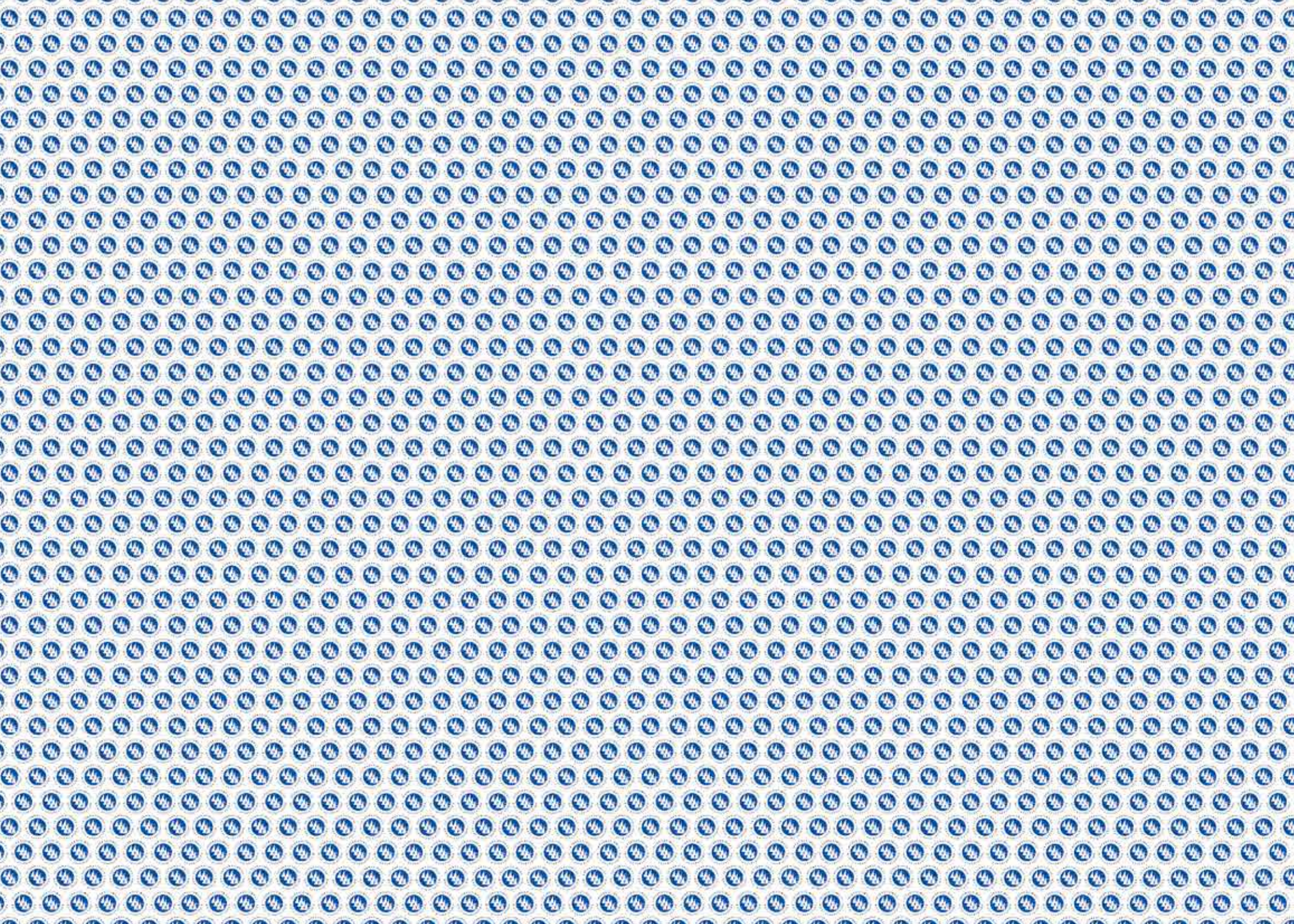


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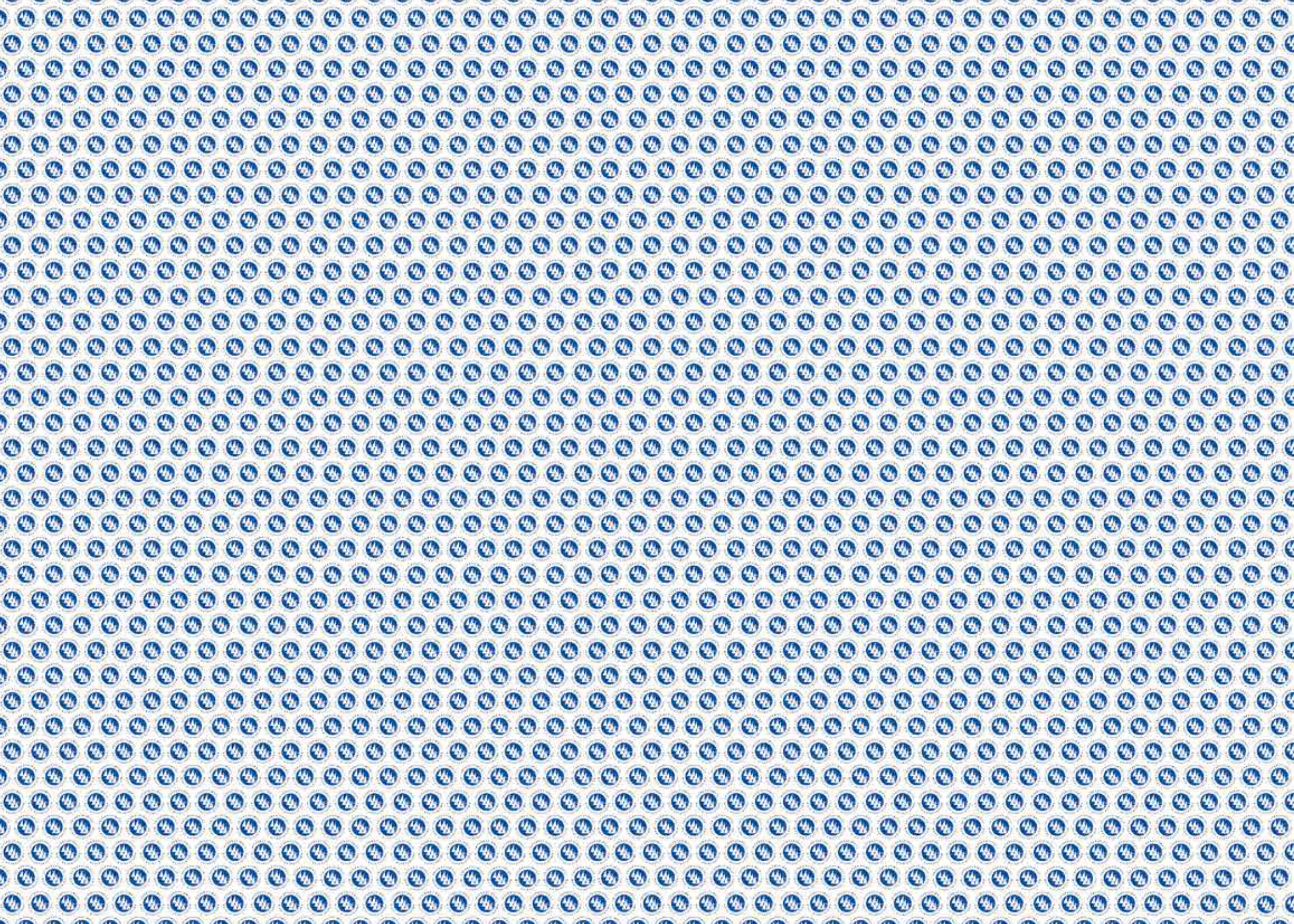


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## NEVER STRAIGHT

It is said the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. But at sea, charting any course comes with a slew of uncontrollable factors. The winds, the currents, the swell... Only the strongest will, the keenest experience and a sharp intuition can overcome such overwhelming powers. Only by keeping the highest expectations and harnessing the deepest resources can one chart a course between where one is and where one aims to be. There is very little chance it will ever be a straight line. **Yet more often than not, it will be the right one.**

*#Perpetual*



OYSTER PERPETUAL  
YACHT-MASTER 42

  
**ROLEX**







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## EDITORIAL, DESIGN AND PRINT

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*Blasting downwind on Sir Peter Odgen's Jethou.  
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*





## IMA FOUNDER MEMBERS

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### FOUNDER MEMBERS

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Raul Gardini

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John B Kilroy

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Baron Edmond de Rothschild

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William Whitehouse-Vaux

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### HONORARY MEMBERS

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His Majesty Juan Carlos I of Spain

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### IMA BOARD

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Pier Luigi Loro Piana  
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### PAST PRESIDENTS

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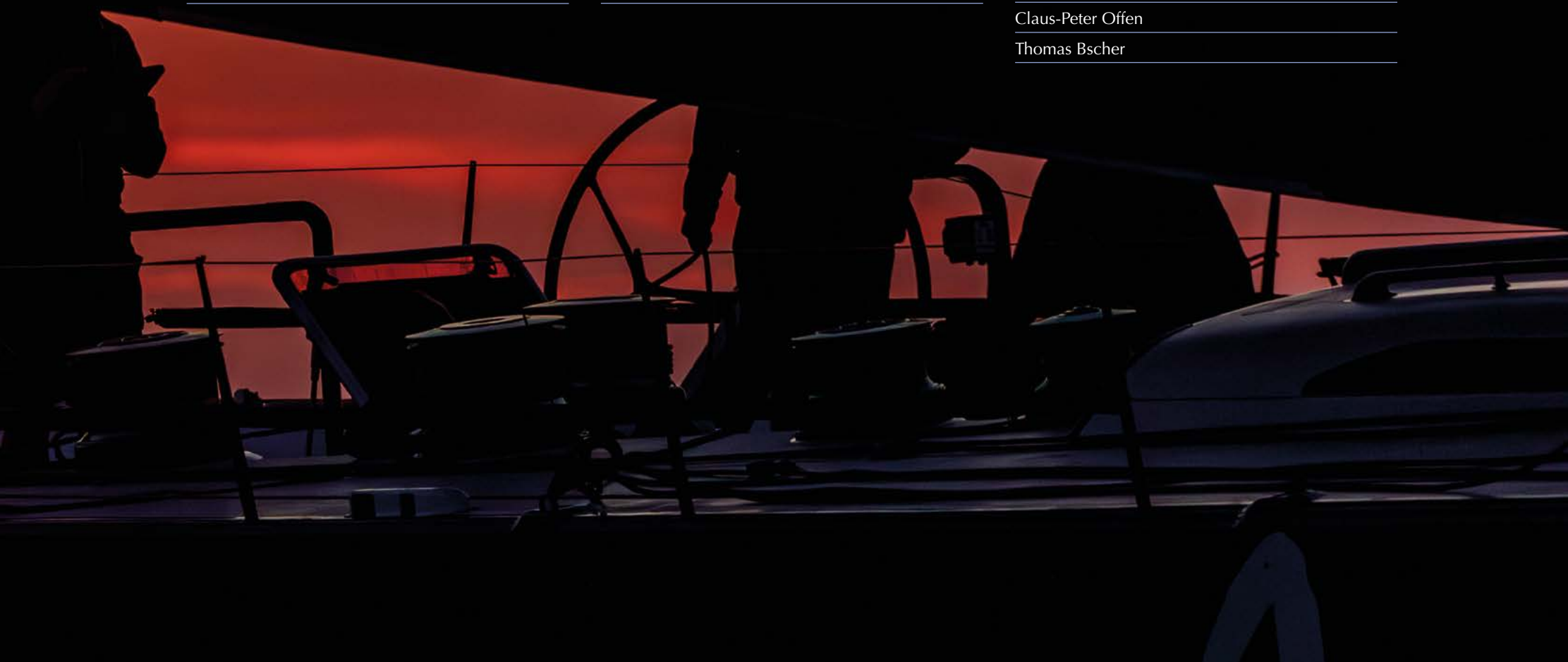
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Claus-Peter Offen

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Thomas Bscher

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## IMA STAFF AND CONTACTS



**Andrew McIrvine**  
*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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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 media relations, updating the IMA website and assisting the Secretary General with the day-to-day activities of the Association.  
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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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During his 35+ 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 and maxi enthusiasts – welcome to our IMA yearbook for 2024.

The International Maxi Association, our members and events enjoyed another great season in 2023. At a time when many areas of the sailing world seem to be shrinking, maxi yachting goes from strength to strength. Not only are fleet numbers strong, but the quality of the maxis competing at our major events

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

is improving every year. It is also encouraging to see continued growth in newer events such as the Aegean 600 and our IMA Maxi European Championship, once again set to be held in Sorrento this May. Many new and exciting maxi yachts have been launched, or are soon to be, some of them highly innovative – aspects we do our best to accommodate within the IMA and our races.

On behalf of the Association, I would like to thank all the yacht clubs, race organisers and partners with whom we work during the season and the huge commitment they make to our members.

The Association continues to be run day-to-day by a dedicated and extremely skilled team led by our Secretary General Andrew McIrvine. The IMA's aim, as always, is to increase maxi participation and work with teams and race organisers to improve the quality of racing for the whole maxi fleet at all the events they attend. Maxi owners and crew should be able to safely assume that at all events appearing on the IMA calendar – and especially in any of our annual 'Challenges' – the standard will be consistent from one event to the next. It is for this reason, for example, that we are often asked to advise on class splits and, in some cases, insert our own specialist race officers, such as Stuart Childerley and Ariane Mainemare, into the race management for major events.

Naturally none of this would be possible without the contributions of our members and the valuable backing of our official partner, Rolex – I thank you for your continued support of maxi racing.

For the new season I am pleased to welcome several new members to our Association, including the

owners of the Irens 84 catamaran *Allegra*, the Wallycento V (ex-*Tango*), the 100ft *Black Jack* (ex-*Alfa Romeo II/Esimit Europa 2*), the Solaris 64RS *Petit Cheval Blanc*, the 82ft *Django HF* (ex-*Highland Fling XI*) and the Baltic 65 *RE/MAX One2*. Anyone who owns a maxi and wants a voice when it comes to how and where they race, should join the Association. The larger we grow, the stronger and more influential we become and, speaking from experience, I am delighted by the strong friendships that can develop with other like-minded maxi owners along the way.

We were sad to learn of the death of our Vice President George Andreadis, who was a key supporter of the Association over many years. He will be much missed.

For 2024 we will be welcoming some fresh faces to the IMA Committee. Continuing as Treasurer is Sir Peter Ogden, alongside Vice Presidents Hap Fauth, Roberto Lacorte and Claus-Peter Offen, but we are gaining three new Vice Presidents. These are Pier Luigi Loro Piana, long-term member and owner of various *My Song* maxis for some 20+ years (see p12); Aldo Parisotto, owner of the *Mylius 65FD Oscar3* and Maurits van Oranje-Nassau, owner of the *Mylius 60 Sud*. I warmly welcome them all and look forward to them playing their part in steering the Association towards an even brighter future.

Finally, I wish you all the best for 2024 and hope this new season, which you can read about in the following pages, will bring you all the success you deserve.

**Benoît de Froidmont**





It has been another incredible year to be involved with, and to serve, the International Maxi Association and the international maxi community more generally.

In the Mediterranean, the fleet is flourishing, with several teams significantly upping their game. For example, two previously fast cruising-oriented maxis, *Bullitt* and *Leopard 3*, underwent extensive refits, transforming them into purer racers, and both have been rewarded with strong results; *Bullitt* won the Rolex Middle Sea Race overall and *Leopard 3* the Aegean 600 overall, while both also won races at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

There was a strong maxi entry for the RORC/IMA Transatlantic Race, followed by the RORC

Caribbean 600 and St Maarten Heineken Regatta, enabling us to hold our second IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge. This was won by Roy P Disney's *Pyewacket70*. Sadly, with no Les Voiles de St Barth taking place in 2024, we have dropped our maxi monohull Caribbean circuit for this season, with the hope of reintroducing it in 2025. In the meantime, we are continuing our commitment to the maxi multihull fleet by holding the first IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series in 2024. This will also include the BVI Spring Regatta.

The Mediterranean season started with PalmaVela, which had good maxi representation, though as yet only a few are joining its accompanying La Larga offshore race around the Balearic Islands.

Our second IMA Maxi Europeans was held in the Bay of Naples, even if the weather saw Sorrento rechristened 'Torrento'! Despite the rain, the full race programme was completed, starting with the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore. The overall worthy winner was Peter Dubens' *North Star*.

The two trips around Giraglia went well, although the courses for both the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar and Rolex Giraglia were shortened. The inshores prior to the latter were a success, but culminated in an incredible rainstorm which meant the cancellation of the massive Rolex crew party. While finishes of Rolex Giraglia are notoriously light, in fact this year the first arrivals reached Genoa in daylight hours, where they enjoyed the best breeze of the race.

Our leading event, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, provided a good test of our new class structure.

Throughout the season our intention was to keep TCC bands and class splits constant from event to event. In Porto Cervo, the Maxi 1 sub-class worked well, but elsewhere the splits failed due to the irregular balance of boat numbers between each, forcing us to consolidate classes. This was not always well received, therefore for 2024 we have reintroduced some flexibility, although retaining the main five band structure wherever possible, as was agreed at September's IMA AGM.

This year we were very sorry to lose one of our longest-serving members in Vice President George Andreadis, who died in June. A former Olympian, he had an incredibly loyal and extensive commitment to our sport, both as a competitor and then as an officer of almost all the important organisations in charge of international sailing, from the days of the IYRU through to World Sailing, as well as the ORC. We are delighted that one project which he strongly supported from its inception, the Aegean 600, continues to go from strength to strength.

President Benoît de Froidmont shoulders the major load as well as flying the flag, competing in most of our regattas with – I am glad to say – great success.

Finally, I would like to thank all the yacht clubs and organisations with whom we work so successfully, and our sponsor Rolex who give us such generous support and encouragement. I'd also like to thank the excellent team who support me, especially James Boyd and Maria Luisa Farris, who put so much effort into producing this beautiful book

**Andrew McIrvine**





▲ The IMA 2023 AGM.



▲ Dario Castiglia, Andrea Casale and Benoît de Froidmont.



▲ The IMA's James Boyd and Rachele Vittello mid-commentary at Rolex Giraglia.



▲ Maria Luisa Farris with Andrew McIrvine.



▼ The IMA Captains' Meeting in Porto Cervo.



▲ IMA's charity donation at the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar.



▲ Benoît and Aurélie de Froidmont with the IMA's Maria Luisa Farris and Monica Recchia.

▼ Rob Weiland with IMA Treasurer Sir Peter Ogden.









A name synonymous with the IMA and maxi yachting is Italian Pier Luigi 'Pigi' Loro Piana. Well known in business circles as the driving force behind the luxury clothing and textiles company bearing his family's name, Loro Piana has been campaigning maxi yachts called *My Song* for more than three decades, his latest being a canting keel ClubSwan 80 designed by Juan Kouyoumdjian. Launched in time for the 2022 season, this was the replacement for his ill-fated Reichel/Pugh and Nauta-designed, Baltic 130-footer, possibly one of the best looking yachts ever launched.

### A life at sea

While in recent years more and more maxi owners have been taking up yachting later in life – as successful business careers calm and companies are sold – Loro Piana instead began sailing aged 18 in the most relatable of ways. He caught the bug after sailing on a family friend's boat, going on to complete a sailing course on the island of Caprera (close to Porto Cervo). He bought his first boat with a friend, a Strale dinghy (similar to a 470) called *Barolo Libero* (named after the famous wine grape from his family's native Piedmont region). He subsequently graduated on to a Yngling keelboat and a 30ft Dufour Arpège, used for cruising with his elder brother Sergio.

Most significant was his first racing yacht, an Avventura 703 Mini Tonner designed by Vallicelli. This was the first production yacht built by an embryonic Nauta Yachts in the 1970s and brought him into contact with a kindred spirit in Nauta's founder, Mario Pedol. A passionate and experienced sailor and yacht designer, today Pedol, with his company, is a major force in maxi yacht and superyacht interior design and

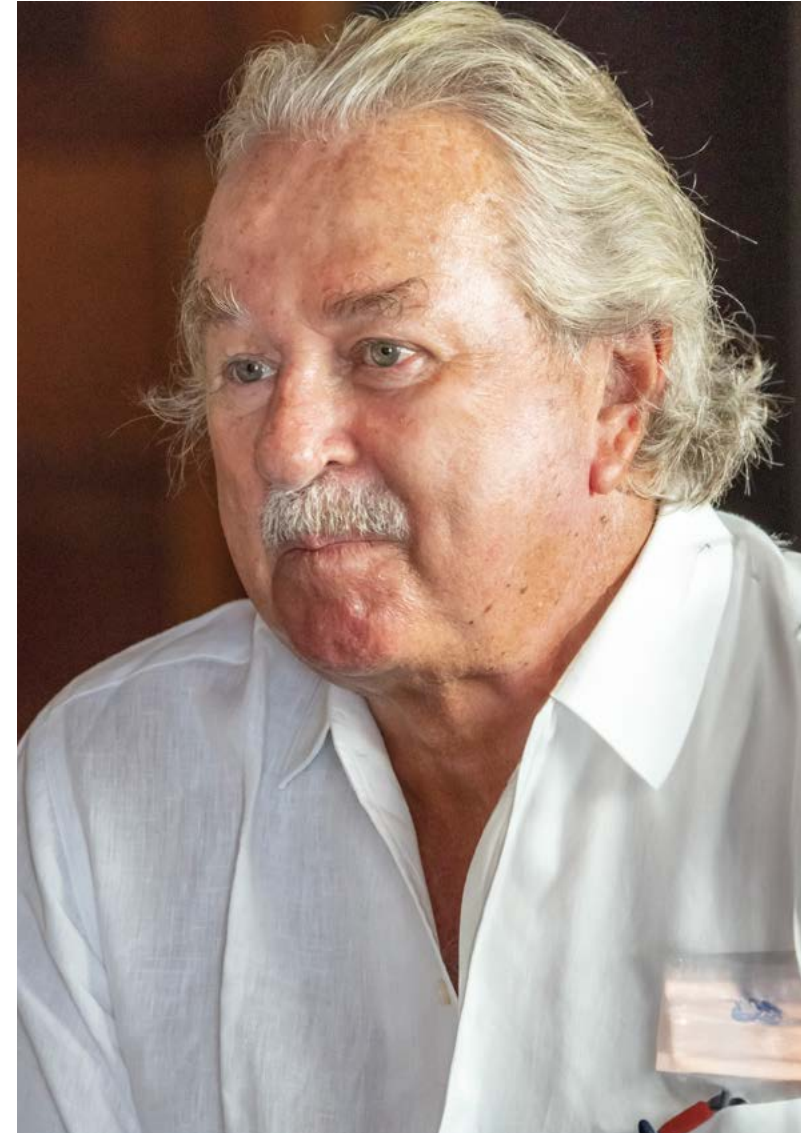
styling. In 1986, when Pedol and friends clubbed together to produce the first Nauta 54, Loro Piana was among the first to buy one.

Launched in 1988, the Nauta 54 was the first of Loro Piana's yachts to be named *My Song*, after the album and song by American jazz pianist Keith Jarrett. "He has been and still is, the best jazz piano player that I know of," insists Loro Piana. The name struck him as perfect when one day, while listening to it, he realised that the feeling the music instilled in him was the same as that when he went sailing.

The first *My Song* was replaced in 1991 by a 70ft Bruce Farr design, but also styled and with a deck arrangement and interior design by Pedol and Nauta Design, built by CNB Fano. This was also the first *My Song* to bear other consistent traits of Loro Piana's yachts, a blue-black hull colour, along with sleek, graceful hull lines.

Nauta was once again involved with the third *My Song*, a Reichel/Pugh 84-footer, built by Cooksons in New Zealand and launched in 1999. She served her owner well for the next 15 years, going on to be sold to Argentinean Miguel Galuccio who renamed her *Vera* and won the IMA's 2018-19 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge. By this point Loro Piana had acquired what was certainly meant to be his ultimate boat, a 130-footer, built in pre-preg carbon fibre by Baltic Yachts in Finland, again from Reichel/Pugh and Nauta.

Sadly, despite being one of the most beautiful modern yachts, the *My Song* 130's life span was tragically all too short. She made her race debut at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez in 2016 and competed at



Opposite: The latest *My Song* is a ClubSwan 80.

Right: Pier Luigi Loro Piana.

Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi





his own Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta the following year in Porto Cervo. After two seasons, she won the IMA Trophy for line honours in the 2018 RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race and went on to come third in class at the 2019 St Barths Bucket. It was as she was being shipped back from Antigua to Genoa, in rough seas while northeast of the Balearics on 26 May, that she slipped from her cradle and toppled into the water, dismasting and sustaining considerable additional damage. She was salvaged, but upon being lifted out at STP in Palma, the cost of repairing her was deemed to exceed building her anew and she was quickly written off.

Personally, Loro Piana was crushed by the incident. He later told Boat International magazine: "It was like seeing your house where a bomb has exploded." However he would later say, pragmatically: "My reaction was always that there are worse things in

*Top right: The first My Song in 1988 was a Nauta 54. This was replaced (top left) by a Farr 70. Left: Loro Piana achieved great success with his third My Song, a Reichel/Pugh 84.*



the world today and yesterday, than what happened to me.”

The incident resulted in lengthy court proceedings but, as those ground on, Loro Piana was conscious that the precious clock was ticking – he had to find a replacement. Up to this point all his previous *My Songs* worked very well both for cruising and racing. For his latest set-up he chose to separate these roles – he would have a motor yacht on which to cruise and a sailing yacht mainly to race, but with some cruising potential. Initially he worked with Pedol on new builds for both but, in the end, he opted to have the first ClubSwan 80, although his team had much input into the design and, unusually for the Finnish builder, her construction was sub-contracted to Persico in Italy. Meanwhile, instead of having to wait three years for a new superyacht, he acquired the 51m explorer motoryacht *Etra/Aspire*. In just eight months the Lusben shipyard in Livorno transformed her into *Masquenada*, notable for her huge acreage of uncluttered aft deck.

Loro Piana ideally likes to spend around six months a year at sea and is an intrepid traveller; recently *Masquenada* has been cruising the western extremities of the Pacific, including Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

### The current *My Song*

Elsewhere, his focus has been on his fifth *My Song*. So why 80ft? “It is the right size to achieve the speed and the emotion I like when I go sailing,” Loro Piana explains. “It is still a traditional sailing boat, but with the highest speed possible for a boat of this size – we do not fly, but we still do 20-30 knots. A bigger boat needs more crew and to move them is a complicated



Top: Crew dwarfed on the massive, immaculate, but now sadly lost Baltic 130.  
Above: Loro Piana – happiest at sea. Photos: YCCS and ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi



business, so having fewer crew is definitely better. 80ft is also the maximum size of boat you need if you are only racing. With the old *My Song* I was doing cruising and racing, 50/50. With the new *My Song* we are 95% racing and 5% cruising..."

He continues: "I tried to make the fastest possible 80-footer to compete with bigger boats, while enjoying novelties like a canting keel and very light displacement. My 84 was 30% heavier – 29.5 tonnes, compared to 19. This boat is definitely faster than 80-footers were 10 years ago. It is fun!"

Two years in, Loro Piana still feels he and his team have a long way to go to achieving her optimum performance: "I was expecting the boat to be slightly faster in light air. It is very strong in strong air – I see that every time we have 20 knots; I have more fun and also we get better results."

Understandably, *My Song* has many long-serving crew. Over the years many top names have raced on board, including Francesco de Angelis, Tommaso Chieffi, Ken Read, Roberto Bermudez and Brad Butterworth. Among the crew in 2023 were Alberto Bolzan on tactics, Francesco Mongelli navigating and Michele Paoletti, plus Lorenzo Mazza, Claudio Celon, bowman Corrado Rossignoli and Spain's Jaime Arbones Fernandez.

#### Steering the family business

Despite LVMH now holding an 85% stake in the Loro Piana family's company, he remains its Deputy Chairman, but explains that today he is "lightly involved" in its affairs. While the Loro Piana company will celebrate its centenary this year, its origins actually go back much further, to the early



The current *My Song* has been optimised for racing in lighter conditions typical in the Mediterranean.  
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



19th century when the family was issued a licence to sell fabrics in the Kingdom of Piedmont, the northwesternmost province of Italy bordering France and Switzerland; this makes Loro Piana and his late brother the sixth generation in the family business.

In 1924 Pietro Loro Piana established the family firm as it is known today, renowned for its luxurious cashmere and wool products. It was subsequently run by his grandson Franco from the 1960s, with great-grandsons Sergio and Pier Luigi taking over in the 1970s. They expanded the company hugely, diversifying from exportation of materials into manufacturing their own lines of high-end luxury wear, sold through their own shops, of which today there are more than 130 worldwide. In the 2000s they introduced a line of interior fabrics.

All the while they have continued to develop increasingly exotic and groundbreaking fabrics. The company was partly responsible for helping save the vicuña from extinction. This endangered Peruvian mini-camel was once so highly valued by the Incas that it was illegal for anyone other than royalty to wear garments made from their fine, but slow-growing, hair. After years of being heavily hunted their numbers fell to 6,000 in the mid-70s. "They were risking extinction, but we helped to repopulate them thanks to our relationship with the government and offering to shear them [once every two years]. With Loro Piana's assistance, their population has now recovered to 350,000, a process that took 20 years. Vicuña is the finest animal fibre in the world from which to make fabrics." Loro Piana owns a reserve in Peru where they breed vicuñas, a fine example of the company's unfashionable 'vertical'

business structure – where they source the raw materials, create the fabrics, draw the designs and make their own garments, which they then sell through their own stores.

Their yarns not only come from animals. According to Loro Piana, in 2008 they developed a new fibre from the stem of an exotic lotus flower found in Myanmar. "It is the finest fibre – between silk and linen..." However it takes 32,000 stems to weave just one metre of cloth!

Perhaps unsurprisingly, *My Song* is a testbed for the company's technical clothing; their latest range is 70% wool while incorporating a breathable membrane and a 'storm system' – "it is waterproof, windproof and laminated onto pure linen..."

#### Racing today with the IMA

As to how the IMA has evolved since he first joined in 2001, he maintains that the Association is much more reactive today. "More attention being paid to all of the problems. The IMA is closer to participants, but the participants and the owners have changed a lot and some are more involved than others. The yacht clubs are also much closer to the Association. Everyone knows each other and solutions can be found to any problem that comes up."

He agrees with the maxi fleet being divided up into classes of similar rating. "Then the boats are sailing equally, or close to each other – that makes the racing more interesting and enjoyable." However he questions whether IRC is the best rating system. "Some people feel uncomfortable with its secret formula which makes it difficult to accept. Maybe the system is better if you know what the formula is."

While he helms *My Song* – which he maintains is the only thing he can do on board and, besides, he likes it – he doesn't especially care about the IMA 'owner-driver rule' and would be happy to line up against pro drivers. "If I lose to a very strong champion, I am still good; but if I beat a champion, then it is fantastic. Winning or losing, it is not just a question of the helmsman – it is the team, the boat, everything. The helm is an important cog in the engine, but when you are racing, all the gears have to work well."

Looking ahead to 2024, Loro Piana is keen on competing in the inshores, such as the IMA Maxi Europeans –which his company will once again support, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. He will once again also be competing in offshores such as the Regata dei Tre Golfi and Loro Piana Giraglia. But, always one to push himself and to discover new things, both on the water and in business, *My Song's* 2024 season may conclude with the Rolex Middle Sea Race – an event he has never done before.



Loro Piana is beginning to see success with his latest *My Song*.  
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



# 2023 Season Round-up

*Hap Fauth's Bella Mente en route to her class win at the 2023 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.  
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*





Bella Mente





## IMA CARIBBEAN MAXI CHALLENGE

For 2023, the second edition of the IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge (CMC) comprised the RORC Caribbean 600, Heineken St Maarten Regatta and Les Voiles de St Barth-Richard Mille. Historically maxi yachts have been racing in the Caribbean since the dawn of the sport, notably in hubs such as Antigua and St Thomas. As ever, the IMA's aim with this series is to encourage maxi yachts both to visit the Caribbean and to participate in its famous regattas.

