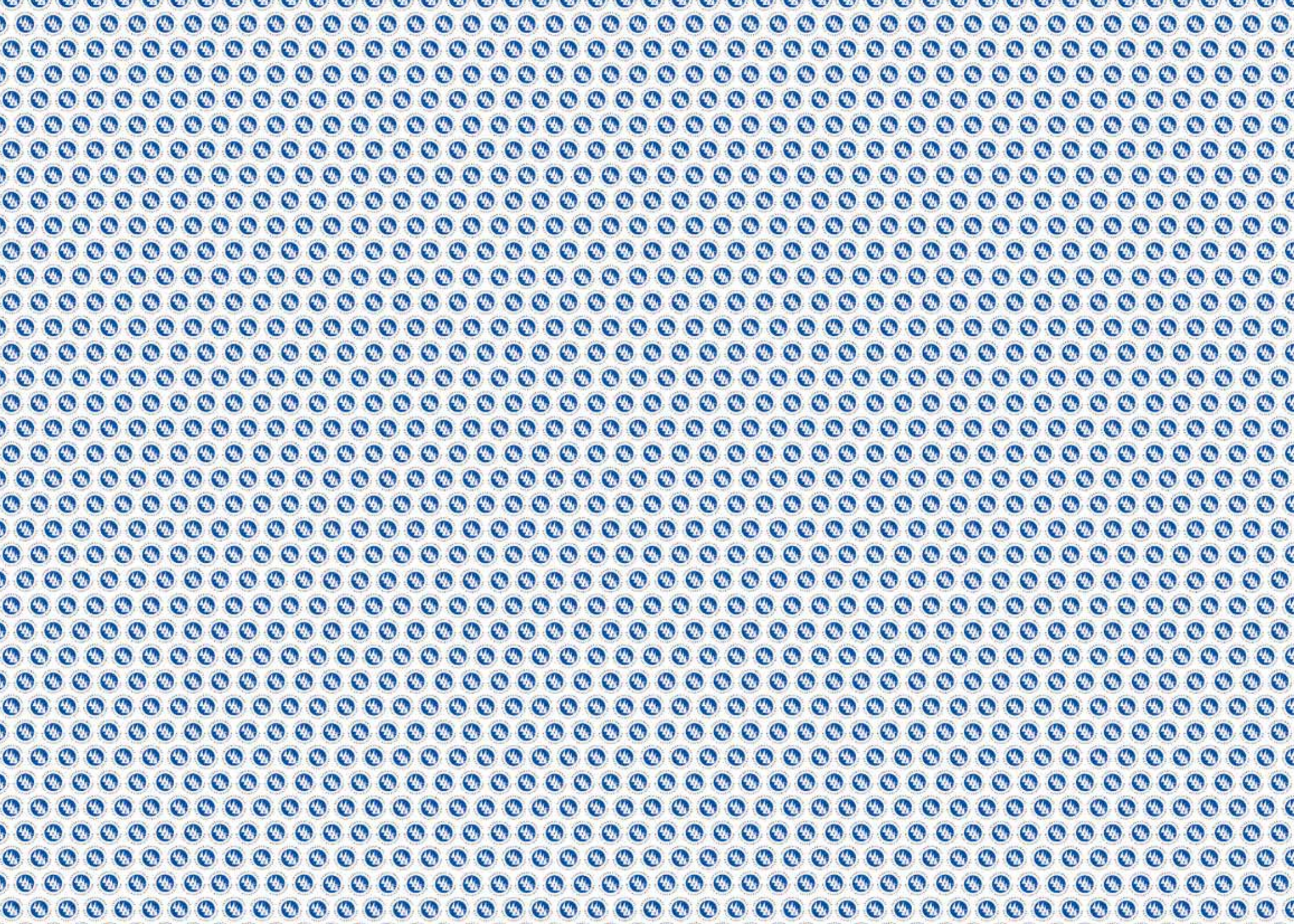
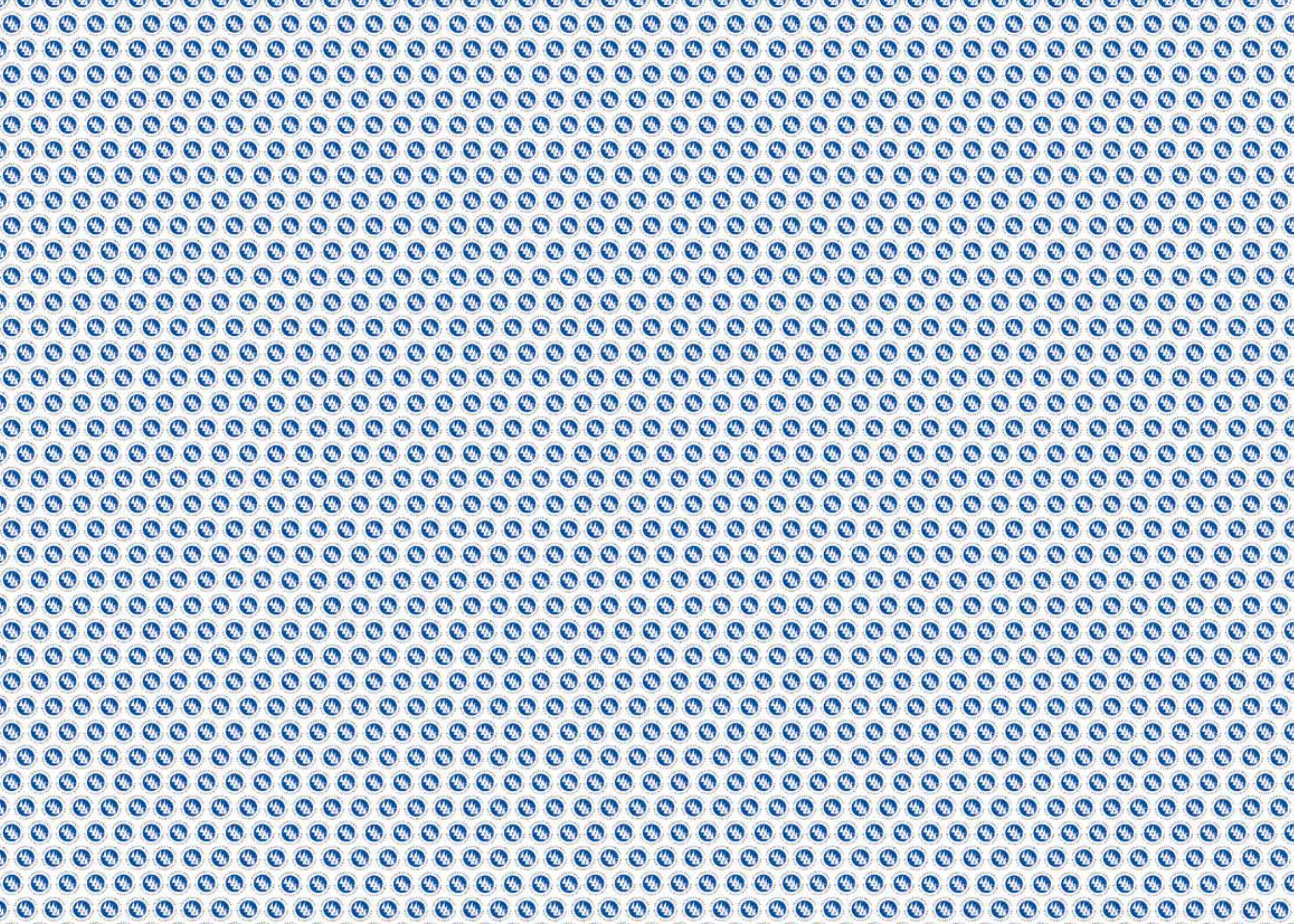


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ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE



ROLEX TP52
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



ROLEX SWAN CUP



ROLEX SYDNEY
HOBART YACHT RACE



ROLEX FASTNET RACE



MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP

REACH FOR THE CROWN

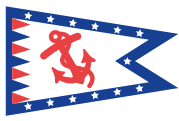


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CONTENTS

4	IMA Founder Members, Honorary Members, Board and past Presidents
6	IMA staff and contacts
8	President's message: Welcoming in a new era for the IMA
10	From your Secretary General Andrew McIrvine
12	2025 IMA Annual General Meeting
14	Niklas Zennström – from Mini Maxi World Champion to the J Class
20	2025 season round-up
22	At the IMA Maxi Europeans <i>Bella Mente</i> reigned supreme
32	IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge 2024-25
34	Despite light tricky conditions, La Larga was won by the VO70 <i>L4 Trifork</i>
38	In the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar, <i>Cippa Lippa X</i> finally came out on top
42	Loro Piana Giraglia's offshore race went to <i>Capricorno</i>
50	The Aegean 600 was lighter than usual, with victory in the maxi class going to Philip Rann's <i>Umiko</i>
54	In the Palermo-Montecarlo, <i>Black Jack 100</i> was first home but <i>Manticore</i> was top maxi
58	Louis Balcaen's <i>Balthasar</i> claimed the Rolex Middle Sea Race overall
64	IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge 2025
66	Pascale Decaux's <i>Tilakkhana II</i> prevailed at Sandberg PalmaVela
70	<i>Capricorno</i> overcame the 100s during the Loro Piana Giraglia inshore racing

76	<i>Galateia</i> and <i>Django 7X</i> won their world championships at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup
86	<i>V</i> and <i>Django 7X</i> came out on top at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez
96	<i>Spirit of Lorina</i> won the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge for a second time
98	The 100ft <i>Galateia</i> prevailed in the 2025 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge
100	Alessandro Del Bono's <i>Capricorno</i> crowned IMA 2025 Yacht of the Year
102	The ATO's James Dadd updates us on all matters technical at the IMA
106	Former YCCS Secretary General and Sporting Director Edoardo Recchi speaks with Maria Luisa Farris
110	Andi Robertson brings us the latest news from the J Class
114	Maxi state of the art: we examine the Worlds-winning wallyrocket 71 <i>Django 7X</i>
120	New maxi news: Baltic 80 Cafe Racer, Swan 80, Mills 62, Grand Soleil 'Plus' line and much more
126	2026 maxi events preview – incorporating Copa del Rey MAPFRE once again
130	2025-26 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge preview
134	Looking ahead to the 2026 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge
138	The Superyacht Cup Palma Richard Mille joins the 2026 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge
140	Four events will comprise the 2027 IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series
142	Other IMA trophies – Aegean 600, RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race and others
144	We look forward to maxi events beyond the Mediterranean and Caribbean
146	Maxi yacht racing events directory

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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 Italian media relations, updating the IMA website and assisting the Secretary General with the day-to-day activities of the Association.

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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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*Kite drop on board IMA Vice President Pier Luigi Loro Piana's My Song.
Photos – main: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi
Thumbnails: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*





Photo: Carlo Baroncini

Welcome to the IMA yearbook for 2026, a year which also ushers in a new era for the International Maxi Association, not least because I have had the great privilege to be elected as the Association's new President. We also welcome several familiar, highly regarded individuals to the Board.

To start I would like to thank my friend Benoît de Froidmont for his service over the last seven years as President. His tenure was longer than usual as it included the difficult period navigating the Association through the pandemic. Benoît has also enjoyed spectacular success on the water, winning our Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge no less than three times with his 60-footer *Wallyño*. He will be a hard act to follow.

My profound thanks must also go to our long-standing Secretary General Andrew McIrvine who has served with us since 2013. Over this period the membership has evolved to become very much more active, while the Association has grown from merely dealing with our partners at the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda and the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup to liaising with a whole series of events, both inshore and offshore in the Mediterranean and Caribbean, nurturing strong relations with their organising yacht clubs plus others running maxi yacht racing around the globe.

I am delighted to report that maxi yacht racing seems to be growing across the board, from state-of-the-art grand prix racers to cruiser-racers of all genres. As an association our aim is to represent the interests of all while maintaining our core values – notably owner-driver Corinthian competition, even if in classes like the Maxi 1 and Maxi Grand Prix it is at the very highest level. Personally, in 2024 I stepped up from my Mylius 60 FD (now being raced by new owner Robert Szustkowski as *R6*) to the latest *Sud*, a Wally 80, which I shall be campaigning this season.

While, alongside Benoît and Aldo Parisotto, I feel comfortable looking after the interests of the smaller cruiser-racer maxis, the Board represents all parts of the fleet. Long term maxi owner Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones joins the Board as the voice of the Maxi 1 class, while Giovanni Lombardi Stronati, Peter Dubens and Sir Peter Ogden will speak for the Maxi Grand Prix class. I am especially pleased Sir Peter has agreed to stay on as Treasurer. We are also fortunate to have the industry perspective of Peter Dubens, while Pier Luigi Loro Piana can share his insights as an event sponsor.

I would also like to pay huge thanks to our out-going Vice Presidents Hap Fauth, Roberto Lacorte and Claus-Peter Offen, all of whom have given up their time and shared their considerable wisdom for the benefit of the IMA, especially Claus-Peter, who previously served as President.

Over the last year we have been occupied revising the Association's By-Laws, which, as I write, are in the process of being voted in by the members. The aim of this is to ensure that the IMA has a proper, up-to-date structure providing the correct checks and balances for the future.

I would like to restate the role of the IMA: Our Association is the World Sailing-sanctioned governing body of maxi yachting internationally, which enables us exclusively to hold World Championships. We are the conduit for and aggregator of our maxi owner members' needs and ideas, and work with our yacht club partners to create or evolve rules that ensure the highest level and fairness in our racing. Our By-Laws also state that we are obliged to organise functions at which our members can socialise. Personally and in line with these By-Laws, I see my role as President as 'Chairman of the Board', serving where and when needed, while the day-to-day work of the IMA is carried out by the Secretary General and the executives.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to our yacht club partners and to our sponsor Rolex, whose long term and invaluable support for our Association has helped us evolve our maxi racing to its present healthy position. I am looking forward to a strong season of maxi racing in 2026 and a buoyant future for the IMA.

Maurits van Oranje-Nassau

*The President's Wally 80 Sud competing at the IMA Maxi Europeans.
Photo: Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi*





▲ With Maria Luisa Farris at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.



▲ On the water at the IMA Maxi Europeans.



▲ With the IMA's former Technical Officer Nicola Sironi.

▼ Presenting prizes to Bullitt's Andrea Recordati at the RORC Nelson's Cup.

▼ Socialising in 'rose square' at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

▼ With former RORC Commodore James Neville and charterer Craig Clifford.



▼ Strong branding at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.



▼ Technical officer James Dadd hard at work.



▼ The IMA team at the 2025 AGM.

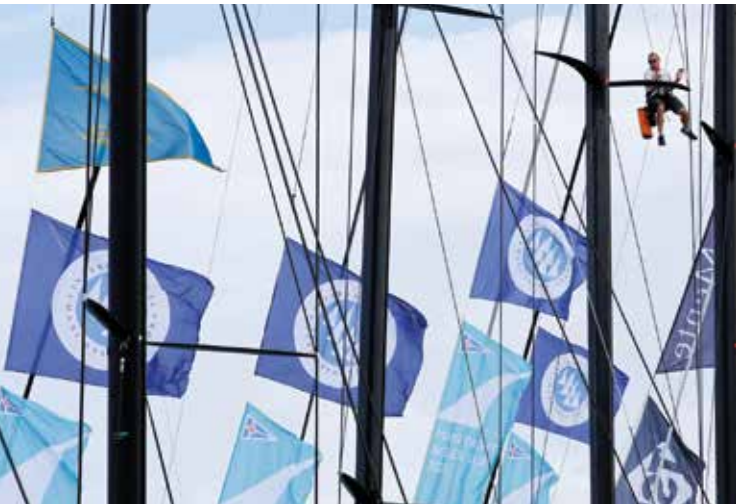




Photo: James Mitchell

As you will see going through our latest yearbook, the maxi racing community and the International Maxi Association are doing very well despite rather eventful changes around the world – which at the time of writing seem to be getting worse.

Our programme in the Mediterranean has consolidated around four major events which have proven to be consistently attractive to owners and crew. An extra advantage of this is that with high numbers we are able to split the fleet according to performance, making for much fairer and enjoyable racing for all. Nevertheless we do keep looking at alternative venues because, with these four events based out of just three harbours, there is always the

possibility new challenges will be needed. Fortunately, we know the weather will always make each event unique, although we were lucky in 2025 not to see some of the extremes we had in 2024.

Maxi racing, for both monohulls and multihulls, is picking up in the Caribbean and it has been encouraging to see strong participation in the RORC Nelson's Cup, an event we have encouraged the Royal Ocean Racing Club to adapt to suit the needs of our participants. For this year's edition conditions were excellent and enjoyed by all. It was notable for seeing two female helms reach the podium in Wendy Schmidt (*Deep Blue*) and Lizz Flowers (*Galateia*). Particular congratulations should be extended to Joost Schuijff and the crew of *Leopard 3*: They not only won the RORC Nelson's Cup, but set a new record in the Antigua 360 and then went on to win the RORC Caribbean 600 outright on corrected time – a superb trophy haul.

Some exciting new boats joined the fleet last year: Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' 100ft Verdier-designed all-electric *Magic Carpet e* is a very innovative and complex departure from his previous Wallycento design. It will no doubt need a little more time and development to achieve its full potential. His former *Magic Carpet*³ is now being raced enthusiastically by Pascale Decaux and her crew, featuring a strong female contingent, as *Tilakkhana II*. Meanwhile, launched last spring, Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X* was able to get up to speed fast enough to become the first Rolex IMA Maxi Grand Prix World Champion during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in Porto Cervo in September. Also being added to Stronati's considerable and ever-growing fleet is his latest *BeCool*, the first Swan 128

to be built. Although more set up for very comfortable cruising, she took part in the RORC Transatlantic Race in January.

There are various other new boats in build at present and to encourage more, knowing that some new builds had been put on hold due to uncertainty regarding rating rules, we have decided to stick to IRC on a rolling three-year basis, although with annual re-evaluation. Between the IMA's own Technical Office and the IRC Rating Office, we have already made some special IMA-only developments to the rule such as the reduction of rating TCC if the declared crew is 70% or fewer than the IRC allowance.

This year a decision was made at the Annual General Meeting to encourage youth and female participation, which had been noticeably lacking. Therefore 'bonus crew' may be taken – even if opting for the reduced crew number – as long as they are males under 21 or females of any age.

We also intend to work with the IRC Rating office to develop a system where the advanced features of racing maxis are evaluated and measured more fairly, but without changing the overall system.

It is very good to welcome Maurits van Oranje-Nassau as our new President, who you will see racing his Wally 80 *Sud* at events this year.

We very much hope that you enjoy this publication for which many thanks must go to its editor, James Boyd, someone else who you will see at most of our events.

I wish you all an excellent season with fair winds and close racing.

Andrew McIrvine





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



MAXI OWNER PROFILE: NIKLAS ZENNSTRÖM

From sketching yachts during idle moments as a student to creating and successfully campaigning several of the most significant racing yachts of the last two decades, Swedish tech entrepreneur Niklas Zennström is genuinely a man fulfilling his childhood dream.

As the owner of one of the most successful Mini Maxis of all time, Zennström twice won the Rolex Fastnet Race outright and was a three-time Rolex Mini Maxi World Champion. Since 2022 he has been a co-owner of a J Class, twice winning class in Porto Cervo and raising the benchmark for the magnificent pondering 1930s leviathans. Alongside this, Zennström also continues to race his two smaller yachts: his ORC World and IRC European Championship-winning FAST40+ and the CF520 which he races offshore.

While home today for Zennström and his French wife Catherine is London, he grew up on the outskirts of Stockholm. His parents were teachers; his father taught art while his mother worked in the textile department at Uppsala University, where Zennström himself gained a BSc in business administration and an MSc in engineering physics/computer science. Teaming up with young Dane Janus Friis, Zennström cut his teeth in peer-to-peer file sharing technology with KaZaA, a competitor of Napster. However the duo will be best remembered for Skype, the company that revolutionised IP-based voice and video telephony. Just two years after Skype's first release, they sold it to eBay in 2005 for US\$2.6 billion. Zennström, now 39, at this point was able to return to his first passion. As he recalls: "Catherine could see that I was buying more and more yachting magazines!"

*Left: Niklas Zennström behind Svea's giant wheel with an afterguard including Steve Hayles, Bouwe Bekking and Magnus Woxen.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

Growing up, Zennström had spent his summers cruising aboard his parent's 30-footer. He was also a member of a local sailing club where he sailed dinghies such as the Optimist, Europe and Laser, although he says he never had time to develop his racing skills. "I was always really passionate about sailing and yachts. As a kid, I was drawing boats and building models. I wanted to be a naval architect or a yacht designer. I was reading all the magazines all the time. For me it was a dream."

