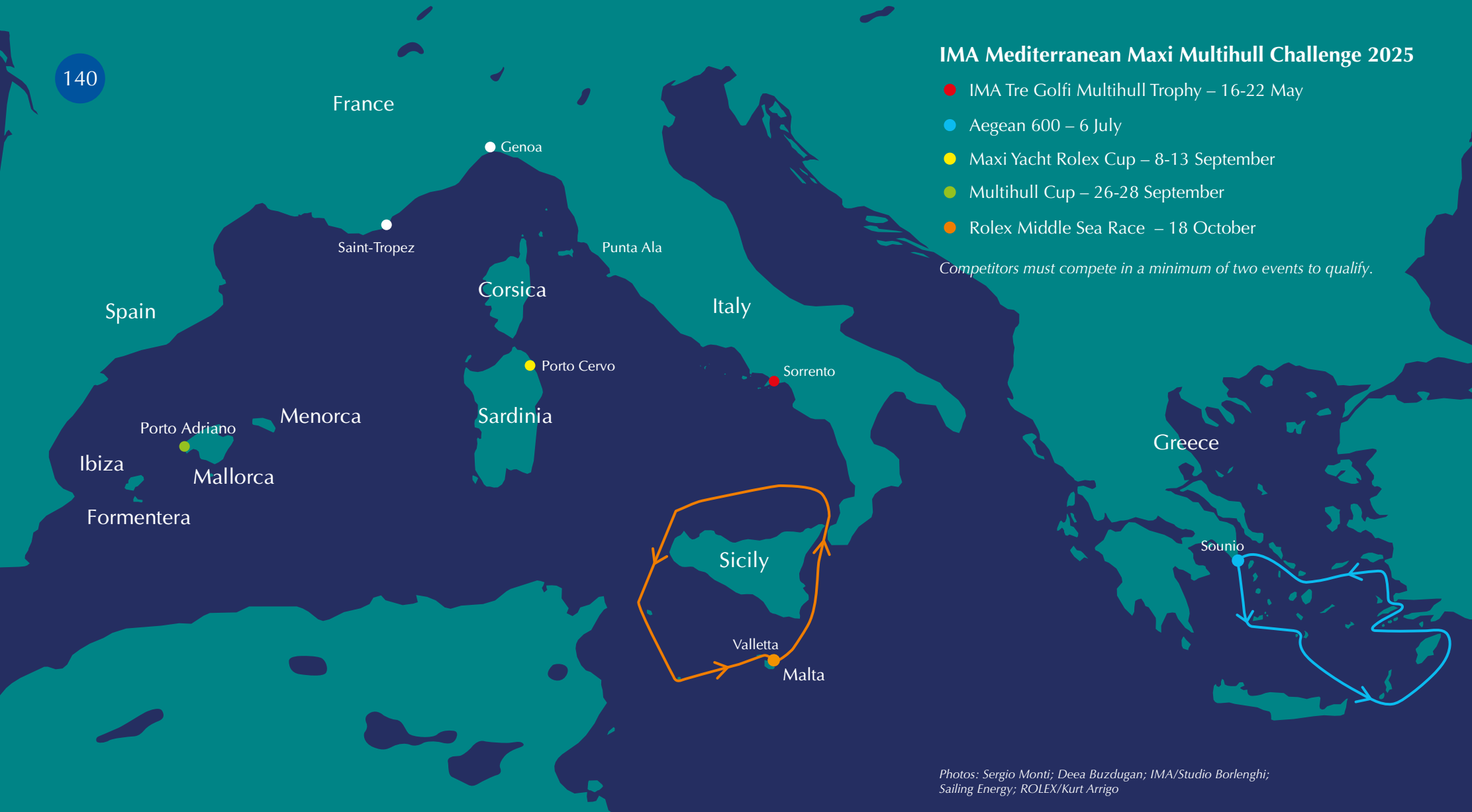
Past winners

2024	<i>Allegra</i>	Adrian Keller (SUI)
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IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge 2025

- IMA Tre Golfi Multihull Trophy – 16-22 May
- Aegean 600 – 6 July
- Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup – 8-13 September
- Multihull Cup – 26-28 September
- Rolex Middle Sea Race – 18 October

Competitors must compete in a minimum of two events to qualify.



*Photos: Sergio Monti; Deea Buzdugan; IMA/Studio Borlenghi;
Sailing Energy; ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo*





In 2024 we introduced our Mediterranean equivalent of the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series, also featuring a mix of inshore and offshore events. The IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge (MMMC) will this year include some new fixtures and we have substantially revised the combination of events in order to encourage multihull teams to compete in as many races as possible.