While not part of the IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge, January's RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race acts as a feeder for yachts visiting the Caribbean and in 2023 five maxis took part: two VO70s, Scott Shawyer's IMOCA *Canada Ocean Racing*, the giant Swan 115 *Jasi* and Eric Tabarly's famous *Whitbread*

Round the World Race maxi ketch and subsequent 1976 OSTAR winner *Pen Duick VI*, raced by his daughter Marie. Ultimately it was the Polish youth team on VO70 *I Love Poland* (winner of the IMA's first Caribbean Maxi Challenge in 2022), led by experienced Polish match racer and big boat sailor Grzegorz Baranowski, that arrived 13 hours ahead of the Canadian IMOCA on elapsed time, winning by more than 34 hours under IRC.

"From the beginning we knew that it was likely to be an almost classic trade winds race," commented *I Love Poland's* navigator Konrad Lipski. "However, it was a bit shiftier than usual and there were a variety of sailing conditions, from over 20 knots to very light winds. I was a bit nervous when we were very

far south and the shift was late in coming, but by then we had built up a good lead and we could be a bit more conservative, so we gybed back towards the rhumb line." IMA Secretary General Andrew McIrvine was in Grenada to present the *I Love Poland* crew with the IMA Trophy for their line honours victory.

The RORC Caribbean 600 in 2023 took place after the club's new inshore series of races and the lap of the island in the Antigua 360 which, together with the RORC Caribbean 600, form the Nelson's Cup Series.

Perhaps it is due to larger boats being better suited to the race's oceanic wave formations, or simply having some of the world's top crew, but maxi yachts often perform well in the RORC Caribbean 600, not only winning line honours but also the race overall under IRC. In 2023 Roy P Disney's *Pyewacket70* continued this tradition. The Californian's VO70 finished in an elapsed time of 42 hours 45 minutes 6 seconds, well outside of *Rambler 88's* 37 hour 41 minute record, but her corrected time proved enough to see her win overall in the 46-boat IRC fleet.

While owner Roy P Disney had been forced to stand down for the race due to knee surgery, he handed over the reins of his capable team to Ben Mitchell, a long-serving crew who has been with him since 1989. *Pyewacket70's* A-list crew also included navigator Peter Isler and numerous Volvo Ocean Race alumnae such as Brad Jackson, Tony Mutter, Daryl Wisland, Rodney Daniel and Robbie Kane.

Three-time Volvo Ocean Race winner Brad Jackson commented: "With the wind north of east we expected



Left: Roy P Disney with IMA President Benoît de Froidmont at Les Voiles de St Barth prize-giving.

Photo: Theo Questel Photography

Right: *Pyewacket70's* crew relishes the brisk Caribbean conditions.

Photo: Christophe Jouany









the wind shadow to be further forward at Guadeloupe, but in reality that was not the case and we really slowed down there. The sargassum weed was also a factor, but *Pyewacket70* is equipped with weed cutters and they worked well in this race. We stopped behind Guadeloupe three times, but not for very long, so that did not cost us too much in the race.”

12 maxis competed at Heineken St Maarten Regatta led by six VO65s and 70s, albeit not including *Pyewacket70*. With five races successfully held, this ended up being a Polish one-two between *I Love Poland* and the VO65 *Wind Whisper*, skippered by Marcin Sutkowski. In every race these two either finished first or second in the CSA 1 maxi class, with *I Love Poland* securing victory by a mere point over her compatriot’s VO65.

Les Voiles de St Barth-Richard Mille had a surprisingly poor turnout of maxi yachts, leaving *Pyewacket70* free to claim straight bullets over the VO70 *Hypr*. Winning two events was enough to give Roy P Disney’s team the 2023 IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge.

Roy P Disney is from the famous Hollywood animation and film dynasty and a great grand-nephew of the founder, Walt Disney. The Disney passion for sailing started with his father Roy E Disney whose sailing programme began in the 1980s, the *Pyewacket* name coming from the witches’ cat in the play and 1958 film starring Kim Novak and James Stewart, *Bell, Book and Candle*. Over the years various Disney maxis, notably a Reichel/Pugh 75 and a canting keel maxZ86, have won line and handicap honours and set records in

all of the major offshore races in the USA and further afield. In the 1980s, Roy E Disney was also highly influential in the development of the US West Coast ULDB sleds, synonymous with California’s top offshore race – the Transpac.

Following the death of Roy E Disney in 2009, his son has continued his family’s strong sailing tradition, acquiring the latest *Pyewacket* in 2021. This VO70 originally finished fourth, as *Telefonica*, in the 2011-12 Volvo Ocean Race, skippered by Iker Martínez. She was subsequently acquired by Peter Harburg’s *Black Jack* team (see p54) and raced in Australia where she underwent substantial turbo-ing, such as increasing the draft of her canting keel by a metre to 5.5m, while removing one tonne of lead to maintain the same righting moment. As sail stacking is not permitted under IRC (while it was in the Volvo



Ocean Race), water ballast was added: So too were power winches, a taller rig, an extra two metres on the boom and a longer bowsprit – in short, a massive performance boost.

In Disney's hands, *Pyewacket70* won line honours (the 'Barn Door Trophy') and was second in class in the 2021 Transpac.

While Disney had previously raced with his father three times in the Caribbean, this year was the first visit on his own. He had to miss out the RORC Caribbean 600 but was able to race on board in St Barth. Of racing out of the French Caribbean island, he said: "It is amazing sailing out here – even in the rain squalls around these islands. They couldn't be more picturesque and the sailing is fantastic. We had good wind, from 9 to 20 knots, and the same guys on board – they are amazing, they don't make mistakes."

At Les Voiles de St Barth-Richard Mille prize-giving, Roy P Disney and the *Pyewacket70* crew were congratulated in their victory by IMA President Benoît de Froidmont, who said: "We are very proud this year that our IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge has been won by a fantastic boat and a legendary family, known for their movies, but also an incredible sailing family. Roy and the *Pyewacket70* crew did a fantastic job in winning the RORC Caribbean 600 and now Les Voiles de St Barth-Richard Mille. I am very pleased to announce you as the winner."

*Pyewacket70* visited Europe in 2023 and competed in the Rolex Middle Sea Race. In 2024 she is due to compete in the Newport-Bermuda. Meanwhile Disney continues to race regularly on the US West Coast on his Andrews 68, also called *Pyewacket*, which won her class in last year's Transpac.



Setting off on the RORC Caribbean 600.

Photo: RORC/James Tomlinson/jamestomlinsonphotography.co.uk



## IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

For its second edition the IMA Maxi European Championship was again organised by Naples' Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia (CRVI) in conjunction with the IMA, with support from Rolex as Official Timepiece and Loro Piana. To provide a complete test for competitors, it comprised the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore race followed by four days of inshore racing out of Sorrento. Under IMA-appointed PRO Stuart Childerley, the inshores were a mix of windward-leewards and coastal courses on the Bay of Naples, including the popular lap of Capri.

The Regata dei Tre Golfi is also part of the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge, while the inshores/coastals score in our Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge.

### Regata dei Tre Golfi

26 maxis started the 68th Regata dei Tre Golfi, which set off from the Naples landmark of Castel dell'Ovo and its adjoining Santa Lucia Marina, where the CRVI's clubhouse is situated. The maxi fleet got underway at 17:00, followed by the smaller yachts at 17:30.

This year there had been mild alterations to the 150-mile course. As usual the boats headed WNW from Naples, but then left to port Zannone and its neighbour, Ponza, the race's northwesterly turning mark. Returning east, they could leave Capri to port or starboard before rounding Punta Campanella, at the tip of the Sorrento peninsula. Continuing, they left the southerly turning mark, the Li Galli islands off the Amalfi coast, to starboard before, in another change, then rounding Punta Campanella en route to the finish off Massa Lubrense, west of Sorrento.

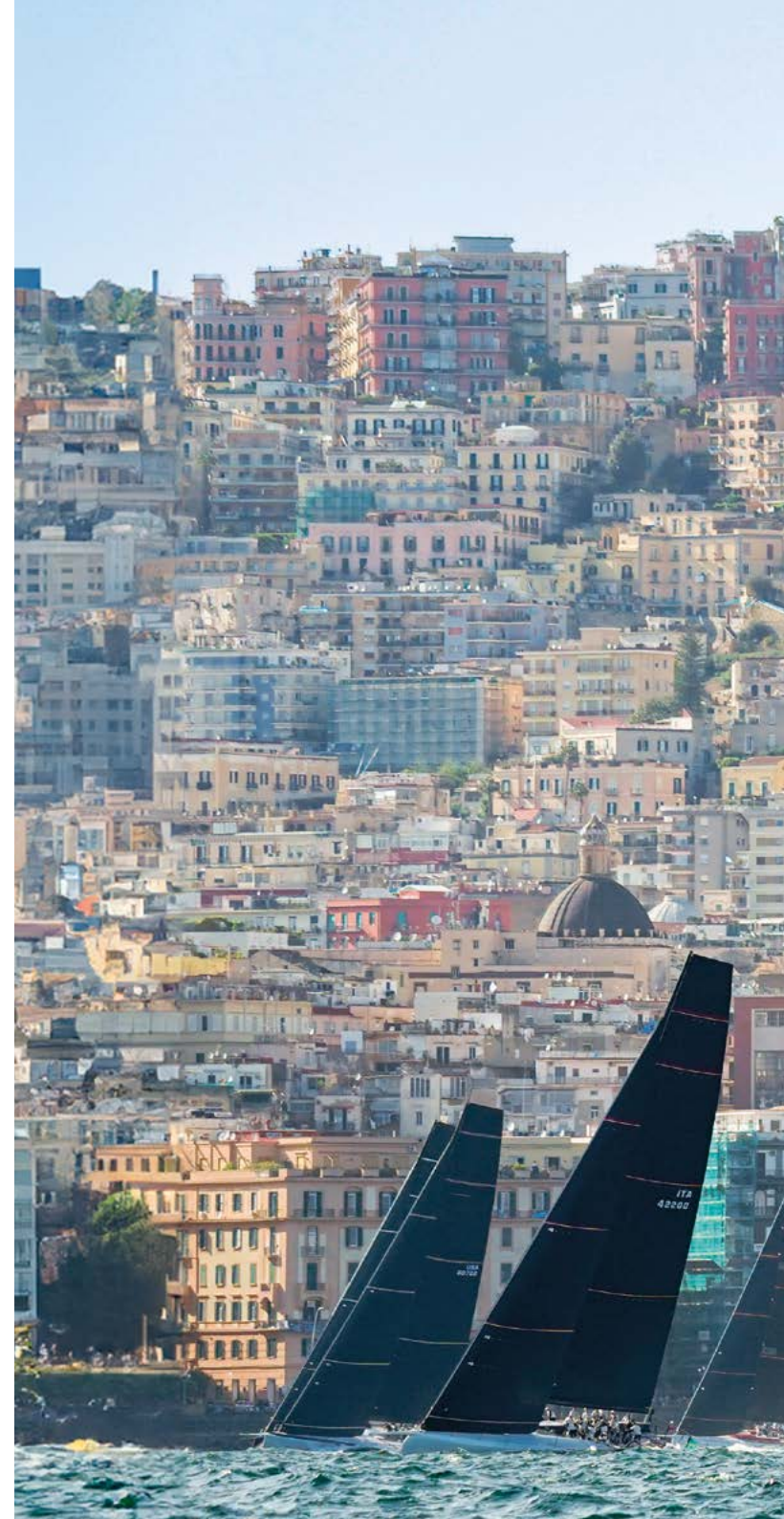
Many teams were returning, including 2022's line honours and overall winners: respectively, Peter Dubens' former Maxi 72 *North Star* and Furio Benussi's 100ft *Arca SGR*, the latter hoping to better the race record of 16 hours 44 minutes 13 seconds set in 2016 by Guido Paolo Gamucci's *Cookson 50 Cippa Lippa 8*. Gamucci was back, but with his canting keel *Mylius 60 Cippa Lippa X*. *Arca SGR*'s main line honours rival was another Trieste-based maxi – the 90ft water ballasted *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* (ex-*Alfa Romeo I*). Meanwhile *North Star* would face competition from the other former Maxi 72s, including Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou*, plus the recent Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup class winners: Dario Ferrari's *Cannonball*, Jim Swartz's *Vesper* and George Sakellaris' *Proteus*.

In 2006 Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 84ft *My Song* won the Regata dei Tre Golfi 'double' (overall and line honours). This time he returned with his new *My Song*, the Tre Golfi being his ClubSwan 80's first offshore race. Another past winner competing was Giuseppe Puttini's 1976 vintage Swan 65 ketch *Shirlaf*, which came out on top in this event's predecessor, Rolex Capri Sailing Week, in 2021.

Usually the Regata dei Tre Golfi is light, but this year the leaders held the breeze all the way.

Unfortunately, the race for line honours had an early casualty when at 23:30, as she was leading around Zannone, *Arca SGR* began rapidly taking on water. Her crew issued a Mayday to which *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* and a Coastguard patrol boat responded. The majority of her crew were transferred to the latter, which then towed the stricken maxi to nearby Ponza.

*The 2023 IMA Maxi Europeans fleet sets off from Naples on the Regata dei Tre Golfi.*  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi













Without *Arca SGR*, the battle for first place was now between *My Song* and the five former Maxi 72s, the competition close throughout until, ultimately, *Jethou* pulled ahead to be first home the following morning at 08:44:26, setting a new record of 15 hours 30 minutes 1 second (9.7 knots average). She finished just a minute ahead of *Cannonball*, with the six first maxis arriving within *Cippa Lippa 8's* record time.

"It was amazing," said *Jethou's* Sir Peter Ogden, "the best race we have done here: We didn't park

anywhere – we had wind all the way round. We did well on the back side of Ponza, where we left *Cannonball* – they went inshore and disappeared for a while. Then it got really shifty. It was a nice race – we enjoyed it; good fun."

Tactician Brad Butterworth explained how they stayed ahead: "*My Song* was leading and probably would have won, but they had problems off Ischia and had to bear away and we managed to pass them. Then we put our elbows out." *My Song* had

caught a giant moonfish on one of her rudders and had had to back up to release it.

Under IRC corrected time it was ultimately *North Star*, last year's overall winner, which won the maxi race, seven minutes faster than second-placed *Jethou*. "It was a really quick race and the boat and team were great," explained tactician Nick Rogers. "There was quite a lot of reaching so we got to use our new water ballast." Given the forecast they had chosen to sail with just eight crew (instead of 15). A



Above: Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou* – first home in the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi  
 Opposite, top left: Paul Berger's Swan 82 *Kallima* had a solid series, finishing 10th overall. Top right: One day off may have cost Jim Swartz's *Vesper* a podium position. Bottom: To leeward, Jean-Pierre Dreau's *Mylius 60 Lady First III* lines up with Riccardo de Michele's *Vallicelli 78 H2O*.  
 Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi





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VESPER



key moment had come exiting the Gulf of Naples when they peeled to the Code Zero. “We came hammering through the fleet, went straight through the middle and that set us up nicely for the whole evening – bouncing around in *Cannonball*’s dirt, but powered up. Then the wind shut down at Ponza, but we carried a spinnaker and were brave enough to hold it quite late with our hydraulic drop...”

Under IRC, four of the top five spaces were occupied by Maxi 72s, with Riccardo de Michele’s Vallicelli 78 *H2O* third overall and topping the Maxi 4-5 class. “It was good that we had wind for most of the race,” said de Michele. “At Li Galli we broke a gennaker – our fault, as we didn’t realise it had a small tear in it when we hoisted it.”

#### Inshores and coastals

Two days later, the first day of the inshores saw 22 maxis sent off in a light to moderate northwesterly on a 22-mile coastal, deep into the Bay of Naples. With a windward mark set beneath Mount Vesuvius, they returned downwind to a leeward mark off Punta Campanella, followed by a reach across to a mark off Capri, before returning to the finish off Sorrento.

The day was rainy, with passing cells creating gusts, lulls and significant wind shifts; the wind disappearing altogether on the downwind leg between Sorrento and Punta Campanella. Overall this benefitted the smaller boats most, with the lowest rated, *Shirlaf*, winning overall by 18 minutes on corrected time.

Among the former Maxi 72s, *Vesper* got the best start, but *Cannonball* edged ahead to reach the top mark first, followed by *Vesper*, *Proteus* and *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC*. There was a reshuffle during the

shutdown towards the end of the run when the 90-footer and *Cannonball* gained greatly while edging offshore, only for their lead to evaporate as the wind dropped approaching the finish.

*Cannonball* tactician Ed Baird explained: “We finished with two knots of boat speed and two minutes later everyone behind was going 8-10 knots. The wind angle changed enough that the boats that were really far back were able to fetch into the finish. But that’s how this works...”

Overall *Cannonball* was first of the former Maxi 72s, winning the Maxi 2 class, but was 11th overall. Despite being the lowest rated, *Shirlaf* finished with three boats in her rear view mirror, having been less affected by the park-ups, as tactician Gabriele Bruni explained: “We managed to stay on the outside of the fleet; we have some locals on board and they knew that there would be more pressure there, so we gybed on starboard on the first downwind and arrived with pressure. *Shirlaf* likes more than 11-12 knots of wind, so sub-9 is a problem. And we prefer sailing in the sunshine – today was like Cowes Week!”

IMA President Benoît de Froidmont’s Wally 60 *Wallyño* finished the day second. Overall at this point, *H2O* was leading the Championship on 5.25 points to *Wallyño* on 6.5 and *Shirlaf* on 10.75.

Despite a storm forecast, in fact day two of the inshores provided some of the best and most exhilarating racing. In a 15-knot southerly the fleet was sent off on a clockwise lap of Capri. Compared to day one, the rain was more intermittent, but with larger and more intense squalls around the weather side of Capri, which caused the wind to veer from the south to west, south of the island, building to 16-17 knots.

These conditions favoured the faster boats, with four former Maxi 72s and *My Song* filling the top five places overall. The racing was close, with *Cannonball* winning by just one second ahead of *My Song* and *Proteus* just 13 seconds further behind after 2 hours 17 minutes of racing. Under IRC however, *Proteus* beat *Cannonball* by 1 minute 38 seconds. The American maxi had started close to the race committee boat and held on a long starboard, most of the fleet ducking her, enabling her to lead past the Faraglioni rocks.

After the initial five arrivals, 30 minutes later *Cippa Lippa X* led the next wave to win Maxi 3, finishing a minute ahead of Jean-Philippe Blanpain’s Vismara-Mills 62 *Leaps & Bounds 2* on the water. “It was a lucky day,” said *Cippa Lippa X*’s Guido Paolo Gamucci. “Coming into Capri – there were 20° shifts, so if you were in the right position at the right moment, you gained a lot. At times *Leaps & Bounds 2* was ahead, but after two or three tacks we were in front. We are good upwind because we have 18 people on board, but that makes us heavy downwind.” Again *H2O* won Maxi 4 to claim sixth overall for the day, confirming their lead in the event overall, although the success of the former Maxi 72s elevated *North Star* to second, tied on points with *Cannonball*.

On the penultimate day, two windward-leewards were held along the north coast of the Sorrentine Peninsula. Further cloud activity brought deluges of rain, causing one wag to rechristen the race’s host port ‘Torrento’. With the wind starting at 15 knots, then decreasing to 10 for race two, again the race course was shifty, made harder still due to the largish swell.

After not racing on day two, Jim Swartz’s Maxi 72 *Vesper* fought back with a vengeance and won both



windward-leewards under IRC corrected time on day three. Strategist Dan Slater explained: “We got two really good starts: We believed short-term in the left and then leading back to the right, so the game plan was to start to windward of the fleet and there was a shift coming off the land. Gavin [Brady, tactician] did a brilliant job of getting Jim [Swartz, owner] to the line – Jim got us off the line, which made the rest much easier from there.”

In both races, it was tight between the former Maxi 72s and *My Song*, which seemed to relish the brisk surfing conditions downwind to be first home on the water. Most surprising about *Vesper's* wins was that

among the other former Maxi 72s, she was the least out of class, the others having been turboed – lengthened, fitted with water ballast, etc. With discards applied after these two races, *Proteus* took the event lead overall, 1.75 points ahead of *North Star* with *Cannonball* third, a further two points astern. *Jethou* was disqualified after a port-starboard incident in the second race.

Across the three classes at this point, Maxi 3 was closest with five points separating *Cippa Lippa X* from *Leaps & Bounds 2* (which blew up her spinnaker on the final run) and Pascale Decaux's Wally 80 *Tilakkhana*. *H2O* continued to lead Maxi

4-5, chased by *Shirlaf* and *Wallyño*, less than 10 points separating them.

For the final day's coastal race *Jethou* was the star performer, winning overall, but the lower rated *North Star* managed to hang on to her coat tails, finishing second. Having gone into the final day second overall, *North Star* nosed ahead of *Proteus* to be crowned IMA Maxi European Champion by just a quarter of a point.

This came as vindication after Dubens and his crew had seen victory slip through their fingers the previous year. “It was the English weather – I loved it!” explained Dubens of his team's biggest victory in 14 years of campaigning. In fact, while rain was a dominant feature of the week, on the final day it held off. Dubens continued: “Today was very tense. We had to put a boat between us and *Proteus* and it wasn't easy, especially when we had to do a penalty. We were lucky to get out of that. This is a fabulous event – I really love it, sailing around Capri and Sorrento.”

Overall, former Maxi 72s claimed the five top spots followed by *H2O* ahead of *My Song* and *Wallyño*. While the IMA Maxi Europeans is highly competitive and evolving into one of the IMA's premier events, not all competitors were highly experienced racers: it was the first regatta for the Canadian-owned Swan 60 *Sea Quill*, whose owner's representative was Italian Class40 sailor Andrea Fornaro: “I think this is an amazing event. The fleet is beautiful and the conditions have been good for sailing in wind and waves – we like it.” Others, such as Craig Clifford and his Anglo-Tasmanian crew on the chartered Marten 72 *Aragon*, were using this event as a means of mixing some serious racing with visiting this exotic corner of Italy.



Peter Dubens helms *North Star* to the IMA Maxi Europeans Championship title.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

Opposite photos: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi; CVS/Studio Borlenghi;  
IMA/Studio Borlenghi; IMA/James Boyd





▲ Peter Dubens with Pier Luigi Loro Piana and the North Star crew.

▼ Skippers briefing with PRO Stuart Childerley.



Pre-regatta party at the CRVI. ▲

▼ Marco Gentili, Guido and Omella Fiorentino, Guido Paolo Gamucci and Stefano Leonardi.



◀ Loro Piana concert in the Hotel Bellevue Syrene's cave.

▼ Riccardo de Michele with wife Patrizia and daughter Cecilia.



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







# Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge







*Rolex Giraglia match race at dawn for Kallima and Yoru.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi*



## 151 MIGLIA-TROFEO CETILAR

Usually a newer, longer, canting keel race boat will easily leave a similar shorter, fixed keel, water ballasted race boat as a speck in its rear view mirror. But this was not the case in the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar. This event, the fourth in the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge, is organised by Yacht Club Punta Ala, Yacht Club Livorno and Yacht Club Repubblica Marinara di Pisa and sponsored by the pharmaceuticals company of race founder and IMA Vice President Roberto Lacorte.

The race's 14th edition started and, for the front runners, finished, in a modest sea breeze. In between, the wind was so light and fickle it was neither a case of boat size nor technology that counted, but simply which of the 13 maxi yachts competing in the 180-boat fleet could hunt down the slightest zephyr.

Given the light forecast, for the first time ever, the course was shortened. Starting from Livorno, the fleet headed to Giraglia via a turning mark off Marina di Pisa, but the usual southerly turning mark of Formiche di Grosseto was abandoned, crews instead obliged to pass through a gate off Fetovaia, on the southwest side of Elba, before heading directly to the Punta Ala finish. This shortened the course from 151 to 124 miles.

For line honours favourite, Australian Peter Harburg's team on *Black Jack*, newly arrived from 'Down Under', this was their first experience racing in the Mediterranean. However in its previous guises as *Alfa Romeo II* and then *Esimit Europa 2*, the 100ft canting keeler was most familiar with it, as were several of her crew, including tactician, America's Cup legend Brad Butterworth, who in 2019 had set the race record on George David's *Rambler 88*.

*Black Jack's* main rival was *Arca SGR*, Furio Benussi's team having swapped boats after their own 100-footer suffered canting keel issues in the Regata dei Tre Golfi. They borrowed another Trieste-based maxi, the water ballasted 90ft *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC*, originally *Alfa Romeo I*. Thus, by strange coincidence, two of Neville Crichton's former maxis found themselves lining up together.

After a faster than expected passage from Marina di Pisa to Giraglia, *Black Jack* headed for the Corsican coast while *Arca SGR* split, sailing east towards Capraia.

Here the nip and tuck began between the two former *Alfas*, as *Black Jack* skipper Mark Bradford explained: "We poked into the gap as we came off the island and the 90-footer came down with a spinnaker and got to within a mile of us. Our lead had been about 8-10 miles and it got chewed up pretty quickly. From there the boats were pretty close."

*Black Jack* resorted to match race tactics to keep *Arca SGR* behind and was just three minutes ahead passing through the Elba gate.

Another park-up followed, south of Elba, before eventually both were able to point their bows towards Punta Ala. 10 miles out *Black Jack* was crawling along, making just 1.5 knots, but nosed into the sea breeze first – in fact the best wind of the race, albeit barely double figures. She finished at 13:18:40 CEST, 28 minutes ahead of *Arca SGR*. Her elapsed time of 23 hours 13 minutes 40 seconds, even on the shorter course, was well outside the record.

Despite the repeated 'glass-outs', Bradford commented: "When you have the biggest boat,

*The party at Yacht Club Punta Ala at the end of the race is an epic sit down dinner for 1,400 people, including live entertainment and fireworks.*

*Photo: Studio Taccola*











Top: Aldo Parisotto's Oscar3 was second maxi overall for a second year.

Above: A rare moment of breeze when Roberto Lacorte's amazing foiler FlyingNikka was able to fly.

Photos: Studio Taccola

usually you get out in front and you're off, but with this we had a real yacht race. We all thoroughly enjoyed it. It is a beautiful coastline and it was great to see such a large fleet."

Their race may have been a rare case where having a water ballasted boat paid over a canting keeler – in light conditions *Arca SGR* could dump her ballast while the canting keeler could not. Before setting off, both had shed sails and crew, *Arca SGR* going with 14 instead of 20 and with only their A1 and a jib for headsails.

*Arca SGR's* Furio Benussi was pleased to be able to compete given the trauma to his own 100-footer. *Black Jack* had finally managed to break away from them on the final leg towards Punta Ala. "They found some wind from...somewhere!... and they left us. Also we don't have an upwind Code Zero; we only have an A1 for when it is light."

On IRC corrected time Giancarlo Gianni's *Durlindana 3* won the maxi class by 1 hour 21 minutes 4 seconds. "It is a good boat with a good crew," explained Gianni of the 25-year-old Carroll Marine 60 he has owned for the last decade. "It was light, but we made good choices at the right moments." While the conditions certainly benefitted the smaller maxis this year, *Durlindana 3's* result was no fluke; last year she was third overall in the maxi class.

Navigator Massimo Capuano continued: "In a couple of places we stopped – especially off Elba, close to the gate." Second lowest rated in the maxi fleet, *Durlindana 3* had been often able to catch up with the yachts parked ahead of her. "But," pointed out Capuano, "they restarted before we started again. We made good choices in the second part of





the last leg [from Elba to Punta Ala], staying on the southern side.” Through the race they never saw more than 8 knots, that being the sea breeze off the Tuscany coast.

Another major race took place between the similarly-rated Mylius 65 *Oscar3* of Aldo Parisotto and Dario Castiglia’s Baltic 65 *RE/MAX One2*. At various stages both led and both exited Giraglia to the east, heading into the coast of Capraia before continuing onto the Elba gate. Ultimately their races were decided on the final leg where *RE/MAX One2* split north, benefitting her rival; *Oscar3* crossed the line 16 minutes ahead, winning by 20 minutes 40 seconds under IRC. This duo completed the maxi podium.

“We stopped three times,” said Parisotto, who finished second for a second consecutive year. “The first was before Gorgona [halfway to Giraglia], then just before Giraglia and then for four hours off Elba. We had a good race with *RE/MAX One2* – she

performs well. We are better upwind, but they have a good boat with a good team.”

*RE/MAX One2*’s tactician Andrea Casale previously sailed with *Oscar3*, but jumped ship because *RE/MAX One2*’s owner Dario Castiglia is a relative. Of their race Casale recounted: “We were very lucky, approaching Elba before the gate off Punta Fetovaia, because everyone rounded it wide. We found some breeze and were also able to take a short cut.” However, on the final leg to Punta Ala, he admitted: “We missed the shift. It is always the same story behind Elba – when the breeze is starting in the channel, you don’t know which side is best.”

Andrew McIrvine was in Punta Ala to present prizes, including the IMA Trophy for the IRC winner of the maxi class – *Durlindana 3*. For the first time since 2016, the Gianfranco Alberini Trophy, the IMA’s special prize for sportsmanship, was awarded, going to *Oscar3*’s Aldo Parisotto.

Above: Line honours favourite, *Black Jack* powers away from the Livorno start line.  
 Right: *RE/MAX One2* enjoyed a great race with *Oscar3*.  
 Photos: Studio Taccola





## ROLEX GIRAGLIA – OFFSHORE

As expected for this special 70th edition of the Rolex Giraglia, the race included a strong turnout of maxis, with 27 among the 155 starters.

Organised by the Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez and Yacht Club Sanremo, the race was the fifth of seven events in our 2022-23 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge.

Given the ultra-light forecast, prior to the start the race committee shortened the course: Instead of heading southwest from the start to the usual turning mark, Île du Levant, off Hyères, the fleet headed east along the coast to a laid mark off La Chrétienne, east of Saint-Raphaël, before resuming the usual route to Giraglia and on to the Genoa finish. This change reduced the course length from 241 miles to 215. Thanks to the anticipated light winds, despite Australian Peter Harburg's *Black Jack* being entered, there was no chance of breaking the sub-15 hour record his 100-footer had set in 2012 in her previous incarnation as Igor Simčić's *Esimit Europa 2*.

Many maxis left the dock with fewer crew and sails. But in fact, due to local cloud activity, come start time an ENE'erly breeze got up to 10 knots.

*Black Jack's* principle competition would be Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' Wallycento *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> – a past line honours and overall winner of Rolex Giraglia. In fact the former L'Oréal Chairman and CEO and his highly experienced crew, including top navigator Marcel van Triest, are among the most capped Rolex Giraglia competitors of all time. The previous year the dark blue maxi had claimed line honours after pipping the 100ft *Arca SGR* to the post. Would she repeat this in 2023?

*Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> certainly made the best start, leading until she fell into a hole off Giraglia, remaining stuck there as the competition joined her parking lot. Having eased past them by this stage, *Black Jack* was first to edge away from the rocky island, but *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> hung on. *Black Jack* crossed the finish line at 11:33:16 local time, her elapsed time of 23 hours 30 minutes 16 seconds was well outside her race record. *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> was just 9 minutes 12 seconds behind them, but ahead by almost two hours under IRC corrected time.

Having acclimatised to rounding Giraglia and the light Mediterranean conditions in the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar, *Black Jack* experienced the best breeze of the race on their approach to Genoa, which they reached during the daylight hours. "It was a challenging race," admitted Peter Harburg. "We were extending and got to Giraglia just before midnight with a lead of nearly five miles, but then we parked. I went off watch and when I got up at 04:00-05:00 to go on watch all the 72s had caught us up! We might as well have dropped the anchor!"

*Black Jack's* strategist, Joca Signorini added: "It was a very tough, but wonderful, race against *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> – we were within two miles for the whole race. At Giraglia we managed to get a little puff and escaped – we had the best lead of our race after that. But early in the morning it was again tough, with all the changes in the wind. It was really only in the last 10 miles that we pulled away again."