To this point Sweden had historically been a strong nation in the metres classes and had entered a team in the fledgling 1961 Admiral's Cup, becoming a regular competitor from then on. Legendary yacht designer/sailor Pelle Petterson led two challenges for the America's Cup in 1977 and 1980. Sweden made its first tentative foray into the Whitbread Round the World Race in the early 1980s before the floodgates opened, spawning a generation of offshore heroes such as Magnus Olsson, Roger Nilson and many others, several of whom still race with Zennström today.

When Skype was sold in 2005 the Zennströms were by now living in London, where they had moved in 2002. With sailing back on the agenda, in 2006 the couple chartered boats in Cowes and Hamble, competing in several weekend and RORC offshore races before having a new carbon fibre Martin 49 cruiser-racer built, launched in 2007. They raced *Yani* in a programme that included a first unsuccessful attempt on the Rolex Fastnet Race, then took her to the Caribbean. While a nice boat, Zennström quickly realised that she was very compromised as a racer.



*Niklas Zennström – successful in business and on the water.
Photo: RORC/Rick Tomlinson*

Not one for half measures, Zennström carried out his research and opted to build a Mini Maxi, which would enable him to race both inshore and offshore. In 2008 it was also a burgeoning class – Dan Meyers (together with America's Cup winner Ernesto Bertarelli and many of his Alinghi crew) on the 66ft *Numbers* won their class at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, beating Roger Sturgeon's *Rosebud/Team DYT* and Jim Swartz's *Money Penny* – American yachts designed to the Storm Trysail Club's sadly shortlived STP65 box rule – as well as Andres Soriano's 68ft *Alegre* and Neville Crichton's latest 72-footer *Alfa Romeo 3*.

judel/vrolijk were chosen as architects as they had designed *Numbers* and because Alinghi's Chief Designer Rolf Vrolijk had perhaps put the most research into developing the design (after the AC90 monohull had been criticised for being too expensive, a larger version of *Numbers* was being contemplated as a more cost-effective class for the next America's Cup before these plans were demolished and the 33rd America's Cup became a 'Deed of Gift' match between *Alinghi* and *Oracle* in giant multihulls).

"Rolf advised us to build a 72 instead of 69, because it will be a little bit quicker and it's pretty clear in an IRC fleet that it's an advantage if you can get your nose ahead," Zennström explains.

As an interim measure the team acquired a TP52, the former *Patches 2*, renamed *Rán* after the Norse goddess of the sea. Aboard her in 2008 they won class at Cork Week, the IRC National Championship and then the RORC's Cowes-Dieppe Race.

Launched by Green Marine in April 2009, *Rán II* would become one of the most successful Mini Maxi/Maxi 72s of all time. She beat America's Cup team principal Patrizio Bertelli's *Luna Rossa* and *Rosebud/Team DYT* to first place in a fleet of 277 IRC yachts in that summer's Rolex Fastnet Race. After a speedy delivery to Porto Cervo, she then won the Mini Maxi Racing division at that year's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. She would go on to win subsequent editions of the IMA-backed Rolex Mini

Maxi World Championship in 2010, 2011 and 2013 – a record still not beaten – as well as the next Rolex Fastnet Race in 2011. Her programme was exceptional; in just one season she started in Sydney and visited Antigua, Newport, Bermuda, Palma, Porto Cervo, Antibes, Saint-Tropez and La Spezia, before returning to Sydney.

"*Rán II* was a really competitive boat," Zennström acknowledges. "Rolf had a design in mind and we were fortunate that it just happened at the right time in the cycle." A lot of tech from the winning America's Cup V5 boat also ended up on board, such as winch-pedestal systems developed by Jon Williams' company Stayinphase that enabled the grinders to perform functions such as driving winches and rotary hydraulic pumps simultaneously at mark roundings.

Key to the campaign were the crew, as Zennström explains: "My philosophy – whether it is my business team or my sailing team – is if everyone is much better than I am, then we're in good shape. You need to be comfortable with that and also trust them."

This started on *Yani* with sailmaker Jeremy Robinson and Willie Beavis; impressively, many of the original *Rán* crew, such as Andy Hemming and Adrian Stead, continue to race with Zennström today. 'Kingpin' was Tim Powell who signed on for the 2007 Rolex Fastnet Race, later becoming project manager and skipper as Zennström learned the ropes. A talented Laser sailor who won the Europeans in 1990, Powell's career as a pro sailor was launched when he raced *Dolphin & Youth* in the 1993/94 Whitbread Round the World Race, alongside future *Rán* navigator Steve Hayles. He would go on to sail three



Catherine and Niklas Zennström with Roger Maingot, Managing Director of Rolex UK, and the then Commodore of the RORC, now IMA Secretary General Andrew McIrvine at the 2009 Rolex Fastnet Race prize-giving. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

more round the world races, the last in 2005/06, while also honing his inshore racing skills as co-helm and strategist on the TP52 *Cristabella*. He was thus very much at the top of his game when he joined *Rán*. “Tim is a great sailor, but he is also a really, really good leader,” Zennström observes. “So we had great alignment.”

As to how he developed as a helmsman, Zennström explains: “Mini Maxis are quite big and intimidating. In the first year, Tim did most of the driving because it was pretty daunting on the start line. Then he did the start and maybe the first half of the beat before I took over. And then I started to drive for the whole thing, which was great. We also did a lot of training. With Ado [Adrian Stead] we did a lot of course training, developing our playbook and different manoeuvres.”

The Zennströms take a very egalitarian approach to their team and typically they all eat and socialise together at events. During offshores they stand watches with the rest of the crew and, according to Tim Powell, it is rare that Niklas misses a training day or any briefings. “He’s quite unusual on that front – he’s competitive, he wants to win, but he also wants to do it in the right way. It’s not ‘win at all costs’, outspend everybody, etc.”

For 2013 new hardware such as *Stig* and *Bella Mente* were appearing in the Mini Maxi fleet and to remain competitive the decision had been made to go ahead with a new boat, another judel/vrolijk design, *Rán V*. Unfortunately, once out of the box she proved less successful. Both Zennström and Powell partly attribute this to a change in the IRC rule that took place while she was under construction, a change which ironically made their



One of the most successful racing yachts of all time, *Rán II* still races in the maxi fleet as Peter Dubens’ *North Star*.
Photo: RORC/Rick Tomlinson

previous boat more competitive. Powell recalls: “The new boats were stiffer and more powerful, so we knew we were coming towards the end of that life cycle of our boat. Hence, we did *Rán V*, but then IRC changed the rules massively halfway through the build, so in retrospect we would have been better off not building a new boat at all...”

In the 2013 Rolex Fastnet Race this was compounded by weather which favoured the smaller boats; *Rán V* came home a disappointing 203rd, albeit beating *Bella Mente*. In 2014 the IMA established the Maxi 72 box rule class based on yachts like *Bella Mente*, *Allegra*, *Rán II* and *Rán V* to prevent every iteration simply getting faster, but by this time Zennström was moving out of the class. *Rán II* had been sold, changed livery and was now competing as *Robertissima*, while by the end of 2014 *Rán V* was also under new ownership. Raced as *Proteus*, new

owner George Sakellaris would go on to enjoy much success on her, winning the 2016 RORC Caribbean 600 and in 2017 Les Voiles de St Barth, PalmaVela and the Corfu Challenge, ultimately becoming IMA Yacht of the Year. The legacy of this duo lives on in today’s Maxi Grand Prix class with *Rán II*, now Peter Dubens’ *North Star*, winning the IMA Maxi European Championship in both 2022 and 2023, while *Proteus* finally won the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in 2024.

Around this time Zennström admits his sailing was perhaps getting out of hand. In addition to the Mini Maxi campaign, in 2011 he entered the Audi MedCup aboard the newly-built *Rán IV*. She finished her first season fourth, but claiming the owner-driver prize. In 2012 Zennström became one of the stakeholders in the MedCup’s replacement, the 52 Super Series and finished third on the season’s podium behind pro-drivers on four occasions.



Much Swedish national pride is involved in the Svea campaign. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

Between simultaneously campaigning the 72 and the TP52 in the early 2010s, Zennström was racing around 100 days per year, more than many pros! He admits: “I realised that I was spending too much time [sailing] and I was still running a business and I needed to focus on that.” This business was Atomico, the technology-focussed venture capital firm Zennstrom had founded in 2006.

Deciding to adjust his commitments, he withdrew from the 52 Super Series in 2017, just as the FAST40+ circuit in the UK took off, which the *Rån* team joined in 2018. “It was a good emerging class. It was in the UK and it was easy – Friday to Sunday,” Zennström recalls. “And we also decided to do things differently,

bringing more young people and some girls on board. I had suggested that for the Super Series and we’d done it before with the Corel 45 *Kolga* and the British Keelboat Academy. It was great seeing the veterans like Tim and Steve enjoying being mentors to the youngsters. It made the dynamic on board more fun.” Even with a marginally less ‘grand prix’ approach, *Rån* dominated the circuit, winning in 2018-19 and 2021-22 before the circuit’s demise. Their FAST40+ is perhaps, alongside *Rån II*, the team’s favourite *Rån*; in 2025 aboard her they won both the ORC Worlds and IRC European Championship.

Zennström’s return to maxi racing occurred in a way that could not have been predicted. Since childhood

he had been a fan of Tore Holm, the Swedish yacht designer, builder and sailor who represented Sweden in the Olympics, winning gold in the 40sqm class in 1920 and in 1932 on a 6mR. During the 1920s and 30s at his boatyard in Gamleby Holm created Skerry Cruisers and numerous metre class boats.

With this in mind, Zennström commissioned yacht designer Andre Hoek to create for him a 47ft modern classic daysailer to sail in Sweden. “I just love the old Tore Holm metre class designs – he designed the most beautiful boats,” enthuses Zennström on what for him is clearly a passion among passions. Based on the lines of a Holm 8mR, *Elsa* was built by Baltic Yachts and launched in 2013 with all modern

NIKLAS ZENNSTRÖM

performance features, from her appendage design to carbon construction and EC6+ carbon rigging.

It was around then that Hoek unveiled the ultimate temptation to Zennström: a J Class design by Tore Holm dating back to 1937, the previously unknown plans having been uncovered in the archives of Holm's daughter. "I told him – 'Oh no. Put it away! Remind me when I'm older!'" The 143ft *Svea*'s birth would go on to be a faltering one: first a Swedish consortium unsuccessfully attempted to build her. Then a Dutch owner went on to build her hull and deck, only to abandon her as he wanted a fully stripped-out J which is not permitted by the J Class. The project was then taken on and completed by American tech billionaire Tom Siebel and launched in 2017. *Svea* finished fourth at the America's Cup J Class Regatta in Bermuda and the subsequent IMA-backed J Class World Championship in Newport, RI.



On Zennström's yachting agenda is winning the Admiral's Cup, an event he has followed since his youth. Photo: RORC/James Tomlinson



Zennström and his army of largely Swedish *Svea* crew at the 2024 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup prize-giving. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi

It was during the pandemic that Zennström got a call from a friend, Hjalmar Winbladh, saying that *Svea* was on the market. He recalls: "Of course, everyone knows that with a J it's not how much you pay for it, it's the running costs. But it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Within KSSS [the Royal Swedish Yacht Club] and the Swedish community, it was a big deal." *Svea* was eventually bought by Zennström, Winbladh (who soon dropped out) and a third Swede – Filip Englebert, who also campaigned the FAST40+ *Elvis*. Catherine Zennström was also enthusiastic of this acquisition as several years previously she had enjoyed a day out on *Velsheda*. She used to regularly race with her husband on the various *Råns*, especially offshore, but has done less of this in recent years, preferring to be a regular part of the *Svea* crew instead.

"Compared to a Mini Maxi, they're slow, but you can also see that they're majestic special things... We love it," Zennström continues. "They're amazing to sail – very different from a race boat. I thought it would be like driving a bus, but you have feel on the rudder. You do have to anticipate everything and of

course my first start was about as scary as the first start on the Mini Maxi, because you come together and you don't know the turning circle. And once you start turning, you cannot turn the other way! And of course, there's a lot of people involved and it requires amazing teamwork."

Naturally, being a Swedish project, more or less the entire catalogue of Swedish big boat sailors have been recruited to *Svea*, alongside *Rån* regulars like Powell and Hayles.

After a fallow season, J Class racing is set to resume in 2026 at the Super Yacht Cup in Palma and at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez (see p110). Zennström hopes the racing fleet will grow in 2027 following the launch of *Yankee*. "You just need one more person to say 'you know – this looks amazing'. And there's *Ranger* there to be acquired. I think the Js really stand the test of time. They're also great to go cruising in – although not very practical..."

In the meantime, Zennström won't sit idly; he also aims to achieve another childhood dream: to win the Admiral's Cup in 2027. You wouldn't bet against him.



2025 Season Round-up



*Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' state-of-the-art 100ft maxi, Magic Carpet e is all-electric and has a radical keel that cants laterally and can be raked aft to reduce her draft.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

For its fourth edition, the IMA Maxi European Championship was once again organised by Naples' Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia (CRVI), combining the Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore race with four days of inshore/coastal racing on the Gulf of Naples and around Capri. The Maxi Europeans brought together 30 maxi yachts divided into four classes, including the 80-100 footers in Maxi 1, Maxi Grand Prix (ex-Maxi 72), with the smaller racer-cruisers in Maxi Alpha and Bravo.

The Regata dei Tre Golfi overnight race once again started and finished off Naples, with the 156-mile course rounding Ponza to the north and the Li Galli islands off the Amalfi Coast to the south. Usually a light-air race, this year it delivered unusually brisk and sustained conditions for its 70th edition.

The spectacular downwind spinnaker start took place in 15 knots off the CRVI's clubhouse in Naples' Porticciolo di Santa Lucia in the late afternoon. Chris Flowers and David M Leuschen's

100ft *Galateia* exploded off the line, leading the fleet past Ischia and into the Gulf of Gaeta. Close behind were Lord Irvine Laidlaw's Gunboat 80 *Highland Fling 18*, Adrian Keller's 84ft catamaran *Allegra* and former line honours winner Furio Benussi's 100ft *ARCA SGR*.

The race's fastest section came on the broad reach north to Ponza, where the northeasterly gradient built to 25 knots. *Galateia* led around Ponza at approximately 20:00, followed by *Highland Fling 18*, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' newly launched 100ft *Magic Carpet e*, Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 80ft *My Song* and Karel Komárek's *Wallycento V*.

Heading back was mostly a fetch, but taking the frontrunners, including line honours favourite Seng Huang Lee's *SHK Scallywag*, well south of Capri. Meanwhile the Maxi Grand Prix yachts – Peter Dubens' *North Star*, Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou*, George Sakellaris' *Proteus* plus *ARCA SGR* – were more lifted and able to pass north of Capri, catching the frontrunners, apart from *Galateia* and *Magic Carpet e* who both stayed further offshore en route to Li Galli.

Galateia passed Li Galli at around 04:00 and powered west, rounding Punta Campanella, then striding out on the fast final reach across the Gulf of Naples to finish at 05:54:42. Her elapsed time of 13 hours 19 minutes 42 seconds shattered the course record, her speed averaging 12.75 knots compared to the 9.7-knot average of previous record holder *Jethou*.

"There was a northeasterly gradient wind from the land, but how it came off the valleys and hills was tricky – the devil was in the detail," explained



Galateia's navigator Simon Fisher. *Galateia* had recently been 'turboed', now sporting a longer bowsprit, larger chutes and an interceptor, which had hiked her rating from 1.781 to 1.802.

An outstanding performance came from Hap Fauth's 74ft *Bella Mente* which finished third on the water, just six minutes behind *Magic Carpet e*. South of Capri, Peter Harrison's *Jolt* had overhauled them but, when both were later becalmed off the Amalfi coast, *Bella Mente* had found the new breeze first.



Peter Harrison's Jolt was runner-up to Bella Mente in the Regata dei Tre Golfi.
Photo: Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi



Maxi fleet sets sail from Naples' Porticciolo di Santa Lucia, home to the CRVI's clubhouse. Photo: Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi

She went on to win not only the Maxi Grand Prix class but the whole Maxi class – a great start to defending their IMA Maxi Europeans title and a fine 80th birthday present for Fauth.

The most breeze *Bella Mente* saw was en route to Ponza when, in 24 knots, she had hit 26 knots boat speed sailing triple-headed. However, she also took on so much water it affected her electrics. Behind, Peter Harrison's *Jolt* finished second overall with *North Star* third. *Galateia*, Paul Berger's Swan 82

Kallima, Giuseppe Puttini's Swan 65 ketch *Shirlaf* and Riccardo Pavoncelli's Gunboat 68 *Gaetana* won their respective classes, with *Highland Fling 18* claiming multihull line honours.

After Saturday's finish, there was a brief respite for the fleet, now moored up to the specially-installed pontoons in Sorrento's Marina Piccola prior to Monday's start of inshore/coastal racing. The fleet, now standing at 23 for the inshores, ranged from the new *Magic Carpet e* (IRC TCC 1.834) down to *Shirlaf*

(1.103). To determine the IMA Maxi European Champion, the races would all start en masse and be scored both as one class and in four sub-divisions.

For the opening inshore, PRO Stuart Childerley sent the fleet on a 15-mile composite course in a light southwesterly. *Galateia* got the best start, followed up the first beat by *Magic Carpet e* and *V*. The top five overall were from the Maxi Grand Prix and Maxi 1 classes, with *Jolt* first ahead of *Galateia* and *Bella Mente*.



Jolt tactician Ed Baird commented: “We were lucky enough to stay in clear lanes as we have to be very cautious of what the 100-footers are doing. Fortunately we were able to avoid the traffic long enough to play the game from the front end.” *Jolt* is unique in the Maxi Grand Prix class for having a trim tab, theoretically providing her with a high mode to get into clear air on the beats, but with a rating some 28 points above *Bella Mente*.

Maxi Alpha class honours went to Guido Paolo Gamucci’s canting-keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*, although Jean-Sébastien Decaux’s Wally 94 *Sensei* led around the course on the water. Over the winter *Cippa Lippa X* had been modified with 400kg of water ballast added, permitting her to reduce her crew from 18 to 15, along with shedding 1.2 tonnes of displacement. She finished ahead of Paul Berger’s Swan 82 and defending champion *Kallima* and Jean-Pierre Barjon’s Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina*.

Yacht Club Gaeta President Vincenzo Addressi’s Mylius 60 *Fra’ Diavolo* topped Maxi Bravo, finishing 11th overall ahead of IMA President Benoît de Froidmont’s Wally 60 *Wallyño* and Luca Scoppa’s Dehler 60 *Blue Oyster*.

The second day’s coastal race was a demanding 27-mile course around Capri, with volatile wind conditions benefitting some of the smaller maxis.

A shift on the start line enabled Pascale Decaux’s *Tilakkhana II* to be first around the weather mark off Sorrento until a gennaker failure forced her retirement, handing the lead to *Galateia*. Meanwhile Sir Peter Ogden’s *Jethou* had been OCS but found better breeze after heading offshore, drawing level with the 100s. Those in by the shore fell into a lull



Left: As usual the inshores had full fleet starts from off the Sorrento peninsula.

Photos: Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi

Andrea Recordati’s Bullitt embarks on the lap of Capri.



Hap Fauth's *Bella Mente* was the IMA Maxi Europeans decisive overall winner for a second time.
Photos: Tre Colli Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi

before 25-knot bullets came dropping down from the cliffs near Punta Campanella.

After a turning mark close to Li Galli, the fleet returned to sail the picturesque route around the south side of Capri, past landmarks such as the Faraglioni rocks and Punta Carena lighthouse.

Despite the conditions, *Bella Mente* again delivered a masterclass. "We had to be patient and anticipate the last shutdown near Capri," explained tactician Terry Hutchinson. South of Capri *Jolt* had been out in front, but her advantage had diminished in the shutdown. "We wriggled our way around, and all the boats were going from jib to masthead zero to soft sails. We took *Proteus'* transom, which got us over to *Jolt*." They finished 1 minute 45 seconds astern of *Jolt*, enough to beat them on corrected time.

Among the Maxi 1s, Andrea Recordati's *Wally 93 Bullitt* claimed IRC honours, having kept up with the 100-footers during the shutdowns.