The season starts with a brand new event; at the request of several teams, Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia (CRVI) and our Association have agreed to run the IMA Tre Golfi Multihull Trophy. This will take place in May alongside our IMA Maxi European Championship and as part of the CRVI's broader 2025 Tre Golfi Sailing Week. This has been largely engineered by *Gaetana's* owner Riccardo Pavoncelli, who is a CRVI member.

The IMA Maxi Europeans for the maxi monohulls will be taking place out of Marina Piccola in Sorrento, but – due to berthing limitations there – the IMA Tre Golfi Multihull Trophy catamarans will be moored in the Marina di Equa in Vico Equense, just 2.5 miles from Sorrento. Otherwise, the multihull event will follow the same format as the IMA Maxi Europeans, kicking off with the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore race, starting from Naples at 16:15 on 16 May and finishing off Naples. This will be followed, from Monday 19 May until Thursday 22 May, with coastal races on the Gulf of Naples, probably including a lap of nearby Capri.

In terms of offshore races, the MMMC will include the Aegean 600 in July and the Rolex Middle Sea Race at the end of the season. These are two of the toughest offshore races and competitors need to be

prepared for them. The Aegean 600 passes numerous islands, and competitors will find the meltemi wind to be extremely gusty as they pass in and out of the lee of them. Adrian Keller's 84ft *Allegra* has been a regular competitor in the Aegean 600. In 2024, for the race's fourth edition, the MOD70 trimarans *Argo* and *Zoulou* match raced their way around the anticlockwise lap of the Aegean Sea, with *Zoulou* ultimately setting a new race record of 37 hours 18 minutes 52 seconds (see p44). At present *Allegra* is set to return in 2025.

The hospitality and experience of the organisers, the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club, the newness of the course and that so many outside of Greece have yet to take part in this still relatively new event, are great attractions to the Aegean 600.

The Rolex Middle Sea Race can also be a brutal race, but this is more due to it taking place in mid-October, a time of year when the Mediterranean is frequently in a very fickle mood – blustery one minute, flat calm the next. But again, the spectacular start from within Valletta's heavily fortified ancient harbour and the course – which uniquely passes several active volcanoes such as Mount Etna and Stromboli, as well as the challenge of the changeable weather and the hospitality of the Royal Malta Yacht Club are reasons enough for competitors to return repeatedly. In the 2021 edition Jason Carroll's MOD70 trimaran *Argo* reduced the race record down to 1 day 9 hours 29 minutes 28 seconds.

For 2025 the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda has kindly permitted the IMA to include the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in our MMMC. The club in Porto Cervo, with which our Association has enjoyed very close ties

since the early 1980s, introduced a multihull class for the first time in 2023, with entry numbers capped at five due to limited berthing space. For each of these last two editions three catamarans have entered, with *Allegra* winning by a hair in 2023 and Riccardo Pavoncelli's Gunboat 66 *Gaetana* claiming the top prize in 2024. The coastal courses the YCCS lays on around the Costa Smeralda and La Maddalena archipelago, where winds usually funnel down from the Strait of Bonifacio between Corsica and Sardinia, plus the area's famous azure waters and craggy sandstone sculptures of the famous 'Bomb Alley' between the archipelago and the Sardinian mainland, make this one of the world's top venues for this style of racing.

Perhaps the best news for 2025 comes from the Multihull Cup, which *Allegra* owner Adrian Keller supports, taking place out of the large marina at Porto Adriano, just west of the Bay of Palma. The organisers of this already have firm commitments from seven maxi-cats. In addition to *Gaetana* and *Allegra* will be Lord Irvine Laidlaw's Gunboat 80 *Highland Fling XVIII* and Valentin Piëch's *Dragon*, both of which competed in 2024. 2025 will see the welcome return of Angus Ball's Gunboat 66 *Coco de Mer*, following her dreadful Round the Island Race capsized two years ago. Also expected are the Gunboat 72 *Layla* and the MM65 of Zachary Plavic, *Gaea*.

To qualify for the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge, competitors must race in a minimum of two events. Similar to the IMA's other series, the more events competitors take part in, the more points they can accumulate. As mentioned in our multihull round-up on p110, many more multihulls are joining this burgeoning part of maxi racing.