Of *Magic Carpet*<sup>3's</sup> race, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones commented: "It almost went incredibly because there was a big rating gap between the two boats. We never really seriously thought we could beat them [on the

*Black Jack* and Dario Ferrari's *Cannonball* lead the maxi fleet away from Saint-Tropez.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi







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Above: Peter Dubens' North Star took the most extreme rock-hopping route past Giraglia.  
 Opposite: Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' Wallycento Magic Carpet<sup>3</sup> is a past line honours and overall Rolex Giraglia winner.  
 Photos: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

water], but we came out of the Bay really well after the start, due to a couple of tactical choices. We went a little deeper than they did and they tacked away and we didn't, which worked for us."

*Black Jack* overtook them on the fetch to Giraglia, but there disaster struck: "Unfortunately, we couldn't see in the dark where the wind was on the water," continued Owen-Jones. "We managed to find the spot where there was exactly zero wind. Everyone came in and they managed to muddle through quicker than we did."

Olympic medallist and Volvo Ocean Race winner, tactician Ian Walker provided further insight into *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup>'s Giraglia rounding: "We lost some 10 miles to the boats behind, which was quite painful. Our boat is 50 tonnes and, once stopped, it takes some time to get going again. We sailed really well coming back from Giraglia. We came into *Black Jack* and went further west where the transition was better and we put a lot of distance on the guys behind. It was a good race – we kept it close enough to be interesting all the way to the finish." On board they never changed jibs, although they did occasionally hoist the staysail. "We never had the wind behind the beam. We took one spinnaker because we needed something to sleep on!"

Under IRC corrected time it was the former Maxi 72s that prevailed, most also arriving before the night-time wind shutdown off Genoa. Winning the maxi class (IRC 0) was Dario Ferrari's 75ft *Cannonball*. For a time she was also looking promising to win IRC Overall too, until she was eventually overtaken by the TP52 *Red Bandit* and 2022's overall winner, the Ker 46 *Lisa R*, leaving her











on the bottom step on the podium. Four former Maxi 72s – herself, plus *Vesper*, *North Star* and *Jethou* – took the top spots in IRC Zero, all ending up within the top eight in IRC Overall.

With Vasco Vascotto calling tactics, *Cannonball's* team strategist and project manager Michele Ivaldi described their race: “We had a very good start. We were leading for a long time. We were very happy coming into Giraglia because we were fourth or fifth overall with the other 72s way back. Then there was a massive parking lot. We got back to *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> and *Black Jack*, but then all the other 72s arrived. It was chaos! There was no wind. A few boats were only a length from the island with no steerage. We all sat there for 15 minutes up to an hour.

“Getting away from Giraglia, we aimed for Genoa but going low, anticipating the northerly. By dawn *North Star* and *Vesper* were close to us – as we owe them time, we had to do our best. Everyone did a fantastic job squeezing them. We found more pressure and more lift and in the last 25 miles put a lot of distance between us and *Vesper*.”

Owner Dario Ferrari was delighted, said Ivaldi: “He really wanted to win the Giraglia because last time they were leading right to the end when Francesco de Angelis and myself on *Momo* beat them. He wanted to fix that!”

Despite being substantially more modified, *Cannonball's* time corrected out to just 17 seconds ahead of the far less tweaked *Vesper*. For *Vesper's* owner Jim Swartz, this was his second Rolex Giraglia: “I enjoy the atmosphere and the competitors. I am not a super fan of light races as the park-ups are always a roll of the dice. Teams like *Cannonball* have

this down to a tee, so to come close to them is a huge achievement. 17 seconds is amazing if you think about the 100 decisions you made along the way. That makes this racing so fascinating.”

While *Vesper* had gone light with 15 crew and only one jib and spinnaker, Peter Dubens’ *North Star* had gone lighter still, racing with eight thanks to his 72 being retrofitted with powered winches.

Among the smaller maxis, IMA President Benoît de Froidmont’s 60ft *Wallyño* won, also coming a creditable ninth in IRC Overall: “As usual, it was a fantastic race,” he said. “From start to end, you never knew what would happen. There were big surprises at Giraglia and the finish, making it extremely complicated. Tactics were very important and my tactician did a great job. We stopped at the island, but not for very long. Then we lost one and a half hours short of the finish which would have changed the results.”

*Wallyño's* tactician Cédric Pouligny said of their Giraglia rounding: “*Itacentodue* [the 2021 and 2022 maxi class winner in the Rolex Giraglia offshore] was 40m away and left, while we remained parked. On the way to Genoa we recovered. We started on starboard and as soon as we were headed, we tacked. We expected some left, so we were below the fleet and gained more than 10 miles on our opponents.” However then they stopped. “If we’d arrived any later we would have spent half of the night parked, so I am pretty happy.”

*Cannonball* also won the Rolex Giraglia’s maxi class overall prize, combining results from the Sanremo to Saint-Tropez offshore, the Saint-Tropez inshores and the offshore back to Genoa, ahead of *North Star* and *Vesper*. Adriano Calvini’s FY61 *Itacentodue* claimed the overall prize in the smaller maxi class ahead of *Wallyño* and Dario Castiglia’s Baltic 65 *RE/MAX One2*. *North Star* won the prize for the best placed IMA member in Maxi Class IRC 0.



Opposite: *Cannonball* heads down the Cote d’Azur.  
 Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi  
 Above: A superb conclusion to Dario Ferrari’s ownership of *Cannonball* – finishing top maxi in the Rolex Giraglia.  
 Photo: IMA/James Boyd



Despite this only being its third edition, the 2023 Aegean 600 galvanised the race's reputation as being one of the windiest among the international roster of 600 mile offshore races.

Organised by the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club in conjunction with Attica Region and Olympic Marine, the race follows a magnificent anticlockwise lap of the islands in the southern Aegean, starting and finishing off Cape Sounion at the tip of the Attica peninsula, 45km south of Athens. The race was also the penultimate event in the 2022-23 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge.

Among 46 entries were 11 maxis, including two super maxis: Italian-owned Swan 112 *Eratosthenes* and the Frers 105 *Ulisse* of former Prada CEO, Luna Rossa America's Cup challenge team principal and IMA Honorary Member Patrizio Bertelli.

At the smaller end were 60-footers like Guido Paolo Gamucci's canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*, while Jean-Philippe Blainpain's Vismara 62 *Leaps & Bounds 2* was making a return appearance, having finished third overall in 2022. Significantly it would be the first race for the line honours favourite, the Farr 100 *Leopard 3*, following a six-month refit which saw her return to her grand prix race boat state with a new rig and winch package, plus the removal of her interior which saved five tonnes, dropping her to 42 on the scales.

Perhaps most excited to compete was Maxi 72 *Proteus* owner George Sakellaris – a Greek American, who had only ever cruised on these waters previously. He described the merits of the course beforehand: "You always get wind whereas in some of the other venues you go to, you are

supposed to race for five days and quite often miss one or two. Plus the scenery – going around the islands is spectacular."

There was some concern before the start over the forecast, showing 30+ knots, gusting into the 40s for the first night.

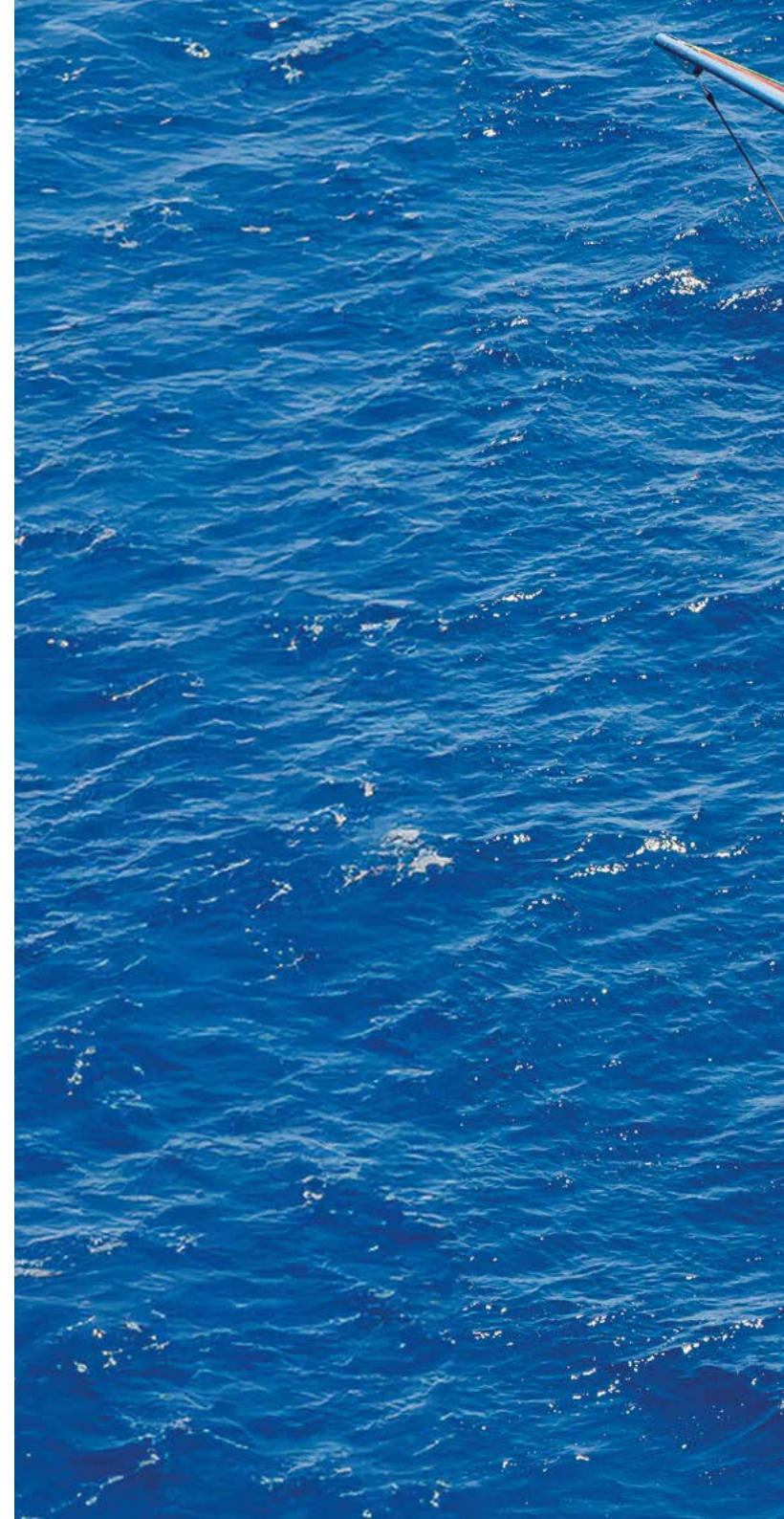
With conditions already getting brisk, just before the gun was fired at 14:00 local time on 9 July, *Proteus* damaged her mast track as her crew attempted to hoist the mainsail. She was forced to retire. "We are not sure how it happened," admitted tactician Gordon Maguire. "Maybe one of the battens caught in the runner, twisted the car and sheared some of the track off."

In the event the Meltemi was strongest on the first night of the race, as the frontrunners were tackling the southern section of the course. But on the second night, as they were zigzagging their way up through the numerous islands off the Turkish coast, competitors were still regularly seeing 30-35 knots and 40+ knot gusts.

The fight for line honours was between *Leopard 3* and the VO70 *I Love Poland*, winner of the 2022 IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge. *Leopard 3* had previously competed in most of the top offshore races but, just two weeks out of her refit, was still finding her feet. Meanwhile *I Love Poland*, originally Puma Ocean Racing's *Mar Mostro* and built to race round the world, was fully accustomed to the conditions and for most of the first day managed to hang on to the coattails of her longer rival. 24 hours in, while rounding the north tip of Rhodes, *I Love Poland* had closed to just three miles, with a 65-mile cushion between her and the second cluster of eight maxis.

*Line honours favourite for the race, but freshly out of a major rebuild, Leopard 3 ultimately would score the rare race 'triple'.*

*Photo: Nikos Alevromyitis/www.alen.gr*











Above: Despite light winds approaching the finish, Cippa Lippa X ended up sixth overall.  
 Opposite: George Sakellaris' Proteus was heavily tipped pre-start, but ultimately didn't make it to the start line in the big conditions.  
 Photos: Nikos Alevromyitis/www.alen.gr

At this point the Poles seemed in good shape to win the Maxi class under IRC corrected time, but from here *Leopard 3* extended through the tricky upwind section of the race, further aided when *I Love Poland* came to a stop on the leg to the Mykonos-Delos gate. Aeolus, the mythological Greek ruler of the wind, was clearly not smiling on *I Love Poland* which, in sight of the finish line, was then becalmed for a further 45 minutes. Ultimately they finished 5 hours 22 minutes astern of *Leopard 3* on the water, 1 hour 22 minutes behind her on corrected time.

Despite his crew of young Polish development sailors losing to the largely pro *Leopard 3* crew, skipper Grzegorz Baranowski felt they had been unlucky to have been becalmed just 300-400m from the finish. Otherwise his thoughts on the race were mixed: "We saw 35 knots two or three times – 25-27 knots on a VO70 is super wet, super fast and super fun. We made a few mistakes, but we didn't lose any sails and the boat, and everyone on board, are still in one piece." While on one occasion they had wasted time when they had been unable to furl their headsail, the biggest frustration was being unable to predict the localised wind. "You round thousands of islands and each one has some surprises for you," Baranowski continued. "It is a beautiful race, passing Santorini at night with all its lights...but the weather forecast you can leave at home – you have to be ready for everything. We made maybe 30 or 40 sail changes. At times we had all the sails on deck trying to find the right one."

Despite their tentative start, *Leopard 3* ended up crossing the line at 11:05 on 11 July, her elapsed time of 45 hours 5 minutes 25 seconds demolishing the previous monohull race record of 63 hours 2











hours 20 minutes set in 2022 by the Elliott 52 *Rafale*. “It was a full-on adventure!” reported her tactician, double Olympic medallist Mitch Booth. “There was a lot of wind, lots of corners...it is a really nice course and a great event. We saw 37 knots a couple of times and some nasty chop. The first night was fruity – gybing a 100-footer in 30+ knots is always entertaining...fortunately there are plenty of people on board who have been through it all before. There were a couple of times we had to back off and slow the boat down because we didn’t want to destroy everything.” At one point they saw a top boat speed of 30 knots. “You knew you were alive for sure!”

Most importantly *Leopard 3*’s Dutch owner Joost Schuijff enjoyed it. “He was on deck more than his watch required – it was the strongest breeze he has raced in, but he loved every second of it.”

By the time the second peloton had reached the northern tip of Rhodes, *I Love Poland* was already 75 miles ahead. At this point *Cippa Lippa X* was third on the water, ahead of the Marten 72 *Aragon* and *Leaps & Bounds 2*. *Ulisse* was 22 miles astern with *Eratosthenes* a further 17 miles back. However on the next upwind section the waterline length of the super maxis came into their own and they recovered ground, especially as the group ahead were short tacking up to Agathonísi, the northeast turning mark. The boats ahead then sped off on a reach to Mykonos, slowing again as they passed through the channel, by which time *Ulisse* was just seven miles behind *Leaps & Bounds 2*, which had lost contact with *Aragon* and *Cippa Lippa X*.

At this point the navigators had to decide whether to leave Giaros to port or starboard: *Aragon* left it to



port and parked, while the rest left it to starboard, making better progress. Again size, plus an army of former Luna Rossa America’s Cup talent in her crew, prevailed, with *Ulisse* overtaking *Leaps & Bounds 2*. Rounding the penultimate headland at the north end of Kea, *Cippa Lippa X* was still ahead, but with *Ulisse* now just three miles astern. Here all four parked again, allowing *Eratosthenes* to catch up further. Breaking north, *Ulisse* was first to find the new breeze, steaming home to claim third on the water, 39 minutes ahead of *Cippa Lippa X*. *Leaps & Bounds 2* was another 23 minutes behind, followed 15 minutes later by *Aragon* and almost another hour later by *Eratosthenes*.

Due to her favourable rating the giant Swan slipped ahead of *Cippa Lippa X* to take third in the Maxi class under IRC.

For *Eratosthenes*’ tactician Andrea Casale, this was his second Aegean 600: “It is a great course with

great mythology and it is one of the few windy races in the Med, thanks to the Meltemi. As usual it was super windy down at the bottom of the course before Kassos. It is unbelievable; you find yourself going downwind in 30 knots when, to leeward of Kassos, you get this catabatic wind, so you are reaching on port tack in 40+ knots. We saw 45 knots! But we had prepared for that.”

Casale said that the hardest part was zigzagging upwind through the islands. “Behind some islands there is a big shadow and on some you have to play the shift. Everywhere you must make smart moves, but the race was decided in the last 20 miles.”

Ultimately, with line honours and a course record bagged, *Leopard 3* went on to score ‘the triple’, winning under IRC corrected time as well, not just in the Maxi class, but across the whole IRC fleet – some endorsement of her latest modifications – with *I Love Poland* second overall.

Opposite: Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli boss Patrizio Bertelli’s Frers 105 *Ulisse*, whose crew included much former America’s Cup talent.

Photo: Aegean 600/Carlo Borlenghi

Above right: Jubilant crew on the winning Farr 100 *Leopard 3*.

Photo: Kostas Karageorgiou



## PALERMO-MONTECARLO

Among the 44 entries in the 18th Palermo-Montecarlo yacht race, four were maxis. Once again, the race from the Sicilian capital was organised by the Circolo della Vela Sicilia (CVS) and Yacht Club de Monaco, in partnership with Yacht Club Costa Smeralda (YCCS) and under the patronage of the Federazione Italiana Vela and Unione Vela Altura Italiana. It was also the final event of our 2022-23 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge.

As ever the course north passed through a gate off Porto Cervo, overseen by the YCCS, after which competitors were permitted to sail the shorter course (of around 437 miles) through the Strait of Bonifacio and up the west coast of Corsica towards the finish, or the slightly longer route, if the routing favoured this, leaving Corsica to port.

This year there was a stand-out line honours favourite in a boat very familiar with the course; Australian Peter Harburg's *Black Jack* was previously Igor Simčič's *Esimit Europa 2*, which won line honours four times and, on her last participation in 2015, set the race record. Since she was bought by her Australian owner she has been turboed with her rig moved aft to improve her all-round performance. Once again *Black Jack*'s main competition would be Claudio Demartis' *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC*. Both boats were originally commissioned by Neville Crichton and named *Alfa Romeo*, the latter the water ballasted 90-footer, the former the slightly more modern 100ft canting keeler.

The other maxis competing were the VO65 *Sisi* (a recent competitor in the Ocean Race when she was named *Austrian Ocean Racing powered by Team Genova*) and the much-travelled VO70 *I Love*

*Poland*, winner of the 2022 IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge. With a forecast of sub-10 knot winds, neither heavyweight former Volvo Ocean Race boats were expecting a great result.

As usual, the Palermo-Montecarlo served up light, patchy conditions, making for a highly tactical race that demanded the utmost patience and concentration from its competitors.

While the fleet enjoyed light steady winds on the first afternoon, generally there was little synoptic breeze, requiring crews to make the most of the thermal land and sea effects. Thus the race became a game of snakes and ladders.

With an international crew including multiple America's Cup winner Brad Butterworth and Volvo Ocean Race winner Joca Signorini, on the first afternoon *Black Jack* powered away, making 11 knots. She reached the Porto Cervo gate in 26 hours 3 minutes 50 seconds and continued up La Maddalena archipelago and through the Strait of Bonifacio, only to get stuck off southern Corsica on the second evening. *Black Jack* was 6 hours 25 minutes ahead of Claudio Demartis' *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* on the water at the Porto Cervo gate (and more than four hours ahead under IRC corrected time) but the park-up allowed her 90ft rival to regain ground.

"It was pretty fluky and we wasted some time getting back to shore to find the land breeze at night," recounted *Black Jack* skipper Mark Bradford. "We linked that up pretty nicely, but there was a lot of downtime in those manoeuvres, going 90° to the course." After hugging the Corsican coast, the Aussie 100-footer finally bid the French island farewell on the

Once again Peter Harburg's *Black Jack* was the stand-out line honours favourite and once again she delivered.  
Photo: CVS/Studio Borlenghi







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BLACK Jack





second morning and then had a good run up to the finish, reaching Monte Carlo on the second evening at 19:53:06. Given the light conditions, her elapsed time of 55 hours 3 minutes 6 seconds was surprisingly close to the 47 hours 46 minutes 48 seconds race record she'd set in 2015 as *Esimit Europa 2*.

Given that the race's average wind speed was only 3-4 knots, Bradford felt they had done well and paid tribute to the crew, but especially to their exceptional maxi yacht: "She is so juiced up in light air – in 4 knots we can do 11. She is made for light air and races like this. We were probably ahead of the record when we got to the gate, but we lost it all off southern Corsica."

Of the race generally, Bradford continued: "It was about getting through the nights without stopping. We managed to do that pretty nicely." Compared to earlier races in the Mediterranean this season, when the faster boats were typically sailing into less pressure, conditions were more even for this race, although they ultimately ended up favouring the smallest yachts in the fleet. Anticipating a light race, *Black Jack* had kept all of her 18 crew, but had gone light, taking the smallest sail wardrobe: her 'turbo' set-up of mainsail, J1 and masthead Code Zero, plus staysails. According to Bradford, the apparent wind direction, mainly due to the apparent wind, was never aft of the beam.

*Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC's* elapsed time was 71 hours 46 hours 3 minutes, correcting out to more than 13 hours behind her bigger rival under IRC, however the Trieste-based 90-footer had managed to wriggle free from the park-up that beset those chasing her into the finish.

On the third evening, seeing *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* becalmed ahead of them, *I Love Poland* and the Cookson 50 *Kuka 3* split from the Corsican coast. In the early hours, the 90-footer got going and at one point was 20 miles closer to the finish but, 10 miles short of the line, she parked up yet again, enabling *I Love Poland* and *Kuka 3* to close to within two miles of her. In the last moments, *I Love Poland* chose a westerly route into the line while *Kuka 3* split east where she found better breeze, finishing just over eight minutes ahead.

Of the race *I Love Poland's* skipper Grzegorz Baranowski said: "On the one hand it is a beautiful race; sailing around Sardinia, Porto Cervo and La Maddalena and Corsica...they are beautiful. On the other hand, our quite heavy boat is designed for 20+ knots, so if you park a few times and there is a small boat sailing around you, it is hard. It is not that easy to accept that smaller carbon boats like the Cookson 50 are quicker than us in these conditions, but that is part of the game."

Of the finish he added: "We were 1.5 miles behind *Shockwave* when they caught breeze and we parked for another hour. We split completely [with *Kuka 3*]. They chose the right and we chose the left and stayed close to the shore because we thought there was more wind inside. But the wind came from the other place and we finished one mile behind them. It was really close."

While *Black Jack* won the Giuseppe Tasca d'Almerita Trophy for her line honours victory, ultimately the maxis on this occasion lost under IRC. The race was won by the JPK 10.10 *Joy*, with *Black Jack* top maxi, but finishing 12th overall across the whole IRC fleet.

Top: Conditions were not hardcore enough for the VO70 *I Love Poland*.

Above: Joca Signorini oversees Peter Harburg helming *Black Jack* towards the finish.

Photos: CVS/Studio Borlenghi





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## MMOC 2022-23 WINNER – PETER HARBURG’S BLACK JACK

It takes much ambition, motivation, not to mention resources, to ship your 100ft maxi to the other side of the globe and race it with your regular crew. Yet this is what Australian Peter Harburg, owner of the Reichel/Pugh-designed *Black Jack*, undertook with resounding success in 2023. With a crack squad of Aussie and even a few Kiwi sailors, *Black Jack* embarked on a full Mediterranean programme, claiming line honours in all the offshore races in which she competed, ending the season as the 2023 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge winner.

A well-known property developer from Australia’s east coast, Harburg took up sailing only when he was 35, as until this point his spare time was spent motor racing. A long-term Porsche fan, he raced 911s in the 1970s, graduating to a 962, the German manufacturer’s race-winning machine of the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, in which he raced on some of Europe’s finest race tracks, including Le Mans.

Harburg was lured afloat by his late son Benjamin, who was a keen sailor and had competed in the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race. However, the seed for Peter’s interest had been sown much earlier: The Harburgs herald from Brisbane, although they lived in the city’s western suburbs, some way from the water. Aged six, Peter accompanied his father (a commentator for the Australian Broadcasting Commission), to cover the start of the first Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race. Harburg recalls: “That was the first time I’d seen these giant yachts going out into the ocean. They must have been all of 30ft long, but they impressed me!”

Among his first yachts was a Swan 50 called *Carrera*, followed by *Zinger*, the Open 66 which had been

previously campaigned hard by Sean Langman as *Xena/Grundig/AAPT*. However it was with his first *Black Jack*, a Reichel/Pugh 66, that Harburg began to make an impression. He draws parallels with his motor racing: “I started in motor racing in 1500cc sedans, but you always want to go faster and bigger and better...”

Prior to this Harburg had been intending to build new, keen to beat the canting keel *Wild Oats X*, but then her sistership, *Stark Raving Mad*, became available. Harburg named her – along with his subsequent maxis – *Black Jack*, in tribute to his friend, triple F1 World Champion, Sir Jack Brabham. Aboard her, Harburg was sixth home in the 2008 Rolex Sydney Hobart; won line honours and set records in

the 2008-09 Brisbane-Keppel races, and took line honours in the 2009-10 Brisbane to Gladstone races. The boat has since gone on to win both the 2018 and 2023 Rolex Sydney Hobart races as *Alive*.

While Harburg’s team had turboed the 66, they went further still with their next *Black Jack*, the 2011-12 vintage VO70 *Telefonica*, which they acquired in 2013: draft was increased to 5.5m so one tonne could be shed from her bulb, while maintaining righting moment. Water ballast was added, her winches swapped to powered and her sail plan enlarged in every dimension (mast, boom and bowsprit). Harburg explains: “My background in motorsport is in aerodynamics and lightness, which I’ve applied to sailing.”



Opposite: *Black Jack* has been heavily turboed since she last competed in the Mediterranean as the all-conquering *Esimit Europa 2*.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

Above: Secretary General Andrew McIrvine presents Peter Harburg with the silver IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge trophy.  
Photo: IMA/Michelangelo Forza





But during the 2016 Rolex Sydney Hobart, the boat bit back: "It was in extreme conditions; I got up and was trying to put my wets on and the next thing I am flying across the cabin. When I tried to get up, my leg wouldn't move and my shoe was pointing the wrong way! They took me back in and a day and a half later, I woke up with my leg straight. It was a bit sore for a while..."

The second *Black Jack* achieved good results and today, as Roy P Disney's *Pyewacket70*, it has picked up trophies on the US East Coast and in the 2023 RORC Caribbean 600, also becoming the second IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge winner (see p20).

*The boss watches on as Mark Bradford helms, supported by Black Jack's heavyweight afterguard of Brad Butterworth, Alex Nolan and Joca Signorini.*  
Photo: CVS/Studio Borlenghi

Tired of being beaten by the 100s, in 2017 Harburg graduated up to his own. Launched in 2005 as *Alfa Romeo II* for Neville Crichton, this Reichel/Pugh design has excelled around the world, including a record-setting win at the Transpac in 2009. Between 2010-2015, racing as *Esimit Europa 2* for Igor Simčič, she won repeated line honours in the Giraglia Rolex Cup, Palermo-Montecarlo and Rolex Middle Sea Race, setting records in the first two that remain today. 2013 saw her win line honours in both the ÅF Offshore Race (Round Gotland) and Rolex Fastnet Race.

Again, when she was acquired by Harburg she went through a weight-saving regime, aided by her having a

tungsten bulb (70% denser than lead); her rig was moved aft (by lengthening the bow and shortening the transom), and once again her sail area went up, thanks to the latest lightweight sail technology. "When we first got the 100, *Wild Oats* was beating us, but the last six or eight times we have beaten them – which we enjoy!" states Harburg. "With *Comanche*, 30 knots reaching we don't see them, but if it is six knots, we sail straight past them."

Keen to try his weapon out in the famous Mediterranean races, *Black Jack* was shipped up to Europe in 2019, only for the pandemic to strike. She returned to Australia where in 2021 she won Rolex Sydney Hobart line honours.

In 2023 *Black Jack* returned to Europe for the 2023 season. As Harburg explained: "I have been sailing for a long time and we have done every race in Australia fifty times! It is nice to broaden your horizons, so the crew agreed that the circuit in Europe would be great."

Over the course of the season, *Black Jack* notched up line honours victories in the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar, Rolex Giraglia and Palermo-Montecarlo. "We can do pretty well upwind in 30 knots, but our real superiority is in light conditions," says Harburg. "That's another reason I brought her over to the Med. We were happy to win the Rolex Giraglia...I'd heard of that for so many years and we were there, sailing around it! And finishing races in Genoa and Monte Carlo – that was thrilling. We didn't get any overall wins, but the boat could – it was competitive in the Med, and still is."

*Black Jack's* A-list crew is led by helmsman North Sails Australia MD Mark Bradford, with Alex Nolan navigating and tacticians like Adam Beashel, Joca



Signorini and Brad Butterworth on board, plus other former Team New Zealand/Alinghi crew such as Dean Phipps, Simon Daubney and Will McCarthy, among others.

Unsurprisingly, Harburg has an interesting perspective on the differences between maxi racing in Australia and the Med. In the latter, winning line honours is more significant and most races offer prizes for this. In fact, the IMA has even introduced line honours prizes in many of its inshore races, aimed at some of the longer-legged grand prix maxis, not well suited to inshore courses. But the undisputed overall winner is whoever comes out on top under IRC corrected time. In Australia this is less the case, explains Harburg: "For me, coming from a motor racing background, the winner is the one who crosses the finish line first. In Australia, the average person will know the last three line honours winners of the Rolex Sydney Hobart, but not the handicap winners. With the handicap you need to wait two or three days to see who's won it. By then the press has moved on to something else."

This helps explain the nature of the Aussie maxis. With 100ft as the absolute maximum length of Rolex Sydney Hobart entrants, all these line honours contestants are full-on, stripped out, grand prix racers. Meanwhile 100ft maxis in the Mediterranean, like the Wallycentos or *Leopard 3*, are all mostly fast cruisers (or, at least, have been).

Personally, Harburg likes his maxis unlimited: "Why would you slow the boat down by adding weight to get a better handicap and use fewer sails than you could use?" However, he fully understands why rating systems are essential: "...otherwise the guys with the

smaller boats won't come out to play. You can't be everything to everyone, but we want to maximise our performance. As I see it: you have 'the winner' and then you have the 'handicap honours winner'."

His views on owner-driving also don't align with IMA rules. Aside from being 82 years old, he explains: "I have 18 people on the boat and I am the 18th best sailor. In any team, you get your best person to do the task they are best at. I have trimmers who are better than me...everyone is better than me. So, I can steer a boat – I did in Porto Cervo and we still won – but if someone else did it, we would be faster."

At the time of writing *Black Jack* was up for sale. Harburg won't race her again in Europe, but he may

ship her back to Australia and continue racing her there. If she does sell, then it may be time to replace the McConaghy 38 sportsboat which he previously used for WAG racing ("Wednesday Afternoon Gentlemen racing...except there are no gentleman!") in Brisbane, but recently sold.

Despite his age, Harburg shows no signs of stopping. He is supposed to have retired, but has two significant housing developments underway in Brisbane. "When I decided to go sailing in the Med, I had to go back to work to pay for it!" he quips.

"I need to keep sailing. People say 'you're 82, you can't do that anymore'...but you have to live your days. As the great philosopher Dusty Springfield once said 'I live my days instead of counting my years...'"



Despite being 19 years old, *Black Jack* remains one of the world's most potent 100-footers, especially in light weather. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



## ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE

The 2023-24 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge got off to a brisk start as usual with the Royal Malta Yacht Club's premier event, the Rolex Middle Sea Race.

Following the previous edition's exceptionally light anticlockwise lap of Sicily, passing the active volcanos of Mount Etna and Stromboli, the 2023 race was a headbanger. While the wind may only occasionally have peaked above 30 knots, racing upwind in a sharp, violent seastate, left over from a southerly gale before the start, caused several maxis to retire.