Cippa Lippa X put in another fine performance to finish second across the whole fleet, taking another Maxi Alpha class win. "Coming back was all straight under the Code Zero – really fast," explained tactician Michele Regolo. Similarly, *Fra' Diavolo* repeated her Maxi Bravo victory.

The penultimate day featured two windward-leeward races in a 10–15 knot southwesterly and a confused sea state, under dramatic skies with rain clouds obscuring Mount Vesuvius to the north and the off-lying islands of Capri and Ischia. The day was dominated by the five-boat Maxi Grand Prix class, with only *V* occasionally breaking into the top positions.



▲ David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers' 100ft Galatea upwind off the Sorrento peninsula.
▼ Sir Irvine Laidlaw's Gunboat 80 Highland Fling 18 was first multihull home in the offshore.



▲ IMA President Benoît de Froidmont's Wally 60 Wallyño suffered keel damage during the inshore racing.
▼ Karel Komárek's V passes Capri's famous Faraglioni rocks.





▲ Maxi 1 leads the Maxi Grand Prix class down the run.

▼ Guido Paolo Camucci's canting keel Mylius 60 Cippa Lippa X was runner-up in the Maxi Alpha class.



▲ Maxi Bravo winner, Vincenzo Addressi's Mylius 18E35 Fra' Diavolo.

▼ Paul Berger's Swan 82 Kallima successfully defended her title.



IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP



Andrea Recordati at the helm of his Wally 93 Bullitt.

The opening race ended in a dramatic photo finish, with *Galateia* winning on the water by just three seconds from *V*. In the second race, *Galateia* again took line honours and corrected out ahead of *Bullitt* and *V*, tightening her grip on the Maxi 1 class.

“We had a very fun day,” commented *V* tactician Ken Read. “Karel [Komárek] did a really nice job driving. The first one was a ‘drag-em-out’, fun, really well-sailed boat race and we nipped *Galateia* because they give us all a little time.”

Stars of the day, unquestionably, were the Maxi Grand Prix five. In the opening race *Bella Mente* successfully port-tacked the fleet, a colossally brave move in a 74-footer, but ultimately came second to Peter Dubens’ *North Star*, with *Jethou* third.

For the second race, the wind had dropped 3 knots and it was the turn of George Sakellaris’ *Proteus* –

newly fitted this season with water ballast – to finish ahead of *Bella Mente* and *North Star*. All five Maxi Grand Prix boats corrected out to within one minute.

“It was a tricky day with the cloud influence,” commented *Proteus*’ strategist Jon McKee. “In the second race the left came in at the end, rather than the right, so we positioned ourselves to the left which got us to the windward mark in good shape.”

In Maxi Bravo, the first race saw Luca Scoppa’s Dehler 60 *Blue Oyster* win after finishing eighth overall, one ahead of the Maxi Alpha class winner, Paul Berger’s Swan 82 *Kallima*, which also won the second race in her class, with *Fra’ Diavolo* again winning Maxi Beta.

Spirit of Lorina tactician Stephane Christidis commented: “The conditions and racing were perfect for us. In the first race we had a really good



Pier Luigi Loro Piana’s 80ft canting keeler *My Song*.

start – to do well you needed perfect timing with a good distance to the line at maximum speed, which was difficult in so much traffic.”

The final day’s coastal race covered 25.4 miles across the Gulf of Naples in an 8-14 knot southwesterly. Before starting, *Bella Mente* had already secured the overall IMA Maxi European

Championship title thanks to her consistent podium finishes throughout the week. In the final race she discarded her seventh to finish on nine points, leaving *Jolt*, *North Star* and *Proteus* behind her – all tied on 17 points.

“It was tightly fought – the boats are really close and the racing was excellent,” confirmed a delighted Hap Fauth. “*Bella Mente* is fast and the crew make it faster. But we work at it, we keep the boat in really good condition and keep investing in it. We’ve really enjoyed this week – we had good breeze. As I say, ‘luck beats early rising and skill trumps all’.”

Terry Hutchinson added: “Hap expects hard work, professionalism and a little mongrel in us. We had really good, consistent boat handling. The boat was going well. We started really well, which was probably the difference.”

Longer legs in the final race allowed the Maxi 1s to unleash their full potential. While *Galateia* had also

secured her class win with a day to spare, she still took line honours in the last race. During the week co-owner Chris Flowers shared helming duties with his daughter Lizz, making the sizeable transition up from her usual 420 dinghy.

In Maxi Alpha in the last race, *Kallima*, finishing 13th overall two ahead of Guido Paolo Gamucci’s Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*, was enough to secure her the class win – a fine birthday present for Belgian owner Paul Berger. “*Kallima*’s going really well,” said tactician Romain Mouchel. “We started the project with Paul five years ago. At first, we didn’t have many pros but since then we’ve been investing in new sails and a few more pro crews, and it’s paying off. The last two to three days were really our conditions.”

Maxi Bravo class winner, Vincenzo Addessi was particularly pleased *Fra’ Diavolo* finished the last race first behind the fully professional Maxi 1 and

Grand Prix fleets. “We have a very good boat and a good team and were well prepared. We’ve had every condition, from the long distance race in strong winds, to light winds, but our boat performs well in all.”

Taking place alongside the IMA Maxi Europeans was the Tre Golfi Multihull Trophy in which Riccardo Pavoncelli’s Gunboat 66 *Gaetana* enjoyed a perfect scoreline, finishing ahead of *Highland Fling 18* and *Allegra*.

“We’ve had a great week with amazing conditions,” said Pavoncelli. “*Gaetana* has certainly got a very good handicap. We had her re-rated just before the race, just to make sure. We only sailed with three sails and everybody worked very well. We had perfect conditions for us which wouldn’t have been the case if it were much windier. Parthenope, the goddess of the Neapolitan sea, was very helpful to us...”



Bella Mente’s jubilant Hap Fauth with tactician Terry Hutchinson (right) and Rolex Italia’s Managing Director Stefan Müller (left).



The winning crews from *Bella Mente*, *Galateia*, *Kallima* and *Fra’ Diavolo*.
Photos: Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi



▲ Secretary General Andrew McIrvine with the IMA's Maria Luisa Farris.



▲ Future IMA President Maurits van Oranje-Nassau with guests at the IMA party.



▲ IMA cocktail party on the terrace of Sorrento's Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria.



▲ Hap Fauth and Amy Laing with CRVI President Roberto Mottola di Amato.



▲ The CRVI's Maurizio Pavesi with Loro Piana's Giorgio Benussi.



▲ IMA Vice Presidents Hap Fauth and Pier Luigi Loro Piana.



▲ Kallima's Paul Berger.



▲ Fra' Diavolo's Vincenzo Addessi, President of the Yacht Club Gaeta.



▲ President Benoît de Froidmont with Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones and Pascale Decaux.



2024-2025 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge

*Deep Blue and Leopard 3 engulfed in a tropical downpour during the RORC Nelson's Cup in February.
Photo: Tim Wright/www.photoaction.com*



Following on from the previous autumn's Rolex Middle Sea Race, the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge resumed in 2025 with La Larga. While PalmaVela was originally introduced in 2005 by the Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP) as the maxi class' Mediterranean season opener, its offshore race – La Larga – was only added as a prelude to the main event (now known as Sandberg PalmaVela) five years ago.

Starting on 26 April, the 2025 race got off to a hesitant start with a postponement of over four hours until the wind filled in, finally allowing the fleet to set sail from the Bay of Palma. With a forecast anticipating 15-knot northerlies, the big boats, led by the maxis, were dispatched on a 235-mile course. This sent them around the islands of Ibiza, Formentera and their adjacent islets, to port, before heading back towards Mallorca. Here they had to round a mark off Porto Colom before heading for the finish line back in the Bay of Palma.

Among the 35 boats on the start line, three were maxis racing in the IRC class. Leading the way was the highest rated among them, the much-travelled and heavily turboed VO70 *L4 Trifork* (once upon a time the 2008–09 Volvo Ocean Race winner *Ericsson 4*), skippered by Jørn Larsen.

The Danish-flagged yacht's project manager Jens Dolmer commented prior to the start: "This is the second time we're taking part in La Larga and we're really looking forward to it. We raced in a previous edition three or four years ago and we believe it's a great event. You see a lot of regattas here in Palma, but there aren't many offshore races, so it offers

something different – and in one of the best sailing locations."

By early evening, the maxis were experiencing the best pressure of the race, making 15–17 knots leaving Mallorca for Ibiza, where they arrived around midnight. Off the southern tip of Formentera, they experienced strong rain squalls before later being becalmed as they attempted to round the island of Cabrera, located to the south of Mallorca.

Yet over the course of the race the fleet would also encounter significantly lighter conditions: the wind petered out rounding Ibiza, followed by light breezes around Cabrera, while teams fought to maintain forward motion to reach the last mandatory waypoint off Porto Colom.

Inevitably *L4 Trifork* was first back to Palma the following afternoon shortly before 17:00. Her elapsed time of 24 hours 34 minutes 52 seconds was enough for Jørn Larsen's crew not only to claim line honours, but also victory overall on corrected time by almost two and a half hours. Finishing 7 hours 38 minutes later was Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Spirit of Lorina*, the 2021-22 IMA MMOC winner. According to skipper/project manager Benjamin Enon, most of the super-light race had been simply too light for their Botin 65, the racing having included two significant transition periods in the weather. "In both we lost our advantage and the arrival back into Palma was very light and complicated too," he explained. Under IRC, Poland's Robert Szustkowski and his Mylius 60 FD *R6* (ex-*Sud*) was second, with *Spirit of Lorina* filling the podium in third place.

*The maxi trio set sail from Palma on La Larga.
Photo: SailingShots/Maria Muiña*







The RCNP's well known sports coordinator Vivi Mainemare.



R6 crew Jarek Kazberuk, Grzegorz Gozdzik and Robert Janecki at the prize-giving.



Team L4 Trifork receives their prize from RCNP President Rafael Gil and Commodore Jorge Forteza.

LA LARGA

At the prize-giving held at the Real Club Náutico de Palma's clubhouse, where Rafael Gil, President of the RCNP, acted as master of ceremonies, La Larga's winners received exclusive pieces from the

PalmaVela trophy collection, which this year featured work by José Smith Zubiaga – a self-taught painter known for his naïve style and bold, expressive use of colour.



*Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 Spirit of Lorina found the going tough but still gained valuable MMOC points in La Larga.
Photos: SailingShots/Maria Muiña*

*The all-conquering VO70 L4 Trifork was skippered by CEO of technology company Trifork, Jørn Larsen.
Photo: Ugo Fonolla/RCNP*





151 MIGLIA-TROFEO CETILAR

It was a long time coming for Guido Paolo Gamucci, who has been, and remains, one of the most enthusiastic competitors in both the IMA's series of inshore and offshore races. 'Forever the bridesmaid, never the bride', his canting keel Mylius 60, *Cippa Lippa X*, spent much of the 2024 season being raced well but seemed perpetually to finish second, a run that continued into her first event of 2025 – the IMA Maxi European Championship. However – finally – Gamucci, tactician Michele Regolo and the *Cippa Lippa X* crew got to taste victory when they won the Maxi class in the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar.

In 2025 the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar followed a new course, avoiding Giraglia off north Corsica and steering the fleet away from the Traffic Separation Scheme in the Corsican Channel, into which, in previous races, some competitors had occasionally erred, or worse, were even stuck becalmed in during the middle of the night...

The new course was set to leave Livorno to round a mark off Marina di Pisa as usual, but then turning southwest to round the island of Gorgona (halfway to Giraglia), before heading to the southwesterly turning mark of Pianosa (an island southwest of Elba). The course continued on to the familiar mark from previous races, Formiche di Grosseto, but then included another new mark in the Piombino channel (between Elba and the Italian mainland), creating a dogleg northwest before returning to finish off Punta Ala.

In the event, due to the forecast Gorgona was removed from the course, with competitors instead having to leave two virtual marks to port to avoid a marine mammal sanctuary off the coast of Livorno.

Following the Maxi class start at 14:05 on 30 May, line honours favourite *ARCA SGR*, skippered by Furio Benussi, set the pace. She was followed by a trio comprising *Cippa Lippa X*, ICE Yachts CEO Marco Malgara's *RP78 Nice* (ex-*Capricorno*) and the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar's defending champion, Carlo A Puri Negri's *Farr/Felci 70 Atalanta II*. Fourth on the water was the Swan 601 *Durlindana IV*, the Gianni family's replacement for their 2023 *Farr 60* Maxi class winner.

The frontrunners made good progress until the early evening, with race founder and sponsor Roberto Lacorte's 60ft foiler *FlyingNikka* initially stuck behind before pulling up to second on the water. Approaching the west coast of Elba, *ARCA SGR* may have slowed, but the 100-footer's towering rig enabled her to keep moving and by mid-evening, as she was rounding Pianosa, it was the next group that was becalmed off Elba. Here a little hitch to the west played out well for *FlyingNikka*, which became first of the next wave into the new breeze. As a fine example of being both the tortoise and the hare, she was soon back up and flying at 22 knots, albeit forced to sail some unpleasant angles to do so. On the water she was second around Pianosa at around midnight, at which point *ARCA SGR* was making reasonable progress east, laying Formiche di Grosseto.

However it was not to last. Just six miles east of Pianosa, *FlyingNikka* fell into a hole, allowing *Nice* and *Cippa Lippa X* to once again draw level with her. At this point *Cippa Lippa X* did well edging south and two hours later was making good progress towards Formiche di Grosseto. Yet as the wind filled in, building to 12 knots (the most the frontrunners saw during the race), it was not long before



Dario Castiglia's Baltic 65 RE/MAX One finished sixth in the maxi class.



Victory finally for Guido Paolo Gamucci (second from left) and his *Cippa Lippa X* crew.

FlyingNikka was back up on her foils and, once more, had left them for dead. *ARCA SGR* again claimed line honours, crossing the line at 05:12 to establish a record for the new course of 15 hours 31 minutes 57 seconds.

“The race was really nice – our speed only dropped to 2-3 knots for a couple of minutes and we never stopped,” commented Benussi. “We handled the

transitions in the right mode and arrived really quickly. I am really proud of the crew.”

FlyingNikka was second home at 09:30. “It was great fun,” commented the team’s Alessio Razeto. “The wind conditions were up and down and for us it meant a short time flying – just 8% of the total time, but it was good because we continued to improve our displacement mode sailing and there

were times when we were catching up *ARCA SGR*. We had no expectations when we started because it was a light wind forecast. We could not hope for any better.”

Over the winter modifications had been made to *FlyingNikka*: the span of her foils were reduced, fences were added to both her foil arms and keel to help eliminate ventilation while an interceptor was



It may have been another stop-start race for Roberto Lacorte’s amazing foiler FlyingNikka, but this year she was second home after ARCA SGR.

Photos: Studio Taccola



Defending champion Carlo A Puri Negri's *Atalanta II* finished third in the Maxi class.

fitted to her transom. "It should improve our acceleration, but it is more critical now to keep the boat on the foils so you have to improve the skill of the crew," Razeto explained.

Behind, *Nice* and *Cippa Lippa X* spent the last third of the race in their own personal match race. *Cippa Lippa X* finished at 10:12 off Marina di Punta Ala, just behind *Nice*, which took second place in the Maxi class under corrected time. *Atalanta II* again put in a strong performance to end up third.

"Last year we always seemed to finish second, so it is great to win it this time," commented *Cippa Lippa X*'s tactician, former Olympic Laser sailor Michele Regolo. "It was a pretty light race with high pressure dominating the situation. We had a fantastic start and a good first part but then, close to Elba, there was a transition with no wind. The group came together but we decided to gybe inside Elba, which

apparently would be 'death' but in fact we managed to find a local breeze. From then on, we had a really good race. Of course, as usual in long offshores, you have to be in the right place at the right moment for the gradient and thermic transition. We pushed very hard and we did a lot of sail changes and we didn't spare ourselves. I am very happy for Guido Paolo Gamucci because he is very passionate about sailing and this boat and finally we have won..."

For Gamucci, who typically races his boat intensely throughout the season, the victory was doubly satisfying as his yacht club is Punta Ala, the event's co-organiser with Yacht Club Repubblica Marinara di Pisa and Yacht Club Livorno.

Regolo said they had also perhaps benefitted from their match race with *Nice*. "They are a bit faster than us; when we made some good moves, they would stretch away again with their speed so it was



The exceptional post-race party in the waterside grounds of the Yacht Club Punta Ala.

like we were attached by shock cord. When you have a slightly faster boat next to you it pushes you to give more and more, so they were a help for us."

The new course was well received by the maxi owners, despite the wind fully shutting down on Saturday afternoon, leaving a six-hour gap between the arrivals of eighth-placed *Tapioca*, the ICE 66 of José Agnaldo Andrade Jr, and Alois Neukirchen's Mylius 66 RS *Schorch*.

The event concluded on Sunday evening with the prize-giving where *ARCA SGR*'s crew received the Challenge Trophy for their line honours victory, while Guido Paolo Gamucci and his crew on *Cippa Lippa X* received the IMA Trophy for their overall corrected time Maxi class victory. This was followed once again by the event's usual spectacular sit-down dinner for all its competitors in the waterside grounds of the Yacht Club Punta Ala.

LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA OFFSHORE

Loro Piana Giraglia, the Yacht Club Italiano's historic offshore race between Saint-Tropez and Genoa via the infamous Giraglia off north Corsica, has often seen some close finishes, with yachts being pipped to the post in the final miles. However the conclusion of the 2025 race included an epic, if slow-motion, match race to the line between Seng Huang Lee's *SHK Scallywag* and Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' new *Magic Carpet e*, the 100-footers crossing tacks within sight of the finish line.

While many maxis did not participate the previous year due to a severe forecast, in 2025 many chose not to start the race because of an ultra-light one, with the routing predicting that the 241-mile race, typically requiring just one night at sea, would on this occasion take some 40-50 hours. Ultimately just 14 maxis started at midday on 11 June, with George Sakellaris' *Proteus* retiring soon after the gun went, leaving Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X* as the sole remaining Maxi Grand Prix yacht.

While light, it nonetheless proved a highly tactical and enjoyable race. As *SHK Scallywag* tactician Mark Bradford later explained: "Everyone was writing the race off, but it turned out to be bloody good. We had a great battle between the four of us all the way around and it was really close."

The start took place in 10-12 knots in what would prove to be the most breeze of the entire race. *Magic Carpet e* took an early lead heading away from the French coast as *ARCA SGR* lost ground to the north. Meanwhile the nimble *SHK Scallywag* found her more southerly track paying so that by 18:00 she had nosed ahead of her rivals. The evening ended frustratingly for the frontrunners, who ran out of

breeze for almost four hours, but, with the leading 100-footers swapping sides of the course, the biggest upset came when *Magic Carpet e*, the grand master of the Loro Piana Giraglia course, lost out to south, with *Capricorno* resolutely hanging onto her. This let *SHK Scallywag* leap ahead as the first able to resume their passage towards Giraglia.

However progress slowed again as *SHK Scallywag* led around the southern tip of the Giraglia just before 06:00, followed around 15 minutes later by *Magic Carpet e* and *Capricorno*. Here *Capricorno* got stuck, allowing *Magic Carpet e* to break away and Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 80ft *My Song* to catch up – all having dug into the north coast of Corsica to make best use of the vital land breeze.

Conditions remained difficult for the frontrunners throughout the morning, with those astern catching up with *SHK Scallywag* as, further back, *ARCA SGR* and *Django 7X* were once more solidly becalmed. Eventually everyone was on their way again, with *My Song* attempting a flier out to the east, but come lunchtime the leaders – by now still only halfway between Giraglia and the finish in Genoa – faced yet another park-up.

By late afternoon the wind had filled in again. *SHK Scallywag* had done well in the calm to remain four miles ahead, but as dusk fell *Magic Carpet e*, having managed to stay on a higher course, was closing fast. Conditions may have been light, but with both having to put in two critical tacks in order to cross the line, it was impressively tense. Ultimately the Singaporean maxi claimed line honours at 20:58:47 local time, beating her rival by just 2 minutes 13 seconds on the water.

Line honours favourite, SHK Scallywag leads the fleet away from Saint-Tropez on the Loro Piana Giraglia.
Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi





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Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 80ft My Song scored her best result of 2025, finishing second maxi under IRC and 7th overall across the full fleet. Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

“The race was as light as we expected, but it wasn’t as close as we expected,” commented *SHK Scallywag*’s relieved Australian skipper David Witt. “We didn’t even know if our 10-year-old boat was going to be any good against the brand new *Magic Carpet e*, so we’re really happy to be able to beat her. We got lucky in the Rolex Middle Sea Race and we got lucky here, so that’s our two Med events we’ve won...”