IMA Yacht of the Year Trophy

In addition to our ‘challenges’ in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, the Association also awards the annual IMA Yacht of the Year Trophy to the member’s yacht that has achieved the most

outstanding performance throughout the season. This is decided based on both inshore and offshore results, taking into account the magnitude of races and class sizes.



IMA Yacht of the Year Trophy 2023 winner – North Star’s Peter Dubens. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

The IMA Yacht of the Year trophy is an antique, refurbished Georgian-style, two-handled cup with cover, manufactured in London by Barnard Bros. at the end of the 19th century. It is presented at the IMA Members’ Dinner the following September during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

In 2024 the trophy was won by Yacht Club Costa Smeralda Commodore Andrea Recordati’s Wally 93 *Bullitt*. Following a lengthy refit, including many upgrades, *Bullitt* scored a major victory at the end of 2023 when she not only won the maxi class in the Rolex Middle Sea Race after a close run battle with *Leopard 3*, but eventually was pronounced the race’s overall winner. In 2024 she was runner up to V in Maxi 1 at the IMA Maxi Europeans and posted other solid results through the season.

Past winners		
2013	<i>Rán II</i>	Niklas Zennström (SWE)
2014	<i>Robertissima</i>	Roberto Tomasini Grinover (ITA)
2015	<i>Momo</i>	Dieter Schön (GER)
2016	<i>Rambler 88</i>	George David (USA)
2017	<i>Proteus</i>	George Sakellaris (USA)
2018	<i>Atalanta II</i>	Carlo A Puri Negri (ITA)
2019	<i>Rambler 88</i>	George David (USA)
2021	<i>Twin Soul B</i>	Luciano Gandini (ITA)
2022	<i>Capricorno</i>	Alessandro Del Bono (ITA)
2023	<i>North Star</i>	Peter Dubens (GBR)
2024	<i>Bullitt</i>	Andrea Recordati (ITA)

Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy

Comandante Gianfranco Alberini was the much admired and long serving Secretary General of the Association, from its early days as the International Class A Yacht Association (ICAYA). He took on running the IMA due to his position as Secretary General of the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda (YCCS), from 1975 and then as YCCS Commodore from 1981. It is because of this arrangement that such a strong bond remains between the IMA and the YCCS to this day. It was also thanks to Alberini that the ICAYA World Championship was created and he was also responsible for bringing in Rolex as title sponsor, resulted in today's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

Upon his death in June 2013, the IMA Board established the Gianfranco Alberini Challenge trophy in memory of this formidable individual who was for so long the Association's guiding light.

This perpetual trophy is a dodecagonal silver cup, mounted on a juniper plinth. Originally it was awarded to the IMA member whose crew demonstrated best sportsmanship in the Volcano Race, an event Alberini had established. Sadly since that race is no longer held, the Trophy is now awarded, under the exact same remit as before, at the IMA Maxi European Championship based nearby in Sorrento.

Past winners

2014	<i>Shirlaf</i>	Giuseppe Puttini (ITA)
2015	<i>Fra' Diavolo</i>	Vincenzo Addressi (ITA)
2016	<i>Wild Joe</i>	Márton Jósza (HUN)
2023	<i>Oscar3</i>	Aldo Parisotto (ITA)



2023 Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy winner, *Oscar3's* Aldo Parisotto. Photo: IMA/James Boyd



Secretary General Andrew McIrvine presents the IMA Trophy to *Lucky's* owner Bryan Ehrhart for winning monohull line honours in the 2025 RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race. Photo: RORC/Arthur Daniel

IMA Trophy for the RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race

Racing westwards across the Atlantic on the tradewinds route to the Caribbean should be on all sailors' bucket list. The IMA has been supporting the RORC Transatlantic Race since 2014, when the RORC first held their race from Calero Marinas' Marina Arrecife in Lanzarote to the finish off Camper & Nicholson's Port Louis Marina in Grenada. In recent years the race has gained popularity thanks to the RORC moving its start to January.

The IMA Trophy, awarded to the race's line honours winner, is an 'Adam Style' vintage silver trophy.

With no MOD70s competing in 2025, the field was clear for a monohull overall winner and after a tough race with Christian Zugel's team aboard the highly upgraded VO70 *Tschuss 2* (ex-*Groupama*), line honours was taken by Bryon Ehrhart's 88ft *Lucky*, surprisingly the first time the former *Rambler 88* had won this trophy.