As usual, the Saturday start from Grand Harbour of the Maltese capital Valletta was sensational, each class dispatched by a noisy, smoky cannon blast that echoed around the ancient city's ramparts, to the delight of the huge crowds assembled to wave the 91-boat fleet off. The maxis racing in IRC 1 started last at 12:20 with Bryon Ehrhart's *Lucky* (ex-Rambler 88) leading away from Malta.

The leaders converged on the southeastern tip of Sicily, Capo Passero, around 18:00. Passing Sicily's east coast on the first night, there was more wind than forecast and a brutal short, sharp chop. "There," *Leopard 3's* tactician and watch leader Mitch Booth reported, "we were really struggling."

Shortly before midnight Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's 82ft *Django HF* was the first maxi to retire, as Chris Mason explained: "We were going for a reef in 27 knots of wind with a big sea. During the reefing manoeuvre we had a mast track failure which led to some of the mainsail car stack coming away from the mast and causing irreparable damage to the main. We were unable to continue."

*The maxis set sail from Valletta's Grand Harbour to the usual canon fire, fanfare and large crowds.  
Photo: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo*







An hour later the 107ft *Spirit of Malouen X* was forced out with critical electrical issues caused by water ingress.

The remaining maxis stuck their bows into the toe of Italy with *Lucky* heading furthest east, still leading *Leopard 3* and Andrea Recordati's 93ft *Bullitt*. Passing up the Strait of Messina, those who hugged the Calabrian coast past Reggio Calabria to avoid the current did best, *Bullitt* edging ahead of *Leopard 3* and *Lucky*, which had erred further offshore. Tactically, rounding Capo Peloro and exiting the Strait proved a key moment with *Bullitt* leading *Leopard 3* north towards Stromboli. However, as *Bullitt*'s tactician Joca Signorini explained: "*Leopard 3* brought in some drainage breeze and we ended up bow to bow..." While they escaped, those astern, including *Lucky* and Roy P Disney's *Pyewacket70*, had to endure a virtual restart, parked up in light wind and a building counter current as the smaller boats caught up with them.

Mitch Booth explained: "The current against was starting, there wasn't much wind so we were wiggling along the shore trying to get a puff to keep us advancing around the last point. We only just made it. *Lucky* was behind us – they tacked and were going back into the middle and just got flushed back down. Meanwhile we were gone."

As *Leopard 3* was leading *Bullitt* round Stromboli, the northeasterly turning mark of the course, shortly after 10:30 on Sunday, *Lucky* and *Pyewacket70* had just escaped the clutches of the Strait and were 32 miles behind.

The beat west over the top of Sicily saw *Leopard 3* maintaining a tight cover on her rival, until they







## ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE

encountered the next transition northwest of Palermo. “The breeze dropped below three knots for about 30 minutes, the wind transitioning from upwind to running,” described Booth. “We knew that was coming, but we still didn’t manage it very well and we put the wrong sails up. When you stop, it is hard to get moving again in 3 knots.”

Passing Trapani at around 03:00 on Monday, *Leopard 3* had pulled out a small lead over *Bullitt*. From there it was a port tack fetch to Pantelleria; upwind to Lampedusa, the race’s southwesterly turning mark, and an exhilarating close reach back to the Comino Channel followed by a final beat to the finish just inside Valletta’s Marsamxett Harbour. By this stage *Leopard 3* was finally putting miles between her and her rival on every leg.

After an exceptionally close race, the tight reach back to Malta was so tough *Leopard 3* had to back off. She eventually claimed line honours, finishing at 01:20:56 on the Tuesday morning in an elapsed time of 2 days 12 hours 50 minutes 56 seconds, well short of *Comanche’s* 1 day 16 hour record. *Bullitt* arrived 1 hour 49 minutes later, second on the water, but leading IRC 1 by almost two hours on corrected time.

*Leopard 3’s* crew looked exhausted upon arriving, but her owner Joost Schuijff was delighted with their result. The race with *Bullitt* had been a rerun of 2022, but since then both maxis had had massive refits to turn them into purer race boats. “I was worried about being north of Sicily, because last year we were floating around there for a long time,” he said. “This time we always had some wind, so we never really stopped. Also we also had a very

*Opposite: Rounding Stromboli – Leopard 3 was favourite for, and secured, line honours.*

*Right: Bullitt won her class and then, after a long wait, the race overall.*  
Photos: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo







powerful J0 – with that, even if you only have 3 knots, you can still keep the boat moving.”

Despite losing on the water to her longer rival and arriving in the middle of the night, *Bullitt's* owner Andrea Recordati was brimming with enthusiasm too. “It was extremely exciting and challenging, especially the first night. It was amazing that we

managed to get out ahead of the fleet at Messina – we weren't expecting that. Let's not forget we were up against *Lucky*, *Leopard 3*, *Pyewacket70*, etc – some serious boats. And *Ambersail* had a fantastic first half of their race. We were just keeping the breeze, while the others were slowly losing it at different points of the race, which made their lives more difficult. It was a great race.”

His tactician, Brazilian round the world sailor Joca Signorini added: “We worked hard on the first night to look after the boat, because it was very windy. I think the crew did a fantastic job keeping everything together.”

While *Bullitt's* worst breakage from the rough seas was their kettle, elsewhere there was more serious damage. Guido Paolo Gamucci's canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X* and Hungarian Márton Józsa's DSS-equipped 60-footer *Wild Joe* both broke running back stays, just before and just after Stromboli respectively.

However, by far the worst incident was the dismasting of *Lucky*, a boat which knows the course very well, having previously been George David's repeat line honours winner *Rambler 88*. At 07:00 on Monday, having just passed the Egadi islands off the western end of Sicily, *Lucky's* mast broke a few metres above her first spreaders. As tactician Brad Butterworth put it: “We were under J2, putting in a reef in the main in 19 knots TWS when – BANG...” Fortunately no one was hurt and, having jettisoned the mess, *Lucky* pulled into Sicily to pick up fuel before motoring back to Malta. The reasons for the breakage of this five-year-old carbon fibre spar remain unclear.

Despite their significant length differences, *Lucky* and *Pyewacket70* had been having their own race following their Messina restart. For Roy P Disney's heavily turboed former *Telefonica VO70*, this was the first time the California-based team had entered the Rolex Middle Sea Race, however his crew are all old hands, including multiple Volvo Ocean Race winners Brad Jackson and Tony Mutter.



*Pyewacket70's* legendary navigator Peter Isler said there was some romance to the race, seeing the lava on Stromboli steaming away and the incredible night-time stars as they beat west along the north coast of Sicily. Despite having a deeper keel, huge rig and sail plan (reefed, *Pyewacket70* has the same sail area as a regular VO70), Isler still felt that on the bumpy first night their round the world race boat was the most suited to the brutal conditions.

Third home on the water, they suffered on the final leg back towards Malta, both due to the breeze dropping, but also having picked up some flotsam which, after America's Cup/round the world sailor Kyle Langford had dived overboard to disentangle it, proved to be some Styrofoam fishing floats and a large reed branch.

After Andrea Recordati and the crew of *Bullitt* had finished, a day and a half of nail-biting ensued and it wasn't until Wednesday evening that it became evident that their black Wally 93 had not just won the maxi class, but the race overall under IRC. In the previous 14 years this was only the second time a maxi yacht had won the Rolex Middle Sea Race outright. It came as some shock to Recordati but validation of his yacht's turboing last winter.

"When I came into the Rolex Middle Sea Race my dream was for a class win," said Recordati. "That would have been a fantastic result against boats more adapted to this type of offshore race. Coming first overall in corrected time...honestly, I am ecstatic, almost speechless. I am super happy for the boat – she deserves it. I am especially happy for my crew; I have an exceptional team and they really deserve this too.



"The duel with *Leopard 3* was like déjà vu [they also had a close race in 2022]. If they had got stuck with the others in Messina, we might have got them on the water. They just managed to pull through and sailed a fabulous race, so it's good for them. I never came into this race thinking we would have a chance for line honours and it is nice to be second on elapsed time."

Aside from her owner and Signorini, *Bullitt's* 20-person crew for the race also included: Bozidar Matkovic, Guillermo Altadill, Luigi Filippo Orsi Magngelli Alvera, Luke Molloy, Maciej Malag, Marc Lagesse, Martin Strömberg, Mate Ivic, Matthew Joubert, Michael Pammenter, Miguel Jauregui, Peter Van Niekierk, Phil Jameson, Richard Bouzaid, Richard Fryer, Tai Vinnie and Vinicio Vanossi.

An ecstatic Andrea Recordati with some of his winning *Bullitt* crew at the prize-giving.  
Photo: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo





# Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge

*The Costa Smeralda is one of the world's most picturesque yacht racing venues.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi*









In 2004 the Real Club Náutico de Palma introduced Maxi Race Week as the Mediterranean season opener for maxi yachts. Its successor, PalmaVela, has grown to include all racing yachts and even an offshore race, La Larga.

Today PalmaVela's inshore/coastal races kick off the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC), while La Larga is included in our offshore equivalent, the Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge (MMOC).

*Battle of the 100-footers: Galateia v Magic Carpet<sup>2</sup>.  
Photo: María Muiña by SailingShots.es*

Held the weekend before the inshores/coastals, La Larga was run over a 240-mile course starting and finishing in Palma, taking in Mallorca, Menorca and Cabrera. In the fleet were two maxis, with the well-travelled VO70 *I Love Poland* beating Ermanno Traverso's *Stormvogel* in IRC.

It was with great pleasure that *Stormvogel* also competed in the subsequent inshores and coastals: The legendary offshore racer, launched in 1961 for

Dutch plywood pioneer Kees Bruynzeel, was built to the maximum limit of the rule of the day and can be considered the world's first modern day maxi yacht; Bruynzeel enthusiastically racing her in events as far afield as the Transpac, China Sea and Sydney Hobart races.

The nine maxis competing in the inshores/coastals were split into two classes, Maxi A and Maxi B, with *Stormvogel* the lowest rated (with an IRC TCC of





1.181) and up against the ‘modern classics’: Christian Hentschel’s Spirit Yachts 72 *Anima II* and Guillaume de Montalier’s Truly Classic 90 *Atalante*.

In Maxi A, the Wallycentos – David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers’ *Galateia* and Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones’ *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> – were the scratch boats, with TCCs of 1.787 and 1.782 respectively. *Galateia* was the one to beat after winning with straight bullets the previous year.

Making a welcome return to the race course was *Vera*, the 84ft Reichel/Pugh design that won the IMA’s MMOC in 2019. This was Argentine owner Miguel Galuccio’s first time back competing on his maxi since that supremely successful season.

On the opening day Maxi A sailed a 33-mile coastal course, exiting the Bay of Palma to the southeast in a southerly sea breeze, which peaked at around 14 knots. Maxi B sailed a similar 27-mile course.

In Maxi A *Galateia* won the pin and the left and, with *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> tight to weather, contained her rival, despite at one point breaking a lock for one of her jib halyards. Similar woes befell *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup>, and while *Galateia* had done enough to score her first bullet, *Vera* corrected out to second.

In Maxi B there were some raised eyebrows as the 62-year-old *Stormvogel* won by 4 minutes 29 seconds on corrected time.







The unusually warm conditions continued on day two with a light thermal breeze of 8-13 knots. Both maxi classes raced two windward-leeward on the Bay of Palma, south of Arenal. The first for Maxi A saw a facsimile of the previous day's start – *Galateia* winning the pin and then the left to finish first by 2 minutes 47 seconds on corrected, again from *Vera* and *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup>. *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> turned this around in the second race after *Galateia* bailed out, starting on port, with Owen-Jones' team scoring their first bullet. The Wally 80 *Rose* corrected out to second: Owner Sven Wackerhagen felt they had chosen the right sail combination for the conditions and, despite having a crew including fewer professionals than their competition, made almost no errors in their manoeuvres.

In Maxi B, *Anemo II* won both races. This was the first ever race for the Spirit Yachts 72 since her launch in 2021, however her German owner Christian Hentschel is an experienced Dragon sailor who, unusually on the 72, works the bow while his wife trims and daughter helms.

Day three of PalmaVela saw more coastal racing for the maxis, but in fickle conditions – the sky more overcast and the sea breeze finding it harder to establish. After an hour's delay, the maxis were sent off on a round the cans course to the southeast, with Maxi A sailing 25 miles and Maxi B 20 miles.

The battle to win the pin on the usually left-favoured course was won by Andrés Varela Entrecanales' Vismara Mills 68 *Pelotari.Project*, with *Galateia* subsequently thundering past them to weather. In fact, during the race the southeasterly dropped and went left instead of right. In Maxi A *Galateia*

continued her winning ways, but *Pelotari.Project* benefitted most from the 90° shift passing the Regana mark, then enabling them to lay the next mark, unlike the boats ahead. As a result the Spanish maxi finished second, with *Vera* third.

Meanwhile *Stormvogel* was back on form in Maxi B, albeit winning by a mere 19 seconds from *Atalante*. At one stage *Stormvogel* was even ahead of both her more modern rivals on the water.

The final day of racing at PalmaVela nearly didn't happen, but patiently waiting for more than two hours paid off as a large rain cloud brought with it wind, albeit still sub-10 knots. In this *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> finally got the upper hand over *Galateia* at the start, leading around the top mark. However *Galateia*'s crew dowsed their Code Zero better at the next turning mark and nosed in front. Their match race continued to the finish line with *Galateia* prevailing, winning the regatta by five points.

"We have been trying to get the boat going better in light airs," explained tactician Kelvin Harrap. "David and Chris have both learned a lot," he added, referring to *Galateia*'s co-owners David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers. A delighted Leuschen commented: "Palma has always been very kind to us. Maybe it is because the boat is based here! It is the third or fourth time we have raced here and we have had good luck every time.

"We have got a great crew that we continue to tweak and we seem to learn something new every race: Today we did a gybe peel just before the finish – the crew did a masterful job."

In Maxi B *Atalante* scored her first bullet of the regatta, but Ermanno Traverso's *Stormvogel*, despite finishing over an hour later, scored a vital second to win the class by a point. "We were down to about 2.5 knots of wind speed for the last hour and a half of today's race," explained *Stormvogel*'s captain Ian Hulleman.



Opposite: *Pelotari.Project* performed well on day three in the Bay of Palma.

Photo: María Muiña by SailingShots.es

Above: David M Leuschen, partner Anna Schroeder, tactician Kelvin Harrap and their winning *Galateia* crew at the PalmaVela prize-giving.

Photo: Laura C Guerra/PalmaVela



## ROLEX GIRAGLIA – INSHORES

Prior to the 70th anniversary Rolex Giraglia offshore, three days of inshore and coastal races were held on and around the Golfe de Saint-Tropez and the bay off Pampelonne Beach. As usual, the stars of the show among the 184-strong line-up were the 21 maxi yachts. These races comprised the third event in the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge.

Scratch boat was again Peter Harburg's 100ft *Black Jack*, all the way from Australia, which would face the two Wallycentos: local favourite Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> and *Galateia*, being steered for the regatta by co-owner Chris Flowers and with a stand-in afterguard including John Cutler, Will Oxley and Ian Budgen. Other major players in the Maxi 1 class were the 82ft *Django Unchained* (ex-*Highland Fling XI*), Pier Luigi Loro Piana's ClubSwan 80 *My Song* plus the former Maxi 72s: the defending champion Sir Peter Ogden's 77ft *Jethou*, Dario Ferrari's 75ft *Cannonball*, Peter Dubens' IMA Maxi European Champion *North Star* and Jim Swartz's *Vesper*.

Among those fighting it out in Maxi 2 would be the Marten 72 *Kuujjuaq*, Dario Castiglia's Baltic 65 *RE/MAX One2* and IMA President Benoît de Froidmont's *Wallyño*, the 2022 runner-up here.

On the opening day, the rain held off and the wind filled in just enough for a 19-mile race to be laid on by the race committee, which as usual included IMA-appointed race officer Ariane Mainemare. With an ENE'erly wind at the start, a start-finish line was set immediately off the Port de Saint-Tropez.

The fleet had a windward start before exiting the Golfe de Saint-Tropez on an six-leg course, including two reaching legs. Throughout, the wind rarely

exceeded eight knots, but a massive shift saw it veer from 060° to 120°.

At the start, the boldest move was taken by Dario Ferrari's *Cannonball* which, despite the pin being favoured by 20°, started by the race committee boat and was first to tack on to port. "We wanted to be the first on to port to go into the first headland," explained strategist Michele Ivaldi. "It was a bit risky, but it paid off and we managed to lead [the next former Maxi 72s] at the first cross, which was important. From then on it was easier because there were not many passing lanes." Most importantly, their forecast, which had anticipated the scale of the shifts, proved accurate.

*Cannonball* won big under IRC, by 11 minutes 27 seconds from *North Star*, with *Galateia* third. First 100-footer to finish, *Galateia's* top move was an accurate layline call into the top mark, anticipating the shift, while *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> overstood. Behind them, *Black Jack* had to play catch up after having to carry out a penalty turn at the start.

In Maxi 2, *Wallyño* and *RE/MAX One2* stood out on the opening day, the IMA President winning by 5 minutes 37 seconds under IRC. Adriano Calvini's Felci 61 *Itacentodue* was third, trailing *RE/MAX One2* by more than 10 minutes.

On day two, after a three-hour wait for wind, the race committee managed one windward-leeward out of Pampelonne Bay in exceptionally light, tricky conditions. Again *Cannonball* and *Wallyño* won their classes, only with much smaller margins: *Cannonball* by 3 minutes 40 seconds from *Vesper*, with *North Star* third. *Vesper* tactician Gavin Brady explained: "It was tricky. We sailed the race in five knots of

*Maxi fleet stacked up on the start line – left to right: Magic Carpet<sup>3</sup>, North Star, My Song and Cannonball.*  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi













wind and, when you have all the big boats starting together, it is a bit of a scramble – ducking and diving. You have to basically get out to the sides, but that worked out okay. We were the right-hand boat and crossed the line at full speed before rolling straight into a tack.”

While the light conditions favoured the highly refined former Maxi 72 grand prix racers, making best progress against them was *Django Unchained*, which finished fourth for a second day. Despite difficulties at the start, the 82-footer had benefitted from a shift out to the right on the second beat.

In Maxi 2 *Wallyño* finished 3 minutes 4 seconds ahead of *Itacentodue* with *RE/MAX One2* third under IRC. Giovanni Chiappano, grandson of *Itacentodue*'s owner Adriano Calvini, commented: “During the race we crossed paths with *Wallyño*; we were behind them at the start, got in front, but then on the last downwind they got ahead of us again. They are going very fast in the light winds.”

On the third and final day, the maxis raced a 19-mile coastal course. Remarkably, *Cannonball* and *Wallyño* won yet again. They may have ended the Rolex Giraglia inshores/coastals with perfect scorelines, but, in reality, the competition had been getting ever stronger as the event progressed.

In Maxi 1, the former Maxi 72s once again dominated, with *Jethou* making her first appearance on the podium. Of their performance *Cannonball* tactician Vasco Vascotto explained: “We perform well in these light conditions. This week we made some good decisions. It is a nice combination of crew, boat and happiness. Everything looks nice and luckily in these conditions we have a little edge

*Opposite: Dario Ferrari's Cannonball relished the light conditions to end the Rolex Giraglia inshores unbeaten.*

*Right: The perennial battle continued between the Wallycentos Magic Carpet<sup>3</sup> and Galateia.*

*Photos: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi*







*IMA President Benoît de Froimont's Wallyño also managed a 'perfect scoreline'.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi*



on the others, so if you don't know where to go you can just stay with the others!"

Of their day, he added: "Today there were a couple of choices to make on the first upwind. You wanted to go right at the beginning. When you wanted to leave the point, the left was stronger for a period, but then you knew that the right was coming good again at the end. So on the first upwind you had to cross the course three times and had some difficult decisions to make."

*North Star* corrected out to second, 1 minute 38 seconds behind *Cannonball* – the smallest winning margin of the three races for Dario Ferrari's team. This third podium finish, in as many races, left *North Star* second overall in Maxi 1. *North Star's* tactician,

double Olympic 470 medallist Nick Rogers, explained their final day: "We had breeze the whole way around and then we came in with a thunderstorm, so we kept the breeze all the way to the finish. Peter [Dubens] loved it. He is really pleased. It has been a good week. We have had some great starts which helped."

*Vesper* completed the podium overall, despite an OCS in the final race. Overall *Django Unchained* ended up fourth, first of the larger maxis, ahead of *Galateia*, *My Song*, *Black Jack*, *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> and Eduardo Plass' Soto 65 *Camiranga*.

*Wallyñõ's* Benoît de Froimont was delighted by his Maxi 2 clean sweep, the first occasion his famous 60-footer has achieved this. "It is a great

combination of a good tactician and the crew, who now have been on board for a long time and know the boat perfectly. Definitely, light airs are good for us, especially downwind," he said.

Behind, a final third place left *RE/MAX One2* in second overall, but just one point ahead of *Itacentodue*. The podium finishers ended the regatta substantially ahead of *Kallima*, Luigi Sala's *Yoru*, the Mylius 60 *Sud*, Ludovic de Saint John's Marten 72 *Kuujuuaq* and Giancarlo Gianni's *Durlindana 3*.

Sadly, the rain that subsequently descended over Saint-Tropez was so heavy and persistent that it resulted in the cancellation of the giant Rolex crew party, scheduled to take place on Saint-Tropez's Plage de la Pesquière that evening.



The characteristic fuchsia spinnaker of Sir Peter Odgen's *Jethou*.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi







## MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP



For the 2023 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, while the 45-strong entry was not a record, it nevertheless represented one of the highest quality turnouts the maxi yachting's pinnacle event had ever seen.

As usual there was a Super Maxi class for five yachts of 30.51+m LH racing under ORCs. A trio of Js – *Svea*, *Topaz* and *Velsheda* – competed in their own class, under their own rule.

For 2023, the term 'Mini Maxi' was dispensed with along with the previous 80ft divide, the enlarged 'Maxi' fleet now spanning 18.29-30.51m (60-100ft). This was split into Maxi A - IRC TCC 1.700< (roughly the former 'Maxi Racing' class); Maxi B – IRC TCC 1.600-1.700 (ie ex-Maxi 72s, smaller Maxis, VO65s) and Maxi C – IRC TCC <1.600 (former 'Mini Maxi' classes).

The most groundbreaking development was the new Maxi Multihull class, which the IMA has helped to introduce; this class is aimed at high performance cruising catamarans racing under ORCm. This attracted three competitors: Adrian Keller's 84ft *Allegra*, Lord Irvine Laidlaw's brand new Gunboat 80 *Highland Fling 18*, and the equally new Gunboat 68 *Convexity*<sup>2</sup> of former M32 catamaran World Champion Don Wilson and Suna Said.

Two former IMA Presidents entered brand new maxis. Replacing his Wally 100, Claus-Peter Offen described his Wally 101 y3k as being "both a better racer and a better cruiser – 15% lighter, with 15% more draft and 15% more sail area." Thomas Bscher's latest *Open Season* was a Baltic 68 Café Racer. In new livery were the Wallycento V (ex-*Tango*) and *Django HF* (ex-*Highland Fling XI*), the 2022 Maxi class winner.

*Bella Mente*, *Proteus* and *Cannonball* – despite all being out of class, the hottest competition remains between the former Maxi 72s.  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

Both the 100ft *Leopard 3* and Andrea Recordati's Wally 93 *Bullitt* had undergone recent massive refits. *Leopard 3* was lightened by five tonnes, with a new mast and winch package; while *Bullitt* gained a longer bowsprit, increased mast rake, replaced her lifting keel with a 6m fixed version and had two tonnes of water ballast added on each side.

Several former Maxi 72s had been modified too. The highest rated, Hap Fauth's 75ft *Bella Mente* had been newly fitted with twin rudders and water ballast. Peter Dubens' *North Star* had a new rig designed to twist substantially, which, along with AEROSix standing rigging, aimed to reduce windage and improve upwind/reaching ability. *Cannonball* had reverted back to 72ft LH, reducing her rating and gaining her IRC age allowance. Significantly she was being steered by Peter Harrison, which ultimately resulted in his buying *Cannonball* from Dario Ferrari.

Also on the start line was Tara Getty's elegant classic *Baruna of 1938*, essentially designed as a smaller version of the Sparkman & Stephens Super J *Ranger*.

The regatta got off to a good start in a 10-knot northerly that built to 20+. In this the Js and Maxi B sailed two windward-leewards, while the rest were sent on an anticlockwise lap of varying lengths of La Maddalena archipelago. The Maxi Multihulls headed off first with the highly experienced crew on *Allegra* claiming the first bullet in this new class. After racing, a cocktail party was held at the YCCS clubhouse, hosted by Gunboat and the IMA to welcome the new multihulls.

In Maxi A *Leopard 3* prevailed, winning by one minute from *Galateia*, with *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> third; meanwhile the brand new y3k scored her first







## MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP

victory in Super Maxi class, albeit trailing Juan Ball's Swan 115 *Moat* on the water. *Open Season* was less fortunate in Maxi C, finishing fourth to the winner – Jean-Pierre Barjon's 65ft *Spirit of Lorina*, with defending champion Riccardo de Michele's 78ft *H2O* in second place. In Maxi C there was an unfortunate incident when Dario Castiglia's Baltic 65 *RE/MAX One2* struck a rock off La Maddalena and was rammed by Luigi Sala's *Yoru*, which had been chasing her at the time. Both retired, while two of *RE/MAX One2*'s crew were taken to hospital from where they were subsequently discharged.

The tightest competition was in Maxi B where, after two windward-leewards, *Cannonball*, George Sakellaris' *Proteus* and *Bella Mente* remained tied on points. *Cannonball* had won the first race and *Proteus* the second, with *Bella Mente* second in both. Meanwhile, among the Js, Niklas Zennström and Filip Engelbert's 43.6m *Svea* dominated, winning both races.

After a strong onshore breeze had been blowing all night, conditions were challenging on day two, the northerly having only dropped to 20 knots by start time. All classes raced longer coastals, south around Mortorio and Soffi, before returning north to La Maddalena archipelago, finishing with another downwind leg back towards Porto Cervo.

In Maxi C, *Spirit of Lorina* clearly enjoyed the bigger conditions, securing her second bullet in style, 13 minutes 28 seconds ahead of second-placed *H2O* under IRC. However the biggest win was in the Maxi Multihull class where the offshore veterans on *Allegra* won by 1 hour 37 minutes 38 seconds under ORCmh corrected time from the newbies on



*Convexity*<sup>2</sup>. *Svea* continued her winning streak in the Js, match racing against *Velsheda* after *Topaz* blew up two kites and retired.

Fastest around the course in Maxi A was, again, Roberto Lacorte's *FlyingNikka* in 2 hours 55 minutes 56 seconds compared to the first displacement maxi, Peter Harburg's 100ft *Black Jack*, which took 3 hours 21 minutes 40 seconds. Under IRC there was delight for Pier Luigi Loro Piana as his ClubSwan 80 *My Song* won her first race. Second was *Leopard 3*, after *Galateia* and *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> both blew up kites and *EWOL Way of Life* retired with a broken mainsail headboard.

*Moat* claimed the Super Maxi class win, leaving a three-way tie at the top of the leaderboard with *y3k* and Marco Voegel's 108ft *Inoui*. It was also close between the former Maxi 72s in Maxi 2 where,

despite suffering a hydraulic leak, *Proteus* won by just 19 seconds from *Bella Mente*; behind them, *North Star* retired with bowsprit issues while *Cannonball* blew up a spinnaker.

For day three the wind remained northerly, but had dropped to 12-16 knots; the sea was flatter, but with occasional large leftover waves. The Js raced two windward-leewards as the rest were sent on an anticlockwise lap of La Maddalena archipelago.

Across the classes it was a day of firsts: In Maxi B, *Bella Mente* finally scored her first bullet, despite a spinnaker blow-out, with *Proteus* second. Similarly, among the Maxi Multihulls *Highland Fling 18* enjoyed her first ever race win, albeit by just 14 seconds from *Allegra*. *Bullitt* also prevailed in Maxi A in the first trouble-free race of this, her first regatta following her refit. An eighth for *Leopard 3*, due to

Opposite: Claus-Peter Offen's magnificent new judel/vrolijk designed Wally 101 y3k won on her first outing.

Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

Top right: Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup fleet moored close to the YCCS clubhouse in Marina di Porto Cervo.

Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi







## MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP

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problems with her spinnaker furler, dropped her from the top spot overall.

Elsewhere *y3k* secured her second victory in the Super Maxi class, by just one minute from *Inoui*. *Spirit of Lorina* continued her perfect scoreline in Maxi C, again finishing ahead of *H2O* by another big margin – almost five minutes under IRC. So too *Svea* in the Js, notching up two more race wins to maintain her unbeaten record, despite two less than perfect races – blowing up a jib in the first and starting poorly in the second.

After Thursday's layday, racing resumed in shifty winds that barely touched 10 knots and were more typically 5-6. Maxi A was scheduled to sail windward-leewards, but only managed one before the wind died. With a shutdown forecast around La Maddalena, the other classes headed south on an anticlockwise lap of Mortorio and Soffi, their course ultimately shortened too.

There was upset in Maxi C when *Spirit of Lorina's* stranglehold was broken, not by second-placed *H2O*, but by Thomas Bscher's new *Open Season*. Compared to his previous 107ft Wally, Bscher said of his Baltic 68: "It is wide and short, so it behaves differently. You can't 'shoot' because momentum is immediately gone, but the boat runs fabulously and we improve every day." Second was *Wallyño*, with Gerald Logel's Swan 601 *@robax* another 12 seconds behind under IRC.

In Maxi B *Bella Mente* scored her second consecutive win, beating *Cannonball* by 3 minutes 38 seconds. Similarly in the Maxi Multihulls, *Highland Fling 18* won for a second day by a large margin over

*Opposite: The trio of Js continued to steal the show on the water.*  
*Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi*  
*Right: Wendy Schmidt's Botin Partners 85 Deep Blue.*  
*Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*





*Convexity*<sup>2</sup>. Maxi A's single windward-leeward was won by *Bullitt*, hanging on to the larger boats, her time correcting to 4 minutes 18 seconds ahead of *Galateia*, followed by *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> and Wendy Schmidt's 80ft *Deep Blue*. *Moat* scored a second bullet in the Super Maxis.

Among the Js, *Svea* was the only class leader to remain unbeaten. On her coastal they had rolled *Velsheda* out of a gybe, while *Topaz* – having

headed for the shore – had dropped behind, leaving *Velsheda* and *Svea* to match race.

"It was a fantastic week," said Zennström, who shared the driving with *Svea*'s co-owner Filip Engelbert. "This is now the second year we've been sailing the boat and we have tried to be systematic about our approach, in terms of understanding and learning her. It is really about teamwork, then practicing and doing more manoeuvres; these are

big boats and heavy and if you make a bad tack or bad gybe you lose a lot." Zennström would also win the prize for the 'highest placed IMA member'.

Sadly, on the final day a lack of wind meant that while a race was started, it was then abandoned.

Thus *Bella Mente* claimed Maxi B. Hap Fauth's *Bella Mentis* were previously Rolex Mini Maxi/Maxi 72 World Champions three times (last in 2016). He first entered his latest *Bella Mente* in 2019, finally prevailing on this, his fourth attempt, in her latest 75ft incarnation. She beat *Proteus* by three points, with Peter Harrison's newly-acquired *Cannonball* third.

"Our boat had great speed – the phenomenal boat compensated for my age!" quipped a jubilant Fauth. "We come to this event every year and we work hard at it – it is the pinnacle of our season."

In Maxi A *Galateia* won by seven points from *Leopard 3*, one point ahead of *Bullitt*. *Leopard 3* had made the strongest start to the event, *Bullitt* latterly seemed to prefer the lighter winds, but *Galateia* maintained consistent podium finishes. Co-owner Chris Flowers was acclimatising to *Galateia*'s helm: "This is my first time here and I am delighted with our result. I'm very impressed with the competition. What a beautiful venue and what fantastic weather. For me, this is my biggest achievement in sailing."