The finish line was unusual in that it was aligned with the 4-knot wind rather than positioned across it, so the leaders had to finish on port tack. Tactician Mark Bradford (personally celebrating his third consecutive Giraglia line honours win, following the last two on *Black Jack 100*) explained their approach: “Our plan was to get a tack in early, get built, so on the last cross we could either duck to go on starboard or cross them. In the end we just had a nice little puff and got across them, which made life easier.”

On board *Magic Carpet e* there was frustration but acceptance of a good result; after all this was only the boat’s second offshore race and they had done well to catch up in the light conditions considering their deficit at Giraglia. Tactician Francesco de Angelis observed: “Coming from the Giraglia we stayed there in the hunt and, let’s say, ‘we opened up an opportunity’. But they [*SHK Scallywag*] sailed well, especially at the end. They were quick and we are just learning the boat. For our team it was a very positive experience.”

Third home half an hour later was Alessandro Del Bono’s *Capricorno*. Winner of the Loro Piana Giraglia inshores in the Maxi 1 class, *Capricorno*



Another line honours contender, Furio Benussi’s 100ft ARCA SGR was third home on the water.



It was a busy month for Cippa Lippa X going from the IMA Maxi Europeans, to winning the 151 Miglia to Loro Piana Giraglia.
Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

claimed the Maxi class in the offshore too under IRC corrected time, despite *Django 7X* leading at one point, followed by Guenther Birkner's new generation Swan 65 *Cloudy 7*.

On the last miles to Genoa, *Capricorno* had erred west and *My Song* dramatically east towards Portofino, the former choice ultimately paying. "When we arrived at the Giraglia, there was no wind," commented Del Bono. "Pigi [*My Song*] arrived in our wake and passed us. But our last decision was the right one. We did very well, I'm very happy and the boat now is performing well – we think we are at about 85% of the potential of the boat."

Capricorno's afterguard heavyweights included Brazilian multiple Olympic medallist tactician Torben Grael, who added: "We expected it to be light and it was pretty light. We had a couple of stops, but the angles we had were generally not too bad – when you're dead upwind or downwind, it's a lot worse."

Of their choice to head west approaching the finish, he added: "We'd lost a little bit at the Giraglia, especially to *My Song*. So we left the fleet to get pressure before the other boats. The other boats had a little curve to leeward and we gained on the boats ahead."

Capricorno went on to finish second overall across the whole IRC fleet.

On board *My Song*, Pier Luigi Loro Piana and son Giacomo handled the majority of helming duties. The 80-footer came home fourth on the water at 22:58 after just losing a tacking duel with the 100ft ARCA SGR. This left her second on corrected time,



Loro Piana Giraglia was a supreme event for Alessandro Del Bono's JV80 Capricorno, winning the inshores, then the maxi class prize in the offshore race.



SHK Scallywag wafts along in the light breeze as dusk arrives.
Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi



Guido Paolo Gamucci, Michele Regolo and the Cippa Lippa X crew prepare to celebrate.



YCI President Carlo Cameli presents SHK Scallywag skipper David Witt with champagne.

but almost three hours behind *Capricorno* under IRC in the Maxi class, and ahead of third-placed *Magic Carpet e*.

Unlike some of her competitors, *My Song* reduced her crew from 18-20 down to 12 and left many of her sails on the dock. “We tried to keep everything as light as possible,” explained tactician/navigator Tommaso Chieffi. Of their race, he added: “We had a good start. Of course *Capricorno* was quicker upwind and stretched away, but as soon as we started reaching with the Code Zero, we were catching up and eventually

we were not very far behind at the Giraglia. They parked in a hole and we had the opportunity to cut the corner and went inshore where there was a line of breeze.” Ultimately the race favoured the 80-footers.

Guido Paolo Gamucci’s well-sailed canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X* continued her spectacular winning streak in the small Maxi class. Following her straight bullets in the inshores the Italian canting keeler continued this performance in the offshore, finishing ahead of the Swan 80 *Sapma* and the Swan 65 *Cloudy 7* on corrected time.

“We had 10-12 knots on the first upwind, but then it just died and it was really tough,” admitted Gamucci. “We had three or four big stops, one before Giraglia and everyone that was a bit more on the right came into us, which was frustrating.” *Cippa Lippa X* arrived at 09:05 to take fifth overall in the maxi class behind *Django 7X*. “Fortunately we arrived with the last of the wind – for the last 100 metres there was no wind at all,” stated Gamucci.

Naturally in the combined inshore and offshore race results, *Cippa Lippa X* and *Capricorno* were unchallenged in their respective classes.



The line honours battle culminated in a full-on 100-footer match race between SHK *Scallywag* and *Magic Carpet e*.



While competitors in the 2023 and 2024 races received a severe beating with storm force winds and violent gusts, in contrast the fifth edition of the Aegean 600 was comparatively light. As usual the event was organised by Hellenic Offshore Racing Club with Olympic Marine and the Region of Attica as co-organisers and Rolex as the official timepiece.

The 2025 race proved to be one of snakes and ladders – several boats pulled out what seemed to be unassailable leads only to fall into giant wind holes, many defying meteorological logic. But despite taking almost four days to complete, this race culminated in an extraordinary three-way dash for line honours in survival conditions.

While light winds were forecasted for the start from Cape Sounion at 14:00 on 6 July, they didn't materialise. "We went out and straight away were flying a hull past Poseidon's Temple," recounted Paul Larsen, co-skipper on Adrian Keller's 84ft catamaran *Allegra*.

Heading away from Lavrion, *Allegra* and Philip Rann's Swan 80 *Umiko* did best at first by heading west of the rhumb line, only to park-up. George Procopiou's VO70 *Aiolos*, the monohull line honours favourite and defending Maxi class champion, was first to get away, leading into the Milos turning mark just ahead of *Allegra*, which, despite past experience of the race, endured a difficult night. Larsen explained: "If you're the first canary down the coalmine everyone can see what's going on and decide where to go. The expected southwesterly just wasn't filling in, so we decided to stick in behind Milos...and got absolutely rinsed. We spent all night tacking in and out, looking at the same view each



George Procopiou at the helm of *Aiolos* with his wife Alexandra.

time..." They were passed by *Umiko*, Federico Marchi and Diego San Giuliano's 69ft *Nacira*, and several smaller race yachts.

Another park-up occurred when the front runners reached the magnificent Santorini caldera the next afternoon. By this time the nimble new Carkeek 54 *Daguet 5* had overtaken *Aiolos*, with *Allegra* two and a half hours behind, just ahead of *Nacira* and *Umiko*. This caused further misery for the maxi catamaran, as Larsen commented: "You sail into Santorini and if you're 100ft left or right you can just get stuck in these turbulent vortexes and park up. Other boats roll in, just get a gust and sail around you..." When *Allegra* exited the caldera at 17:30, *Aiolos* was 21 miles ahead, having slowly overhauled *Daguet 5* en route to the race's

southernmost point, Kassos, which *Aiolos* reached at 01:00 on the second morning.

However, being the 'first canary' soon proved *Aiolos*' undoing too. Becalmed off Karpathos, *Aiolos* was the warning *Allegra* needed to stay offshore, enabling her to recover her deficit. Meanwhile the lightweight *Daguet 5* found breeze, propelling her off towards Rhodes. This wind hole was the most significant of the race, catching all the race's faster boats so that, by the time the restart had occurred at 07:30, *Daguet 5* was 34 miles ahead.

Approaching Rhodes was the fastest part for *Allegra*, recalled Larsen: "We had an amazing power reach – full hull-flying, 25-28 knots, screecher up, full rig, just loving life, finally putting some good miles on the course." She was now back up to second on the water, with *Aiolos* sixth, close to other maxis *E Vai*, *Umiko* and *Nacira*.

Leading the way, *Daguet 5* reached the easternmost turning mark off Rhodes harbour, followed by *Allegra* 1 hour 30 minutes later, *Aiolos* 40 miles astern.

Yet, while sailing upwind west along the north coast of Rhodes to Kandelioussa, *Allegra* finally reeled in and passed *Daguet 5*, which was going around 9.5 knots to her 14. The big cat rounded this tiny island just after 22:00 on day two, half an hour ahead of her French rival.

The passage anticlockwise around mountainous Kos is one of the trickiest parts of the race and where *Allegra* experienced extreme wind shear. Larsen explained: "There was this hot air coming through and it was like sailing in front of a hairdryer. Then it would cool again. At times you just couldn't trust

Left: George Procopiou's VO70 *Aiolos* sets sail from beneath Poseidon's Temple at the tip of the Sounion peninsula.
Photos: ALEN Photography/Nikos Alevromytis



▲ Philip Rann (third from right) with his winning Umiko crew including 2.4mR Paralympic gold medallist Helena Lucas.
▼ This would be Rann's last race aboard his Swan 80 having recently upgraded to his Carbon Ocean 82 Aegir.



▲ The course of the Aegean 600 is complex but passes some of the greatest hotspots, many featuring in Greek mythology.
▼ Adrian Keller's catamaran Allegra returned to once again score multihull line honours.



your wind instruments – they'd be saying the wind is on the other side of the boat and yet your sails would be full."

Allegra survived by manoeuvring south towards the Datça Peninsula and rounded the eastern end of Kos at 03:00 on 9 July, 7 miles ahead of *Daguet 5*. Conditions then turned light, favouring *Daguet 5*; as *Allegra* struggled past Farmakonisi, their French rival again nosed ahead, reaching the course's northeasterly turning mark of Agathonisi at midday.

As the leaders now attempted to make progress west upwind, they split tacks. *Daguet 5* headed north towards Samos, *Allegra* headed south, but neither made good progress. Meanwhile the chasing group were reducing their deficit; after turning their bows west, this group hugged the north coast of Agathonisi and the northern tips of Arki and Patmos, *Aiolos* now up to third on the water. By 22:00 *Daguet 5* was making better progress to the north, having shaved the western tip of Icaria, while *Aiolos* had caught up with, and passed, the wallowing *Allegra*.

Approaching Mykonos, after almost four days of mostly light winds, the notorious Meltemi arrived. This was well forecast, although the 35-knot breeze was closer to 50 in reality. *Daguet 5*'s northerly route finally paid and at 04:30 on 10 July she was first to Mykonos, with *Aiolos* 12 miles behind in second, followed by *Varuna* and *Allegra*.

In the lee of Mykonos *Allegra* was already under two reefs and J2, making 12-18 knots. Then in the Mykonos channel they saw 49 knots. "We were pushing it along," Larsen recalls. "We came off one big wave in a squall and the J2 split in half." They

changed to their J3 – the first time they'd ever hoisted it in thousands of miles of offshore racing.

The penultimate island of the course, Gyros, again provided the race's defining moment as *Daguet 5*, *Allegra* and *Aiolos* approached it three-abreast. *Argo* had gained to its lee in 2024, a tactic *Allegra* followed this year, as *Aiolos* and *Daguet 5* passed it to windward. "When we got behind it, it was white with all these huge swirling eddies coming down off the cliffs, hitting the water and exploding out. I was thinking we should get Adrian [Keller, owner] below. But he was loving it, because we were hammer down in what was otherwise survival conditions, the finish getting closer with all to play for..."

Unfortunately for *Allegra*, this time the boats to windward gained. In perfect VO70 conditions *Aiolos* nosed ahead to lead around the top of Kéa and, after a short fetch to the finish, was first home at 09:32:08. Initially resigned to finishing third, *Allegra* then noticed *Daguet 5* in trouble. Extraordinarily, despite having seen a prolonged period of 60 knots that had relieved them of their masthead wind instruments, *Daguet 5* was now becalmed. *Allegra* sailed through them, crossing the line in second place at 09:59:54, followed by *Daguet 5* at 10:08:16.

Larsen continued: "At the end we were going 'that was one of the best races we've ever had': just high-octane blasting. Everyone had had the same misery and had had to pay their tax. The course was the ultimate leveller. Other races will feel boring after this."

While *Aiolos* achieved a great come-back to claim line honours, overall it was Philip Rann's Swan 80

Umiko which won the Maxi class under IRC – a fine result for Rann's last race with her (having acquired the Carbon Ocean 82 *Aegir*). *Umiko* had an exceptional last quarter of the race, reaching west rather than upwind like the frontrunners. She shed her opponents to lead into the Mykonos channel and was the first to break away from a final park-up off Syros, finishing eighth on the water.

"I would say, by some distance, it was the hardest 600-mile race I've ever done," admitted Rann, who as usual sailed with a 50/50 pro-am crew that included North Sails' Tommy Webb, former Clipper Round the World Race skipper Sean McCarter and co-skipper, Richard Gould. "We took a day and a half more than last year. But – finally – we won something!"

Of the race itself Rann added: "The wind stops for no reason and then starts without warning. We had 200 miles of gentle sailing and then 400 miles sitting in wind holes or getting smashed. We were getting 3m seas in places and quite short seas coming through as well. We also fell into a wind hole 32 miles from home, for no apparent reason..." A few hours earlier they had seen 44 knots, albeit light compared to the 72 they saw in the 2024 edition.

"It's not a country for old men," Rann continued. "I'm 75 this year, but the youngsters loved it – particularly when every third wave was coming over the boat. I prefer it when I've got a gin and tonic in my hand by 7pm!"

At the prize-giving, the George Andreadis Challenge Trophy for the highest placed IMA member was awarded to George Procopiou and the crew of *Aiolos*.



The concluding event of the IMA's 2024-25 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge was, as usual, the Palermo-Montecarlo, run by the Circolo della Vela Sicilia in Palermo and the Yacht Club de Monaco, in partnership with the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda.

On this occasion, among the 41-boat fleet were four quite varied maxis competing in the Maxi Class. These ranged from the undisputed line honours favourite, Remon Vos' *Black Jack 100*, to the perennial VO65 ocean racer *Sisi*, skippered by Oliver Kobale, alongside Franz Wilhelm Baruffaldi Preis' Mylius 60 FD cruiser racer *Manticore* and Vincent Beuvry's RP69 *Intuition* (originally Hap Fauth's first *Bella Mente* mini maxi).

Typically taking place in August, the 437-mile Palermo-Montecarlo offers prolonged light winds which tend to test competitors' patience and often force radical tactics, like veering off course in an attempt to find breeze. Yet for a second consecutive year the race enjoyed mostly solid wind conditions.

As usual, after leaving the Mondello start line off the Circolo della Vela Sicilia (to the west of the Sicilian capital Palermo), the fleet set a course for the turning mark off Porto Cervo before then being left with the decision to either head through the Strait of Bonifacio and up the west coast of Corsica, or to take the 30 miles longer route, leaving the mountainous French island to port before heading to the finish.

Black Jack 100 knew the course well having first secured line honours as *Esimit Europa 2* in 2010 when she set a record time of 48 hours 52 minutes 21

seconds. Line honours came her way again in 2011 and 2012, while in 2015 she also beat her record with a time of 47 hours 46 minutes 48 seconds. After a break, she returned as Australian Peter Harburg's *Black Jack* in 2023 when she again won line honours before being sold to her present owner. Under Remon Vos she yet again scored line honours in 2024, setting another record time of 44 hours 34 minutes 22 seconds. In 2025 the *Black Jack 100* team was able to defend its title: leading from start to finish, securing line honours and the Giuseppe Tasca d'Almerita Trophy for an incredible seventh time, topping it off by reducing the record down to a mere 38 hours 53 minutes 16 seconds.

"I think we had some luck," mused *Black Jack 100*'s co-skipper Tristan le Brun. "Last year it was in 15-18 knots upwind and, at night downwind, we occasionally had 20-25 knots. This year it was mostly a downwind race. We were carrying big sails all the time – light at the beginning and then medium. To Porto Cervo it was downwind VMG, but we were on port tack most of the time, so not a lot of gybes."

Black Jack 100 reached the gate off Porto Cervo in just 22 hours 40 minutes, followed almost five hours later by the VO65 *Sisi*. After that *Black Jack 100* surprisingly chose to take the usually less popular route up the east coast of Corsica. This decision was made at the last minute, le Brun explaining that the routing kept switching, but ultimately, "there was more wind and it was downwind – so fast downwind all the way."

Once clear of Corsica and turning her bow towards the Monaco finish line, conditions then deteriorated:

"There was a very severe thunderstorm on Wednesday afternoon," le Brun continued. "We were surrounded by very heavy rain with lightning everywhere. It was not easy to keep the boat in one piece. It was just horrendous. I cannot even guess how much wind we had. We had very little sail up, but we were still so heeled over that the anemometer would not read properly! We were under A3 in 25 knots of wind and we had a header instantly of 100°. Luckily we had a second to bear away and immediately furled the sail. Literally everyone had their finger on the button..."

They also had gone east as it set them up better to tackle the tricky approach to Monaco. "There was



Pre-race party at the Circolo della Vela Sicilia in Palermo.



▲ Line honours yet again for Black Jack 100.

▼ Remon Vos (holding the Groningen flag) with co-skippers Tristan le Brun and Jelmer van Beek left of him.



PALERMO-MONTECARLO

drainage from the land – that was the only wind we could use to get to the finish...and it worked.”

After a massive refit over the winter of 2024-25, this was *Black Jack 100*'s third consecutive line honours victory following Gotland Runt in Sweden and July's Rolex Fastnet Race. “We had zero failures for a third event in a row,” le Brun continued proudly. “The crew did an outstanding job. We are good at boat handling and make fast sail changes, so we're always carrying the right sails and we're pretty efficient and always on polars. The owner drives a lot – that's going quite well. And we have some new crew who are perhaps not the most famous people, but are growing.”

Owner Remon Vos was delighted: “More than a regatta, this is a beautiful event. The welcome in Palermo and Monte Carlo was wonderful. Winning is always a thrill and I have to thank the crew. Competing in such a difficult race in this way is the result of a combination of factors: boat, sails, crew and luck. It's a shame some of our maxi competitors weren't here this year. I hope they'll come and challenge us next year...”

Next maxi to finish was the Austrian-flagged VO65 *Sisi*, followed by the Mylius 60 FD *Manticore* and then Vincent Beuvry and his French team on the RP69 *Intuition*. Despite arriving some 13 hours after *Black Jack 100*, *Manticore*'s IRC corrected time still gave them a significant lead of 6 hours 16 minutes; this left the line honours winner second overall in the Maxi class, with *Sisi* third.

“It was a beautiful race – we always had good wind and we only stopped for perhaps one hour on the first night,” explained Gabriele Bruni, of the famous

Photos: CVS/Studio Borlenghi

Sicilian sailing family, who was calling tactics on *Manticore*. “We started with a southerly and arrived in Porto Cervo with 25 knots.”

For those astern of *Black Jack 100*, the routing to the west of Corsica was much more certain. “When we entered the channel [off La Maddalena] the wind was lighter, but we knew it would change from south to west,” Bruni continued. “After one hour with no wind, we got the westerly, so we were upwind to Corsica. Then it was straight until the end.” Straight, but not straightforward: En route to the finish they encountered the westerly Mistral which piped up to 22 knots. Then, two miles out from the finish where the wind often gets light, instead *Manticore* experienced a big thunderstorm, bringing rain and wind. “So we managed to finish quickly!”



▲ Spinnaker gets out of hand on board *Intuition*, the original 69ft *Bella Mente* mini maxi.

▼ Franz Wilhelm Baruffaldi Preis and the *Manticore* crew celebrate their overall Maxi class victory.

▼ Maxi winner: The Mylius 60 FD *Manticore*.



16 maxi monohulls and one maxi multihull took part in the 46th edition of the Royal Malta Yacht Club's Rolex Middle Sea Race, concluding the 2025 offshore season, but starting the IMA's 2025-26 Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge.

Among the 117 total starters, the monohull line honours favourite Remon Vos' *Black Jack 100* was up against three former Volvo Ocean Race boats – the VO70 *Ocean Breeze* and 65s *Sisi* and *Kranendonk-Sailing Poland* (the latter chartered to a Chinese team including Laser Olympic gold medallist Lijia Xu and Ocean Race veterans Xue Liu and Cheng Ying), plus the Nacira 69 *12* and, all the way up from Australia, David Griffiths' JV 62 *Whisper* (formerly Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou*), on a tour also taking in the Rolex Fastnet Race.

Another hot contender was Louis Balcaen's Maxi 72 *Balthasar* which arrived in Malta after some speedy work by the team and suppliers to rectify damage done to her rig after a collision during September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

Then there were the canting keelers: Guido Paolo Gamucci's Mylius 60 *Cippa Lipa X* and Fabio Cannavale's Baltic 78 *Lupa of the Sea*, plus Derk Albada's Shipman 72 *Caiarossa* and the Vismara 80 *Luce Guida*.