Past winners

2015	<i>Nomad IV</i>	Jean-Paul Rivière (FRA)
2016	<i>Leopard 3</i>	Mike Slade (GBR)
2017	<i>CQS</i>	Ludde Ingvall (FIN)
2018	<i>My Song</i>	Pier Luigi Loro Piana (ITA)
2019	<i>Childhood</i>	Bouwe Bekking (NED)
2021	<i>Green Dragon</i>	Johannes Schwarz (AUT)
2022	<i>Comanche</i>	Mitch Booth (AUS)
2023	<i>I Love Poland</i>	Polish National Foundation (POL)
2024	<i>Leopard 3</i>	Joost Schuijff (NED)
2025	<i>Lucky</i>	Bryan Ehrhart (USA)

OTHER MAXI EVENTS

While the core of the IMA's activities are focussed upon the Mediterranean and we make continued efforts to encourage participation in the Caribbean, maxi yacht racing also takes place elsewhere around the world.

In 2025 two of the greatest maxi yacht events will start from the USA. The first is the latest edition of what is considered perhaps the first offshore race between privately owned yachts, which took place in December 1866. The 'Great Ocean Yacht Race' was contested by three giant schooners belonging to three New York Yacht Club members. The winner of the race, along with the enormous prize purse (of roughly US\$2 million in today's money), was the eccentric future newspaper proprietor James Gordon Bennett Jnr, aged just 25 at the time. This race has continued at sporadic intervals since, recently becoming quadrennial. It still finishes in Cowes, with a timing gate at the Lizard, but today starts from Newport, Rhode Island. 2025's edition will be special as it will coincide with the centenary of the race's co-organiser, the Royal Ocean Racing Club.

While the race will take place under IRC, considerable bragging rights go to the line honours winner, which this year looks set to be between Remon Vos' *Black Jack 100* and Christian Zugel's successful VO70 *Tschüss 2*. The race will double as a feeder into the Rolex Fastnet Race and it will be interesting to see if *Tschüss 2* can repeat the success of the Askew brothers who, aboard *Tschüss 2* under her previous name, *Wizard*, in 2019 won both the Transatlantic and subsequent Fastnet Race – continuing a tradition dating back to 20-year-old brothers Olin and Rod Stephens on *Dorada* in 1931.

Shortly afterwards another of the world's oldest trans-oceanic races will set sail on the US West Coast. The inaugural Transpacific Yacht Race was first held in 1906, the same year as the first Newport-Bermuda, but the Transpac runs on one of ocean racing's sweetest courses – a 2000+ mile downwind blast in shorts and t-shirts from Los Angeles to Hawaii. This race has attracted more maxi competitors over its history than any other, for example 16 60+ footers competed in the 1959 race. Since the 1970s it has even seen its own genre of maxi created – the ultra-light displacement boat (ULDB) or 'sled'. The race's record has been held by several of the world's most famous maxis such as designer Bill Lee's *Merlin* – the first ULDB, Roy E Disney's Santa Cruz 70 *Pyewacket*, Hasso Plattner's maxZ86 *Morning Glory* and Neville Crichton's *Alfa Romeo II*.

For maxi yachts there are several other offshore events running along the US West Coast prior to the Transpac, while in the mid-West, there is the annual Chicago-Mackinac Race. This had a memorable edition in 2024 when the Andrews 80 maxi *Maverick*, campaigned by Sanford Burris and William and Ward Kinney, set a new race record of 22 hours 24 minutes 23 seconds.

Other classic offshore events on the menu are the Cape 2 Rio Race taking place at the end of the year. This 3,700-mile course is highly tactical, usually requiring competitors to negotiate their way around the South Atlantic's St Helena high pressure system. Since the race was first held in 1971, famous maxis like *ICAP Leopard*, *Rambler*, *Zephyrus*, *Morning Glory* and *Ondine* have added their names to the race's trophies, including the South Atlantic Trophy for the

corrected time winner – comprising a stylised boat with a golden hull and silver sails.

Looking further ahead, venturing north to the Baltic Sea could be an interesting proposition in 2026, with two maxi-friendly events that neatly link in with each other: The Royal Swedish Yacht Club's Round Gotland Race first started out in the 1920s as a race from Sandhamn to Visby, on the island of Gotland and back, but, from 1937 on, became a race around the island. During the heyday of IOR in the 1970s and 80s, the Round Gotland attracted a sizeable international entry including maxi yachts, especially offshore yachts competing in the Whitbread Round the World Race.