In the new Maxi Multihull class, a strong start also helped the 84ft catamaran *Allegra* prevail, winning by two points from *Highland Fling 18*. "We sailed very well for the first two days. We are not a light wind yacht, so yesterday was really painful and today would have been too, but that is sport," said owner Adrian Keller.



Thomas Bscher's latest Open Season is the second Baltic Café Racer 68.  
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

Opposite photos: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi





▲ Leopard 3 was the early leader in Maxi A.



▲ Maximum velocity on Andrea Recordati's Bullitt.



▲ Despite her longer length, Django HF was unable to beat the former Maxi 72s in Maxi B.



▲ Jean-Pierre Barjon's Spirit of Lorina managed one of the best scores in the fleet.



Claus-Peter Offen was delighted to win the Super Maxi class aboard his new *y3k* in her first regatta, beating Juan Ball's *Swan 115 Moat* by one point. He last won in Porto Cervo in 2011: "I wish we had sailed [a full race] today, as we were in the leading position when they stopped. This week we had a lot of things to test. We learned a lot and we know what to improve and the technical issues."

Unsurprisingly, the line honours prize, for the yacht in Maxi A with the shortest combined elapsed time over all the coastal courses, went to the 60ft foiling yacht *FlyingNikka*. Although yet to make any impression under IRC corrected time, Roberto Lacorte and his crew have shown dramatic improvement since last year and the stability of their foiling is impressive.

Close to *Svea's* performance was that of Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Spirit of Lorina* in Maxi C, finishing 11 points clear of an impressive group: five-time winner Riccardo de Michele's *H2O* tied in second with Aldo Parisotto's *Mylus 65 FD Oscar3*, one point ahead of Massimiliano Florio's *Southern Wind 82 Grande Orazio* and a further two ahead of Benoit de Froidmont's *Wallyño*.

After a celebratory leap into Porto Cervo Marina, Barjon commented: "We have been coming here for eight years and each year we hoped to win. This year we had the best chance because we have a very good crew and boat and the weather was good, so everything worked out. It is a historic day – this is the best result of my life."

*H2O* won the prize for the Maxi sub-class 4 and Matteo Fossati's *Stella Maris* for Maxi sub-class 5.



▲ YCCS Commodore Michael Illbruck with Claus-Peter Offen and the crew of Super Maxi class winner *y3k*.



▲ Pre-regatta welcome reception at the YCCS.  
Photos: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi





▲ America's Cup legend Brad Butterworth.



▲ The IMA Members' Dinner at the YCCS clubhouse.



▲ Pre-dinner drinks for the IMA members on the YCCS terrace.



▲ Left to right: Oscar3's Elena and Aldo Parisotto with Luisa and Roberto Lacorte.



▲ Magnificent buffet at the Rolex Owners' Dinner.



▲ Rolex's Lionel Schurch and Roberta Cerrati.



▲ Carla Comelli with Marco Pecori.



▲ The Rolex Owners' Dinner was held at Hotel Cala di Volpe.

Top row photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi; Middle and bottom rows: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi







## LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ

For 2023, Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, the concluding event of the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge, changed from its previous fortnight duration – when the maxis raced in the second week following the classics and ‘moderns’ – to a 10-day format where the maxis started first, later joined by the moderns and classics. With the IMA’s own race officer Ariane Mainemare installed into PRO Georges Korhel’s race committee for the maxi course, the maxis raced on the Golfe de Saint-Tropez on day one, then transferred to neighbouring Pampelonne Bay.

The strong turnout of 39 maxis mostly included yachts that regularly race with the IMA, but also several, mainly smaller, maxis that only seem to compete at this event. The fleet was divided into four classes by IRC rating.

Maxi A included the defending champion, Jean-Luc Petithuguenin’s 107ft *Spirit of Malouen X*, this year facing a trio of Wallycentos: Karel Komarek’s *V (ex-Tango)*; *Galateia*, being campaigned by co-owner Chris Flowers; and *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> of perennial competitor, 2022 winner and Saint-Tropez resident, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones; plus Claus-Peter Offen’s brand new Wally 101 *y3k*. The class also included *Bullitt*, *Deep Blue* and *My Song*, plus three former Maxi 72s – *Jethou*, *North Star* and *Cannonball* – the latter being steered by new owner Peter Harrison.

Maxi B included the widest range, from Bernard Sabrier’s 112ft superyacht *Silvertip* and the Spirit Yachts 111 *Geist*, to Thomas Bscher’s new Baltic 68 Café Racer *Open Season* and the smaller Wallys: *Rose* and defending champion, Terry Hui’s 77ft *Lyra*.

Maxi C featured two brand new boats, Matteo Groppo’s Grand Soleil 72 *Bianca* and Alois Neukirchen’s Mylius 66 RS *Schorch*, the latter one of three Mylius yachts competing, the other two being 60s: Maurits van Oranje’s *Sud* and Jean-Pierre Dreau’s *Lady First III*. They faced a ‘modern classic’ in the Andre Hoek 108ft *Namuun*, alongside the two-year-old Advanced 80 *Mindfulness*. Class favourite was the 60ft *Wallyño* of IMA President Benoît de Froidmont.

The 2022 Maxi D winner returned in Jürg Schneider’s Swan 65 *Saida*, celebrating her 50th anniversary. She was joined by Matteo Fossati’s 64ft *Stella Maris*; a trio of CNBs – *Neyina*, *Pat Bon* and *The Rock*; the Truly Classic 90 *Kealoha* and regular competitor Francois Benais’ Shipman 63 *Bambo*.

As usual at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, a combination of patience and magic was required to stage racing. On the opening day the race committee achieved this, despite the ultra-light 4-6 knot easterly; the course was to start and finish off Saint-Tropez and mainly comprised a windward-leeward set outside the bay. Ultimately however, while the 25-mile course was completed by the two faster classes, it was shortened for the two smaller. Typically when the wind is blowing into the Golfe de Saint-Tropez, playing the right out of the start and making the most of the shift off Cap St Pierre are winning moves and this proved true again.

In June both *Wallyño* and *Cannonball* had scored straight bullets on these waters at Rolex Giraglia. Both continued this on the opening day of Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. *Cannonball*’s winning margin was exceptional – first home ahead of the 100-footers on

*Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> leads *Bullitt* and the Advanced 80 *Mindfulness* into the Saint-Tropez finish.  
Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget/www.martin-raget.com







the water and 24 minutes 15 seconds ahead of second-placed Wendy Schmidt's 85ft *Deep Blue* under IRC, followed by *Bullitt* and *V*. Meanwhile *Wallyño* prevailed over *Lady First III* and *Sud*, as did *Lyra* in Maxi B.

The breeze had improved for day two's coastal race out of Pampelonne Bay, but it still required a two-hour wait. At the start the southerly had built to 7 knots and later got up to 12-14 as the sea breeze filled in and veered. The maxis were sent south to Cap Lardier, returning via a mark in the bay off L'Escalet, the smaller boats then headed directly back to the finish while Maxi A had to round the famous Nioulargue mark to the east, before finishing.

In the more stable breeze *Cannonball's* winning streak ended, with victory going to Peter Dubens' IMA Maxi European Champion *North Star*, once again banging the right before enjoying a prolonged leg on port in clear traffic. Second in Maxi A was *Bullitt* followed by *Jethou*, *V* and *Galateia*.

In Maxi B, *Lyra* scored her second bullet ahead of the chartered Marten 72 *Aragon* and Sven Wackerhagen's Wally 80 *Rose*, while *Wallyño* was also maintaining her perfect scoreline in Maxi C, ahead of the Mylius sisterships *Sud* and *Lady First III*, despite the latter blowing up a spinnaker. A closer contest was in Maxi D; here defending champion *Saida* scored her first bullet in the closest of finishes across the classes – 26 seconds ahead of *Stella Maris* under IRC. The smaller boats benefitted from being last to finish, as the breeze was at its height.

In stark contrast to the opening day's conditions, for day three competitors braced themselves for winds



Opposite: The former *Wallycentos*: *V* (ex-*Tango*), *Galateia* and the extended *Spirit of Malouen X* (ex-*Hamilton*, *Open Season*).  
 Top right: Maurits van Oranje's Mylius 60 *Sud*. Above: Matteo Fossati's *Stella Maris* scored her second win of the season.  
 Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget/www.martin-raget.com; IMA/James Boyd



into the mid-20s. In theory this may have produced different winners, but this proved not to be the case in Maxi B and C, where *Lyra* and *Wallyño* each scored their third respective bullets of the regatta. For *Wallyño's* Benoît de Froidmont, this surprised even him: "These were not the conditions for the boat, because it was quite windy and we had some technical problems before the start. We broke the electronics, so we were having to sail old style – just based on feel." In second was Karl Pisec's *Solaris 72 Black Pearl*, followed by *Sud* (*Lady First III* suffered mainsail damage pre-start).

*Lyra* won Maxi B by a larger margin of 9 minutes 10 seconds, but of surprise here was second place: *Geist*. With her modern classic lines and wood-epoxy construction, the beautiful Spirit Yachts 111 incorporates new technology such as a carbon fibre mast and a bulb keel, while her crew includes America's Cup sailors, such as Paul Campbell-James and Pete Cumming.

In Maxi A, the former Maxi 72s handled the big conditions, fortunately in a reasonably undeveloped sea state, with *Cannonball*, *North Star* and *Jethou* filling the podium. *Cannonball's* victory was set up from the start, followed by good tactics up the first beat. *Jethou* gained by taking a shortcut between some rocks, only for *Cannonball* to recover: "We had super fun downwind with good breeze and good waves. The last 10-15 minutes of the race with the jib top...we were doing 22-23 knots! It was one of the best races I have sailed here," confided *Cannonball* strategist Michele Ivaldi.

Fourth was *My Song* while *Galateia* was first home on the water (and also among the 100-footers under

IRC). "They were the best conditions – we had a lot of fun after two days of light wind," said Pier Luigi Loro Piana, whose *My Song* had been matching the 20 knot wind speed. "We were planing. It was great to get a 'little bit of oxygen'."

The conditions were also liked by the smaller cruiser-racers in Maxi D, where *Stella Maris* won. "20 knots of wind and really beautiful landscape," said owner Matteo Fossati. "Our boat is old and needs wind conditions like today."

After Wednesday's layday, racing resumed in light conditions with a six knot southerly. The maxis' coastal course took the bigger boats to a mark off Fréjus and smaller ones on a shorter course via Issambres, both finishing in the Golfe de Saint-Tropez.

A further win and an unblemished scoreline for Benoît de Froidmont, tactician Cedric Pouligny and the *Wallyño* crew, secured them victory in Maxi C with a day to spare. Having started three up from the pin, *Wallyño* headed for the mid-left up the beat to stay in optimum pressure and shift. "*Lady First III* had a tighter layline with two more tacks than us and we managed to roll them at the top," explained Pouligny. 6 minutes 46 seconds behind, *Lady First III* claimed second with Marco Tursini's *Advanced 80 Mindfulness* third.

In Maxi A, Wendy Schmidt's 82ft *Deep Blue* scored her first bullet, with *Galateia* second, 1 minute 10 seconds behind under corrected time, having been locked in contention with *V* for much of the race. "We were glued together – super close," observed *Galateia's* tactician Murray Jones. Battles were also raging between the former 72s where *North Star* had

the upper hand for most of the race. Approaching the leeward mark off Fréjus, *Cannonball* engaged, forcing *North Star* to tack just short of the mark, but still managing to gain the inside berth. Ultimately *North Star* would come home third overall, but just over a minute ahead of *Cannonball*, the sole former Maxi 72 to reach the podium. Going into the final day, just 0.7 points were separating the top three overall in Maxi A.

In Maxi B Terry Hui's *Lyra* was finally toppled as *Rose* and *Aragon* finished first and second under IRC. "We started well; we had a significant lead at the first mark and were the first to gybe on the first corner where there was a massive 23° shift," explained *Rose's* tactician Jesper Radich of their win.

Maxi D saw *Saida* score her second bullet of the series, ahead of *Stella Maris* and Jerome Bataillard's Shipman 63 *Sao Bernardo*.

For the final day the maxis were sent on a large trapezoidal course off the Bay of Pampelonne in a 7-10 knot easterly with seas ranging from flat to occasionally lumpy and irregular. The breeze was forecast to drop later in the afternoon, favouring the bigger boats. While *Galateia* was the frequent line honours winner over the week, on the last day it was finally also her turn to win Maxi A under IRC corrected time too, further breaking the former Maxi 72 stranglehold following *Deep Blue's* victory the previous day. *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> also enjoyed her best result of the week with a third. *Galateia's* strategist, 470 Olympic gold medallist and America's Cup winner Jordi Calafat explained: "*Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> was catching us in the light winds, so we had to make sure we closed the door..."









## LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ

*Galateia's* victory earned her the third step of the Maxi A podium overall, behind Peter Harrison's *Cannonball* and Peter Dubens' *North Star*, after one discard was applied. This was Harrison's first victory in his newly acquired yacht, which he was continuing to sail with many of previous owner Dario Ferrari's crew, including ace afterguard double act Vasco Vascotto and Michele Ivaldi. "Their approach is in a different league and that is what made all the difference – the boat is great too," said Harrison. "This week, what was interesting for us was that she worked well in strong breeze and we had good results in light breeze."

Maxi B again saw a new winner in Thomas Bscher's Baltic 68 *Open Season*, whose crew correctly anticipated the wind shifting back to the right during the first beat, then overcame *Lyra*, even with her getting the inside overlap on them at the top mark. Despite this, Terry Hui's black 77ft *Lyra* was not going to be displaced from the top spot and won her class at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. "We have a good team and we are learning every year, but this year we had some tight competition with *Rose*, so we couldn't make any mistakes," observed Hui. Overall *Rose* was second, *Aragon* third and *Open Season* fourth.

A third bullet in Maxi D secured victory comfortably for Matteo Fossati's 64ft *Stella Maris*, while a final day fifth for Jürg Schneider's Swan 65 ketch *Saida* dropped her to third overall behind *Sao Bernardo*. "This year is 'the double' – I have won two – it is a very good year," said Fossati, referring to his class win at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup a month earlier. "Everything has been perfect here, which I

understand is not the case every year. Perhaps we chose the right year – or we brought the weather!"

Despite *Wallyño* having secured Maxi C honours with a day to spare, the silver 60-footer confirmed her result on the final day, not just winning on corrected time, but on the water too. Overall, the Mylius 60 sisterships *Lady First III* and *Sud* filled the remaining podium positions.

"It was a fantastic week," said de Froidmont. "The crew is really on fire now at the end of the season. With light breeze and flat sea this week - it has been the conditions for the boat."



Left: Yet again, Terry Hui's *Lyra* won her class. Right: Peter Harrison scored his first class victory as *Cannonball's* new owner.  
Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget/www.martin-raget.com

Opposite photos: Gilles Martin-Raget/www.martin-raget.com;  
IMA/James Boyd





▲ Stella Maris' Matteo Fossati receives his prizes. ▼ Fossati compares notes with Saida's Jürg Schneider.



▼ IMA party held on Saint-Tropez's sea wall.

▲ Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez has lost none of its festive atmosphere.



▼ Victorious again: Lyra's Terry Hui.



▼ Benoît de Froidmont with Olivia Hui (left) and Carla Comelli (right).



▲ The end of a superb season for Wallyño's crew.

▼ Sud's Maurits van Oranje.









Thanks to the pandemic, the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) has only occurred three times in five years. In 2023 Benoît de Froidmont's *Wallyño* became the first maxi to claim the championship title for a second time. When the IMA President's Wally 60 won in 2019 it could not have been closer, with a two-way tie between her and Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Lorina 1895* that was only decided in *Wallyño's* favour on the last run of the last race of the season.

In contrast, *Wallyño's* 2023 victory was more clear-cut: She started the deciding event – October's Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – already with a nine-point lead across the entire IMA maxi fleet. *Wallyño* seems to excel in the Cote d'Azur hotspot's usual mix of conditions and, in the season's concluding regatta, not only won her class, but was also the sole maxi to finish with a perfect scoreline across the 39-boat fleet. She claimed the 2023 IMA MMIC in emphatic style.

Only the best three results count when scoring the MMIC, allowing those who sail more than three events to discard their worst result. With discards applied, Peter Dubens' Maxi 72 *North Star* finished the 2023 IMA MMIC second overall, closely followed by Chris Flowers and David M Leuschen's Wallycento *Galateia* – a wholesome podium, with the breadth of the maxi fleet represented.

Following the victory of Alessandro del Bono's *Capricorno* the previous year, so *Wallyño* won the IMA's third MMIC after a magnificent 2023 season.

May saw de Froidmont and his crew's year begin with the IMA Maxi European Championship in Sorrento, organised by the Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia. After a series of windward-leeward and



coastals held on the Bay of Naples and around Capri, the top five places were taken by former Maxi 72s, *Wallyño* finishing ninth overall and second in the Maxi 4 class to Riccardo de Michele's substantially longer *H2O*.

"As usual, it was an extremely tough regatta and the fleet was very competitive," de Froidmont recalls. "Sailing around the Bay of Naples and Capri was magic, as always. The organisation was perfect and the courses were nicely diverse, demanding a good

*Left: Untainted by being 'designed to a rule', Wallyño has a good-looking hull shape from Farr Yacht Design.*

*Above: Wallyño's season began with the IMA Maxi Europeans.*

*Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*





Benoît de Froidmont, wife Aurélie, tactician Cedric Pouligny and crew celebrate with the IMA MMIC trophy.  
Photo: Gianfranco Forza

balance between tactics and performance.” There was overly persistent rain for much of the regatta, but as de Froidmont says: “That is part of the game – personally I prefer rain and wind, rather than no wind.”

Next up in the MMIC were the three days of inshore racing off Saint-Tropez at Rolex Giraglia in mid-June, prior to the event’s famous offshore race. In these, Dario Ferrari’s former Maxi 72 *Cannonball* scored straight bullets in the Maxi 1 class, but so too did *Wallyño* in Maxi 2. She went on to finish second to the race’s overall Maxi winner *Itacentodie* in Maxi 2 in Rolex Giraglia’s combined inshore-offshore results.

“It would have been difficult to do better!” de Froidmont quips. So why does *Wallyño* do so well in Saint-Tropez? “There are two things: We sail 40 days per year with the same crew, so the crew is extremely skilled with all the manoeuvres, which are very well operated – these days we make nearly zero mistakes. The tactician [Cedric Pouligny] also did a great job, but the crew as a whole is the key point.

“Secondly, for both the Giraglia inshores and Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, we had the best weather conditions for the boat. Compared to *Wallyño*, our Swan [he previously owned a Swan 82] had a much higher righting moment. *Wallyño* in the breeze is not that competitive, but in light winds – that is what she was designed for. From a pure performance basis, she is extremely good in the light.”

As usual the most points towards her overall tally came in early September from the IMA’s premier event, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in Porto Cervo. Here, lively conditions through the week didn’t suit *Wallyño*, but she still managed a fifth place, behind old rivals



Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Spirit of Lorina* and *H2O*, plus Aldo Parisotto's Mylius 65FD *Oscar3* and Massimiliano Florio's Southern Wind 82 *Grande Orazio*.

"Porto Cervo was more complicated because the crew was still extremely good, but it was really not the best conditions for the boat – breezy with a choppy sea. I still had a lot of fun, but it was tough for *Wallyño*. When it's like that, we are just happy if we don't break something..."

These results were enough to give her a commanding lead in the MMIC going into the final event of the season – Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Unbeaten in Saint-Tropez throughout 2023, *Wallyño* on these waters was so dominant that she seemed to be in a class of her own.

"It was a fantastic week," commented de Froidmont of his latest Saint-Tropez victory, adding: "The crew was really on fire at the end of the season, but also these were 'our conditions' – with light breeze and a flat sea. *Wallyño* went really well – she is a Saint-Tropez boat!"

De Froidmont's command of the wheel certainly helped their season once again. Originally from Belgium (but having lived in Geneva for some years now), during his youth he raced dinghies, from Optimists to Lasers, Fireballs and 470s, until he had to put this to one side in order to focus on his studies and life at business school. He stepped back into the sport at a very much grander level in 2010, when he acquired the Swan 82 that was previously Roland Pieper's *Favonius*, which still competes on the maxi circuit under present owner Paul Berger as *Kallima*.

With the Swan sold, after a lengthy search he acquired *Wallyño* in 2013. At the time she was

berthed in Barcelona and in a sorry, abandoned state, complete with 20cm of water inside her. After visiting the boat with experienced French pros from his Swan, Sebastien Audigane and long-term bowman Arnaud Vasseur, de Froidmont bought her and, remarkably, in her first season, she won her class at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Since then, her proud owner has ploughed into her considerably more than her purchase price, although *Wallyño*, with her sweet-looking silver Farr-designed hull from the early 2000s (at a time when her design would have been untainted by any rating rule) and her name deeply indented into her transom, remains very much an 'iconic Wally'.

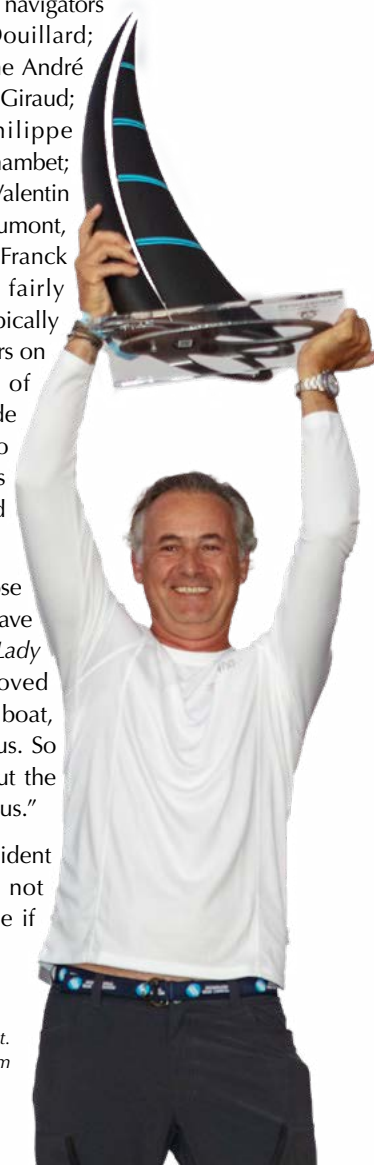
Over the last decade under de Froidmont, *Wallyño* has gone from strength to strength. Although at 60ft she is at the smaller end of the IMA maxi fleet, her owner prefers this size compared to his previous 82. "It depends on your programme and what you want. I like sailing her with this crew and some friends, so we sail her with 12. A team of 15 is easier to manage and to keep on a permanent basis, whereas with the Swan we had 25. And everyone knows this boat. Even if she is 20 years old, she is still very good-looking. Also we are always competitive and dangerous on the race course. So I'm not sure what I would buy if I wanted another boat. It would be hard to have more pleasure and be more competitive."

In 2023 de Froidmont's crack French crew was again led by expert tactician, well-known keelboat specialist and Tour de France skipper, Cedric Pouligny. "We are happy. The boat is going well, we are starting well and have no issues with the manoeuvres," explained Pouligny. Basically, they ticked all the boxes.

Of his crew de Froidmont paid special tribute to his boat captain Rémi Bouvet, for whom Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez was his last regatta with the team. The rest of the crew through the season were: pitman Benjamin Redreau; main trimmer Mathieu Frei; navigators Nicolas Le Moigne and Olivier Douillard; bowmen Arnaud Vasseur, Christophe André and Vendée Globe skipper Clément Giraud; trimmers Matthieu Salomon, Philippe Buchart, Solune Robert and Louis Chambet; plus Morgan Audic, Olivier Arnaud, Valentin Pantonnier, Antoine Arnoud, Eric Dumont, Mathias Herest, Hugo Stubler and Franck Jacob. While the crew remained fairly consistent throughout the season, typically they usually get one or two youngsters on board, mainly to grow the pool of sailors with maxi experience, as de Froidmont explains: "There is no ego on board between the young guys and the old guys, it is a good balance."

While the competition wasn't as close as it was in 2019, *Wallyño* did not have it all her own way. "It was tough as *Lady First III* and then *Sud* really improved strongly – after they changed their boat, they were becoming quite dangerous. So it was different towards the end, but the level was high between the three of us."

Naturally *Wallyño* and the IMA President will be back in 2024, attempting not only to defend their title, but to see if they can make it an IMA MMIC hat-trick.



IMA President and winning sailor Benoît de Froidmont.  
Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget/www.martin-raget.com



Following the serious damage she sustained during the Regata dei Tre Golfi, Furio Benussi's 100ft *Arca SGR* made a giant bounce-back in his Trieste-based team's leading event of the season, the Barcolana presented by Generali.

Officially called the Autumn Cup, the Barcolana presented by Generali is famous as being international yacht racing's largest single-start regatta. In 2023 it saw a giant entry of 1,773, although still diminutive compared to its pre-pandemic record of 2,689 participating yachts. As usual the set course, with its giant starting line off the clubhouse of the event's organiser, Società Velica di Barcola e Grignano (SVBG), was a minimal 13-mile, clockwise lap of a fixed rectangle in the Gulf of Trieste, the finish line set immediately off Trieste harbour.

Sadly the 55th Barcolana will be remembered for being one of the lightest on record. With so many boats on the start line with so little steerage, the objective, more than ever, was to avoid collisions. After the gun it took more than 30 minutes for the maxis to break free. On the Swan 90 *Woodpecker Cube*, the boat backed by event sponsor Generali, the crew, including Francesca Clapcich and Claudia Rossi, headed right towards Barcola. The other maxis remained on starboard and headed towards the Miramare lighthouse side of the course, on the basis that if any breeze was going to arrive, it would come from there.

On *Arca SGR*, tactician and local Lorenzo Bressani had made the call to start three-quarters of the way down the line towards Miramare and headed left along with *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* and *Way of Life*. On several maxis, crew were hauled aloft in an attempt to spot the slightest zephyr.



Eventually, half a mile from the first mark, a small puff of breeze arrived; *Arca SGR* was first into it, tacking back, followed by others close to her. But this pressure was short-lived, lasting just a few minutes.

Given the conditions, the course was shortened, finishing at the first buoy. Benussi's maxi arrived first, in the pedestrian time of 1 hour 49 minutes 55 seconds. Sharing helming duties on board *Arca SGR* was Benussi's 16-year-old daughter Marta.

However it was close; right behind were the chasing pair: the 90ft *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* match racing Gašper Vinčec's *Way of Life*. The former luffed hard and, thanks the great stubbornness of her helmsman, ended up second, 3 minutes 9 seconds behind *Arca SGR* and just 17 seconds ahead of *Way of Life*.

The Barcolana has no handicap – the prize goes to the line honours winner – and this win followed *Arca SGR*'s last victory in 2021, the sixth for Benussi's Fast

and Furio Sailing Team. At the prize-giving on Molo Audace, attended by thousands of people on the dockside, the trophy was awarded to Furio and Marta Benussi and their team by Minister for Sport and Youth Andrea Abodi, together with SVBG President Mitja Gialuz, Generali's Chairman Andrea Sironi and SVBG Sports Director Dean Bassi. Also attending was Wendy Schmidt, owner of *Deep Blue*, winner of the previous Barcolana.

Benussi commented: "Every victory is special, but this one is more so than others for me and for the whole team. This is the victory of an extraordinary group of people who fought against everything and everyone to be able to live this day after terrible months in which many said that our maxi would never sail again. We did it – and we did it by winning a very difficult regatta in which anything could have happened. Obviously this success is also profound for me having shared the helm with my daughter, Marta. This perhaps represents the beginning of a generational transition."

A few days prior to Barcolana, some of the maxis had participated in the Barcolana Maxi – Trofeo Tivoli Portopiccolo. This three-day event saw the opening day cancelled due to a lack of wind, but the fleet enjoyed great conditions with a 20-knot Bora for the coastal race on day two and 15 knots on the final day.

Ultimately Alberto Leghissa's canting keel Frers 63 *Anywave Safilens*, with Sandro Alberti calling tactics, won the final day's race on the Barcolana course, first to finish and winning on corrected time too, ahead of the VO60 *CleanSport Energy*. Thus, following her second place in the coastal race, *Anywave Safilens* won the Barcolana Maxi - Trofeo Tivoli Portopiccolo outright.

Above: Furio Benussi and daughter Marta, who helmed, with their trophy.

Opposite: Barcolana is famous for being the world's biggest single start yacht race.

Photos: Barcolana/Studio Borlenghi









The Venice Hospitality Challenge, the unique annual event in which maxis are able to race along the Canale della Giudecca and Bacino di San Marco, passing famous landmarks such as St Mark's Square and the Doge's Palace, celebrated its 10th edition in 2023. As ever for this event, each maxi was paired with a leading Venice hotel.

18 maxis, this year divided into three classes, started this 10th anniversary race. The scratch boats were Furio Benussi's 100ft *Arca SGR* (Ca' Sagredo), fresh from her Barcolana victory; the 90ft *Shockwave 3 Prosecco Doc* (Hotel Excelsior), skippered by Mitja Kosmina, and Gašper Vinčec's maxZ86 canting keel *Way of Life* (The Gritti Palace). Among the other

entries were the Swan 70 *Flying Dragon*, skippered by Mauro Pelaschier, and the former America's Cup challenger *Il Moro di Venezia*, helmed by Dodi Coletti (a trimmer on board during the 1992 America's Cup).

The race had a dramatic start as all three favourites, *Arca SGR* (Ca' Sagredo), *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* (Hotel Excelsior) and *Way of Life* (The Gritti Palace) incurred penalties for being OCS at the start, while the 62ft *Adriatic Europa* (Hotel Danieli) ran aground off San Giorgio island. *Arca SGR* (Ca' Sagredo) led from the outset and maintained her advantage throughout the six-mile course so that, despite her OCS, she secured victory ahead of *Way of Life* (The Gritti Palace) and *Shockwave 3 Prosecco DOC* (Hotel Excelsior).

The Maxi B class was won by Roberto Zambelli's Cori 70 *Pegaso* (Alajmo Ristorante Quadri) ahead of Jure Orel's VO60 *Clean Sport One* (Violino d'Oro) and Alberto Leghissa's Frers 63 *Anywave* (The St Regis Venice), while in the new Cruising class first was Paolo Montefusco's Farr 80 *Idrusa* (Palazzina), followed by Paolo Pesaresi's Southern Wind 78 *Kiwi* (Ca' di Dio VRetreats/LILT) and Gugli Danelon's Farr 80 *Anemos II* (JW Marriott)

At the prize-giving *Arca SGR* (Ca' Sagredo) skipper Furio Benussi and his team were awarded the regatta's symbolic trophy – a replica of the Doge's Hat, made of Murano glass by Berengo Studio. Of his fourth victory at the Venice Hospitality Challenge, skipper Furio Benussi said: "For us it was a really nice day. The boat performed really well, the crew also. It was a great job for the sponsors and a nice job for Venice."

*This event provides a unique opportunity for maxis to race on Venice's Bacino di San Marco.*  
Photo: VHC/Carlo Borlenghi



### The Gritti Palace

Paolo Lorenzoni has been the general manager of The Gritti Palace, a Luxury Collection Hotel, since 2009, following a long, successful career running exclusive hotels and resorts in Venice, Rome, Milan and Paris. In 2014 he was elected 'General Manager of the Year – Italy' by the European Hotel Managers Association.

Lorenzoni describes his and The Gritti Palace's part in the Venice Hospitality Challenge: "For the last 10 years I have been involved with the sailing world thanks to an initiative launched by my friend Mirko Squario, President of the Yacht Club Venezia, which

in 2013 launched the first edition of the Venice Hospitality Challenge. For this unique challenge, usually taking place in October, maxi yachts are permitted to spend one day racing in Venice's extraordinary Canale di San Marco.

"For the event each maxi yacht is partnered with one of the most prestigious hotels in Venice. Since 2015, The Gritti Palace has partnered with *Way of Life*, skippered by Gašper Vinčec, an IMA member.

"Gašper and I met in 2015 and immediately became good friends. I first got involved in sailing thanks to

him and his very professional team. I was invited onboard for all the last editions of the Venice Hospitality Challenge and I really feel I am part of the team now. More recently, I also joined the *Way of Life* team for the Barcolana in Trieste, and spent a few days training with them in Porto Cervo just before the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup a few years ago. That really was a dream come true for me."