The line-up also included two of Jean-Luc van den Heede's former solo round the world boats: Laurent Givry's Open 60 ketch *Cigare Rouge*, which the French offshore legend raced to second place in the 1992-93 Vendée Globe, and Arthur Hubert's 84ft *Adrien*, in which 'VDH' set a singlehanded record westabout against the prevailing winds in 2004.

Then there was Ermanno Traverso's venerable *Stormvogel*, built in the early 1960s for plywood pioneer Cornelius Bruynzeel and one of the first maxis to go on a global tour, competing in major events at the highest level. Her main maxi rivals were Marietta Strasoldo's Swan 651 *Lunz Am Meer* and Anatole Masfen's Swan 66 *Salpare*.

Favourite in the five-boat multihull class was Adrian Keller's much-travelled 84ft catamaran *Allegra*.

Prior to the start the forecast was unsettled, with no agreement between the weather models over exactly how a depression centred over the coast of North Africa might make its way northeast over the race course. As *Allegra's* racing skipper Paul Larsen noted: "The weather router was saying it could be light and variable...from the north or the south!" Some models showed thunderstorms on the first night, albeit not as extreme as those the fleet encountered in 2024.

The fleet set sail in a light flukey easterly from Grand Harbour to the sound of cannon fire, much to the delight of crowds gathered along the imposing ancient battlements of the Maltese capital Valletta. *Balthasar* got the best start among the maxis, although *Black Jack 100's* waterline length advantage soon prevailed to overtake the 72-footer once out into open water.

Despite torrential rain, the easterly enabled the frontrunners, led by *Allegra*, to make good progress towards Capo Passero, the southeasternmost tip of Sicily. However by late afternoon they were being headed, with *Allegra* tacking east just off the coast shortly before 17:00, followed by *Black Jack 100*, now second on the water. Better equipped for

sailing upwind, *Black Jack 100* took the lead at Capo Passero with *Balthasar* in hot pursuit. From here the leaders were able to lay the eastern Calabrian shore of the Strait of Messina. At this point *Black Jack 100* managed to break free, while *Allegra* and *Balthasar* were becalmed due east of Mount Etna.

In the Strait of Messina it was a case of 'the rich get richer'; *Black Jack 100* got through by 03:36 on the Sunday morning followed by *Balthasar* at 05:50, both helped through on the favourable 'montante' current, followed by *Allegra* at 07:33. Those immediately astern faced the 'scendente' or counter current.

Exiting the Strait, *Black Jack 100* was 20 miles ahead of *Balthasar* and, now on a starboard fetch, made solid progress towards the course's northeasterly turning mark, the active volcano of Stromboli. Here she arrived at 06:55 having extended her lead to 30 miles, although by the time *Balthasar* passed at 10:01, the blue 72-footer was leading by just under an hour on corrected time. At this point *Allegra* was still attempting to exit the Strait with the nimble 54ft *Daguet 5* in hot pursuit. Behind her, *Whisper* was being chased by the lead TP52s and *Kranendonk-Sailing Poland*.

20th on the water, *Salpare* passed Messina at 11:51. Navigator Campbell Field reported: "It's been a long, wet night and dawn couldn't come soon enough. We've been working our way up towards the Strait of Messina in light, shifty conditions – two knots one moment, six the next – every puff of wind counts."

The flotilla that popped out of the Strait late morning with the changing tide found itself headed in light conditions, with no boat making more than 5 knots.





Fortunately the breeze built slightly in the early afternoon, with several putting hitches out to the east in search of pressure.

By the time *Allegra*, third on the water, passed Stromboli at 13:21, *Black Jack 100* was 52 miles further up the course, heading west along the northern edge of Sicily. 28 miles astern of the leader but closing, *Balthasar* was taking a more offshore course in the still sub-10 knot patchy northeasterly.

Black Jack 100 passed north of Palermo mid-evening, giving the notoriously tricky headland at San Vito Lo Capo, to the west of Palermo, a wide berth. Some hours later *Balthasar* had a harder time, shaving the headland, saving miles but requiring multiple light wind gybes. *Black Jack 100* passed Favignana off northwest Sicily at 23:13, followed by *Balthasar* at 04:17.

Behind, everyone was having a tough time making headway. Remarkably, third on the water at this point was the 54ft *Daguet 5*, ahead of *Whisper* and *Allegra* and then *Cippa Lippa X*. However it would not be until 17:43 on Sunday that *Daguet 5* passed Favignana, followed by *Whisper* at 18:29 and *Cippa Lippa X* at 20:54, still ahead of the slippery TP52s. At Favignana *Balthasar* was leading *Black Jack 100* by almost three hours on corrected time in IRC Overall.

Naturally, as *Black Jack 100* turned south so the wind backed, but in the early hours on Monday morning both they and *Balthasar* were making a solid 10-12 knots progressing to Pantelleria until, as dawn approached when nearing the remote island, *Black Jack 100* began to slow, finally passing Pantelleria at 07:38.

Left: *Allegra* passes Cabo San Vito, west of Palermo, en route to claiming multihull line honours.
Photos: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo

Meanwhile *Balthasar* had remained in breeze, albeit taking her to the west of the rhumb line. In fact she was so far west that as she drew level with Pantelleria at 15:41, she was within 10 miles of the Tunisian coast (and some 29 from Pantelleria), off course but making 10 knots compared to *Black Jack 100's* six.

By this time those astern were approaching Favignana; *Whisper* was closing on *Daguet 5*, having gone offshore at San Vito Lo Capo, while *Allegra* and *Cippa Lippa X* chose the inshore option – fortunately none getting stuck, but having to gybe downwind, still in exceptionally light breeze.

Mid-evening on Sunday found both leaders making around 10 knots in a northerly. *Black Jack 100* reached the course's southwesterly turning mark of Lampedusa at 22:19 with *Balthasar* having halved

her time deficit to four hours by the time she arrived. Astern, *Whisper* had closed on *Daguet 5*, all timing their gybes so that, unlike *Balthasar*, they shaved Pantelleria.

Having made good progress back to Malta, passing through the South Comino Channel and on to the finish line at the entrance to Marsamxett Harbour, *Black Jack 100* crossed the finish line at 05:45 on Monday. Her Dutch owner Remon Vos commented: "Winning line honours in the Rolex Middle Sea Race is very special. It's a big race and it is a significant achievement for the team, and for the boat."

His most memorable moment: "The turn at Lampedusa was special. We were downwind doing 17-18 knots under a sky full of stars."



Black Jack 100 departs Malta in the 2025 Rolex Middle Sea Race.

Skipper Tristan Le Brun added: “This boat is so highly complex that to complete the course with 100% success is a triumph. There were no disappointments with this edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race – it delivered at every step.

“We had a lot of rain on the first night, difficult winds north of Sicily and very light airs on the way south. We sailed several hours with someone up the

rig looking for wind so we could stay ahead of *Balthasar* whose crew did a fantastic job of finishing not so far behind.”

Balthasar finished at 10:00 on the Tuesday to take the lead under IRC corrected time. “Our consistency was the key,” explained tactician Bouwe Bekking. “The *Balthasar* crew have been together for a long time and many have done round the world races

[including Balcaen’s two]. So we know each other’s rhythms, we make our calls early, adapt fast and trust each other completely.”

Balcaen paid credit to their prompt and accurate decision-making: “First out of the harbour, we made an early tactical call to stay north of the rhumb line. That decision helped us avoid a heavy squall that trapped a lot of the fleet. Conditions were tricky – a



Louis Balcaen's Maxi 72 *Balthasar* approaches the finish line in Malta's Marsamxett Harbour. Photos: ROLEX: Kurt Arrigo



Royal Malta Yacht Club Commodore Mark Napier with *Black Jack 100*'s Tristan le Brun and Malcolm Lowell of Edwards Lowell.



Strong trophy haul for *Balthasar* and her crew led by tactician Bouwe Bekking (left).

lot of rain, endless shifts and plenty of stress. It may have looked easier from the outside, but mentally it was tough. You couldn't afford to drop your concentration for a moment."

As to their flier west off Pantelleria, he added: "We had a call from the Tunisian Coast Guard wondering what we were doing so close to their coast! Coming back from Lampedusa, we had 14–15 knots on the beam and from there it was a fast, exhilarating reach home."

As *Balthasar* was finishing, so *Allegra* was approaching Lampedusa, back up to third on the water. From Pantelleria she had been able to lay the course's southerly turning mark, however *Whisper* and *Daguet 5* were in hot pursuit, followed by Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's 52ft Admiral's Cupper *Django Deer* and then another group of mainly TP52s, which *Cippa Lippa X* was still leading.

With the wind now into the southwest, *Allegra* made a speedy return to Malta where she finished at 17:23 on Tuesday. She went on to comfortably secure the MOCRA multihull class – some consolation for having had to retire in 2018.

"This race was unfinished business for us, so to finally cross the line in Malta feels incredibly rewarding," commented *Allegra*'s owner Adrian Keller. "We had a good start, but then came the rain – far more than expected – and for hours north of Sicily there was simply no wind. Even the birds came to rest on board! But once we rounded the corner, the breeze filled in and *Allegra* came alive again. Finishing off Valletta is always something special. After 600 miles at sea, to sail through that historic entrance, surrounded by those ancient walls, really feels like coming home. It's a privilege

to be part of this race and to see multihulls gaining more recognition each year."

Ultimately *Whisper* and *Cippa Lippa X* finished a commendable fourth and seventh in the 26-boat IRC Zero fleet, while *Balthasar* won not only the class, but the race overall.

Of his victory Louis Balcaen commented: "Winning the Rolex Middle Sea Race is one of the highlights of my sailing career. It is the kind of result you dream about, but you also know how hard it is to align the boat, the crew, the weather and the decisions: Everything needs to be perfect. I want to dedicate this victory to the team. We have been sailing together for ten years through ups and downs – this makes it extra special. We left nothing on the table, we stayed calm and collected during the tough moments and above all we enjoyed every mile of it."



2025 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge





*Riccardo de Michele's Vallicelli 78 H2O
en route to yet another hard-fought victory
at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

Following on from La Larga, the 21st edition of Sandberg PalmaVela continued with four days of inshore and coastal racing that took place over 1-4 May. This marked the start of the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) for 2025.

PalmaVela holds a special position within maxi yachting history. The Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP) and the Bay of Palma had long been a favourite of maxi yacht owners who had raced here for many years before the RCNP decided, in 2004, to introduce Maxi Race Week, which became renowned as the season opener of maxi yachting in the Mediterranean. The event, since rechristened PalmaVela, has grown to include other classes, with the La Larga offshore race first added in 2021. PalmaVela has been part of the Association's inshore championship since its inception in 2019.

Six maxis took part in the IMA Maxi class in 2025 with huge anticipation surrounding Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' new Verdier 100 *Magic Carpet e*, which would be making her race debut – very much the star of the show. Aside from her radical new hull shape, she featured a keel that not only canted but could be raked aft by 60° to reduce her 7.1m sailing draft to just 4.6m when moored; in addition she had a steerable canard forward and twin lifting rudders, their blades effectively daggerboards within rotating drums. Her 'e' nomenclature indicated her ability to operate fully electrically for day races, with no need to have a generator constantly running to power her extensive hydraulics. She was optimised for racing both inshore and offshore under IRC in 8-12 knots in the Mediterranean, while sporting a full interior to enable her to go cruising. Thanks to a featherweight build by Persico, she displaced just 37 tonnes

compared to her Wallycento predecessor's 50, but with an IRC rating of 1.825 compared to 1.784.

With *V* and *Galateia* – the latter winner of the three previous editions of PalmaVela – still making their way back from the North Sound Maxi Regatta in the Caribbean, *Magic Carpet e*'s sole 100ft opposition was Pascale Decaux's *Tilakkhana II*, previously Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet*³, now in fresh 'champagne' livery after a six-month refit, but effectively starting out with a new mixed team that was still very green. They were joined by La Larga competitors Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina* and Robert Szustkowski's Mylius 60 *R6*, plus Andrés Varela Entrecanales' Mills Vismara 68 *Pelotari. Project* and Sven Wackerhagen's Wally 80 *Rose*.

Magic Carpet e got off to a strong start at Sandberg PalmaVela when the maxis had the Bay of Palma to themselves on the opening Thursday. Two windward-leewards of eight and nine miles respectively were held, with the wind starting in the high teens before dropping. *Magic Carpet e* won the first race by 3 minutes 49 seconds on the water from *Tilakkhana II* and by 1 minute 57 seconds on second-placed *Rose* under IRC. She then continued to win the second, this time by 3 minutes 38 seconds on the water and 4 minutes 39 seconds under IRC from *Tilakkhana II*.

"The boat is performing well – better than expected for windward-leeward races. We're happy," commented Olympic gold medallist and round the world skipper Xabi Fernández, who was racing on board *Magic Carpet e*. "The crew worked well and the first day went smoothly with two wins. There's still a lot to learn about the boat, but overall we're really pleased."

*The maxi fleet including the 100s Magic Carpet e and Tilakkhana II line up on the Bay of Palma.
Photo: SailingShots/Jacobo Bastos*





The second day of racing saw a busier Bay of Palma, with the other fleets sailing on their own courses, although light variable winds would force several races to be abandoned. The maxi fleet only managed to complete one windward-leeward late in the afternoon and this after a first attempt shortly after

13:00. During this there had been an unfortunate start line collision between *Magic Carpet e* and Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina*, that saw both disqualified from the race. Ultimately *Magic Carpet e* was forced to retire for the remainder of the regatta, nursing damage to her brand new all-carbon rigging.



Spirit of Lorina suffered damage to her starboard aft quarter after *Magic Carpet e* collided with her during a start on day two of PalmaVela.
Photo: SailingShots/Maria Muiña

The single race that was completed was won by *Tilakkhana II*, ahead of *Rose* and *Pelotari*. *Project* on corrected time.

On the third day of racing, the fleet was postponed ashore until 13:00 when the maxis were finally sent on a 25-mile coastal course. This saw yet another winner in *Rose*, convincingly beating *Tilakkhana II* by 20 minutes on corrected time, leaving the two boats tied on points at the top of the IMA Maxi class leaderboard going into the final day.

Despite being her favourite conditions, with the wind gusting and building to 25 knots, it was not plain sailing for *Spirit of Lorina* in the final coastal race on Sunday. The offshore specialist and past winner of the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge missed a mark and, while it seemed all was not lost when she realised her mistake and retraced her steps, she finished just eight seconds behind *Tilakkhana II* on corrected time, with *Pelotari*. *Project* a further 16 seconds behind. Thus the regatta concluded with an ultra-tight finish while overall victory was handed to *Tilakkhana II*.

Pascale Decaux was delighted with her team's performance, especially considering the boat only came out of the shed less than a month prior to the regatta and all but one of her crew being new to the boat. The race team, led by tactician Laurent Pagès, had to learn from scratch on this big, highly loaded, very complex boat. As Pagès explained: "If you don't think about all the systems hiding under the deck, like the machinery and the hydraulics, it is essentially a big TP52! But we still have so many things to put together and our learning curve remains huge, so winning is quite unexpected..."



*The former Magic Carpet³, Pascale Decaux's Tilakkhana II has a crew including several leading female offshore sailors such as Dee Caffari.
Photo: SailingShots/Maria Muiña*

Among the crew were eight women, including round the world specialist Dee Caffari, plus three other members of The Famous Project (Alexia Barrier's all-women Jules Verne Trophy campaign).

Pagès continued of their final day: "We had 15 knots with 22-knot gusts, but it was flat water so it was good fun. The boat was really nice to sail downwind with this breeze. We just sailed cleanly and simply.

In just a few days we have managed to put together a team that has done great work on the boat. It has been a massive effort to train over the last 12 days to race simply but smartly, with good starts and good manoeuvres and never any shockers. And that training paid this week."

Sunday's big conditions were not to Rose's liking, blowing up a kite and a Tylaska on a halyard. Diego

Fructuoso, standing in on tactics for Jesper Radich, commented: "For sure we could have done better – the performance of the boat in less than 15 knots is much better.

"We are really happy and it is an honour to be part of this team. We've had three boats fighting at every mark – huge competition with *Pelotari.Project* and *Spirit of Lorina*. It was amazing."

LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA INSHORE RACES

24 maxis took part in Loro Piana Giraglia's inshore races. Begun as being merely a warm-up to the offshore race, the event has grown to be a considerable series in its own right, endorsed in 2024 when Loro Piana became title sponsor and it was extended from three to four days. As ever it was organised by the Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez.

The maxi entries ranged in length from Robert Szustkowski's newly-acquired Mylius 60 *R6* (ex-*Sud*) to Federico Borromeo's Southern Wind 102 *Almagores II*, while Roberto Lacorte's 60ft AC75-style foiler *FlyingNikka* was highest-rated (IRC TCC 3.444) and the Contest 63 *Blue Vision* was lowest (1.238). They were divided into four classes – Maxi 1, Maxi Grand Prix, and Maxi Alpha and Maxi Beta for the cruiser-racers. The former two and latter two were then combined in the event scoring.

Highest-rated in the Maxi 1s was Seng Huang Lee's offshore-orientated *SHK Scallywag*, yet the favourite – coming directly from class victory at the IMA Maxi Europeans – was David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers' *Galateia*, alongside Karel Komárek's *V* which was also on form having won the North Sound Maxi Regatta in Virgin Gorda. They were joined by Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 80ft *My Song* and the JV80 *Capricorno* of Alessandro Del Bono.

The Maxi Grand Prix class comprised five including defending champion *Jethou*, the 77-footer of Sir Peter Ogden. She was up against George Sakellaris' Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup winner *Proteus*, Peter Dubens' 72ft *North Star* and Filip Balcaen's *Balthasar*. There was much anticipation over Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's brand new *Django 7X*

which was making her race debut. This King Marine-built and Botin Partners-designed wallyrocket 71 featured twin rudders, 2.7 tonnes of water ballast each side and displaced just 12 tonnes, ie 2-3 tonnes less than her rivals (see p114).

In Maxi Alpha, the faster of the cruiser-racer classes, highest-rated were Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina* and Guido Paolo Gamucci's canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*, the latter on a high having just won the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar. Also in this class were the SWS 102 *Almagores II*, Pietro Supino's Swan 80 *Sapma*, Jean-Michel Caye's Vismara 77 *Luce Guida* and Maurits van Oranje-Nassau's Wally 80 *Sud*.

It was also a great pleasure to see Dario Castiglia and his Baltic 65 *RE/MAX One2* back, two years after their encounter with a rock during the 2023 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

The Maxi Beta class included two new generation Swan 65s, Enrico Aureli's *Marlin II* and Guenther Birkner's *Cloudy 7*, plus *R6*, Sean Pescetto's Felci 71 *La Videlle* and Ersu Enis's Contest 63 *Blue Vision*.

The race course for the four days centred upon the Baie de Pampelonne, facing Saint-Tropez's renowned beach. There were two windward-leeward races on the opening day, the first in a 10-knot southerly, before the wind veered into the southwest and built into the high teens.

Finding the most traffic-free lane on the right side proved the winning move. In the first race *V* made the best of this, leading *Galateia* into the top mark. When *Galateia* lost control of her spinnaker tack line, *V* took advantage to forge ahead, winning by six seconds on corrected time from *Jethou*, results which were

Maxi Grand Prix fleet chases Maxi 1 down the run.
Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi







The mighty V attempts to hunt down the nimble 80ft Capricorno.

reversed in the second race when Sir Peter Ogden's 77-footer corrected out 29 seconds ahead. In that race *Galateia* had been first to the top mark, but one bad manoeuvre allowed V to pass her and go on to win on the water. The day ended with a welcome mix of former Maxi 72s and 100-footers sharing the top of the leaderboard along with the 80ft *Capricorno*.

V's navigator Jean-François Cuzon said of their first race: "We started close to the committee boat, because we wanted to be one of the first to go right and control it. We had a good fight with *Galateia* – we spend a lot of time racing together and it is good fun."

While V and *Jethou* were ahead in their classes, it was closer in Maxi Alpha where, after two races, there was a three-way tie for first place between *Spirit of Lorina*, *Sud* and *Cippa Lippa X*. *Spirit of Lorina* sailed a blazing first beat in race one, only for *Sud* to win under corrected time, certainly aided by having Benoît de Froidmont on board as a guest – the IMA President being the defending champion here but boat-less, awaiting structural repair work to be completed on his 60ft *Wallyño*.