Today it is possible to visit the Baltic to compete in both the Round Gotland and then the Royal Ocean Racing Club-run biennial Roschier Baltic Sea Race. This 600-mile race starts and finishes in the Finnish capital of Helsinki and, once again, rounds the island of Gotland, albeit in an anticlockwise direction. Christian Zugel's VO70 *Tschüss 2* set the bar high for this in 2024, winning both the Round Gotland and the Roschier Baltic Sea Race, a feat other maxis may well try to repeat in the future.



Tschüss 2 approaches the Roschier Baltic Sea finish.
Photo: Pepe Kortenienmi

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION/COURSE
AFFILIATED EVENTS IN 2025		
18 June	TRANSATLANTIC RACE 2025	Newport, RI, USA-Lizard-Cowes, UK
5 July	TRANSPAC	Los Angeles-Hawaii, USA
26 July	RORC CENTENARY ROLEX FASTNET RACE	Cowes-Fastnet Rock-Cherbourg
12 October	BARCOLANA	Trieste, Italy
18 October	VENICE HOSPITALITY CHALLENGE	Venice, Italy
25 December	ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT RACE	Sydney-Hobart, Australia
OTHER MAXI EVENTS IN 2025		
25-27 April	NEWPORT TO ENSENADA INTERNATIONAL YACHT RACE	Newport Beach, USA-Ensenada, Mexico
26 April-2 May	ANTIGUA SAILING WEEK	Antigua
29 May	SOCAL 300	Santa Barbara-San Diego, USA
29 May	HONG KONG - EASTERN ASIA OFFSHORE RACE	Hong Kong-Taipei, China
13-15 June	171ST NYYC ANNUAL REGATTA	Newport, RI, USA
28 June-12 July	25TH TROPHÉE BAILLI DE SUFFREN	Saint-Tropez, France-Malta
29 June	GOTLAND RUNT	Sandhamn-Sandhamn, Sweden
19 July	CHICAGO-MACKINAC	Chicago-Mackinac, USA
15 July	PACIFIC CUP	San Francisco, USA-Kaneohe, Hawaii
26 July	SYDNEY-GOLD COAST YACHT RACE	Sydney-Main Beach, Gold Coast, Australia
16-23 August	HAMILTON ISLAND RACE WEEK	Hamilton Island, Australia
27 December	CAPE TO RIO RACE	Cape Town, South Africa-Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
...AND BEYOND IN 2026		
4 March	ROLEX CHINA SEA RACE	Hong Kong-Subic Bay, Philippines
7 March	SAN DIEGO-PUERTO VALLARTA	San Diego, USA-Puerto Vallarta, Mexico
19 June	54TH NEWPORT BERMUDA RACE	Newport, RI, USA-Bermuda
22 June	SSE RENEWABLES ROUND IRELAND RACE	Wicklow-Wicklow, Ireland
28 June	GOTLAND RUNT	Sandhamn-Sandhamn, Sweden
6 July	PACIFIC CUP	San Francisco, USA-Kaneohe, Hawaii
25 July	ROSCHIER BALTIC SEA RACE	Helsinki, Finland-Helsinki

2025 IMA PROGRAMME EVENTS – DETAILS AND CONTACTS

Scanning the QR code with your phone will take you to each event's website

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
12 January	RORC-IMA TRANSATLANTIC RACE Course: Puerto Arrecife, Lanzarote to Camper & Nicholsons' Port Louis Marina, Grenada Distance: 2,995 miles	Organiser: Royal Ocean Racing Club e: racing@rorc.org t: (44) 1983 295 144 rorctransatlantic.rorc.org/
30 January-2 February 	CARIBBEAN MULTIHULL CHALLENGE Where: St Maarten Courses: Coastal	Organiser: Sint Maarten Yacht Club e: saskia@smyc.com t: +1 721 522 1639 www.caribbeanmultihullchallenge.com
18-20 February	<u>RORC NELSON'S CUP SERIES</u> RORC NELSON'S CUP MAXI REGATTA Where: Falmouth Harbour, Antigua Courses: Up to six windwards-leewards and coastal	Organiser: Royal Ocean Racing Club in association with the Antigua Yacht Club e: racing@rorc.org t: +44 (0) 1983 295 144 www.caribbean600.rorc.org
21 February	ANTIGUA 360 Course: Anticlockwise around Antigua, start/finish Fort Charlotte	
24 February 	RORC CARIBBEAN 600 Course: Starting and finishing off English Harbour, Antigua, passing Barbuda and rounding the islands St Kitts and Nevis, Saba, St Barth, St Maarten, Tintamarre, Guadeloupe, La Désirade and Redonda Distance: 600 miles	
6-9 March 	ST MAARTEN HEINEKEN REGATTA Where: St Maarten Courses: Coastal	Organiser: Sint Maarten Yacht Club e: info@heinekenregatta.com t: +1 721 544 2079 www.heinekenregatta.com
31 March-6 April 	BVI SPRING REGATTA & SAILING FESTIVAL Where: Nanny Cay Marina, Tortola, British Virgin Islands Courses: Round Tortola, coastals and windward-leewards	Organiser: Royal BVI Yacht Club e: info@bvispringregatta.org t: 284-346-8292 www.bvispringregatta.org
26 April 	<u>SANDBERG PALMAVELA</u> LA LARGA (Offshore) Course: Starting and finishing in Palma, Mallorca, via Dragonera, Ibiza, Formentera, Cabrera or via Dragonera, Tagomago and Cabrera Distance: 165-225 miles	Organiser: Real Club Náutico de Palma e: coordeportiva@rcnp.es t: +34 971 72 68 48 www.palmavela.com