Naturally, editions of the IMA Yearbook can be found in the library at The Gritti Palace, so that IMA members and other maxi owners may feel at home!



*The Gritti Palace, a Luxury Collection hotel, on the Canal Grande.  
Photo: Courtesy of The Gritti Palace*



*Paolo Lorenzoni on board Way of Life.  
Photo: Way of Life*





In all sports there tends to be a pinnacle event or class that drives evolution. Yachting is a very diverse sport and historically this evolution has been driven by the America's Cup for inshore racing and The Ocean Race or Vendée Globe for offshore. However, these events – while certainly driving development of their own – have drifted further away from mainstream yachting, so evolution in the 'real world' now seems to have fallen into our laps.

Maxi racing has always exhibited innovation tempered by the reality of time. Taking the concept of a maxi from dream to reality is not something that

should, or can, be rushed, and nor should it be taken lightly. It is a huge investment in every way, continuing long after the hull gets wet for the first time. This is where it is good to see evolution continuing beyond the first launch, progressing through the racing life of the fleet. Many may say that modifications and development are costly, but when it extends the competitive life of a yacht, that is beneficial to all.

We are currently seeing the culmination of several years of certain trends working through the fleet. It is now almost six years since the IMA introduced Reduced Crew Numbers: the rating reduction calculated by IRC for a maximum crew of 70% of the standard IRC crew number. We introduced this following comments from several owners that their enjoyment of events was enhanced by sharing the experience with a core group of sailors; increasing that number of sailors did not correspond to an increase of enjoyment, in fact often the opposite.

In the same period, we have seen significant improvements in the efficiency of stored power sail control systems. Thanks to better battery packs and accumulators, these no longer rely on diesel generators chugging away full time. Deck layouts have also improved, and, with a fleet that always retains an eye on the cruising calendar, any development that enables shorthanded sailing is only going to make the yachts more enjoyable, both for cruising out of the marina as well as when slipping the moorings for a day of windward-leeward racing.

We are now seeing the third side of the triangle emerging with the increased use of variable/water ballast both to compensate for taking fewer crew

and to offer more 'gears' when racing. Previously this was very much the reserve of offshore racers like early Open 60s and Whitbread/Volvo 60s to 1990s maxis like *Windquest* and *Shockwave*. However, it was always seen as too much of a compromise for the quick tacking and manoeuvring necessary for inshore, short course racing. Furthermore, the narrow, slab-sided hull shapes that proliferated at the start of this century did not lend themselves to the concept, as both the tanks took up much useable interior space and were inefficiently close to centreline.

With the move to carrying maximum beam all the way aft, and topside flare, not only are the tank positions more efficient, but they also use up space that is not that valuable as accommodation. Add to this improvements in water transfer and pumps, and the system starts to make sense.

The final question of course is "what does it rate?" Here IRC has reviewed the subject and recognises that there are many times when using the full capacity may not be the best solution. As such, the rating appears to better reflect reality.

On that matter, it is important to note that IRC rates the full capacity per side of water ballast. If you plan to install more and only partially fill it, maybe to adjust fore and aft trim as well as stability, there is nothing stopping you using it as such. However, the measurement and rating is based on the full volume of the tanks and plumbing. If the full tankage per side has a volume of 2,000 litres, but you plan to never sail with more than 1,000 per side and will adjust the location fore and aft between two tanks, you must be rated for 2,000 litres not 1,000.





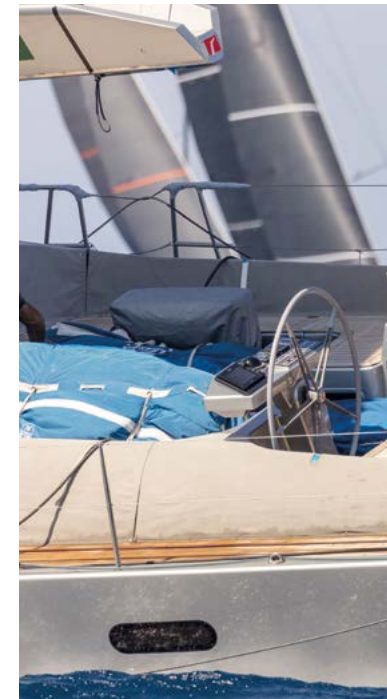
*Hap Fauth's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup winner is now 74ft and fitted with both water ballast and twin rudders.  
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

With the final rating piece of the puzzle in place, it seems now that the picture is complete. We are seeing a significant number of the fleet adopt the reduced crew rating, with fewer hands needed to manage the sail systems using stored power, while the reduction in crew weight is compensated by water ballast.

Our hope is that this allows owners to make decisions based on what they find most enjoyable, rather than feeling the need to bring extra people to an event just to sit on the rail. Every boat is different and so is every owner's wishes. Understandably, some sailors may initially worry about whether this cuts the number of people they see on the dock, but we believe that is shortsighted. The IMA is an association of maxi owners and it is our job to increase our members' level of enjoyment at events. The more our members enjoy their racing, the more they will continue to race and the more races they will enter, so the more their friends and families will, we hope, get bitten by the yacht racing bug! This will hopefully increase the number of members that participate regularly and encourage more to join. It is of benefit to all if fleet sizes are larger and more stable through the season, not only the crew parties!

However, for consistency, we need all our partner event organisers to agree to adopt the reduced crew rating option in their race documents, with plenty of advanced warning. To date, both YCCS and CRVI have adopted the system for the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and the IMA Maxi European Championship respectively. But for each owner, it is best if the team remains the same throughout the year and they have sufficient time to arrange both sailing programmes and logistics well in advance. The IMA is a partner with these





events and often has a seat at the table when decisions are made, but that is not the case for every event in the calendar. For the others, the strongest voice is that of the owners directly: We can and do speak on your behalf, but nothing gets to the heart of the matter as quickly and clearly as the voice of an owner considering whether to enter an event, or not.

Talking of consistency, in 2024 there will be the reestablished option of varying class splits based on IRC TCC alone. For 2023 we used fixed splits, but with mixed results. The problem is that we

don't know in January what the fleets will look like at every event in the coming year. Having some flexibility to split the fleet more evenly, where we can, is a valuable tool. We always try to keep it as consistent as possible, but it is often impossible without racing everyone together.

At some events, we are simply restricted by both minimum numbers of entries and maximum numbers of starts that the event organiser is prepared to lay on. This can tie our hands in giving out recommendations, but does not mean

we don't understand or appreciate the diversity in the fleet.

Simply put, we are trying to find the best solution, where the right solution may not exist. We cannot recommend that one IMA owner races alone, so that several other IMA owners are a little happier. We are here to try and make racing better for all IMA members and maxi owners across the board. Sometimes that results in fleet sizes and diversities that do not favour all, but we cannot be making our recommendations in order to favour the preferences

*North Star has been converted to powered winches, permitting her to be sailed by an extremely reduced crew.*

*Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*



## OWNER-DRIVER RULE EXPLAINED



of one owner over another. As stated already, a recommendation to the event organiser is just that, as we are not the organising authority and cannot dictate demands. Instead, in recent years we have made great progress in building trust and good working relationships, so that our recommendations are heard. We always do our best given circumstances and try and consider the thoughts and racing experience of all competitors.

We look ahead to 2024, hoping that we have a large fleet that races regularly through the season.

**James Dadd**

*Above: Her silver paintjob looks racy, but Riccardo de Michele's H2O is a large cruising maxi that is well sailed.  
Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*



From its inception the IMA has had a strong owner-driver rule for its major events. It has always been defended, although the details are often argued over at our AGMs. The basic principle is simple; to allow amateur owners to helm their boats and compete against their peers, not against world-class professionals. Professional crews have gradually taken over in the most competitive parts of our fleet such that the only amateur, on some boats, is the owner.

While the rule is applied rigorously at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and also the IMA Maxi Europeans, at other maxi events the local organising authority will decide whether to use it, but, so far, few do. Opinions about its use are often polarised, while complexities also enter the debate where exceptions to the rule have been added.

When the rule is applied, the helm must be the owner, co-owner or an immediate relative thereof, or a charterer.

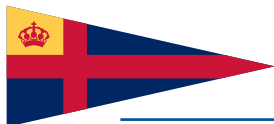
### Owner-driver rule simplified

- Windward-leeward: owner must helm from the preparatory signal; after the first hour a relief helm may helm for up to 10 minutes per hour. The owner must helm the final two miles of the race.
- Coastal race (up to 60 miles): owner must helm from the preparatory signal; after the first hour a relief helm may helm up to 15 minutes per hour and after four hours up to 45 minutes per hour. The owner must helm the final two miles of the race.
- Offshores (60 miles and longer): owner must helm from the preparatory signal and for the first hour, after which there are no restrictions.
- Crew members are permitted to briefly hold the wheel for safety reasons or when the helmsman is crossing the boat to a second wheel during manoeuvres, or requires a toilet break/change of clothes.
- Substitute helm: The owner may choose a substitute helm, being the regular boat captain or another who must be an amateur, (ie a Group 1 'amateur' under the World Sailing Sailor Classification Code). These substitutions incur a 1% or 2% penalty on elapsed time respectively. Approval must be given by the IMA Helmsman Approval Panel prior to racing.
- A new, optional, addition is to extend the period of relief helm time for owners who are over 70 or 75, or declare an incapacity.

Full details of the current rule are found in Section C2 of the IMA Class Rules ([www.internationalmaxiassociation.com/pdf/2024\\_classrules.pdf](http://www.internationalmaxiassociation.com/pdf/2024_classrules.pdf)) or scan the QR code to the right with your phone.







## PROFILE: JORGE FORTEZA - COMMODORE OF THE RCNP

Holding the position of Commodore in an entity with the tradition and respect of the Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP) is a responsibility that transcends merely administering the sports side of a club. Jorge Forteza accepted this position and its challenges in 2019 and has just been reappointed as part of a new Board of Directors. One of their main objectives is to preserve and celebrate the club's eight decades of rich history, during which it has contributed so much to the development of sailing, not just in the Balearics and Spain, but internationally too.

It could be said that Forteza is the RCNP's Commodore by vocation; he has an unmistakable passion for the club. "My first memories of the RCNP go back to 1969," he recalls. "My first home was the RCNP – I spent my life there. At that time, the Optimist was just starting in Spain, it was like a toy. I would sneak out of school to go sailing with my friend Tomás Estela; between the two of us we shared the titles."

Under the burgee of 'his club', Forteza began to collect silverware. This started with two Spanish Optimist championship titles in 1973 and 1974 and included the European Championship, an unofficial World Championship in Arenys de Mar in 1973 and finishing runner-up at the Optimist Worlds the following year in Silvaplana. "From there I moved into the 420, before switching to windsurfing. I entered the Blume residence for high-level athletes and prepared for the 1984 Olympics in the Windglider class, but I felt uncomfortable without a harness! From there, I jumped into the 470 for the Olympic Games in Los Angeles and Seoul. I then moved into the Flying Dutchman, a boat with which



*Talented sailor and RCNP Commodore, Jorge Forteza.*



I won a Princess Sofía Trophy and an Olympic sailing week in Cannes, among other successes. But after my year in that class, I finally abandoned my eight years of Olympic sailing to focus on my professional career.”

Forteza holds an economics degree from Barcelona University and an MBA from IESE Business School. His career has culminated in his becoming owner and CEO of the real estate company Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Nova Mallorca.

Today Forteza continues to compete in a sport in which he remains as passionate as ever. “In yachts, I competed with Pedro Campos and his Movistar project, and with Siemens...teams with whom we won two Copa del Reys, three Princess Sofía Trophies and a Trofeo de Vela Conde de Godó. I also spent five years trying to launch the Platú 25 in Mallorca, a boat in which I’ve also enjoyed success and several titles. I am now focused on the Dragon, a boat that I enjoy very much because the fleet is large in Mallorca and the level is very high.”

Twice voted Best Sportsman of the Balearic Islands, Forteza knows well the world in which he moves as Commodore of the RCNP. “I am responsible for the sports side of the club. This will be my fifth year in this position and I have three more to go. It’s a project that excites me very much, especially because of the great team I’m lucky enough to work with.”

### **75 years of history**

Although its foundation dates back to 1948, the RCNP was born out of the union of two much older clubs: the Club de Regatas (created in 1891) and the Club España (1919), both the organisers of sports

events that have survived to the present day, such as the Vuelta a Mallorca (a cycling competition in Mallorca).

With both strong social and sporting sides, the RCNP has long been held in high esteem, known for being the driving force behind some of Europe’s leading regattas. It has forged an impressive international track record and recently was chosen by Boat Exclusive magazine as one of the ten best yacht clubs in the world.

Its most important annual regatta remains the Copa del Rey MAPFRE, one of the Mediterranean’s top multi-class sailing events and first held in 1982. Here the best professional and amateur teams and sailors from around the world gather every August for a week of intense sailing and social activity.

Along with ‘La Copa’, the club’s sailing programme includes many other annual classics, such as the Trofeo S.A.R. Princesa Sofía Iberostar, PalmaVela and the Superyacht Cup.

### **Leasehold**

To ensure its legacy continues, the RCNP is currently focusing much energy on ensuring that the lease on the clubhouse, which it has occupied since its birth, is renewed. About this, Forteza is optimistic: “We are working on a route that will allow us to extend the lease. We have taken it through the process and it seems that both the State Lawyer, who is handling the matter, and the Balearic Islands Port Authority see it as viable. It could fit and work, and it would allow the renewal to be resolved positively and quickly. Right now, all we have to do is be patient and wait.

“The club continues to function normally, but currently we are in a temporary situation – as we have advised the Assembly and the members. We have their confidence, but we face this challenge knowing it is an enormous responsibility. We continue to move forward with the hope that in 2024 we’ll receive positive news about the renewal.”

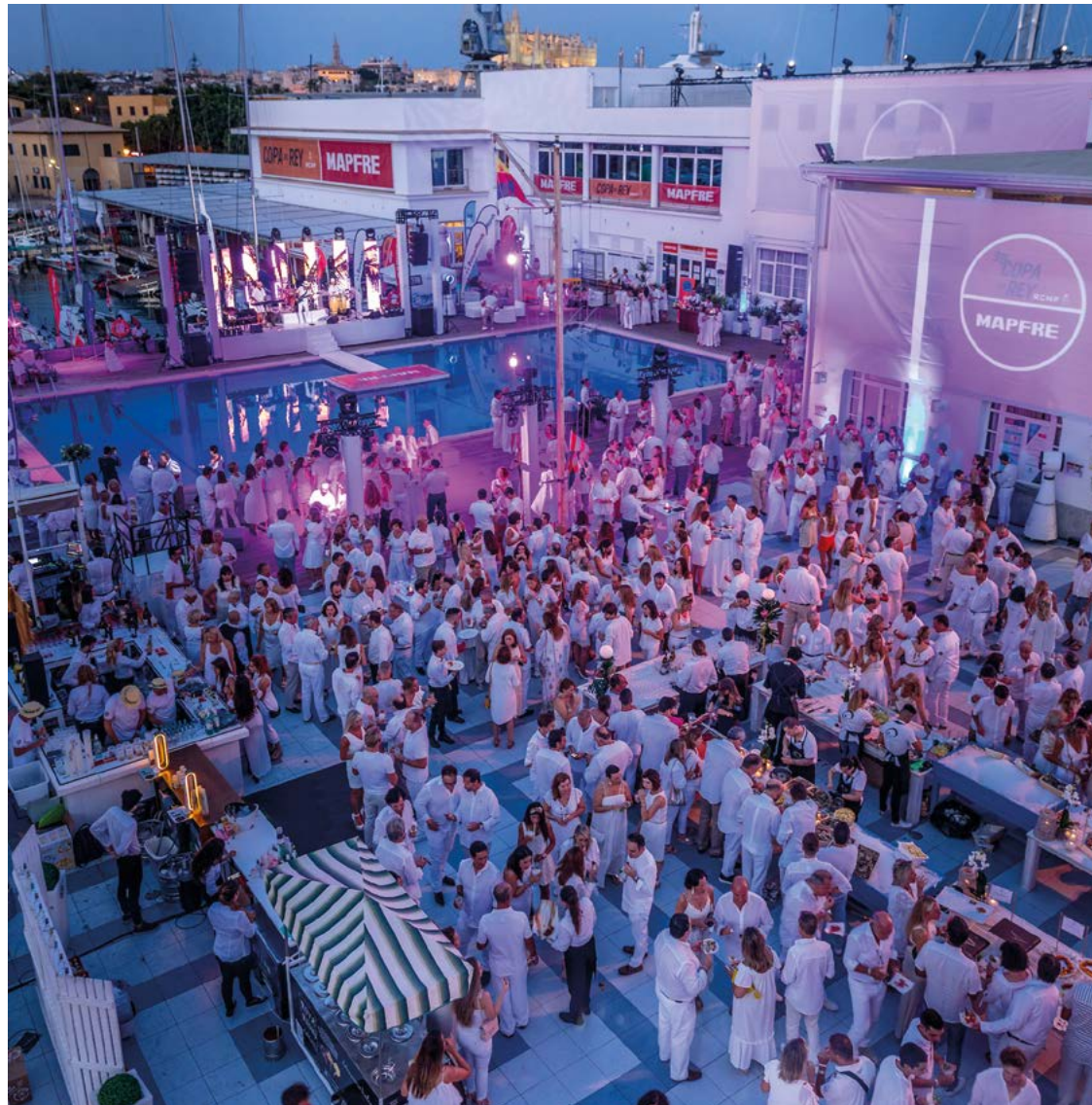
### **Sporting vocation**

Of the club’s sporting credentials, the Commodore continues: “The RCNP has always been a regatta club. In 2023 it celebrated its 75th birthday following a history full of successes that have helped set the benchmark internationally for the very highest level in regatta organisation. I am talking about Copa del Rey MAPFRE, Princess Sofía, Ciudad de Palma, PalmaVela, etc. Few clubs have such a professional, effective and experienced staff to organise such events.

“In 2024 we will have the J/70 World Championship, a new edition of the Superyacht Cup Palma, the ClubSwan Worlds, a 52 Super Series event, the 20th edition of PalmaVela and the third edition of La Larga [PalmaVela’s offshore race], an exciting project that is growing in popularity among the international fleet.”

Three of these events underpin the excellent and lengthy relationship between the RCNP and the IMA. While maxis have been racing in Palma since the 1970s, today PalmaVela continues to be part of the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge, while La Larga scores points in the Association’s Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge. “PalmaVela was initially born as a maxi regatta. It evolved into a one-design regatta and now we are





The famous 'white party' held at the RCNP during Copa del Rey MAPFRE.  
Photo: Nico Martínez/Copa del Rey MAPFRE

going back to its origins, promoting the presence of the maxis," Forteza continues.

"La Larga came about because the offshore fleet needed an important longer race; it was also a request from many cruisers. Besides, an event like this was missing in the Mediterranean calendar. It was a resounding success from day one." For La Larga, the 20th anniversary PalmaVela and this year's 42nd Copa del Rey MAPFRE, a strong turnout is expected for all.

Rafael Gil March, the RCNP's new President, stresses the importance of the maxis in the club's history and its future: "The first editions of Copa del Rey already included the presence of maxi yachts, but it was after the creation of PalmaVela, in 2005, when our club decided to make a strong commitment to organising races for large yachts. Projects like these required establishing a fruitful relationship with the boat owners and the organisation that represents them."

In the RCNP President's opinion, Forteza's profile is ideal to develop this relationship: "Jorge has a long history as a sailor and boat owner. He has always, in all his projects, sailed on behalf of the Real Club Náutico de Palma. His experience and knowledge of the sport makes him a great asset to our organisation, especially when it comes to organising major international regattas such as Copa del Rey MAPFRE or PalmaVela."

#### **Much more than an exceptional bay**

For many years Mallorca has been one of the key hubs of yachting, yacht racing and professional yachting – not just in the Mediterranean, but the world. Central to this is its strategic location in the





like Manu Fraga, Pedro Marí, Gaspar Morey and Vivi Mainemare.

“We have been defending the values of the club for many years, its reputation; but above all we always try to make sailors feel at home. I think that is the essence of this club; what best defines it and is the key to its success.”

**Javier Sobrino**

heart of the Balearic Islands, just over a hundred miles from Barcelona and conveniently en route between Gibraltar and the rest of the Mediterranean. In addition, the sheer scale of its berthing and facilities in the Puerto de Palma, coupled with the easy logistics in having a major international airport nearby, plus the quality of Mallorca’s coves, beaches, ports and dry docks, make it an ideal yachting location.

But when one speaks of racing at the RCNP, a major part of its offering is the Bay of Palma. In Forteza’s opinion this is “difficult to match – a place with

practically guaranteed winds. Whether it is the Olympic classes of the Trofeo Princesa Sofía, the yachts of Copa del Rey or the maxis of PalmaVela, the Bay of Palma is an exceptional playground for sailing. For us it is a privilege to have these facilities at the heart of this sailing paradise.”

But beyond a privileged environment, state-of-the-art facilities and an indisputable tradition, the RCNP’s reputation is due to its human element, as Forteza concludes: “The staff here at the club are the differentiating factor that guarantees the success of the regattas we organise. This team is led by people



*Above: HM King Felipe VI of Spain hosts the prize-giving at the event that bears his name.  
Right: Mallorca’s Catedral-Basílica de Santa María is Palma’s most famous landmark.  
Photos: María Muiña by SailingShots.es*







## BARCELONA BOUND – J CLASS IN 2024



With boats competing at the Superyacht Cup in Palma, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and, for the first time, Ibiza JoySail, J Class owners and crews very much stuck to their preferences during an active 2023 season.

The pinnacle event was September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in Sardinia where three boats raced – *Svea*, *Velsheda* and *Topaz*; the Swedish-flagged *Svea* retaining the title they won previously in 2022 on the same Costa Smeralda waters.

In early summer, *Velsheda* raced *Svea* at the Palma Superyacht Cup in Mallorca, competing under the ORC Superyacht rule, while it was *Topaz* against *Svea* at Ibiza JoySail, the fun Ibiza-based regatta in late September, running for the fourth time in 2024.

*Svea*, with steering shared by her co-owners and Bouwe Bekking calling tactics, proved to be a cut above the rest of the competition. In fairness they put in some useful training sessions early in the season and did more regattas, and as a result sailed fast, making few errors to lift the Kohler Cup for the best boat of the year.

### Barcelona spotlight

Coming up fast on the horizon is a major showcase J Class regatta due to run in early October during the 37th America's Cup in Barcelona. The America's Cup is, of course, where the J Class originated and it was the chosen class of the sport's oldest trophy during the 1930s. Having been in the programme now for two years, the Barcelona event has been a source of considerable motivation for owners and crews throughout the 2023 season and it continues to be so. The intention was to run it as the second

edition of the J Class World Championship but, as the minimum required five Js were unavailable, the event is to be called the America's Cup J Class Regatta, as it was in Bermuda in 2017.

After some owners realigned their programmes for purely personal reasons, the J Class Association is pulling out all the stops to ensure the event is a success. That notwithstanding, just as it was in Bermuda in the summer of 2017, it will be another unmissable opportunity for our magnificent J Class yachts to celebrate their historic America's Cup heritage and remind a global audience of what real grace, beauty and power on the race course looks like.

Centre stage for a few days on the America's Cup arena off the Catalan capital, J Class racing should be a timely recap of how the precision choreography of a crew of more than 20-30 can make a winning difference, rather than foil design geometry or the power of cyclors on a boat run by a crew of eight. Race dates are being firmed up, but likely to be 7-11 October.

Prior to this, *Velsheda* and *Hanuman* are entered in St Barths Bucket in March, while September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup remains the foundation event of the season. Always popular and very much a known quantity for the teams, the mix of windward-leeward and coastal courses represents a long, intense week of racing in some of the most beautiful waters in the world. The title is always highly sought after, but this year it will also be the perfect final warm-up before Barcelona.

### Rainbow rising

The 2024 season will see the return to the race

*Niklas Zennström and Filip Engelbert's Svea is the boat to beat among the magnificent Js.*  
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



arena of *Rainbow*. Now in the hands of renowned Kiwi yachtsman Neville Crichton, *Rainbow* underwent a major refit to bring her back to modern racing trim, going back in the water at the back end of last summer (2023) before a five-day shakedown with some of the race crew in Palma in October. The crew will be run by Erle Williams, who has a solid background in the J Class, previously with *Ranger* when it was owned by the late, much missed John Williams. The exact team line-up has not been disclosed yet, but is widely expected to include a mix of the previous *Ranger* crew and some of Crichton's *Shockwave* crew.

*Rainbow's* return, ten years after she last raced, is highly anticipated as she has always been a fast boat all round. At about two metres shorter than the other Js, she is light and nimble and extremely potent in light airs – so potentially a strong performer in Barcelona – but also stable and good in the breeze as well. The original Starling Burgess-designed *Rainbow* won the 1934 America's Cup 4-0 and, as a 1934 design, has an especially sweet, true hull shape, allied to a powerful rig.

The new *Rainbow* team has worked closely with Dykstra Naval Architects. The last races the boat competed in were at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in 2014 where the team, under Francesco de Angelis, led into the final race, but were disqualified in the protest room and dropped to fourth.

"The whole boat has been brought up to date to be competitive with the most recent boats. We have upgraded the hydraulics system, changed out the motors, fitted new decks, updated the electrics and have new sails," explains *Rainbow* boat captain

Matthew Sweetman. "We are very happy with the balance of the boat; the guys were happy when we sailed in October. We are looking forwards to racing this season and will build up, with a week's training in early May planned. There is no shortage of J experience on board, but we will be new to it as a group, so we will see how it goes."

So, by all accounts, it seems that in *Rainbow*, *Svea*, the dominant team of the moment, is likely to have a new challenger to her recent supremacy. Their first showdown – June's Superyacht Cup – is highly anticipated by all.

#### **Svea are full on**

*Svea* are all set for a 2024 season during which they again plan to do as much sailing as possible and maintain their record of success. Project manager and mainsail trimmer Tim Powell reports: "The winter has mostly been about tidying up some of the engineering work which needed attention and now we are waiting to see what happens before we make any optimising changes for the season. We are looking closely at what further changes we might do for Barcelona. Last season was still a bit of a learning experience for us. At the lighter displacement, we wanted to see how the boat performed."

Of their recent successful run, Powell highlights: "We train hard; it is hard to get a big crew up to top performance level and that requires 100% commitment from everyone. Now I feel we have a very good crew. Our objective has been to be able to do any manoeuvre well, in any wind and at any time. I think we are there now."

*Svea* will use PalmaVela as a warm-up training regatta, racing in a mixed fleet on handicap. "It is a

good chance to get the crew together and race around courses. Any time you can do that it has to be good for the programme."

Thereafter Powell says that *Svea* plans to do all of the 2024 season's J Class regattas.

#### **A new rule in prospect**

The biggest, most significant change through the winter has been that the J Class Rule has been dispensed with and a new rule, ORCj, is being created in collaboration with the ORC. The use of the J Class Rule through 2023 seemed to prove increasingly divisive among most of the fleet and, ultimately, it was considered to be overcomplicated and slow to deliver results.

In making the change, the J Class technical committee, alongside chief measurer Andrew Yates, have sought to learn from the failures of the JCA rule and will deliver a new rule on time for this season.

J Class Secretary Stuart Childerley explains: "Through the winter a 'technical representatives' group has worked steadily with ORC technical representatives and run extensive retrospective scoring of previous races to check the new ORCj VPP. Each yacht's data has been checked and verified. The belief now is that the resulting ORCj VPP is expected to treat each yacht more fairly, considering each yacht's different characteristics, and so giving any well-sailed yacht the chance to win races.

"As you can imagine this isn't an easy process and many people have tried over the years to create the perfect rating system. But the overall feeling is positive, and it is considered that ORC is the best organisation to assist the class."









## BARCELONA BOUND – J CLASS IN 2024

In the medium term, ideally, the strategy is to try and progressively bring the performance envelopes of each respective J closer together, for racing which would be less reliant on handicapping. Plans are being drawn up which, it is hoped, owners will adopt in the pursuit of this, producing a more sustainable future, with competitive racing that the owners and crews enjoy.

*Topaz* navigator Nacho Postigo, who serves on the technical group, explains the essence of what is required of a rating system: “The problem of course is that, although the boats look very similar from the outside, they are very different. For example, *Velsheda* is 90 years old and beautifully maintained by the owner, but the way she was built means she is heavy, with a lot of dispersed weight. Compare that with a boat which is built in aluminium, like *Svea* or *Hanuman*, where a lot of care has been taken to centralise weight.

“*Ranger* is, of course, built in steel and that means, when going through waves, there is a lot of dispersed weight in the boat, which cannot be compared with another built in aluminium.”

Postigo continues: “Also consider rig weights: the difference between the lightest rigs and the heaviest is 600kgs, which is basically the weight of a small car, even though the rigs look the same. And that weight is aloft...so it makes a big difference, particularly, for example, to the pitching moment if you are going into a seaway...that is a lot of pitching moment difference between yachts.

“The result is that you end up with two boats which look the same, but are very different in terms of performance. The aim of the class has always been

*Despite some of their designs now being almost 100 years old, Js remain a star attraction at maxi events.*

*Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*



to have a rating system which will capture these differences between the boats. So, we are looking to develop a good, fair rating system which captures and accounts for these differences.”

Of the new alliance with ORC, he points out, “I think the very good resources – both human and technical – of ORC is very favourable and they have done this exercise for bodies like ours before. For example, they have tailored a rule to the needs of the superyacht boats. So what our class is asking for now is a system specific to the needs of our J Class yachts.

“Each of the J Class yachts have been through a very expensive and comprehensive CFD study, which was the basis for the previous JCA Rule and the class

wants that as the basis for a really good rating system.”

ORC have been working flat out over the last few months; the plan was to launch ORCj in February and have it available for each team to review and analyse prior to this season’s racing. Reflecting on the last two years, Postigo continues: “Stuart Childerley sees that the class has undergone some immense challenges, but he is inspired by the thought of seeing the fleet built up and having five or six yachts racing regularly”.

For 2025, the J Class is planning a return to Newport RI with the New York Yacht Club in June.

**Andi Robertson**



Right: Velsheda is one of the three ‘original’ Js. Above: The Js moored by Velsheda’s support ship Bystander in Porto Cervo.  
Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi







With more large high performance cruising catamaran owners wishing to race and several MOD70 trimarans now being campaigned by private owner-led teams, rather than fully-sponsored pros, so in 2023 the International Maxi Association made its first foray into the world of multihulls.

#### **Multihulls at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup**

Following an initiative from IMA Secretary General Andrew McIrvine, the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda permitted multihulls to take part in the Maxi Yacht

Rolex Cup for the first time. Due to the lack of available dock space as much as anything else, their entry was restricted to five. This initially looked like it would be easily reached, but come September, three maxi catamarans ended up on the start line off Porto Cervo. Two of these were brand new and using the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup as their first ever regatta.

Hardly a stranger to the Costa Smeralda, having first raced on these waters in the 1982 Sardinia Cup and his 82ft monohull having won the Maxi class

at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup only the previous year, Lord Irvine Laidlaw was racing his new *Highland Fling 18*; the first Gunboat 80 launched by the La Grande-Motte chantier. This replaced his previous Gunboat 68.

Designed by VPLP, built in state-of-the-art prepreg carbon fibre with Nomex core and fully kitted out for grand prix racing, the new 80 is capable of 30+ knot top speeds. The catamaran is fully customisable: for example *Highland Fling 18* is optimised for racing in



light Mediterranean-type conditions with minimal interior, while hull no 2, set to be launched this year for *Argo* GC32/MOD70 owner and Melges 32 World Champion Jason Carroll, is being tailored to fast family cruising.

The other new catamaran competing in Porto Cervo was the smaller Gunboat 68 *Convexity*<sup>2</sup>, owned by former M32 catamaran World Champion Don Wilson and Suna Said from the USA.