"We need a bit of wind but the boat is, in general, well set up now, with a good crew and good teamwork, so it was fun," commented *Sud*'s owner Maurits van Oranje-Nassau.

Spirit of Lorina prevailed in the second race. After their poor start, on the first beat their goal had been to get ahead of *Cippa Lippa X*, which finished second in both races.

The maxi crews truly had their work cut out on day two with the stiff northwesterly gusting into the high 20s for the second of two windward-leeward races.

Very much enjoying the conditions was *FlyingNikka* which – able to fly well – hit a top speed of 39 knots. “It was the perfect situation to go 40+ knots. We used the drag of the upwind foil to reduce speed and maintain a safe situation to not damage the boat,” explained Roberto Lacorte. In both races *FlyingNikka* started on port and, engulfed in a ball of spray, screamed past even the 100-footers early up the first beat to finish comfortably first on the water.

In the Maxi 1 class *Galateia* and *V* managed a 3-1 and 1-3 respectively, leaving *V* overall leader. It was also a good day for *Capricorno*, scoring two seconds to stay firmly in touch with the 100s. At one point she reached 25 knots: “It was a better day for us, especially in the windy conditions,” commented tactician Torben Grael. “The crew did a great job with the boss [Del Bono] driving well. We avoided big mistakes, which I think was the key for the day, along with playing shifts.”

Jethou scored a worthy third in the first race in the Maxi Grand Prix class, having clawed her way back after an OCS. *Proteus* posted a 2-1, pulling her up to second overall and *North Star*'s 1-3 left her third. *North Star* tactician Nick Rogers commented: “In the first race we started to the left cleanly, tacked, followed round at the top and then gybe-set – which was a huge call, but we ended up first at the leeward gate.” *North Star* went on to beat the resurgent *Jethou* by a mere two seconds on the water, winning under IRC, all the more remarkable in the stiff conditions, being the only Maxi Grand Prix boat racing with reduced crew numbers.

The three-way tie at the top of Maxi Alpha was split decisively after *Spirit of Lorina* scored two bullets.

Photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

She won the first race by more than five minutes from *Cippa Lippa X* and by just under three minutes in the second. On one run they hit 22 knots – although some way off their 28.5 knot record.

In Maxi Beta, a 1-3 for *Blue Vision* left Enis Ersü's Contest 63 two points clear of *Cloudy 7*, which was the top scoring boat in the class with a 2-1.

Day three caused some surprise when the 80ft *Capricorno* managed to put two 100-footers in her rear view mirror for the majority of the first race.

“We had a good start at the committee boat and tacked almost straight away,” explained tactician Flavio Favini. “It looked like there was a bit more pressure on the right.” Coming back on the starboard layline, both *Galateia* and *V* on port were forced to duck the charging *Capricorno*'s transom and it was only on the final beat that the two 100-footers overhauled her. *Capricorno* won the Maxi 1 class, three seconds ahead of Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou*, which won the Maxi Grand Prix class.

While the first race had taken place in a 10-12 knot northeasterly, the second got underway in 10 knots which would ultimately drop off so much that several smaller maxis were unable to finish. In this *Capricorno*'s poor start was compounded by then being held up by a cruising boat that had erred on to the course. However she recovered to claim second in the Maxi 1 class to *Galateia*.

With a 2-1, *Galateia* ended the day equal top scoring boat with *Capricorno*, while overall in the class *V* was leading *Capricorno* by two points. In the second race *Galateia* had benefitted when *V* had



Sir Peter Ogden's 77ft *Jethou* with her characteristic fuchsia-coloured spinnaker.



Hard pressed on Peter Dubens' North Star.

been locked out at the race committee boat and had come home fourth behind *SHK Scallywag*. On board Chris Flowers was again sharing helming duties with his daughter Lizz.

The day was also notable for Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's brand new Botin Partners-designed wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X* making her race debut with her all-star crew led by tactician Vasco Vascotto, finishing third in the Maxi Grand Prix class in the second race. *Jethou* had comfortably won the first race but then posted a fourth in the second, thereby maintaining her overall lead, but by just one point from *Proteus* whose 3-1 ensured she was top scoring boat in the class.

All photos: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi

Finally *Cippa Lippa X* shed her seemingly perpetual run of second-places to win both races in Maxi Alpha (as well as the combined Maxi Alpha and Beta classes) leaving her tied with *Spirit of Lorina*.

"We are quicker in less wind and today we had two perfect races," explained Gamucci, despite the flukey conditions making steering harder than in the previous day's 20-30 knot winds. "The second start was not as good – it was tough, because there were waves and you didn't know where they were coming from."

None of Maxi Beta finished the second race, but the first was won by *Cloudy 7*, taking the lead in the class, albeit by just one point from *Blue Vision*. Showing improvement was the Polish team on *R6*, which finished second in the first race. "We prefer stronger wind, because we have just have a #3 jib and no #2 or #1," commented boat captain Robert Janecki.

After three days of windward-leewards, on the final day the 22 maxis raced a coastal course. Starting at just after 13:00 from the Baie de Pampelonne in 8 knots, they headed west upwind to a turning mark in the Baie de Cavalaire before retracing their steps to the finish line within the Golfe de Saint-Tropez. The course involved negotiating transitions off the headlands causing compression within the fleet and benefitting those chasing.

In this *Capricorno* managed to reel in and overhaul *V*, the 80-footer proving nimble in the light conditions against the 100s, reaching the top mark just behind *Galateia*. *V* powered back past on the run-reach-fetch to the finish, but on corrected time *Capricorno* scored her second bullet, winning the Maxi 1 class overall on countback from *Galateia*.

"It was the best week so far with this boat," noted *Capricorno* tactician Torben Grael. "There were more windward-leewards and more light air races which I think suits our boat better."

Leaving her best result until last was *My Song*, which finished the final race second in the Maxi 1 class. Owner Pier Luigi Loro Piana commented: "I was happy with the results – we had a good upwind but a better downwind, where we could recoup some positions. And we finished just after the 100-footers."

In the Maxi Grand Prix fleet, there were effectively three winners on the final day: *Jethou* won the event's combined Maxi Grand Prix and Maxi 1 class ahead of George Sakellaris' *Proteus* and *Capricorno*. In the Maxi Grand Prix class alone though, *Proteus* beat *Jethou* after finishing second to her fourth on the final day.

"A good venue, good choices, good racing and good competitors," summarised Sakellaris of the inshore racing. "We lost a couple of points when people fouled us, but when it's light winds, she [*Proteus*] is the best."

Maxi Alpha saw *Cippa Lippa X* continue her winning streak, stealing the top spot from *Spirit of Lorina* after winning the final race. "We had a match race from before the start to the end with *Spirit of Lorina* and we were always at least one metre ahead," recounted a beaming Gamucci. "We go more or less the same speed, but 10° deeper. The team is working fantastically – it runs extremely smoothly."

There was a final day leader change too in the Maxi Beta class when a win for *Blue Vision* toppled *Cloudy 7* to finish second overall ahead of *R6*.



Maurits van Oranje-Nassau at the helm of Sud.



Spectators gather in the Loro Piana Giraglia race village on Môle d'Estienne d'Orves.



Maxis take over Saint-Tropez's old port.



Lizz Flowers (third from left) with the YCI's Gregorio Gavarone and SNST's Pierre Roinson (left) and Pier Luigi Loro Piana (right).



Cippa Lippa X's Guido Paolo Gamucci with his prize for winning the Maxi Alpha class.

MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP

To coincide with maxi yachting's premier annual event celebrating 40 years of Rolex support, the IMA and the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda (YCCS) agreed to hold not one, but two world championships as part of the 2025 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. The IMA is uniquely permitted to hold world championships for maxi classes due to it being recognised by World Sailing as the body that exclusively oversees and nurtures maxi yacht racing internationally.

In addition to the world championship for the Maxi 1 class of 80-100 footers that was successfully run in 2024, in 2025 the second would be for the newly-rechristened Maxi Grand Prix class – successor to the Maxi 72/Maxi 2. The IMA had previously held world championships for the Maxi 72s – the last in 2018 when it was won by *Momo* (now Jim Swartz's *Vesper*) – but with the class once again on the ascent, with new owners and new boats being built, the decision was made to revitalise it.

The Maxi Grand Prix class began the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup race-fit, having enjoyed a three-day pre-Worlds/training regatta backed by Peter Harrison's *Jolt* team. George Sakellaris' *Proteus* was the defending champion but, while newly fitted with just over two tonnes of water ballast (as most Maxi Grand Prix yachts now have), this year found herself facing a fleet twice the size of 2024's.

All eyes were on Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X*, launched in June and the first newborn in the class since Hap Fauth's *Bella Mente* in 2018 (read more on p114). She featured twin rudders and 2.7 tonnes of water ballast each side, while displacing just 12 tonnes, so lighter with more moveable ballast; her low IRC rating was second only

Balthasar chases *North Star*, *Jethou* and *Proteus* in the Maxi Grand Prix class.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi







▲ The 100ft Galatea on course for a close Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship victory.
▼ IMA Vice President Aldo Parisotto defended his title aboard his Mylius 65 Oscar3.



▲ Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's Django 7X represented the Maxi Grand Prix class state of the art.
▼ Riccardo De Michele's Vallicelli 78 H2O won Maxi 4 with straight bullets.



to Peter Dubens' *North Star* (the only one in this class sailing with a Reduced Crew IRC rating).

Nine boats were competing in the Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Championship with the newest addition being Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' 100ft Verdier-designed *Magic Carpet e*, also carrying the highest rating. The previous *Magic Carpet*³, winner in Porto Cervo in 2014 and 2021, returned as Pascale Decaux's *Tilakkhana II*, while Joost Schuijff's *Leopard 3* would be defending her World title.

In addition to *Tilakkhana II*, there were two other competitive former Wallycentos and seasoned rivals: Karel Komárek's *V* and Chris Flowers/David M Leuschen's *Galateia*. Joining them were *Bullitt*, the Wally 93 of YCCS Commodore Andrea Recordati, Wendy Schmidt's 85ft *Deep Blue*, the 80ft *My Song* of Pier Luigi Loro Piana and Alessandro Del Bono's *Capricorno*.

Both *Leopard 3* and *My Song* were competing with reduced crew allowance, but in the former's case this still meant 20 on board.

The smaller/slower racer-cruisers were divided between Maxi 3 and 4. The former was the largest class with 12 and spanned the broadest rating range, with Philip Rann's Carbon Ocean 82 *Aegir* the highest, to Paul Berger's Swan 82 *Kallima* the lowest. Back to defend their title were the Parisottos, Aldo and Elena, on their Mylius 65 *Oscar3*, up against the 2023 winner, Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 *Spirit of Lorina* and the 2024 runner-up Massimiliano Florio's Southern Wind 82 *Grande Orazio*.

They faced the growing fleet of Baltic 68 Café Racers, including former IMA President Thomas

Bscher's *Open Season*, plus *Scorpione Hormar* and Dr Peter-Alexander Wacker's *Ganesha*. Alex Laing returned with the ILC maxi *Nice*, launched in 1995 but still hotly competitive, along with Andres Varela Entrecanales with his Vismara 68 *Pelotari*. Project, Guido Paolo Gamucci's canting keel Mylius 60 *Cippa Lippa X*, fresh from 151 Miglia and Loro Piana Giraglia victories, and Dario Castiglia's Baltic 65 RE/MAX *One2*.

One new arrival was former RORC Commodore James Neville with his recently acquired Botin 65 *Artemis Bleu* (formerly Max Klink's *Caro*) with a heavyweight crew including former America's Cup skipper Dean Barker and navigator Juan Vila.

Favourite in Maxi 4 was Riccardo De Michele's *H2O*, defending champion and six-time winner. He would face Luigi Sala's Vismara-Mills 62 *Yoru*, Franz Wilhelm Baruffaldi Preis's Mylius 60 *Manticore* and sistership Robert Szustkowski's *R6* (ex-*Sud*). The Swan 601s were represented by Gerard Logel's *@robas* and Giancarlo Gianni's *Durlindana IV* (replacing their Carroll Marine 60), plus the 'modern' Swan 65 *Marlin II* of Enrico Aureli, Riccardo Genghini's Swan 651 *Lunz am Meer* and the CNB76 *Beautiful Day* of Jonathan Litt.

The four in the Super Maxi class comprised the longest, Vittorio Moretti's Maxi Dolphin 118 *Viriella*, plus Marco Vogele's 33m *Inouï* and Juan Ball's Swan 115 *Moat*, runner-up in 2024. Also making a return was *Inti*, Marcos Vivian's Wally 94 which had been raced extensively during the 2010s under a previous owner.

Unfortunately, come the opening day there was no action for the 43-strong fleet as the wind failed to

materialise. However, day two started in a 15-16 knot westerly allowing the Maxi Grand Prix class to complete two windward-leewards, the remainder racing a clockwise lap of La Maddalena archipelago.

In the IMA Rolex Maxi 1 Worlds, *Magic Carpet e* romped around the course so that, with the breeze dying, she was not only first home but also won on corrected time ahead of *Bullitt* and *V*.

In IRC 3 the 30-year-old pencil slim *Nice* led the Baltic 68 Café Racer *Ganesha* into Bomb Alley. Eventually *Nice* corrected out over six minutes ahead of *Spirit of Lorina* with *Grande Orazio* third.

The long were also favoured in Maxi 4, where *Yoru* and *Manticore* were beaten both on the water and on corrected time by *H2O*, whose crew had attempted to reduce manoeuvres as the wind lightened.

Inouï retired with a destroyed mainsail in the Super Maxis, leaving *Moat* to win by over 18 minutes from *Inti*.

The eight Maxi Grand Prix yachts enjoyed the best breeze, the wind peaking in the first race at 21 knots. In the first windward-leeward *Jolt*, the highest-rated thanks to her trim tab, beat *Vesper* by 59 seconds with *Django 7X* another three seconds astern, also third on corrected. In the second race the win went to *Bella Mente*, but by just three seconds from *Jolt*.

On day three the maxi fleet experienced four seasons in one – calms; 20-knot Mistral with gusts of 30; rain; no rain; an overcast sky and occasional brilliant sunshine. This time it was the turn of the Maxi 1 fleet to race windward-leewards while the rest of the classes sailed coastals – the Maxi Grand



*An imposing display of Maxi 1 sheer power from (left to right) Capricorno, Galateia, Magic Carpet e and V.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*



MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP

Prix fleet sent off on a 41-mile course that included the islands of Soffi and Mortorio, south of Porto Cervo.

In Maxi 1, the first race was held in 16-20 knots; *Deep Blue* didn't start and *Capricorno* didn't finish. Among the 100s *Galateia*, helmed by Chris Flowers' daughter Lizz, nosed ahead of *V* at the top mark and extended down the run, benefitting from a couple of favourable puffs. First home, she also won under IRC ahead of *My Song* and *Bullitt*.

For race two the wind had built to 20 knots, gusting 25-26. *Galateia*, *V* and *Leopard 3* headed left up the first beat; *V* pulled out a solid lead which she then held, despite squalls rolling in from all angles.

On the coastal, the boats enjoyed a light passage south and around Mortorio, only to meet the Mistral in Bomb Alley. In this *Jolt* enjoyed a blistering reach back from Monaci, hitting speeds of 20+ knots, but was unable to save her time, leaving *Django 7X* to score her first ever bullet. After almost 3.5 hours, all eight in the Maxi Grand Prix class finished within seven minutes under IRC, *Vesper* just 24 seconds behind in second.

Proudest of their achievement were *Oscar3's* exhausted Aldo and Elena Parisotto, who won Maxi 3 despite seeing 25 knots, torrential rain but 18 knots of boat speed. This led to a three-way tie at the top with *Cippa Lippa X* and *Grande Orazio*.

While the shorter *Yoru* beat *H2O* on the water, having passed her on the reaching leg, the Vallicelli 78 won Maxi 4 again, despite having nearly broached. Finishing in third was *@robax*, which had made a good recovery after impaling herself on a

rock on the first day, (subsequently requiring a diver to beat the keel back into shape), and then destroying an A4 kite.

On day four, with the Mistral gusting to 25+ knots, the windward-leewards scheduled for the Maxi Grand Prix fleet was cancelled. However, everyone else sailed a blustery coastal that rewarded courage, confidence and strong boat handling – best demonstrated by *V* and her legion of Volvo Ocean Race heroes like Ken Read and Jack Bouttell. While *Bullitt* was called OCS, *V* blasted off on the reaching start, hitting speeds in the high 20s, and led into the leeward mark north of Capo Figari. On the subsequent reach around Soffi and Mortorio, *Leopard 3* pulled into second. When the course was shortened off Soffi, *V* won by 5 minutes 13 seconds. The conditions had certainly been testing: *Galateia* blew up two kites while *Capricorno* had to perform a 'chase boat drop' at the leeward mark.

Competition remained close in Maxi 3. *Ganesha* was penalised 1% for the boat captain driving, yet still managed to beat *Artemis Bleu*; second by just six seconds ahead of *Oscar3* – strong results considering this was only *Ganesha's* second event and *Artemis Bleu's* first.

With the Mistral still gusting to 29 knots, the penultimate day was also lost. However, light to moderate winds on the final Saturday allowed the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup to conclude in style, with both world championship classes completing two windward-leewards in a 11-15 knot northwesterly.

In the Maxi Grand Prix class there was drama in race one when *Balthasar* and *Jethou* clashed rigs in a port/starboard incident on the first upwind leg,

Good starts from Aegir and Spirit of Lorina in the Maxi 3 fleet.
Photos: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



Cippa Lipa X at pace.



Former IMA President Thomas Bscher at the helm of Open Season.



Aldo and Elena Parisotto's Mylius 65 Oscar3.



Peter Harrison at the helm of Jolt.



Defending champion, George Sakellaris' Proteus.



Paul Berger's Swan 82 Kallima.



Gerard Logel's Swan 601 @robas finished third in Maxi 4.



Modern classic maxi – the Swan 651 Lunz am Meer.



The Super Maxi class sets sail.



The Surrau Winery – new venue for the IMA Members' Dinner.



Elena Parisotto with Dario Castiglia and Alberto Franchella.



Benoît de Froidmont with wife Aurélie.



Filip Balcaen (left) with Andrea Recordati (right).



Galateia's Lizz Flowers with Justin Slattery (left) and helm coach Kelvin Harrap (right).



The CRV's Roberto Mottola with Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones



Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Champions: David M Leuschen and Chris and Lizz Flowers' Galateia crew.



Giovanni Lombardi Stronati and his World Championship winning Django 7X team.

forcing both to retire. Ahead, *Jolt* led around the track on the water, but was unable to save her time on *Bella Mente*, which comfortably won from *Django 7X* and *Vesper* – the top four correcting out to within a minute.

Race two saw *Jolt* sufficiently ahead to win overall from *Django 7X*, but by only three seconds, with *Bella Mente* third. This was enough to give Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's new wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X* and her team, led by tactician Vasco Vascotto, the first Rolex IMA Maxi Grand Prix World Championship title by two points from *Jolt* and *Bella Mente*.

"It was a good job by nice guys in a nice team on a good boat," said a delighted Stronati. "Everything went well, because we were not the fastest on the windward-leeward especially. We have been lucky. I am very happy. Thanks to the guys who sailed the boat very well."

The IMA Rolex Maxi 1 World Championship went to the wire with David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers' *Galateia* winning the final day's first race (when *V* suffered hydraulic issues), giving her a four-point lead over *Leopard 3* and *Bullitt*, who were tied going into the last race. Yet in this *Galateia* made life hard, only recovering on the second lap sufficiently to finish fifth on corrected time. This left her winning the World Championship, albeit only on countback from *Leopard 3*, winner of the final race and, in turn, just one point ahead of *Bullitt*.

"The first race obviously went well...the second race, not so well," explained Leuschen. "At the first top mark, we were further behind than I've ever been in a race before. It was like we'd said 'oh, well, we've had all these top spots so far. We'll be

fine.' We were dead last by rating, but the boat seemed to be going fine. The crew were fine. So we said, 'let's get in the groove, see how many shifts we can catch...' The next three legs were pretty good!"

The rest of the classes sailed an anticlockwise lap of La Maddalena archipelago.

After seeing 8 knots at the start, peaking to 18 at the top of Bomb Alley, Juan Ball's *Moat* survived breaking her J3 north of Caprera to finish first ahead of *Inti* and *Inouï* and, with a perfect scoreline, winning the Super Maxi class overall.