Scanning the QR code with your phone will take you to each event's website

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
30 April-4 May 	SANDBERG PALMAVELA (Inshores) Where: Palma, Mallorca Courses: Up to six windward-leewards and coastals	
16 May 	IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP REGATA DEI TRE GOLFI (Offshore) Course: Naples to Naples, Italy, via Ponza and Li Galli Distance: 155 miles <i>Part of Tre Golfi Sailing Week</i>	Organiser: Circolo Remo e Vela Italia and Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the IMA e: info@tregolfisailingweek.com t: +39 081 764 6393 www.tregolfisailingweek.com 
19-22 May 	IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP (Inshores) Where: Sorrento, Italy Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals on Gulf of Naples and around Capri	
30 May 	151 MIGLIA-TROFEO CETILAR Course: Livorno to Punta Ala, Italy, via Marina di Pisa, Capraia, Pianosa, Formiche di Grosseto and Cerboli Distance: 151 miles	Organiser: Yacht Club Punta Ala, Yacht Club Livorno, Yacht Club Repubblica Marinara di Pisa e: segreteria@151miglia.it t: +39 050 310023 www.151miglia.it 
7-10 June 	LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA (Inshores) Where: Saint-Tropez, France Inshore courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	Organiser: Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez e: info@yci.it t: +39 010 253381 www.loropianagiraglia.com 
11 June 	LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA (Offshore) Course: Saint-Tropez, France to Genoa, Italy via Giraglia Distance: 241 miles	
6 July  	AEGEAN 600 Course: Starting and finishing off Sounio, Greece, via Milos, Santorini Caldera, Kassos, Karpathos, Rhodes, Kandelousa, Kos, Kalolimnos, Farmakonissi, Agathonissi, Patmos, Mykonos-Dilos and Kea Distance: 605 miles	Organiser: Hellenic Offshore Racing Club e: info@aegean600.com t: + 30 210 4123357 whatsapp: +30 6932708404 www.aegean600.com 

Scanning the QR code with your phone will take you to each event's website

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
19 August 	PALERMO-MONTECARLO Course: Palermo, Sicily to Monte Carlo via YCCS gate off Porto Cervo Distance: 437 miles	Organiser: Circolo della Vela Sicilia, Yacht Club de Monaco and Yacht Club Costa Smeralda e: info@palermo-montecarlo.it t: +39 091 347731 www.palermo-montecarlo.it 
8-13 September  	MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP Where: Porto Cervo, Sardinia Courses: Coastal and windward-leewards	Organiser: Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in conjunction with the IMA e: secretariat@yccs.it t: +39 0789 902200 www.yccs.it 
26-28 Sep 	MULTIHULL CUP Where: Port Adriano, Mallorca Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	Organiser: Multihull Cup e: info@multihullcup.com t: +34 637 918 404 www.multihullcup.com 
29 Sept-4 Oct 	LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ Where: Saint-Tropez, France Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	Organiser: Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez e: info@snst.org t: +33 494 973054 www.lesvoilesdesaint-tropez.fr 
18 October  	ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE (2025-26 MMOC) Where: Malta Course: Starting and finishing in Valletta, Malta, anticlockwise lap around Sicily via the Strait of Messina, Stromboli, Favignana, Pantelleria and Lampedusa Distance: 606 miles	Organiser: Royal Malta Yacht Club e: info@rolexmiddlesearace.com t: +356 21 333109 www.rolexmiddlesearace.com 

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