Of the trio, Adrian Keller's team on board the 84ft *Allegra* was by far the most experienced. Designed by eminent British yacht designer Nigel Irens, *Allegra* was launched in 2014 as a 78-footer and subsequently extended to her present length. Due to the enthusiasm of her Swiss owner, Adrian Keller, she is one of the most heavily travelled and campaigned privately owned catamarans on the planet. In 2023, for example, she competed in the Round Gotland up in the Baltic, before heading south to the Mediterranean, taking in the Rolex Fastnet Race on the way (in which she won the MOCRA class for a second consecutive edition). *Allegra* had raced on the Costa Smeralda previously in the Loro Piana/Giorgio Armani Superyacht Regatta, as had Lord Laidlaw on his previous Gunboat.

All three were brimming with experienced pro crew, many of whom had competed at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup before on board monohulls. Among the A-listers was the 'fastest sailor on the planet' Paul Larsen, racing skipper on board *Allegra*, plus French multihull legend Loick Peyron on *Highland Fling 18* and former Match Racing and M32 catamaran World Champion Taylor Canfield on *Convexity*<sup>2</sup>.

Backed by IMA and Gunboat, the YCCS hosted a cocktail party to welcome the new multihull class to the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. Here Lord Laidlaw, who helped the IMA spearhead the multihull initiative with the YCCS, explained why he has swapped his maxi monohull for a large catamaran: "People ask me 'why on earth are you sailing multihulls – why the change?' Well, I am actually getting a little bit older! I was beginning to find large monohulls a little too hard. I like to think ahead – when I was motor racing and I realised I was getting slower and less brave, I knew it was time to quit, so I took up another type of motor sport – and it was the same here. Rather than getting to the point where I was finding it really difficult to move from side to side and to sit on the rail on my 10 minutes off, I thought 'how about trying a cat?' I bought a Gunboat 68, did the Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta and thought 'yes, this could really be the answer and maybe extend my racing life for another 10 or 20 years..!'"

"I now find it is easy to move from side to side. I can take a little 10-minute rest comfortably and actually feel refreshed, whereas before I was feeling worse after getting on to the rail and tacking a few times during my 10 minutes off. So I would like to encourage more people to think about this – it is not a change of life, but a new way of continuing your racing life until you are much, much older..."

#### ***Allegra* - luxury and speed**

Given the decades Laidlaw has spent racing, this was a practical decision by a highly experienced yachtsman and boat owner. Albeit younger, these features are also appreciated by *Allegra's* Adrian Keller. As Paul Larsen puts it: "They are cool boats,



Lord Irvine Laidlaw speaking at the IMA/Gunboat multihull reception at the YCCS.  
Photo: IMA/James Boyd





## IMA AND MAXI MULTIHULLS

especially if you are not as nimble as you used to be. Adrian has done a lot of skiing and mountain climbing, and that takes its toll on your knees and hips. Getting around on deck, these boats feel more stable and comfortable and more protected.”

While he is known for setting the world sailing speed record of 65.45 knots 12 years ago on his *Vestas Sailrocket 2*, Larsen has also raced around the world twice on large catamarans, although less plush than *Allegra*. Thanks to *Allegra*'s design and structure (being heavier than her competition), but also to Larsen and the experienced crew, they have become the ‘go anywhere in any conditions’ catamaran and have raced in 40+ knot winds and severe sea states. *Allegra* often sails at 30 knots and has hit 35+, yet is still a voluminous comfortable cruising yacht. In big conditions, being in the saloon is a strange experience, as Larsen attests: “While you are surfing down waves at 30 knots, you are literally sitting on a couch looking at it through a window... although it is a pretty edgy couch to sit on admittedly! It is like watching a tornado about to envelope your house! But it does give you the ability to get out of the hurricane. The IMOCAs and Ultims are doing the same.”

*Allegra* is far from stripped out. “She’s the fastest luxury apartment I’ve ever sailed!” Larsen jokes: “In the RORC Caribbean 600, we had a neck and neck race with *Teasing Machine*. They finished looking like they’d had a hard lap, on the rail for the whole time. And they were saying ‘your boat – it’s pretty stripped out inside, right?’ So I invited them on board, took them to the galley and showed them our sauce drawer...fully loaded with every sauce. Do I



*Top: Inshore or offshore, Allegra prefers it when the going gets tough.*

*Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

*Left: Owner Adrian Keller (left) with Paul Larsen.*

*Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi*



need to explain anything else?! They'll certainly remember that when we next pass them on a reach!"

For younger owners, fast cruising catamarans (provided the boat is kept on a diet) offer many advantages. On the race course, in light to moderate conditions or above, their performance matches or can even exceed that of the very fastest racing monohulls. In the Rolex Fastnet Race, for example, *Allegra* finished just an hour behind the first grand prix monohulls – a foil-borne IMOCA and the 88ft *Lucky* (ex-*Rambler 88*). As a cruising machine, their interior volume matches that of a monohull at least 20% longer. Meanwhile, due to their huge amount of deck and saloon acreage they are popular party boats, once teams moor up post racing. However, for time-poor executives, it is their ability to make supremely quick passages in times that would be impossible for any regular cruising monohull, that appeals most.

On *Allegra*, they are now fine tuning the boat, rather than making wholesale improvements. Recently this has included refining the sail design and redesigning her boards so that they now retract flush with the hull. In the immediate future it seems likely that when she lines up against the Gunboats, they'll have the edge in the light while *Allegra* will still excel when conditions gets heavy.

### The future

For 2024 the IMA is extending its support of the maxi multihulls by introducing two new challenges – the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series and the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge (see p138 and p140). As with the Association's other monohull challenges, these group the most popular



events together to provide added incentive for teams to get out on to the race course more often.

At the time of writing, it appeared that all three of the catamarans which raced at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in 2023 would be returning in 2024. Encouragingly, the fleet is also growing: Gunboat is launching its seventh 68, which will have a racing specification similar to *Convexity*<sup>2</sup>. The second Gunboat 80, for Jason Carroll, is also due to come online, although its role will be principally as mother ship for the US team's MOD70.

Meanwhile three MOD70s – *Argo*, Erik Maris' *Zoulou* and The Famous Project's *Limosa* – took part

in the 2024 RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race, finishing in that order, and were following this with the RORC Caribbean 600, when they were due to be joined by Giovanni Soldini's *Maserati*.

*Argo* and *Zoulou* were then due to be shipped back to the Mediterranean to take part in July's Aegean 600 (attempting to break *Allegra*'s race record) before the Rolex Middle Sea Race in October.

With at least three MOD70s currently up for sale, and the *Argo* and *Zoulou* teams keen for others to come and join their racing, it seems very possible that in the future there may be a more formalised owner-driver circuit for the MOD70s.

Above: Jason Carroll's MOD70 *Argo*, mid-flight.  
Photo: RORC/Rick Tomlinson/rick-tomlinson.com





*Andoo Comanche and LawConnect match race up the Derwent River.*

2023 was a good year for maxi yachting in Australia. Line honours in the Rolex Sydney Hobart went to the wire, with *LawConnect* pipping John Winning Jnr's line honours favourite *Andoo Comanche* to the post. As so often happens, the Derwent River showdown saw the lead swapping on the final approach, Christian Beck's underdog winning by just 51 seconds.

A maxi yacht also secured the overall IRC prize, with Phillip Turner's Reichel/Pugh 66 *Alive* (ex-*Stark Raving Mad/Black Jack*) winning the Tattershall Cup and the accompanying Rolex timepiece for a second time. Her crew included renowned sailors such as Adrienne Cahalan, Gavin Brady and Stu Bannatyne.

Overseas maxi yachts wishing to visit Australia and compete in the Rolex Sydney Hobart are naturally very welcome. Prior to the main event there is a warm-up series, conceived by the local maxi owners; the Raymarine Australian Maxi Championship this year will run from 6-10 December. It starts with the 172-mile Cabbage Tree Island Race, which sets sail from Sydney Harbour, heading north towards Cabbage Tree Island (between Newcastle and Port Macquarie) before returning to Sydney. This is followed by two days of shorter distance racing off Sydney heads, before finishing with the SOLAS Big Boat Challenge, which takes place within the confines of Sydney Harbour itself on the final day.

In 2023, nine yachts competed in the Raymarine Australian Maxi Championship, with the fleet divided between Maxis (80-100ft) and Mini Maxis (60-80ft). Ultimately Anthony Johnston's Reichel/Pugh 72 *URM Group* claimed the IRC Mini Maxi Division, after winning the SOLAS Big Boat Challenge overall, with *LawConnect* winning the IRC Maxi Division.

For those wishing to spend longer 'Down Under', there are several other races in the CYCA's Audi Centre Sydney Blue Water Pointscore to consider.

Meanwhile, up in Queensland's Whitsunday Islands is Hamilton Island, where the Oatley family own a resort that annually hosts one of the plushiest events in the annual Australian sailing calendar – Hamilton Island Race Week. This year it will take place over 17-24 August. The Oatleys are the owners of the Wild Oats yachts, so of course their event is very maxi-friendly. In 2023 it was *Alive* that prevailed at 'Hamo' ahead of fellow Reichel/Pugh 63 *No Limit*, *Hamilton Island Wild Oats* and *Andoo Comanche*. A feeder to this takes place in July; the Noakes Sydney Gold Coast Yacht Race takes the fleet 384 miles from Sydney to Main Beach, Queensland. It was won in 2023 overall by *URM Group*, with *Andoo Comanche* collecting the line honours prize.

A new race, organised by the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club (RPAYC), where former Racing Manager of the RORC Nick Elliott is Race Director, is the biennial RPAYC Sydney to Auckland Ocean Race. This was held in 2023 and won by Geoff Hill's Santa Cruz 72 *Antipodes* and will next be held in 2025. Starting from within Sydney Harbour on 11 October, this heads 1,250 miles across the Tasman Sea, where the finish is hosted by the Royal Akarana Yacht Club to the east of downtown Auckland. The race is timed so that competitors can then take part in New Zealand's most famous offshore race – the Coastal Classic. This runs north from Auckland to Russell in the Bay of Islands. There is then still time to comfortably return to Sydney for December's maxi programme. The RPAYC also organise the annual Pittwater to Coffs Harbour Yacht Race which takes place at the end of March.

*Opposite: Phillip Turner's Alive passes Tasmania's 'organ pipes' en route to Rolex Sydney Hobart victory.  
Photos: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo*







While some parts of the yacht racing world are languishing, the maxi end of the sport is not. In fact, especially in the 60-100+ft range, there is a truly impressive number of new examples on the drawing board, under construction or recently launched.

Sadly, we cannot yet talk in any detail about some of the hottest yachts destined for the race course. Due for launch sometime early this season is a new 80ft judel/vrolijk design being built by King Marine, while long-awaited is an ambitious new 100-footer in build at Persico, designed by Emirates Team New Zealand's naval architect Guillaume Verdier; both are for experienced maxi owners. Similarly, Botin Partners have a "70-something ft" racer in the pipeline for 2025.

Baltic Yachts goes from strength to strength with two yachts under construction: an S&S-designed all-carbon 'modern classic' 65ft daysailer and an 80ft twin-ruddered, lifting keel, cruiser-racer from judel/vrolijk. The latter we are likely to see on the race course.

But the Finnish builder's most talked about creation is, of course, their 111 *Raven*, launched last summer. With styling by Finn Jarkko Jämsén, a design by Botin Partners (currently immersed in Ernesto Bertarelli's Alinghi Red Bull Racing America's Cup challenge) and, most importantly, engineering by PURE Design, *Raven* appears to be a superyacht version of an AC75 or *FlyingNikka*. However, although she has similar inverted Y-shaped foils on long arms that flip up and down laterally from massive hinge points where her toerail might be, she is not a fully flying foiler. While used the same way, the foils are in fact designed to reduce *Raven's*



Above and opposite: The most radical maxi to be launched in 2023 was the 'skimming' Baltic 111 *Raven*.  
Photos: Dan-erik Olsen





displacement by 60%, enabling her to 'skim' along on her chine, with the intention of her transom remaining immersed. While not flying, skimming still dramatically lowers the parasitic hull drag (although this is exactly what we were told about AC72 catamarans before they started flying fully en route to the 34th America's Cup).

She has trim tabs on the trailing edge of her foils to alter the amount of lift they produce and an 'interceptor' – a plate that can be lowered just beneath her transom to adjust fore and aft trim

(power boat technology that made a brief appearance in the IMOCA class during the 2000s); one imagines, although it has not been confirmed, that much of the trim of these will be automated.

*Raven* is described as being a 'stylish, quick, daysailer superyacht with the ability to undertake high-speed offshore passages'. Unlike an AC75 or *FlyingNikka*, *Raven* also has a fitted-out interior, although this is all basic and ultra lightweight with furniture, for example, fabricated using carbon fibre tubes. Like *FlyingNikka* (and unlike AC75s), *Raven* is



fitted with the most minimal of keels for her size, however when she is not using her foils she requires additional water ballast to be brought on board to maintain stability while sailing.

Meanwhile Baltic Yachts are continuing with successful production of their 68ft Café Racer. The first of this series was for the owner of their yard, Prof Hans Georg Näder (the well-known owner of the series of *Pink Gin* superyachts, culminating in his present 175-footer) and named *Pink Gin Verde* because of Baltic Yachts' use in her build of sustainable materials like flax for her hull and deck reinforcement, and cork in place of teak decking.



Top and above: The eighth Y8 from YYachts is a full update on the previous design.

The second 68, *Open Season*, was campaigned in 2023, with ever-increasing success, by former IMA President Thomas Bscher, as a more modest replacement for his lengthened Wallycento of the same name (now Jean-Luc Petithuguenin's *Spirit of Malouen X*). Clearly the 68 Café Racer is resonating, especially among the owners of much larger superyachts who want to have a 'smaller plaything', with two more 68s having since been sold by the Finnish yard, one to be launched this summer and the next in 2025.

Spanish designer of the 68 Café Racer, Javier Jaudenes of Palma-based Surge Projects has also just

launched a 62-footer, due to be christened in Germany later this year. Meanwhile he continues to associate with well-known broker Michael Schmidt's company YYachts, builders of fast hi-tech carbon fibre cruiser-racers. Their eighth Y8, from Jaudenes, is an updated model due for launch this year; it features a wider stern (on a beam of 6.58m) with the mast set further aft, to increase speed and safety. The revised hull shape increases interior volume by 20%, while the engine room is now hidden beneath the floor, lowering the centre of gravity.

Designed for long distance cruising or racing, the new Y8 has a longer coach roof and a more protected



Above: The first SW108 Hybrid is yet another Farr/Nauta creation for Southern Wind. Photo: Sailing Energy/Southern Wind



cockpit. She is heavily customisable; Yyachts offer her with three keel options – fixed, telescopic and shallow draft, while the owner of the latest Y8 has commissioned an interior in a Scandinavian style from architect and designer David Thulstrup. Yyachts also market the Bill Tripp designs, the 70ft Y7, of which they have sold an impressive 18 since 2019 and four of their 90ft Y9.

Southern Wind consistently seem to deliver good-looking looking yachts. Newest is their Farr/Nautad-designed SW108 Hybrid *Gellicieux*, which at the time of writing had just been delivered, was sailing in the Caribbean and due to compete in St Barths Bucket. The SW108 is fitted with a BAE System Hybrid Propulsion system that is diesel electric, based around two generators and a large high voltage Li-ion battery bank to provide silent motoring. This was designed in from the outset and provides a fresh approach as it permits the generation of power from the main propeller while sailing – a plus for long distance cruising as it saves fuel and increases autonomy. A second SW108 Hybrid is currently in build at Southern Wind's yard in South Africa.

Meanwhile Southern Wind have the fifth SW96 *Liberty* under construction. Scheduled for launch in spring 2024, she is expected to be both cruised and raced. Due to the latter, she has twin runners, her sail plan is larger and her rig is taller than previous SW96s, thereby improving her light air performance. She is also fitted with a high modulus carbon fibre mast and boom with EC6+ carbon fibre rigging.

Finally, tooling is nearing completion for Southern Wind's latest model, the SW100X Allseas, which updates the company's successful previous SW100.



Nautor Swan doesn't seem to be having the same success selling further ClubSwan maxis, despite great things being expected of Pier Luigi Loro Piana's ClubSwan 80 *My Song* this season. Meanwhile the Russian-owned 125 *Skorpios* is laid up, its future seemingly dependent on the outcome of the war in Ukraine.

The Finnish builder has announced its latest model, the Frers-designed Swan 88, which they are describing as a cruising yacht "with a racer soul" although the yacht can be tailored to an owner's requirements anywhere on the racer-cruiser spectrum. Already the 88 is fitted with twin rudders and comes with the three keel options.

*Above: Nautor Swan's latest model – the Frers-designed 88.*

As a company there is change potentially afoot after Sanlorenzo SpA signed a 'memorandum of understanding' in December with Sawa, a company owned by Leonardo Ferragamo, with the intention of "evaluating possible joint strategic opportunities" with Nautor Swan. This is thought to be corporate jargon for Sanlorenzo assessing a possible acquisition of the Finnish builder. With yards in Viareggio and La Spezia, Sanlorenzo SpA has a strong position in the large powerboat and superyacht market, and is a publicly listed company on the Milan stock exchange.

This kind of acquisition is far from being without precedent in Italy where, for example, five years ago Ferretti Group acquired Wally Yachts. Wally remains





One of the more interesting maxis to be launched last year was the new 82ft Code 3 from Michel De Franssu's company Black Pepper Yachts, based in Nantes, France. This is their latest model following the 64ft Code 2, which has previously raced at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Once again, the design of the new 82 is from the board of leading French Mini/Class40/IMOCA designer Sam Manuard, an association which has seen Black Pepper also produce IMOCA's recently for solo round the world sailors Sam Davies and Phil Sharp. Showing the credentials of her design, the Code 3 is made in infused carbon fibre and features a powerful hull shape and a deck that's flush, apart from a modest cabin top. However, unlike an IMOCA, the Code 3 is fitted with a lifting keel. The cockpit is strongly

Ferretti's only subsidiary to produce sailing yachts (alongside sister manufacturers such as Pershing, Riva, Itama, CRN, etc). In the last five years Wally's focus seems to have switched to motorboats where their range has expanded, now spanning their groundbreaking 43ft wallytenders to superyachts.

Last year Wally Yachts launched their latest sailing yacht – former IMA President Claus-Peter Offen's judel/vrolijk designed Wally 101 y3k, which won the Super Maxi class at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup on her first outing. After announcing three new sailing superyacht models, the wallywind 110, 130 and 150, they started construction of the first 110, also designed by judel/vrolijk, on spec, and this yacht has now been sold to a 'repeat client', her launch scheduled for this summer.



Above: The latest from Black Pepper is the 82ft Code 3 and (right) their C.69 catamaran, currently in build.  
Photos: Carine Dewavrin/Black Pepper Yachts





divided between a guest area and the working area of the cockpit aft, while down below the fit-out is simple, minimalist and lightweight.

The IMA embracing multihulls coincides with this market expanding rapidly. Just as 30 years ago Wally rewrote the template for what a modern-day large yacht should look like, so Gunboat did the same for catamarans in the 2000s and continues to do so with its 70, 72 and 80 models, all designs from VPLP. But, just as was the case with Wally, now many other builders are jumping on the Gunboat bandwagon and entering the luxury catamaran market. The real merit of catamarans is that they can be the ultimate cruiser-racers, offering cathedral-sized accommodation and speeds that leave even racing monohulls standing. One downside is that, without styling, they can easily be extremely ugly, but their most common downfall is that all too many max out the available internal

volume by packing in accommodation, sprouting flybridges, etc, becoming too heavy and costing them speed. Aside from displacement:length ratio, the acid test for whether a catamaran is a serious performer is if it is fitted with daggerboards.

In addition to the Gunboats, one that has daggerboards – albeit modest ones – is Black Pepper's new 67ft Code C.69, designed by François Perus and Romain Scolari and currently under construction. This is a good-looking catamaran with fashionable 'Dreadnought' reverse sheer bows and a relatively small deck saloon which permits helming positions either side for a reasonable view forwards.

In France, while the pro teams focus on the extraordinary 32x23m Ultims and the Ocean 50 trimarans, the owner-driver multihull racing scene is oddly polarised at present: on one side, the grand prix trimarans that started life as MOD70s and are

now fully foiling beasts; on the other, Gunboat-style ultra fast, cruiser-racer catamarans.

To bridge this gap is a new 72ft catamaran design from Jason Ker. Lord Irvine Laidlaw (see p116) makes the argument for a boat that combines blazing performance, while allowing for occasional moments of relief via stability and some comfort, and the 72 is really the ultimate expression of this – a boat that is pretty much as fast as you can go, short of becoming a full foiler. Nonetheless, it is still a compromise. On the one hand it is lightweight, sleek with substantial daggerboards, low freeboard and low windage, with a tiny cuddy compared to the spacious deck saloons other catamarans feature. On the other hand, its luxury features are limited to a lounge area aft in the cockpit and a large fixed overhead screen that extends aft from the mast almost to the transom, to protect the crew and owner from the sun.

*Above: Jason Ker's latest 72ft catamaran represents the halfway house between a fast cruising cat and a MOD70.*





Looking ahead to 2024



## 2024 MAXI RACING SEASON PREVIEW

Maxi racing continues to go from strength to strength both in terms of the quantity of maxis racing and their quality. While IMA maxi racing caters for yachts from 60ft up and inevitably of all genres, from cruisers through to grand prix racers, with IRC valiantly creating a level playing field for all, there is a trend of things ‘hotting up’ across the whole maxi fleet at present. Some who had cruiser-racers are trading up to racer-cruisers, or even full-on racers. Others are carrying out major refits to ‘turbo’ their yachts including, for example, profound weight-saving, changing to a higher performance keel, fitting water ballast and continuing to develop the sail wardrobe. And, of course, there is nothing to beat some training prior to the season, ideally with the aid of a professional coach and hi-tech performance analysis equipment. Gradually, maxi yachting is getting more competitive.

Some other trends are also emerging. Over the next couple of seasons we can expect to see a burgeoning fleet of 100-footers, specifically either boats returning to the Mediterranean from the southern hemisphere, or new builds, such as former IMA President Claus-Peter Offen’s latest *y3k*. Launched in 2023, the new *y3k* is a Vroljik-penned Wally 101 that, on her race debut, won the Super Maxi class at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. We wait to see if Offen’s previous Wally 100 will continue to race under a new owner.

Despite the newest boat now being six years old, the former Maxi 72 fleet continues to evolve. Ironically, as Doyle Sails boss and *Bella Mente* afterguard Mike Sanderson points out, the ex-Maxi 72s are actually more competitive than ever now that they are no longer a class. Interestingly, while some teams have been profoundly developing their

boats, others haven’t and neither group has especially dominated. For example, the two 72s closest to being ‘in class’ – Jim Swartz’s *Vesper* and George Sakellaris’ *Proteus* – finished first and second at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in 2022; *Proteus* repeated this result in 2023. Conversely *Bella Mente* and *Cannonball* followed Sir Peter Ogden’s *Jethou* in being lengthened, although last season *Cannonball* reverted to her original length to gain an IRC age allowance. Some have had water ballast installed, while *Bella Mente* was also fitted with twin rudders. *Cannonball* was unbeaten in the inshore racing at Rolex Giraglia while *Bella Mente* prevailed at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. Meanwhile *North Star* was recently converted to powered winches and water ballast, enabling her to be sailed by substantially fewer crew. This recipe seems to have worked as she was crowned 2023 IMA Maxi European Champion, despite being the oldest of the ex-72s (originally launched as *Rán II* in 2009).

Currently the rest of the maxi fleet shies away from lining up with these grand prix racers, but with newer boats developing, such as Pier Luigi Loro Piana’s ClubSwan 80 *My Song* and Wendy Schmidt’s Botin 85 *Deep Blue*, perhaps we can expect to see them start to prevail. Already *Deep Blue* took one race off the 72s at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, while the Wallycento *Galateia* claimed another.

In terms of events, once again we will be running our IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore and Offshore Challenges. Unfortunately, there has been a step backwards in the Caribbean as the Les Voiles de St Barth’s organisers were unable to secure a title sponsor and cancelled their 2024 event. Given that this was one of only three events in our series, and

with the likelihood that fewer maxis would visit the Caribbean as a consequence, the decision was made to cancel the IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge this year. The organisers are working hard to reinstate Les Voiles de St Barth in 2025, when it will take place over 13-19 April, hopefully permitting our IMA CMC to be held once again.

In 2023, the IMA made history with the first edition of the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup to include a multihull class, following the efforts of the IMA’s Secretary General Andrew McIrvine and Lord Irvine Laidlaw (see p116). The next step has been to introduce two new ‘challenges’ specifically for this growing breed. Since the Caribbean benefits from being effectively a ‘meeting spot’ for multihulls visiting from both Europe and the US, we are holding one series there which will include a mix of inshore and offshore races. A similar multihull series in the Mediterranean is also planned for this summer.

In terms of events in the Mediterranean, it is largely business as usual with the four biggest maxi events being the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, Loro Piana Giraglia and the IMA Maxi European Championship, which for a third year will take place out of Sorrento. Aside from the name change, the rechristened Loro Piana Giraglia will kick off with four, rather than three, days of inshore racing off Saint-Tropez and no feeder race from Sanremo. The offshores, notably the Rolex Middle Sea Race and Loro Piana Giraglia (and of course the Regata dei Tre Golfi within our Europeans) have been enjoying great maxi competition. In addition, we are seeing increased interest in the still fledgling Aegean 600.

**James Boyd**



## IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge 2023/2024

- Rolex Middle Sea Race – 21 October 2023
- La Larga (PalmaVela) – 27 April 2024
- Regata dei Tre Golfi – 17 May 2024 (IMA Maxi European Championship)
- 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar – 30 May 2024
- Loro Piana Giraglia (offshore) – 12 June 2024
- Aegean 600 – 7 July 2024
- Palermo-Montecarlo – 20 August 2024

*IMA members must compete in a minimum of three races to qualify. If more events are sailed, the worst score or scores will be discarded.*







The IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge (MMOC) was the Association's first series, introduced in 2015 by the then new Secretary General Andrew McIrvine. The Challenge's aims directly parallel those of the Association: to increase participation in maxi yacht racing. To qualify for a MMOC result, IMA members must compete in at least three of its seven races.

At the time, maxi racing offshore was declining compared to inshore; today, while the latter remains more popular, maxi offshore racing is slowly on the ascent, not just with former Volvo Ocean Race charter/sailing club boats, but with bona fide privately-owned maxis. For example, in 2023 Andrea Recordati's Wally 93 *Bullitt* won the Rolex Middle Sea Race outright, while *Leopard 3* claimed 'the double' (winning line honours too) in the Aegean 600. For 2024, maxi offshore racing in the Mediterranean is

set to be boosted by the return of the 100-footers, *Comanche* and *Scallywag*, with *Lucky* also back in action after breaking her mast in last autumn's Rolex Middle Sea Race. Sadly *Black Jack* won't be back to defend her MMOC title, unless she finds a new owner beforehand.

The 2023-24 IMA MMOC event line-up remains unchanged from previous years. It began last October with the Royal Malta Yacht Club's Rolex Middle Sea Race. In this *Bullitt*, followed by *Leopard 3* and Roy P Disney's *Pyewacket70*, filled the IRC Class 1 podium. While *Bullitt* won IRC Overall, *Leopard 3* finished fourth – a great start to the series for both maxis.

For most, the Rolex Middle Sea Race ranks as one of the top bucket list sailing events to have done. As with the traditional Boxing Day start of the Rolex Sydney Hobart, so the Rolex Middle Sea Race's send-off has become an event in its own right. Taking place in Grand Harbour, east of the highly fortified peninsula that is the Maltese capital Valletta, competitors are sent on their way by cannon blasts that echo around the city's ancient ramparts.

The course is an anticlockwise lap of Sicily, starting with the tactical approach and tidal passage through the Strait of Messina, between Sicily and the toe of Italy. This section involves passing Sicily's active volcano, Mount Etna, with the fleet also going on to round the active volcano on Stromboli, at the course's northeasternmost turning mark. Sicily's northwest corner, especially the headlands west of Palermo are often tricky, before the boats turn south into open waters, passing the remote islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa, the former just 60km from the Tunisian coast.

Taking place mid-autumn in the Mediterranean, the weather is notoriously volatile – light or stormy, occasionally both on the same day.

Into the new year, the MMOC resumes with La Larga, the offshore race of PalmaVela. While PalmaVela is long-established, La Larga was only added to the Real Club Náutico de Palma's season opener in 2021 and, with all the complications of the pandemic, was slow to gain traction. In 2023 it was the VO70 *I Love Poland*, freshly returned from winning the RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race, that won the IRC class, ahead of Ermanno Traverso's historic, yet still highly competitive, 1961 vintage maxi ketch *Stormvogel*.

The course for La Larga is determined by the forecast. Starting and finishing off Palma, in brisk conditions a typical 350-mile course might take in Ibiza, Formentera, then Isla del Aire off the southern tip of Menorca. Meanwhile, in lighter conditions it might be around 225 miles long, including Dragonera (the island off Mallorca's westernmost point), Ibiza and Formentera and Cabrera (the island/national park south of Mallorca).

For its third event, the MMOC moves to Italy with the 69th edition of Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia's (CRVI) Regata dei Tre Golfi. Over the years this has become a more serious yacht race; gone is the romantic midnight start after a fine dinner at the CRVI's clubhouse by Naples' Castel dell'Ovo. Instead the warning signal is now at 16:30, so the fleet can make the most of the day's remaining breeze to exit the Gulf of Naples.

The course takes the fleet WNW to the island of Ponza, before returning past Ischia, Capri and then Punta Campanella at the tip of the Sorrentine





*The race around Giraglia remains one of the most popular offshores, perhaps because it only involves one night at sea...*  
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

peninsula, to round the race's southerly turning mark of the Li Galli islands off the Amalfi coast. For the first time in 2024, the Regata dei Tre Golfi will finish back where it started, off Naples. The new finish extends the course by around 15 miles, to 170 miles. It remains the MMOC's shortest event, but has the greatest maxi participation. This year it also doubles as the opening event of the IMA Maxi European Championship.

Less than a fortnight later is the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar, the first of two events rounding Giraglia, off northern Corsica. It starts from Livorno, with a short leg to a mark off Marina di Pisa, before turning southwest towards Giraglia. Rounding this at night, competitors are often becalmed and end up wind seeking, taking extreme routes back to the northeast, or southwest towards Corsica. Then it is southeast, past Elba, to the race's southerly turning mark, the Formiche di Grosseto rocks, before the final leg north to the Punta Ala finish line.

Conceived by IMA Vice President Roberto Lacorte and backed by his family's pharmaceuticals company, the race is very maxi-friendly. As usual in this part of the Mediterranean during summer, conditions are typically light, but they would be hard-pressed to be lighter than in 2023 (see p34). The event remains strongly in the ascent, helped by the excellent pre-start party in Livorno and the huge sit-down dinner for around 1,400 people, held in the grounds of the Punta Ala Yacht Club after the prize-giving, complete with fireworks and entertainment.

The oldest offshore race in Italy, organised by the Yacht Club Italiano (YCI) in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, sees some changes for 2024, most notably its title sponsor, as Loro Piana



comes on board for its 71st edition. In addition, the traditional feeder race from Sanremo is not happening. Otherwise, the Loro Piana Giraglia offshore race will follow its traditional course from Saint-Tropez to Genoa, via Giraglia. The race is renowned for its highly tactical light airs finish, although this didn't occur in 2023 when *Black Jack* beat *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup> to line honours, maintaining the breeze to finish mid-afternoon. After the Rolex Fastnet Race and IMA Maxi Europeans, it has one of the largest maxi fleets of any offshore race in the world.

Of all the MMOC events, its penultimate one, the Aegean 600, remains the most intriguing, not least because it is rare for international yacht racing to visit Greece. However, this is also one of the attractions; from spending the pre-start in Olympic Marine's marina, close to the airport in Athens; to the course itself, an anticlockwise lap of the Aegean Sea, providing a water-borne tour of Greek mythology.