Similarly, Riccardo De Michele's all-conquering *H2O* scored four bullets in Maxi 4, beating *Yoru* and *@rob*s to win her class at this event for an

incredible, record-breaking seventh time. "The wind was good for us," commented De Michele. And *H2O*'s secret? "For sure, the secret is keeping the core crew the same. And every year, we add small things to increase performance and we work a lot on our manoeuvres."

In Maxi 3, Aldo and Elena Parisotto's *Oscar3* scored her second bullet in the final race, defending her title by two points from *Grande Orazio*; *Ganesha* was third, but first of the Baltic 68 Cafe Racer trio. At the prize-giving later that day, held on the Piazza Azzurra, outside the YCCS, the Parisottos were awarded the trophy for the highest-placed IMA members, having won the class with the most competitors.



Juan Ball's Swan 115 Moat scored straight bullets in the Super Maxi class.



LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ



The concluding event of our 2025 IMA MMIC was the magnificent annual festival of sail, Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, organised by the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez. At this point David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers' 100ft *Galateia* was leading, but with Karel Komárek's 100ft *V*, Alessandro Del Bono's 82ft *Capricorno* and Peter Dubens' 72ft *North Star* still in contention.

In addition to the majestic scene-stealing classics such as *Atlantic*, *Cambria*, *Puritan* and *Sumurun*, the maxi fleet numbered 45, divided into five classes spanning, in terms of length, the Frers 112 *Sealen B* to the Solaris 60 *Crazy Diamond* and Swan 60 *Seaquill*.

Leading the charge would be Maxi 1 with Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet* e competing in her first inshore event from her home port, up against the other 100-footers: *Galateia*, *V*, her predecessor Pascale Decaux's *Tilakkhana II* and Joost Schuijff's *Leopard 3*. They would be joined by *Capricorno*, winner of the Loro Piana Giraglia inshores and Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 80ft *My Song*.

In the Maxi Grand Prix class World Champion Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's *Django 7X* was the shortest at 71ft and Sir Peter Ogden's 77ft *Jethou* the longest, while Peter Dubens' *North Star* was the lowest rated at 1.614 and Peter Harrison's *Jolt* the highest at 1.667. They would also face Jim Swartz's *Vesper*.

The most diverse fleet was in Maxi 3, ranging from *Sealen B* and Christian Oldendorff's Spirit 111 modern classic *Geist* down to Andres Varela Entrecanales' Vismara 68 *Pelotari*. Project, with the highest-rated being the new Southern Wind 96 *Liberty Squared*. Favourite was certainly Terry Hui's Wally 77 *Lyra*, a multiple winner here and one of

three Wallys alongside the 94 *Inti* and Sven Wackerhagen's 80 *Rose*. Also lining up were Philip Rann's Carbon Ocean 82 *Aegir*, the brand new Swan 82 *SPIIP* and Swan 90 *Hummingbird*, while making a welcome return was Luciano Gandini's Mylius 80 FD *Twin Soul B*, class winner in 2019 and back for the first time in three years.

Favourites in Maxi 4 were defending champion Luigi Sala's Vismara 62 *Yoru* and Paul Berger's Swan 82FD *Kallima*, plus Maurits van Oranje-Nassau's Wally 80 *Sud*. They were up against newer cruiser-racers such as José Agnaldo Andrade Jr's ICE 66 *Tapioca*, the ICE 70 *Bandido*, Alois Neukirchen's Mylius 66 RS *Schorch* and the Swan 60 *Seaquill*. Also joining the fleet was Dan Gribble's Tripp 65 *Prevail*, over from the USA.

In Maxi 5 six CNBs were competing, including the brand new 78s *Belles* and *Zampa*, plus Jacques le Barazer's 76 *Zampa*, sisterships Marc-Olivier Laurent's *Cloudy Night* and Jonathan Litt's *Beautiful Day*, and the CNB 66 *Mahina 3*. The line-up also included 2022 winner Jürg Schneider's 1973 Swan 65 *Saida* and sistership *Evrika*, 2021-winner François Benais' Shipman 63 *Bambo* and Enzo Pelizzaro's Solaris 60 *Crazy Diamond*. Most elegant was the Truly Classic 90 *Atalante*, while most palatial was the Oyster 825 *Viva La Vida*.

After a two-hour wait for the wind to fill in on the Baie de Pampelonne, racing successfully got underway. Maxi 1 and Maxi Grand Prix raced windward-leewards, while Maxi 3-5 completed a coastal course west towards Cavalaire and back.

In Maxi 3 *Rose* finished first on the water and under IRC corrected time, ahead of *Twin Soul B* and

Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez is as much about the festival atmosphere ashore as it is the racing out on the water.
Photo: IMA/James Boyd



Schorch and the eventual Maxi 5 winner Crazy Diamond follow the Swan 88 SPIIP on to the run.
Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget

Hummingbird. Meanwhile in Maxi 4, *Yoru* got her defence off to a good start, winning by 16 minutes from *Seaquill* and *Kallima*, challenging all the skills of tactician Gabriele Bruni in the shifty 5-8 knot breeze. *Crazy Diamond* was the big winner in Maxi 5, finishing 19 minutes ahead of *Saida*, having enjoyed slightly more breeze than the faster classes.

The Maxi Grand Prix class never saw more than 9 knots. *Jethou* made the best of the first beat, heading out to the right, but then several tried to get another piece of it by gybing early on the run. *Vesper* chose to hold on starboard which proved the winning move, beating *North Star*, albeit by just seconds.

There was drama on the Maxi 1 start line when *Galateia* went for a gap between Alessandro Del Bono's 82ft *Capricorno* and the race committee boat that didn't open up as hoped. The collision broke some stanchions on *Capricorno* and caused some abrasion on her hull. However *Galateia's* damage – her hull punctured at the waterline, with further damage to her bobstay – saw her quickly taken down the coast to La Ciotat to be repaired.

For the rest of Maxi 1 the first beat had *Tilakkhana II* gaining the favoured right to round the top mark first, but *V* showed her pace on the run to take the lead, going on to win overall as well. But it was close – *Tilakkhana II* rounded the opposite final gate mark just seconds behind, leaving all to be decided on the last beat back to the finish.

The race committee subsequently attempted a second race, but abandoned it as the wind died.

The same classes again sailed windward-leewards and coastals on day two, with Maxi 3-5 this time

heading for a bay to the west and on to windward-leewards before returning to finish in the Baie de Pampelonne. Conditions again never exceeded 8-9 knots and were generally lighter and more puffy than day one.

Star of the show was the new *Django 7X*, which won both Maxi Grand Prix races. Despite being second-lowest rated to *North Star* she was first to the top mark and first home on the water, winning by 4 minutes 20 seconds under corrected time. In the second race competition was closer, *Django 7X* finishing second on the water to *Jethou*, but beating her by 14 seconds under IRC.

In Maxi 1 *Capricorno* bounced back strongly after her day one mauling, third home but her time correcting out to 2 minutes 6 minutes ahead of *V*. However the tables were turned in the second race, which *V* won by 3 minutes 24 seconds ahead of *Capricorno* under IRC.

After a disappointing opening day, *Lyra* found her true form in Maxi 3, winning the coastal race after going offshore. However *Twin Soul B* continued to lead overall.

In both Maxi 4 and 5, *Yoru* and *Crazy Diamond* again won. *Yoru* beat *Seaquill* and *Sud* on corrected, having managed to fend off the 34ft longer *Liberty Squared*. *Crazy Diamond* came out on top ahead of *Saida* and the giant Oyster *Viva La Vida*.

Following Wednesday's layday, conditions looked promising for day three, however by start time the wind was back down to the familiar 8 knot territory, remaining wildly shifty (one tactician reportedly saw wind directions of 50-125°) and puffy for the

Right: Karel Komárek's former Wallycento V put together a great regatta to win Maxi 1.





rest of the afternoon, combined with an awkward sea state kicked up by the easterly breeze.

Repaired following her collision, there was much applause for *Galateia* which finished second in her first race back, enough to raise her from the bottom spot in Maxi 1. Winner, by 50 seconds from V, was *Capricorno*, relishing the light conditions having rounded the windward mark second astern of *Galateia*, a position she held down the run until the mighty V powered past. Post race there was a hiatus, with four boats disqualified for failing to sail the correct course – including the winner *Capricorno* – although they were later reinstated.

Sailing the same course as Maxi 1, Maxi Grand Prix saw *Django 7X* score another bullet, despite starting late after suffering hydraulic issues. *Jolt* and *Vesper* did well on the right to win the first beat as *Django 7X* suffered more in the dirt from the boats further up the course and then mistakenly hoisting an A1 rather than a Code Zero. Later their A1 tore forcing them to peel to the A1.5 as they jockeyed for the lead with *Jethou*, *Vesper* and *Jolt*. Yet, when the race committee opted to shorten course, *Django 7X* was leading under IRC, almost eight minutes ahead of *Vesper* with *Jethou* third. Now able to apply a discard, the 71-footer held a perfect scoreline, leading *Vesper* and *Jethou*.

Maxi 3-5 sailed a marginally shorter coastal course to the west. In this *Twin Soul B* scored her first bullet of the regatta. *Lyra* was second, leaving her tied at the top with *Twin Soul B* after discards were applied and *Pelotari*. *Project* third.

Yoru and *Crazy Diamond* continued their perfect scorelines in Maxi 4-5. *Yoru* finished almost two

minutes ahead of *Kallima* with *Seaquill* third, tactician Gabriele Bruni pleased with the two good shifts they had played out to the right of the course. In Maxi 5 *Crazy Diamond* again won comfortably, by more than 12 minutes ahead of *Viva La Vida* and Federico Intriago's CNB78 *Belles*, despite being too early for the start down by the pin, forcing her to tack and play the right.

For the penultimate day of competition, the wind speed of the southwesterly at last reached double digits, albeit only 12-13 knots. For the first time Maxi 3 and 4 sailed two windward-leewards, while the remaining classes undertook coastal courses to the west.

In Maxi 1 V scored her third bullet ahead of *Galateia* and *Leopard 3*, enabling her to discard a third leaving her with a two-point lead over *Capricorno* overall with *Leopard 3* in third.

Vesper scored her second bullet of the regatta in Maxi Grand Prix, finishing almost two minutes ahead of *Jethou* and *Django 7X*, leaving Jim Swartz's 11-year-old Maxi 72 second overall, one point astern of *Django 7X*.

In Maxi 3 *Twin Soul B* scored double bullets, leaving her leader in the class by two points from *Lyra*. After a less than ideal start, she won the first race by just 54 seconds from *Lyra*, with *Rose* third. In the second she was just 26 seconds ahead of *Lyra*, with *Aegir* third. The wind built from 8-10 knots in the first race to 10-12 in the second. "The right was favoured and we started up by the boat and pretty much got over there in both races and got control of the race," explained *Twin Soul B*'s tactician Paul Cayard, fresh from being crowned



Terry Hui's Wally 77 Lyra – back to defend her title.



Luciano Gandini's Mylius 80 Twin Soul B returned to the race course after a three-year hiatus.

Left: Racing from her homeport, Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' Magic Carpet e leads Joost Schuijff's Leopard 3.
Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget



Jim Swartz, Gavin Brady and the crew of Vesper did well but had a fight on their hands with the new Django 7X.
Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget

Star World Champion at the age of 66. “The wind was wrapping into the bay, so you had to go right.”

Yoru's perfect scoreline was disrupted in the first race for Maxi 4 when Maurits van Oranje-Nassau's *Sud* came home first, 1 minute 42 seconds ahead of *Seaquill* with *Kallima* third, the Wally 80 preferring the breezier conditions. In the second windward-leeward this order was reversed, with *Kallima* on top, 1 minute 32 seconds ahead of *Seaquill* and *Sud* third. *Yoru* then scored an uncharacteristic fourth in the first race before, devastatingly, being called OCS in the second – becoming her discard. Despite her terrible day, *Yoru* led, but only just, with *Seaquill* and *Kallima* back to being within two points of her.

In Maxi 5 a relentless *Crazy Diamond* continued to score bullets, finishing ahead of *Atalante* under IRC. The Truly Classic 90 was being raced for the first time by a crew largely from Lake Constance and finished first home on the water by just 14 seconds from *Crazy Diamond*.

The Cote d'Azur sailing hotspot saved the best for the final day with a 12-15 knot southwesterly eventually filling in. The race committee duly dispatched Maxi 3-5 on a coastal course at 13:30, followed at 14:00 by Maxi 1 and Grand Prix on windward-leewards.

In Maxi Grand Prix the results were turned on their head with Peter Harrison's *Jolt* scoring her first win of the regatta, while the two front runners match raced themselves down the fleet: *Vesper* finishing last and *Django 7X* in fourth. This was still enough for *Django 7X* to win overall, but only by a point from *Vesper*; *Jethou* was another point behind in



▲ With an ever-improving crew, Luigi Sala's Vismara 62 Yoru defended her Maxi 3 title.
▼ Peter Harrison's Jolt finished strongly, winning the final Maxi Grand Prix class race.



▲ Jethou, the 77-footer of Saint-Tropez regular and past winner, Sir Peter Ogden.
▼ Alois Neukirchen's Mylius 66 RS Schorch leads Maxi 3 and 4 downwind.





Karel Komárek (with trophy) and his V team, winners of Maxi 1.



Giovanni Lombardi Stronati (back row, fifth from left) with his Maxi Grand Prix class-winning Django 7X crew.



Finishing with straight bullets: Enzo Pellizzaro and his Solaris 60 Crazy Diamond.



Maxi 3 winners: Luigi and Alessandra Sala with their successful Yoru crew.

third. This was *Django 7X*'s second victory following her World Championship win in September.

In Maxi 1 it was more decisive, with *V* scoring a third bullet ahead of *Capricorno* and *Galateia* to win overall by three points from *Capricorno*. This was the *V* team's first win since their North Sound Maxi Regatta in the Virgin Islands in March. "We had an exceptional week," commented tactician Ken Read. "The team is sailing the boat very very well and it's just really fun to be a part of. There's nothing between us and *Galateia* – they sail a little better, they beat us; we sail a little better, we beat them."

In Maxi 3 *Twin Soul B* had done enough to win with a race to spare, discarding a DNC to still beat

the final day's winner *Lyra* by one point. Both teams had put in exemplary performances throughout – *Twin Soul B* with no result lower than a second and *Lyra* discarding a fourth, leaving third-placed *Rose* seven points astern.

In Maxi 4, *Yoru* recovered from her substantial wobble on Friday, finishing second in the final coastal behind *Kallima* and ahead of *Sud*. This was enough for her to defend her title in the class, albeit winning by just a point from *Kallima*, with *Seaquill* two points further back in third.

The only boat to remain unbeaten through the week was Enzo Pellizzaro's Solaris 60 *Crazy Diamond*, which won Maxi 5 with a race to spare. This left

Viva La Vida to take the bullet in the final race ahead of *Beautiful Day* and former winner *Bambo*. Overall *Viva La Vida* was second ahead of *Saida*.

"It was a wonderful week – I couldn't ask for more," commented Pellizzaro. "It was great fun and the place is beautiful. Probably it was beginner's luck this week!"

The packed prize-giving took place within the regatta village on Môle d'Estienne d'Orves, where trophies were presented to the class winners by VIPs including SNST President Pierre Roinson and Laurent Petit, Head of Event Policy for the Ville de Saint-Tropez. Awards included the new Edmond de Rothschild Trophy going to the Maxi 1 winner, *V*.



Jim Swartz's *Vesper* was pipped to the post in the last race, to lose by just one point overall to *Django 7X*.
Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget



2024-25 MMOC WINNER – *SPIRIT OF LORINA*



In 2025 Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Spirit of Lorina* won the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge (MMOC) for a second time, the first yacht to ever do so since the Challenge was introduced by the Association in 2015. This followed the team's victory in the MMOC aboard their faithful Botin 65 during the 2021-22 season.

As usual, the 2024-25 MMOC began with the previous season's Rolex Middle Sea Race. In this *Spirit of Lorina* set the tone for her campaign, finishing second maxi on IRC corrected time to Louis Balcaen's Maxi 72 *Balthasar* and winning her class. This was an extremely challenging race during which they had faced 44 knots – 'Brittany weather' as boat captain/project manager Benjamin Enon described it – on the first day. During this they, like others, had blown out a kite.

"The offshore is always an adventure," reflected Barjon afterwards. "The Rolex Middle Sea Race was very, very hard. I'm not an experienced sailor and for me it was very hard physically. But once you've finished, you only keep the good memories!"

A first for Barjon and *Spirit of Lorina* was competing in La Larga, the offshore race of PalmaVela. In what was a disappointing race for the French team, they finished third behind the VO70 *L4 Trifork* and Robert Szustkowski's Mylius 60 *R6*. As Enon remembers: "It was super light – too light for us – with two transitions in which we lost out in both. And the arrival was very light and complicated. It was not the best race for us."

Nonetheless it still contributed valuable MMOC points which *Spirit of Lorina* rounded off with the Regata dei Tre Golfi. In a race that for the most part favoured the faster boats, *Spirit of Lorina* finished 21st across the 30-boat maxi fleet. She might have

Jean-Pierre Barjon (right) with boat captain/project manager Benjamin Enon. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

improved her score further had she competed in the Loro Piana Giraglia offshore, but with another light forecast Barjon and the team chose not to take part.

“To win for a second time is incredible because when I won the first time, it was historic for me,” said an elated Barjon. In fact the result went to the wire, with Seng Huang Lee’s David Witt-skippered 100-footer *SHK Scallywag* coming home sixth in the Loro Piana Giraglia to finish on 234.5 points, just four shy of *Spirit of Lorina*’s 238.5, both having qualified for a MMOC result by having competed in three races.

Barjon continued: “This year, the boat has been modified with water ballast and a lot of things. And the crew is always superb under Benjamin Enon, the boat captain and manager of this project. Together we have a special *Lorina* spirit, which is to compete and do well, but without the highest budget.”

Joining Barjon, Enon and their crew on board *Spirit of Lorina* in 2024-25 were Gildas Philippe and Fabien Delahaye as tactician and navigator respectively. Barjon is proud that over the years many of the sailors who have passed through his crew have gone on to greater things. Most notably these have included Olympians turned SailGP stars Quentin Delapierre and Kevin Peponnet, and more recently Figaro sailors such as Achille Nebout, Jules Decelier and Calixte Benoit. “It’s a great pleasure to welcome young French talent on board,” says Barjon. “We are very happy when they are here.”

Underlining the strength of their year, *Spirit of Lorina* was also a strong contender for the IMA’s Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge for 2025, holding second place going into Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, although eventually ending up fifth.



Spirit of Lorina enjoying the fresh breeze at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi



2025 MMIC WINNER – GALATEIA



With the former President's three-time Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) winner *Wallyño* out of action after her grounding during the IMA Maxi Europeans, so the competition for the 2025 MMIC turned into a hard-fought contest between the top Maxi 1s and Maxi Grand Prix yachts. This came down to the last race of the final event – Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Here, after being put out of action by a collision on the opening day, *Galateia* rallied to finish sixth, enough to win the season, their 319.99 just beating the regatta winner *V* into second place on 312.75.

Karel Komárek's *V* and *Galateia*, jointly owned by David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers, had been rivals all season, facing each other over the course of seven events. This started prior to the MMIC with the RORC Nelson's Cup, St Barths Bucket and the North Sound Maxi Regatta in the Caribbean. In these, *V* had got the upper hand.

However considerable upgrades were made to *Galateia* in record time before May's IMA Maxi European Championship. This included the addition of an interceptor on her transom, rig and sail development and enlargement, as well as refinement of her water ballast system. This bumped her IRC TCC up from 1.787 to 1.804 (overtaking *V* on 1.790), helping her gain the upper hand for the remainder of the season... right up until the Saint-Tropez decider.

The Maxi 72s had dominated the IMA Maxi Europeans in Sorrento, but *Galateia* had won the Maxi 1 competition, finishing one place ahead of *V*. This was also the case for the Loro Piana Giraglia inshores. But highlight of *Galateia*'s season was certainly when they were crowned Rolex IMA Maxi 1 World Champions during September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, although on

Left to right: David M Leuschen with Chris Flower and daughter Lizz.

countback from Joost Schuijff's defending champion *Leopard 3*.

Among the Maxi 1s, *Galateia* is unique in having two co-owners, with typically either Leuschen or Flowers taking the helm for events. A pleasing development for 2025 has been Chris Flowers' daughter Lizz sharing helming duties with her father.