The start, close to Cape Sounion (the tip of the peninsula south of Athens), is in the shadow of the remaining columns of Homer's sanctuary, the Temple of Poseidon. From here the fleet heads for Milos, home of the famous Venus de Milo statue. Then it is on to the Santorini caldera, famous for its white houses and azure domes, before encountering the course's southernmost islands of Kassos and Karpathos. Turning northeast to round Rhodes, the mythical birthplace of Athena and residence of Prometheus, the fleet must pass the Palace of the Grand Master of the Knights at the island's northern tip. The course then winds its way north through the beautiful small Greek islands off the Turkish coast, including Kos and Kalymnos. The course's northeasterly turning point is Agathonísi, 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, before finally passing Giaros and Kea, back to the finish line from where they started.

While the course is undeniably scenic, the last two editions have proved that the Aegean's northerly Meltemi can be a brutal wind. Perhaps due to their better seakeeping qualities, this may be why all three past editions have been won overall by maxis.

The MMOC concludes with the Palermo-Montecarlo at the end of August. As ever, this is the only opportunity in the maxi calendar to visit both Sicily and Monte Carlo. In contrast to the Aegean 600, the race is typically a light one and, to prevent monumental fliers, competitors must pass through a gate off Porto Cervo, monitored by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda. After this the course provides two options: leaving Corsica to port (and passing Giraglia for a third time!) or the shorter, more popular route through the Strait of Bonifacio and up Corsica's west coast. Approaching Monaco with the mountains behind it towering to 1+km high, very often the wind can shut down just short of the finish line, however the welcome provided by the Yacht Club de Monaco is well worth the wait.

The MMOC winner's trophy is presented at the IMA Members' Dinner during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

#### 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)



Aegean 600 competitors start and finish beneath the Temple of Poseidon.  
Photo: Aegean 600/Carlo Borlenghi



## IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge 2024

- PalmaVela – 1-5 May
- IMA Maxi European Championship – 20-23 May
- Loro Piana Giraglia (inshores) – 8-11 June
- Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup – 8-14 September
- Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – 30 September-5 October

*IMA members must compete in a minimum of three events to qualify. If more events are sailed, the worst score or scores will be discarded.*







One of the delights of last year's IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) was that going into the final event of the season, Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, a diverse group of maxis were all still in the running for the overall MMIC prize: the 60ft *Wallyño*, Peter Dubens' Maxi 72 *North Star* and David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers' 100ft *Galateia*. Ultimately the IMA President's own Wally 60, *Wallyño*, came out on top for a second time.

Calculations to determine the overall winner are obviously based on performance throughout the year, but as maxis race in different classes, aspects such as this must be taken into account. To qualify for the IMA MMIC, members must compete in at least three events; by competing in more, not only can they discard their worst result, but they can claim bonus points as well.

Unlike its offshore sister, the MMOC, the MMIC runs over a calendar year with the overall winner presented with the Challenge's silver trophy at the prize-giving of its final event, Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

As usual, the annual MMIC begins with PalmaVela. The Bay of Palma has been popular with the maxi community since the dawn of the sport, but it galvanised its position after the Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP) created the Mediterranean season opener, Maxi Race Week, back in 2004. This has since been rechristened PalmaVela and evolved to also include smaller yachts racing under handicap and one-designs.

Racing for the maxis today takes place over five days, with the intention of sailing two coastal and four windward-leeward courses over this period. The event culminates in a prize-giving held at the RCNP. Since the pandemic, it has been great to see a resurgence of maxi racing at this event, with nine competing last year, led by the two Wallycentos, *Galateia* and *Magic Carpet*<sup>3</sup>.

Among the inshore maxi yacht events, newest is the IMA Maxi European Championship, run by the Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia (CRVI) and the IMA. The inshore races of this follow the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore race. While that starts and finishes off Naples, for the inshores the fleet is located on the opposite side of the Gulf of Naples, in Sorrento's Marina Piccola. For this major maxi event of the season, the IMA employs leading international PRO and yachtsman Stuart Childerley, who runs the races with the team from the CRVI. A mix of windward-leeward and coastal courses are set around the Gulf

of Naples, including the popular lap of Capri, passing all its famous landmarks, such as the Faraglioni rocks.

In 2023, 24 maxis competed in the IMA Maxi Europeans, ranging from the ClubSwan 80 *My Song* down to the 48-year-old Swan 65 ketch *Shirlaf*. This year more 80 to 100-footers are expected to take part. At the time of writing, among those already entered were Karel Komarek's Wallycento V, the scratch boat ahead of Andrea Recordati's Rolex Middle Sea Race-winning Wally 93 *Bullitt*. Peter Dubens' *North Star* was back to defend her title, but set to face Hap Fauth's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup class winner *Bella Mente*, Sir Peter Ogden's Maxi 77 *Jethou*, plus Peter Harrison's *Jolt* (ex-Cannonball). With fleet numbers expected to increase for 2024, the IMA Maxi European Championship will, for the first time, have two winners, one for Maxi sub-classes 1 and 2; the other for Maxi 3-5.

The IMA typically hosts a cocktail party on the terrace of the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria and the event offers many other social events to enjoy.

For the Yacht Club Italiano's premier event, the Giraglia, which they organise in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, there has been a significant change this year, with the introduction of a new title sponsor in Loro Piana. In another change, in place of the feeder race to Saint-Tropez from Sanremo, there will be an additional day of inshore racing around the Golfe de Saint-Tropez, making this part of the regatta four days long. This will help to make it an even more significant event and hopefully boost what is already a strong fleet going into the offshore race.

Photos: Nick Moore; María Muiña by SailingShots.es; ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi; IMA/James Boyd





## IMA MEDITERRANEAN MAXI INSHORE CHALLENGE 2024

Much like the IMA Maxi Europeans, Loro Piana Giraglia attracts the type of maxis the IMA is keenest to develop – ones optimised to race both offshore and inshore. The event always attracts a strong entry but this year all eyes are likely to be on the brand new 80ft judel/vrolijk design, built by King Marine in Valencia for a well-known and highly successful maxi owner, due to make her debut at here.

The MMIC builds to a crescendo for its final two events; the biggest of the season. Organised by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in conjunction with the IMA, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup is the zenith of the maxi yachting calendar, with typically around 50 maxis competing, ranging from 60-footers to superyachts and the sumptuous J Class.

As has been the case since the regatta began in the 1980s, between the titans of the sport in the heyday of IOR, courses include a few windward-leewards, but the majority of races are coastal, around the magnificent Costa Smeralda, famous for its contrasting azure waters and the craggy sandstone outcrops of La Maddalena archipelago, taking in 'Bomb Alley' between this and the Sardinian shore. The northwesterly Mistral can often add lively conditions into the mix, the wind funnelling down through the Strait of Bonifacio from the north.

Just as the Aga Khan envisaged when he developed the Costa Smeralda back in the 1960s, this unique cocktail makes sailing here some of the very best in the world, which is why, decades on, it remains one of maxi owners' favourite venues.

Added to this is the professionalism of the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda and the splendid 5+ star facilities of

its headquarters. Naturally the entertainment during the regatta is of the highest standard, including an IMA Members' Dinner held at the YCCS clubhouse and the Rolex Gala Dinner at Hotel Cala di Volpe. During the regatta the Association also uses the occasion to hold its Annual General Meeting, where members have the opportunity to add their input into the direction and policies of the IMA and contribute to their sport.

Finally Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez rounds off the inshore Mediterranean maxi season. The shoreside accoutrements of the Cote d'Azur's most famous hotspot and its glamorous, laid-back, artistic lifestyle have long been attractive to maxi owners and their families. However, over recent years, and thanks to the IMA's input, Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez has been developing into a more serious end-of-season showdown for maxi competitors. Working closely with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, the IMA has installed its own race officer and maxi expert, Ariane Mainemare, into the race committee. This has helped raise the standard of racing by, for example, including more windward starts.

Recent editions of Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez have seen the schedule change multiple times; from the maxi racing coinciding with the famous classics and the rest of the fleet, to having their own separate week, to having the two overlapping, as occurred in 2023 and which will be the case again this year. Like the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, the schedule includes a layday, when crews get to enjoy the delights of the town, with many getting the 'full Saint-Tropez experience' with the traditional lengthy luncheon at Club 55 on nearby Plage de Pampelonne.

*Magic Carpet<sup>2</sup>, and several other Wallys, typically start their season with PalmaVela.  
Photo: María Muiña by SailingShots.es*



For 2023 the race village moved location to the harbour's outlying Mole d'Estienne d'Orves, where the event will again conclude with a prize-giving and the formal presentation of the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Trophy to its winner.

Naturally, the IMA President will be attempting to make it a hat-trick with his *Wallyño*, while a number of his competitors will be attempting to prevent this – if ever there was a challenge, that must surely be it!

**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)



Sorrento's Marina Piccola, home of the IMA Maxi European Championship for a third year in 2024. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi





### IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series 2024

- Caribbean Multihull Challenge Race and Rally – 1-4 February
- RORC Caribbean 600 – 19 February
- Heineken St Maarten Regatta – 29 February-3 March
- BVI Spring Regatta & Sailing Festival – 1-7 April

*Competitors must compete in a minimum of two events to qualify.  
If more events are sailed, the worst score or scores will be discarded.*







While the IMA's Caribbean Maxi Challenge will not take place in 2024, with Les Voiles de St Barth temporarily on hold until a new sponsor is secured for it, the IMA is nevertheless launching the first edition of its IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series (CMMS). This will follow similar lines to the Association's other challenges, uniting the most popular events into an annual championship. It will be open to multihulls of 60+ft LH.

As discussed on p116, this initiative is to meet the demand of private owners of high performance multihulls who want to race. As with the maxi monohulls, the IMA is helping this group consolidate its calendar, while improving and standardising the racing laid on for them.

The IMA CMMS kicks off with the Caribbean Multihull Challenge in one of multihull's spiritual Caribbean homes: St Maarten, where the late catamaran designer Peter Spronk once resided. The event was conceived in 2018 by island legend Robbie Ferron, a founder of the St Maarten Heineken Regatta. It has gained popularity rapidly, growing from 12 entries in 2019, to 33 in 2023. Last year a 'cruising rally' was introduced for owners not wishing to race, which this year will include a night in St Barth. Correspondingly, the event's name has changed to the Caribbean Multihull Challenge Race and Rally.

Most races are held off St Maarten, but for the longer-legged multihulls in the offshore class, longer courses will be set, for example rounding St Barth and Saba. Racing takes place under MOCRA and CSA rules.

From here the Series moves to Antigua. Since it was first introduced in 2009, the RORC Caribbean 600 has welcomed multihulls. In fact, in the first edition

event founder John Burnie and a crack crew chartered an ORMA 60 trimaran, establishing a race record of 40 hours 11 minutes 5 seconds. This stood until 2015 when it was reduced to 33 hours 35 minutes 30 seconds by Lloyd Thornburg's MOD70 *Phaedo*. The current record of 29 hours 38 minutes 44 seconds was set in 2022 by Jason Carroll's MOD70 *Argo*.

The race now ranks highly among the world's 'classic 600 mile' offshore races, alongside the Rolex Fastnet and Sydney Hobart races. However, the RORC Caribbean 600 provides a more complete test, with competitors facing brisk trade winds and an Atlantic swell, plus a course with more twists and turns, meaning the whole sail wardrobe usually sees action. Starting and finishing in Antigua, the fleet weaves its way around 11 islands, from St Maarten in the north to Guadeloupe in the south, taking in Barbuda, Nevis, St Kitts, Saba and St Barth, among others.

The IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series then returns north for the 44th St Maarten Heineken Regatta, organised by the Sint Maarten Yacht Club. One of the Caribbean's oldest regattas, competitors are attracted by the island's crystal clear waters and northeasterly trade winds that provide an opportunity for brisk sailing. Each day competitors are sent off on either a coastal course, including – if conditions allow – a race around St Maarten, or up to four inshore races.

The event is also 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.

Concluding the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series is the BVI Spring Regatta & Sailing Festival, organised

by the Royal BVI Yacht Club and hosted by Nanny Cay Marina in Tortola over the first week of April. The week kicks off with the Round Tortola Nanny Cay Cup, first of two races in the BVI Sailing Festival. The present record for the Round Tortola Race of 1 hour 57 minutes 16 seconds was set in 2019 by Greg Slyngstad's Bieker 53 catamaran *Fujin*. The following day is the Scrub Island Invitational where competitors race to an idyllic island resort to enjoy a BBQ, live entertainment and awards.

Following a layday, racing resumes with three days of windward-leeward on the BVI's magnificent St Francis Drake Channel. The professional race committee set courses to make full use of the variety of offshore and protected channel sailing, with up to three races a day. Maxi multihulls will compete in the Performance Multihull class.

The event's shoreside regatta village is renowned for its cool parties where competitors can dance under the stars, listen to live music and enjoy a variety of local food vendors and bars.

Contenders for the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series' silver perpetual trophy must complete a minimum of two events.





## IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge 2024

- Aegean 600 – 7 July
- Ibiza JoySail – 19-22 September
- Multihull Cup – 27-29 September
- Rolex Middle Sea Race – 19 October

*Competitors must compete in a minimum of two events to qualify.  
If more events are sailed, the worst score or scores will be discarded.*







To complement the IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series, the Association is also introducing its equivalent in the Mediterranean this season. Once again, this will comprise a mix of events that are already in the IMA calendar, and form part of our existing challenges for monohulls, and two that aren't.

The IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge will start in July with the fourth edition of the Aegean 600 offshore race. As mentioned elsewhere in these pages, the Mediterranean's newest 600-mile offshore race has been growing rapidly thanks to its intriguing course, which many racing sailors have never previously experienced, bolstered by solid organisation of the event by the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club.

Multihulls have competed in every edition of the Aegean 600 in the MOCRA class, with two taking part in the first race in 2021. In 2022 Adrian Keller's Irens 84 catamaran *Allegra* was first home, in the process establishing a new record time of 2 days 5 hours 36 minutes 2 seconds and winning the race's Icarus Trophy. This year two MOD70s may beat this time.

While the race provides a magnificent tour of the Aegean Sea and its islands, many deeply steeped in Greek mythology, conditions can be every bit as volatile in the mid-summer here as they are later in the season further west in the Mediterranean during the Rolex Middle Sea Race.

From Greece, the focus moves to the Balearic Islands and Palma de Mallorca for Ibiza JoySail. Again, this is a relatively new event, held for the first time in 2021. Racing in this takes place over four days, with up to four races scheduled. On the opening day is an offshore race from off Palma to

Marina Ibiza. The following three days comprise racing around Ibiza and Formentera. The event was originally conceived by the STP shipyard in Palma and Marina Ibiza, which plays host to the event from day one until the prize-giving. Both are owned by the IPM Group, whose portfolio of companies includes three marinas in the Balearics and three shipyards, including STP and Varadero in Ibiza. To date, multihulls haven't competed in this event, but if entries are adequate then the organisers will create a class for them, dropping the minimum LH to 60ft.

Already in the Balearic Islands, the multihulls can then easily segue into the Multihull Cup, which comprises three days of windward-leeward or coastal racing at the end of the month. This takes place out of Porto Adriano, the Philippe Starck-designed superyacht marina located just outside of the Bay of Palma to the west. As its name indicates, the Multihull Cup is a multihull-only event which took place for the first time in 2016 to help rectify the limited number of racing options available to large performance multihulls in the Mediterranean. Over its three-day duration up to five races will be

held, with up to two races per day. For the first time ever there is set to be a class for MOD70 trimarans.

The fifth and final event of the inaugural IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge will be the Rolex Middle Sea Race. The oldest and most famous offshore race in the Mediterranean, the Royal Malta Yacht Club's premier event, circumnavigating Sicily anticlockwise and passing volcanos on the way, needs little introduction. Multihulls have been regularly competing in it for some time; *Allegra* and the HH66 *R-SIX* competed in, but did not finish, the ultra-light race in 2018, while MOD70 trimarans have taken the limelight in the last few years. In 2023 the Alexia Barrier-skipped MOD70 *Limosa*, with crew from her all-female Jules Verne Trophy (fastest non-stop around the planet) campaign – The Famous Project – scored line honours. However the big year for record-breaking was 2021 when Jason Carroll's MOD70 *Argo* reduced the outright race record down to 1 day 9 hours 29 minutes 28 seconds, finishing ahead of Giovanni Soldini's 70ft trimaran *Maserati* and *Mana*.





### IMA Yacht of the Year Trophy

In addition to its various ‘challenges’ for specific zones and disciplines within maxi yacht racing, the Association also awards the IMA Yacht of the Year Trophy to a member’s yacht that has generally

achieved the most outstanding performance throughout the year. This is based upon a formula that includes the number of races in which each yacht has taken part, combined, of course, with their

performance in each, taking into account the number of entries in the class in which they competed.

The IMA Yacht of the Year winner is decided at the end of the season and is presented to its recipient at the IMA Members’ Dinner during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup the following September.

The winner’s trophy is an antique, refurbished Georgian style, two-handled cup with cover, manufactured in London by Barnard Brothers at the end of the 19th century.

2023 IMA Yacht of the Year was Peter Dubens’ Maxi 72 *North Star*. For the team, in which Nick Rogers calls tactics, the season began strongly, winning the IMA Maxi European Championship. Further success followed in Rolex Giraglia, Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.



IMA Yacht of the Year Trophy 2022 winner – Capricorno’s Alessandro Del Bono.  
Photo: IMA/Maria Luisa Farris

#### Past winners

2013	<i>Rån 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)



## Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy

Gianfranco Alberini was the much admired, long serving Secretary General of the Association from its earliest days, back when it was known as the International Class A Yacht Association (ICAYA). He served in this role right up until his untimely death in June 2013. During Alberini's tenure he founded the ICAYA World Championship and subsequently brought Rolex on board as title sponsor, evolving the event into the present day Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

Upon his death, in memory of this former lynchpin of the Association, the IMA Board established the Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy.

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 originally set up and which the YCCS had run. Since the demise of the Volcano Race, the Association has established the IMA Maxi European Championship and as a result the Trophy is again being awarded, under the same remit as before, but at this event now. The latest worthy recipient in 2023 was the Mylius 65 FD *Oscar3*, whose owner Aldo Parisotto has since become an IMA Vice President.

### Past winners

2014	<i>Shirlaf</i>	Giuseppe Puttini (ITA)
2015	<i>Fra' Diavolo</i>	Vincenzo Addressi (ITA)
2016	<i>Wild Joe</i>	Márton Józsa (HUN)
2023	<i>Oscar3</i>	Aldo Parisotto (ITA)



Top: 2023 Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy winners, *Oscar3*'s Aldo and Elena Parisotto.  
 Above: Secretary General Andrew McIrvine presents the IMA Trophy to *Leopard 3*'s owners for winning monohull line honours in the 2024 RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race. Photo: RORC/Arthur Daniel

## IMA Trophy for the RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race

The Caribbean is a favourite venue for maxi yacht racing. Following the success of their Caribbean 600, often won overall by maxis, the RORC set up their own east to west Transatlantic Race from Lanzarote to Grenada in the Caribbean. Supported by the IMA, the RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race starts in early January, enabling competitors to spend Christmas and New Year at home, but still cross the Atlantic and reach the Caribbean in time for the season there. The IMA Trophy, an 'Adam Style' vintage silver trophy is awarded to the race's monohull line honours winner.

In 2024, overall line honours were won by Jason Carroll's flying MOD70 trimaran *Argo*, but in what frustratingly proved to be one of the slowest crossings on record, the 100ft *Leopard 3* claimed monohull line honours. The IMA Trophy was presented to her owner Joost Schuijff upon arrival at Camper & Nicholson's Port Louis Marina in Grenada.

### 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)



## OTHER MAXI EVENTS

Outside of the IMA's immediate sphere of influence, there will be some significant extracurricular maxi events in 2024, such as the biennial Newport-Bermuda. At the time of writing there was a strong maxi line-up for this, including George Sakellaris' Maxi 72 *Proteus* and Adrian Keller's Irens 84 catamaran *Allegra*, along with other familiar yachts such as the Marten 72 *Aragon*, 2023 IMA Caribbean Maxi Challenge winner Roy P Disney's *Pyewacket70*, *Space Monkey* (ex-*Alegre*, the 2014 Mini Maxi Rolex World Champion), *Temptation Oakcliff* (ex-*Numbers*), *Boudicca* (ex-*Blue Yankee*) and the maxZ86 *OC86* (ex-*Windquest*).

New for the race, the organisers will be employing 'Forecast - Time Correction Factor' (F-TCF) which attempts to remove the weather variable from a yacht's result in a race. Just before the start a predicted elapsed time for each boat is calculated based on its routing (ie latest GRIB files compared with their polars) from which they are allocated a F-TCF number (a ratio of the scratch boat's predicted elapsed time versus theirs). At the end of the race, corrected times are calculated by multiplying the F-TCF by their actual elapsed time. Obviously the system relies upon the use of accurate polars, which may be the weak point of an otherwise interesting development that could lead to the holy grail – one rating system that creates a level playing field for all yachts.

Elsewhere, the RORC is running the second edition of its Roschier Baltic Sea Race, starting and finishing in Helsinki and rounding the Swedish island of Gotland. While the slowest boat won the first race in 2022, favourite among those entered so far is Christian Zugel's modified VO70 *Tschuss 2* (ex-*Wizard/*

*Groupama 4*), which enjoyed much success in the UK in 2023, winning the Round the Island Race and the RORC's Cowes-Dinard-St Malo Race. For those wishing to participate, the trip to the Baltic is made even more worthwhile by also competing in the Royal Swedish Yacht Club's well-established Gotland Runt, taking place a month beforehand (into which *Tschuss 2* is also entered).

2024 could be the calm before what will be a frantic 2025. The year will be particularly significant in the UK, where the Royal Ocean Racing Club will be celebrating its centenary, reintroducing the Admiral's Cup to mark the occasion. The RORC, working with the New York Yacht Club (NYYC), Storm Trysail Club and Royal Yacht Squadron, will also, again, be staging the latest edition of the famous west to east Transatlantic Race, from Newport, RI, across to the Lizard and on to Cowes.

This is the most historic of all offshore races, having been first held from New York to the Lizard in December 1866 between three young NYYC members for what today would be the equivalent of a 3+ million Euro prize purse. Its famous 1905 edition saw the giant schooner *Atlantic*, driven by Charlie Barr, beat the German Kaiser's yacht. More recently, the last edition in 2019 was won by the Askew brothers on their modified VO70 *Wizard*, the prelude to their Rolex Fastnet Race win that year. The 2015 event was a *Comanche v Rambler 88* showdown for line honours, the race won overall by Bryon Ehrhart's 63ft *Lucky*; while in 2011 *Rambler 100* claimed monohull line honours (behind the MOD70 *Phaedo*), but was beaten by the VO70 Puma's *Mar Mostro* on corrected time.

2025 will also mark the 250th anniversary of the Royal Thames Yacht Club (RTYC), which has major celebrations planned in Cowes too, including the RTYC 250th Anniversary Maxi Challenge. Taking place on the Solent over 21-23 July, this could neatly act as a warm-up to the RORC's centenary Rolex Fastnet Race starting on 26 July.

As ever, the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race at the end of the year will be special for the maxi battle at the front end of the fleet, but it will be hard to top the 2023 edition. In this the 100ft *LawConnect* (ex-*Rambler 100/Perpetual Loyal*), runner-up in the last three events, claimed line honours, coming from behind to pip the favourite, *Andoo Comanche*, to the post into Hobart by just 51 seconds. The race was also won overall under IRC by a maxi – Phillip Turner claiming the Tattershall Cup for a second time in his Reichel/Pugh 66 *Alive* (ex-*Stark Raving Mad/Black Jack*).



Some of the west to east Transatlantic's most amazing tales came from *Atlantic's* record-setting race in 1905.  
Photo: Fly Pictures









DATE	EVENT	LOCATION/COURSE
<b>AFFILIATED EVENTS IN 2024</b>		
21 June	NEWPORT BERMUDA RACE	Newport, RI, USA-Bermuda
27 July-3 August	COPA DEL REY MAPFRE	Palma, Mallorca
13 October	BARCOLANA	Trieste, Italy
19 October	VENICE HOSPITALITY CHALLENGE	Venice, Italy
26 December	ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT RACE	Sydney-Hobart, Australia
<b>OTHER MAXI EVENTS IN 2024</b>		
22 February-1 March	SAN DIEGO-PUERTO VALLARTA	San Diego, USA-Puerto Vallarta, Mexico
27 March	ROLEX CHINA SEA RACE	Hong Kong-Subic Bay, Philippines
22-28 April	NEWPORT TO ENSENADA INTERNATIONAL YACHT RACE	Newport Beach, CA, USA-Ensenada, Mexico
27 April-3 May	ANTIGUA SAILING WEEK	Antigua
14-16 June	NYC ANNUAL REGATTA	Newport, RI, USA
22 June	SSE RENEWABLES ROUND IRELAND YACHT RACE	Wicklow-Wicklow, Ireland
22 June-6 July	TROPHÉE BAILLI DE SUFFREN	Saint-Tropez, France-Alghero, Sardinia-Bizerte, Tunisia-Malta
30 June	GOTLAND RUNT	Stockholm-Sandhamn, Sweden
13 July	CHICAGO-MACKINAC	Chicago-Mackinac, USA
15 July	PACIFIC CUP	San Francisco, USA-Kaneohe, Hawaii
27 July	ROSCHIER BALTIC SEA RACE	Helsinki-Helsinki, Finland
27 July	NOAKES SYDNEY-GOLD COAST YACHT RACE	Sydney-Main Beach, Gold Coast, Australia
17-24 August	HAMILTON ISLAND RACE WEEK	Hamilton Island, Australia
6-10 December	RAYMARINE AUSTRALIAN MAXI CHAMPIONSHIP	Sydney, Australia
6 December	CABBAGE TREE ISLAND RACE	Sydney-Cabbage Tree Island, Sydney, Australia
10 December	SOLAS BIG BOAT CHALLENGE	Sydney Harbour, Australia
<b>...AND IN 2025</b>		
5 January	RORC-IMA TRANSATLANTIC RACE	Lanzarote-Grenada
25 January	PINEAPPLE CUP MONTEGO BAY RACE	Miami, USA-Montego Bay, Jamaica
13-19 April	LES VOILES DE ST BARTH	St Barth
18 June	THE TRANSATLANTIC RACE	Newport, RI, USA-Cowes, Isle of Wight
21-23 July	RTYC 250TH ANNIVERSARY MAXI CHALLENGE	Solent
26 July	RORC CENTENARY ROLEX FASTNET RACE	Cowes, Isle of Wight-Cherbourg, France















## 2024 IMA PROGRAMME EVENTS – DETAILS AND CONTACTS

Scanning the QR code with your phone will take you to each event's website

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
7 January	<b>RORC-IMA TRANSATLANTIC RACE</b> <b>Course:</b> Puerto Arrecife, Lanzarote to Camper & Nicholsons' Port Louis Marina, Grenada <b>Distance:</b> 2,995 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> Royal Ocean Racing Club e: racing@rorc.org t: (44) 1983 295 144 rorctransatlantic.rorc.org/
1-4 February	 <b>CARIBBEAN MULTIHULL CHALLENGE</b> <b>Where:</b> St Maarten <b>Courses:</b> Coastal	<b>Organiser:</b> Sint Maarten Yacht Club e: saskia@smyc.com t: +1 721 522 1639 www.caribbeanmultihullchallenge.com
19 February	 <b>RORC CARIBBEAN 600</b> <b>Course:</b> 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 <b>Distance:</b> 600 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> 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
29 February - 3 March	 <b>ST MAARTEN HEINEKEN REGATTA</b> <b>Where:</b> St Maarten <b>Courses:</b> Coastal	<b>Organiser:</b> Sint Maarten Yacht Club e: info@heinekenregatta.com t: +1 721 544 2079 www.heinekenregatta.com
1-7 April	 <b>BVI SPRING REGATTA &amp; SAILING FESTIVAL</b> <b>Where:</b> Nanny Cay Marina, Tortola, British Virgin Islands <b>Courses:</b> Round Tortola, coastals and windward-leeward	<b>Organiser:</b> Royal BVI Yacht Club e: info@bvispringregatta.org t: 284-346-8292 www.bvispringregatta.org
27 April	 <b>PALMAVELA</b> <b>La Larga</b> <b>Courses:</b> Starting and finishing in Palma, Mallorca, via Dragonera, Ibiza and Formentera and Cabrera or via Dragonera, Tagomago and Cabrera <b>Distance:</b> 165-225 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> Real Club Náutico de Palma e: coordportiva@rcnp.es t: +34 971 72 68 48 www.palmavela.com
1-5 May	 <b>PalmaVela</b> <b>Where:</b> Palma, Mallorca <b>Courses:</b> Up to six windward-leeward and coastals	















Scanning the QR code with your phone will take you to each event's website

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
17 May 	<b>IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP</b> <i>Part of Tre Golfi Sailing Week</i> <b>Regata dei Tre Golfi</b> <b>Course:</b> Naples to Naples, Italy, via Ponza and Li Galli <b>Distance:</b> 155 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> 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 
20-23 May 	<b>IMA Maxi European Championship (Inshores)</b> <b>Where:</b> Sorrento, Italy <b>Courses:</b> Windward-leewards and coastals	
30 May 	<b>151 MIGLIA-TROFEO CETILAR</b> <b>Course:</b> Livorno to Punta Ala, Italy, via Marina di Pisa, Giraglia and Formiche di Grosseto <b>Distance:</b> 151 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> Yacht Club Punta Ala, Yacht Club Livorno, Yacht Club Repubblica Marinara di Pisa e: segreteria@151miglia.it t: +39 050 310023 www.151miglia.it 
8-15 June  	<b>LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA</b> <b>8-11 June</b> <b>Inshore courses:</b> Windward-leewards and coastals <b>12 June</b> <b>Offshore course:</b> Saint-Tropez, France to Genoa, Italy via Giraglia <b>Distance:</b> 241 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez e: info@yci.it t: +39 010 253381 www.loropianagiraglia.com 
7 July  	<b>AEGEAN 600</b> <b>Course:</b> Starting and finishing off Sounio, Greece, via Milos, Santorini Caldera, Kassos, Karpathos, Rhodos, Kandelousa, Kos, Kalolimnos, Farmakonissi, Agathonissi, Patmos, Mykonos-Dilos and Kea <b>Distance:</b> 605 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> 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
20 August 	<b>PALERMO-MONTECARLO</b> <b>Course:</b> Palermo, Sicily to Monte Carlo via YCCS gate off Porto Cervo <b>Distance:</b> 437 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> 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 
8-14 September 	<b>MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP</b> <b>Where:</b> Porto Cervo, Sardinia <b>Courses:</b> Coastal and windward-leewards	<b>Organiser:</b> Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in conjunction with the IMA e: secretariat@yccs.it t: +39 0789 902200 www.yccs.it 
19-22 September 	<b>IBIZA JOYSAIL</b> <b>Courses:</b> Palma, Mallorca to Marina Ibiza, Ibiza (offshore), then coastals between Ibiza and Formentera	<b>Organiser:</b> Ibiza JoySail e: info@ibizajoy sail.com t: +34 616 886 331 www.ibizajoy sail.com 
27-29 Sep 	<b>MULTIHULL CUP</b> <b>Where:</b> Port Adriano, Mallorca <b>Courses:</b> Windward-leewards and coastals	<b>Organiser:</b> Multihull Cup e: info@multihullcup.com t: +34 637 918 404 www.multihullcup.com 
30 Sept-5 Oct 	<b>LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ</b> <b>Where:</b> Saint-Tropez, France <b>Courses:</b> Windward-leewards and coastals	<b>Organiser:</b> Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez e: info@snst.org t: +33 494 973054 www.lesvoilesdesaint-tropez.fr 
19 October 	<b>ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE (2024-25 MMOC)</b> <b>Where:</b> Malta <b>Course:</b> Starting and finishing in Valletta, Malta, anticlockwise lap around Sicily via the Strait of Messina, Stromboli, Favignana, Pantelleria and Lampedusa <b>Distance:</b> 606 miles	<b>Organiser:</b> Royal Malta Yacht Club e: info@rolexmiddlesearace.com t: +356 21 333109 www.rolexmiddlesearace.com 



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that matters  
most



is the  
one you  
take next

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