Of their season Chris Flowers commented: "First of all, I would like to say we have a fantastic crew, with great leadership. We have a wonderful vessel. It has been fun doing this with my daughter. I must congratulate David [Leuschen] too, as he and I are co-owners and have a good time. I've known him for a long, long time – he is a wonderful guy. And I think maybe it is more fun for us being partners in this than doing it by ourselves."

The all-star cast on board in 2025 included helm coach Kelvin Harrap, joined by Markus Weiser and Murray Jones in the afterguard.

Flowers enjoys the stiff competition, not only with *V* but with *Leopard 3* and the rest of the Maxi 1 class too: "It's a fantastic bunch of boats. We've won some; we've lost some – and that's what makes it fun. It's a contest out there with many fantastic boats."

Lizz Flowers profoundly enjoyed her helming duties: "It definitely has been a life-changing experience for me. And I'm just so proud to be a part of it and have them welcome me and teach me as much as I can absorb. I like to learn the other roles, even though I don't do them. I used to not know what a leebow was or a dip. I don't know what I'd do without these guys."

*The magnificent 100-footer Galateia.
Photo: Gilles Martin-Raget*





While *Galateia* and *Spirit of Lorina* won the MMOC and MMIC prizes for 2025, the IMA Yacht of the Year was Alessandro Del Bono's judel/vrolijk 80 *Capricorno*, winning based on a calculation of the aggregated results for both inshore and offshore events in the IMA race programme.

This is the second time Del Bono has won the IMA Yacht of the Year, lifting the trophy in 2022 when campaigning his previous *Capricorno*, a still hotly competitive 1995 vintage 78ft ILC maxi. In 2025 he won it on board his latest maxi yacht, also named *Capricorno* as per Del Bono family tradition. Only launched in the spring of 2024, *Capricorno* spent most of that first season finding her way.

During 2025 she competed at the bottom end of the Maxi 1 class where her immediate competition was Pier Luigi Loro Piana's 80ft *My Song* and Wendy

Past winners

2013	<i>Rán II</i>	Niklas Zennström (SWE)
2014	<i>Robertissima</i>	Roberto Tomasini Grinover (ITA)
2015	<i>Momo</i>	Dieter Schön (GER)
2016	<i>Rambler 88</i>	George David (USA)
2017	<i>Proteus</i>	George Sakellaris (USA)
2018	<i>Atalanta II</i>	Carlo A Puri Negri (ITA)
2019	<i>Rambler 88</i>	George David (USA)
2021	<i>Twin Soul B</i>	Luciano Gandini (ITA)
2022	<i>Capricorno</i>	Alessandro Del Bono (ITA)
2023	<i>North Star</i>	Peter Dubens (GBR)
2024	<i>Bullitt</i>	Andrea Recordati (ITA)
2025	<i>Capricorno</i>	Alessandro Del Bono (ITA)

Alessandro Del Bono's *Capricorno* – IMA Yacht of the Year for 2025.

Schmidt's 85ft *Deep Blue*, among others. After finishing ninth from 23 entries at the IMA Maxi Europeans in Sorrento, *Capricorno* achieved her first major success by winning the Maxi 1 class in not only the inshores of Loro Piana Giraglia, but the offshore race to Genoa too. The latter was an ultra-light affair, *Capricorno's* victory secured after a key tactical decision was made to err west on the approach to the finish. This, her tactician, Brazilian multiple Olympic medallist and round the world race winner Torben Grael, explained had been to reach the new pressure before her rivals. Del Bono commented at the time: "We did very well, I'm very happy and the boat is performing well now." *Capricorno* went on to finish second overall across the entire Loro Piana Giraglia fleet.

After finishing seventh in class at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, *Capricorno* rounded out her season on a high, coming home second in the ultra-competitive Maxi 1 fleet at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. As a result of this, she concluded the 2025 season on 427.91 points, ahead of the ex-Wallycentos, *Galateia* on 413.68 and *V* on 384.47.

"I am delighted to be awarded the prize for being 'IMA Yacht of the Year' for 2025," commented Del Bono. "I was quite surprised by the announcement that I had won again and I am looking forward to the official awards presentation in September." The IMA Yacht of the Year trophy is traditionally presented at the IMA Members' Dinner during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

"From my 2025 experience, I am very pleased with the class in which *Capricorno* races – this Maxi 1 class is very beautiful, very competitive, and enables

boats of different ages and sizes to race against one another."

Del Bono is often joined in races by his father Rinaldo, whose ILC46 *Capricorno* was part of Italy's winning Admiral's Cup team in 1995. In fact *Capricorno* is such an institution that many of the crew from that campaign, such as Vittorio Volontè, Flavio Favini, Stefano Rizzi, Alberto Fantini, Matteo Plazzi and Oscar Tonoli, continue to race on board three decades later.

Loro Piana Giraglia is a favourite of Del Bono, as he says: "I like the variation between the strong winds and light air that you usually find in June. Obviously Saint-Tropez is fantastic, also in October for Les Voiles."

At present *Capricorno* has only reached around 85% of her potential confides Del Bono, so we can look forward to her enjoying even greater success in seasons to come as she becomes more and more developed by her highly experienced crew.



Compared to her ILC maxi predecessor, the new *Capricorno* has a modern hull shape with chines and a chamfered deck forwards.
Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi



One of the biggest challenges for the Association Technical Office each year is predicting and preparing for what is coming: Not in terms of the race schedule, or the day-to-day running of the office, but knowing what the next big talking point will be. 2025 was no exception for while we knew what was on the radar, we never exactly knew what would be the cause of the sky falling in during the coming year.

For 2025 the discussion about trim tabs was at the top of the list, as well as interceptors and rotating/twisting rigs. Fly-by-wire controls are also now hitting the agenda.

Trim tabs are not a new innovation: they have been seen on International Metre yachts, such as the 5.5, 6 and 12mR classes for years and many maxi crews are also well versed in using them on the RC44

circuit. They are effectively a rudder mounted on the trailing edge of the keel fin that behaves rather like a flap on an aeroplane wing, providing much increased lift off the keel fin, at best minimising or negating leeway or in some cases, in optimum conditions, creating <math><2^\circ</math> negative leeway (compared to

As IMA rules allow appendages in addition to the rudder to be powered (such as canting keels and canards), it has become increasingly apparent that when a boat has a PLC (programmable logic controller) to manage the inputs from the various sensors around the boat, and can control the appendages through a push button system (excluding the rudder), teaching this PLC to control the trim tab automatically is only a small next step. This takes it from being something that is effective 25% of the time, to effective 99% of the time. That is a game changer but, while a fascinating study, not something that is going to make racing more enjoyable for the fleet as a whole. As such, IRC has increased the rating effect of this for 2026 again. This may be seen as arbitrary, but it is well within the fundamental policies of IRC, where IRC Rule 2.4 states “IRC discourages unnecessary expense at all levels.”

Interceptors have also been on the agenda for a number of teams in recent years. This is a pretty simple modification, with a wedge simply added to the underside of the transom to interrupt the water flow. On motor boats these are often adjustable, but the benefits in the maxi fleet seem to be covered sufficiently with a fixed wedge. IRC has made changes for this year so that this is no longer considered to be a change to the hull, but is rated independently. This means that the hull age date is not affected by using one and the rating effect is equalised irrespective of the boat’s age.

Looking ahead further, we are seeing an increasing number of new rigs being installed with a spherical mast base locator pin, rather than the traditional rectangular pin. When combined with a degree of freedom at the deck partners, this allows a rig to rotate on the base and very slightly present a better angle of attack for the mast and mainsail. IRC does allow this and does rate it, but we are seeing an increasing number of teams “struggling” to make parts a tight fit, allowing them to be adjusted on a daily basis. In my other role we are frequently machining such components to tolerances of $\pm 0.05\text{mm}$, so to me the excuse that ‘we used to be able to get this right but have forgotten how to’, falls on deaf ears. The measurement team this year will be closely monitoring this and if we believe a rig’s partners and base are designed and engineered with the intent to allow rotation, we will make sure that is represented correctly on the IRC rating certificate.

A more philosophical subject are fly-by-wire systems. It is recognised that as the size of yachts and the loads involved with them increase, safety is



Canting keel checks.



Discussions on board Magic Carpet e.



Confirming the sail inventory.



Examining forestay and furler arrangements.



Stanchions and lifelines – vital safety features.

Water ballast

Water ballast is today a significant feature of racing maxi yachts with 100-footers like *Galatea* now capable of carrying around four tonnes of water each side. The tech to handle this has come on in leaps and bounds.

Diverse Performance Systems has built most of the systems for the bigger maxis. These have plumbing that permits a full transfer of water between tanks laterally, ie tack to tack, in under 10 seconds. Transfers are typically carried out prior to a manoeuvre, the water dumped to the leeward tanks by gravity, but if they suddenly have to tack prior to the transfer the water can be pumped up to the weather tank via powerful pumps that can transfer up to four tonnes of water per minute. These pumps are also used to suck water on board if, for example, the water has been expelled for a light downwind leg.



Diverse Performance System's Simon Fisher.

Much of Diverse's manifolds and other plumbing is 3D printed, while a significant feature of their kit is that their valves are pneumatically controlled – a lighter arrangement than using hydraulic or electric controllers.



*The substantial plumbing, pneumatic valve and pump arrangement below on Galatea.
Photos: IMA/James Boyd*

IMA TECHNICAL OFFICE UPDATE

paramount. With the availability of sensors of all types expanding and the computing power needed to analyse this data being available in anything from a smartphone up, the information available to the crew is ever expanding. However, the possibility of allowing the same system to automatically control surfaces rather than simply inform the crew is here. So, should we allow it to be used when racing, and how can we control it?

Current rules permit stored power to be used to control appendages and water ballast etc. The RRS are clear that autopilots are not permitted, but that only extends to steerage through the rudder. Should we allow it to go further? As an example, should a computer be permitted to control a rotating canard for a canting keel boat, making adjustments a hundred times a second to control leeway and keep drag to a minimum? On twin rudder yachts, should a toe-in system for a windward rudder be allowed to be computer-controlled, to ensure the helm gets no confusing feedback from the unused rudder tip being hit by a wave? Should a water ballast system be permitted to be filled or emptied, or a canting keel adjusted, automatically to maintain a perfect heel angle? All is possible, but should it be permitted?

To me, these may be sensible options for cruising shorthanded, but considering the level of racing at IMA events, I believe that the skill of the crew should be tested over the efforts of the programmer or AI. After all, if we were to allow more automated systems, wouldn't this reduce the demand on the crew and see skill levels drop?

This leads me to my next topic; crew numbers. Over the years we see many of the same faces at IMA

events, but we are all getting older and we need to pass our skills on to a younger generation.

At September's AGM it was agreed that <2 crew can race onboard above each yacht's maximum IRC crew limit, provided they are either <21 years old or female. This will hopefully draw some new up-and-coming talent into the fleet. But we need to make sure that these crew are not being brought on to simply bolster numbers on the rail and are getting an opportunity to fill the regular roles on

board. For a female crew member, there is no age limit, but for the under 21, we don't want to see a new 20-year-old onboard each year, only to never see them again.

I will therefore be proposing in September that if an under-21 competes on the same boat for a minimum of three of our events as the under-21 crew, they can be retained in that position for the following year, when over 21. I am thinking we could continue this for an extra two years. If after three years and at the

age of 23 someone has not proven their worth, it would be time to move on. I am sure this idea can be improved and I look forwards to discussing it further through the year.

I also hope this year to expand discussions within the individual classes. We have good stability in the class splits now and, as such, we have competitors consistently racing each other in their given classes. There is still work to do and I would like to look at a DLR (displacement to length ratio) split that will allow some of the larger series builds, such as seen from Nautor Swan and Southern Wind to race in Maxi 3, even if their TCC alone might push them into Maxi Grand Prix. This is a work in progress.

In the meantime, we need to start looking more at individual classes and their needs as the fleet diversifies more. For example, preventing crew being left at the dock on light days works fine for the fully professional crews of a Maxi Grand Prix yacht, but in Maxi 5, where crew may be made up of friends and family, people should not be left ashore during their much deserved holidays.

These needs should be discussed with each class and agreed there, with full consideration for the diversity of needs across the fleet.

As always, there is much to do and with the season rapidly approaching, measurement of winter modifications is in full swing. It is great to see every last drop of performance being squeezed from some of the older yachts and that winning races isn't just about having the newest toy. There is no replacement for skill and time on the water. And that is what racing should be about after all.



*Pascale Decaux (fourth from left) and some of the world class female crew who race with her on board Tilakkhana II.
Photo: SailingShots/Maria Muiña*

EDOARDO RECCHI – AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

There are phone calls that change a life in a matter of seconds and it was one such phone call, one January morning 25 years ago, that marked the turning point for Edoardo Recchi.

Born in 1968 and raised between the Roman hills and Castiglione della Pescaia in Tuscany, Edoardo Recchi had received a solid military education in the Italian Navy as a young man – attending first the Morosini Naval College in Venice, then the Academy in Livorno and getting his final degree in Taranto – before boarding the tall ship *Amerigo Vespucci* as First Officer and navigator. A few years later, under President of Italy Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, he was appointed Commander, ‘Comandante’, of another vessel of the Italian Navy, the presidential yacht *Nave Argo*.

That Sunday morning in January 2001, on the other end of the phone was another naval officer, Gianfranco Alberini, a retired admiral who had been Commodore of the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in Porto Cervo for nearly 20 years. “Edoardo, we need an extra man here at the club,” Alberini simply said. “Would you have time for His Highness and for me?”

‘His Highness’ was Karim Aga Khan IV, President of the YCCS, who had founded the club in 1967. Over the winter of 2000-2001, the Aga Khan had commissioned the New York-based architect Peter Marino to undertake a radical renovation of the YCCS clubhouse overlooking Porto Cervo Marina. The goal of the restyling was to enter the new millennium with the club’s headquarters renewed both physically and spiritually. New resources were needed to meet the high expectations of the President while the club’s enterprising Board of



Edoardo Recchi, YCCS Secretary General and Sporting Director from 2001 to 2025. Photo: Martinez Studio

Directors was striving to bring greater internationalism to its now more prestigious headquarters.

In a matter of days, Recchi arrived in Porto Cervo.

It was mid-winter, the marina was empty, and the Mistral was lashing the cliffs below the Observatory, above the harbour entrance. The clubhouse was a construction site bustling with workers; in anticipation of this, just a few months earlier the club’s offices had been moved to the Sports Center. A small group, from the regatta secretariat to the membership secretariat, had helped to store chairs,

folders of faxes and other documents in the certainty that within a few months they would return to their clubhouse, now made more beautiful than ever. There, in the Sports Centre’s plain unadorned rooms, Commodore Alberini was planning the YCCS’ 2001 sailing season.

The young Recchi was already familiar with the club through family connections and from having participated in several regattas on board Italian navy entries during his years as flag aide to the Admiral commanding the Sardinia region at the military headquarters in La Maddalena.

“I didn’t hesitate; I left Rome in less than 10 days,” Recchi recalls. “The opportunity Gianfranco offered me with the yacht club was completely new to me and captivating. The training I received alongside him was invaluable.

“In the dual role of Secretary General and Sports Director, I quickly found myself managing all aspects of club life. The Aga Khan and his daughter, Princess Zahra, personally oversaw the renovation, making frequent trips to Sardinia. I saw the clubhouse change day-to-day and take on the look promised in the plans. I dealt with unimaginable issues, such as the big umbrellas on the club’s terrace which had to withstand the most extreme gusts of wind and were shipped to Porto Cervo from Australia.

“On the sailing events side, Gianfranco had already worked on some exceptional campaigns on behalf of the club, such as the first Italian challenge for the America’s Cup with *Azzurra* in 1983. In 1987 he had led the YCCS team that travelled to Fremantle, Australia as the Challenger of Record, to manage the challenger selection trials prior to the America’s



YACHT CLUB COSTA SMERALDA



The YCCS Observatory overlooking the entrance of Porto Cervo
Photo: M Luisa Farris



Italian Navy tall ship Amerigo Vespucci off Porto Cervo during the 2007 Mumm 30 Worlds. Photo: YCCS archive



Edoardo Recchi at the 2008 Swan Cup prize-giving.
Photo: Studio Borlenghi/Nautor Swan



The YCCS and New York Yacht Club teams on the occasion of the reciprocal agreement, signed in 2003. Photo: YCCS archive



Melges 24 World Championship in 2008.
Photo: Paul Todd



The race committee and jury teams for Melges 24 Worlds in 2008.
Photo: Paul Todd



Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup awards 2008. Recchi (left) with Their Highnesses the Aga Khan and Princess Zahra. Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi



YCCS Commodore Gianfranco Alberini (left), Recchi (middle) and Fabrizio Pirina from the YCCS. Photo: M Luisa Farris



Comandante Recchi was presented with the IMA's Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy. Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

Cup match race. Alberini was well known and respected overseas and was personally a member of the New York Yacht Club. Starting in the early 1970s, he had conceived from scratch the regattas that had made both the Costa Smeralda's unique race courses around La Maddalena and the organisational skills of the club world class: regattas such as the Settimana delle Bocche, the Sardinia Cup, and the Veteran Boat Rally, soon followed by the first maxi yacht regattas and Swan Cups.

"I threw myself into the new assignment with enthusiasm," Recchi recalls. "The team I found in Porto Cervo was small but highly motivated; everything seemed possible. Alberini used to set ambitious goals but he had the ability to make everything, even the impossible, seem simply 'within reach'. A few years following my arrival, the club went from four or five regattas per year to eight, to ten. Extending the Porto Cervo sailing season greatly benefitted the hotels and all marine services. We all worked tirelessly: during the winter months with



*Stefan Müller, Managing Director of Rolex Italia (left) with Recchi at 2025 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup prize-giving.
Photo: ROLEX/Studio Borlenghi*

meetings and planning, then from late spring with the first regattas. But we quickly managed to bring new world and european championships to Porto Cervo, for practically all the major one-design classes."

Alberini left his post as YCCS Commodore in 2007 and at the same time Princess Zahra was appointed President of the club's Board of Directors, of which she had been a member since 2001.

Under three successive commodores of the YCCS – Riccardo Bonadeo, Michael Illbruck and, current incumbent, Andrea Recordati – Recchi continued to work tirelessly for the club's growth. His no-frills, highly professional vision led to races being organised for a broad range of fleets, including Mumm 30s, Farr 40s, Melges 32s, TP52s, Melges 24s, Smeralda 888s, RC44s and Swan 45s – all racing out of the YCCS.

"We can say that all the modern one-design sailing classes have asked to hold their championships in Porto Cervo, both Worlds and Europeans," Recchi says proudly. "One example is the J/70 class, which replaced the Smeralda 888 as the YCCS' 'club boat' in 2016 and held in its first world championship in the Mediterranean in Porto Cervo in 2017 with a record entry of 170 boats: a number never matched in subsequent championships.

"I also fondly remember the historic Olympic classes like the Star and the 5.5 Metre, as well as the J/24 and 69F. On a completely different, but equally stimulating front, in more recent years I have worked on two initiatives for the club: first in 2009/10 when the YCCS participated in the Louis Vuitton Trophy Series held in the last America's Cup monohulls, with the YCCS' Azzurra team winning the first event

of the series in Nice. And then in establishing Young Azzurra, first with a team of YCCS athletes competing in the innovative 69F foilers and then supporting young sailors from Sardinia in their specific disciplines."

As Secretary General, Recchi also oversaw all the sponsorship contracts: in addition to Rolex, the club's title sponsor since the 1980s, were automotive names like Audi, BMW, Volvo, Jeep and currently Range Rover, as well as luxury brands like Prada, Loro Piana and Giorgio Armani. He was also in charge of official relationships with shipyards and designers: Nautor Swan, Southern Wind, Cantieri del Pardo, Perini Navi, Oyster, Wally and Dubois, all of whom would refer to Porto Cervo as their 'home'. These were also the years in which reciprocal agreements with other important yacht clubs were signed: with the New York Yacht Club in 2003, then with the Cowes-based Royal Yacht Squadron and the Norddeutscher Regatta Verein in Hamburg.

During the 'Recchi era', his team at the YCCS worked hard to establish their reputation for highly professional race management, not only in Porto Cervo but also in Capri and Tenerife, as well as the club's second clubhouse in Virgin Gorda in the Caribbean. Over the years many race officials worked on events held by the YCCS: "Every event brings together international judges, race committee members and top-level technicians in Porto Cervo," recalls Recchi, "like Peter 'Luigi' Reggio, whom we appointed as Principal Race Officer when this role was still virtually unknown in Italy. Owners would return, year after year, to race once again on our exceptional race course, taking in the beauty of the location blessed with strong winds and flat seas; most

suitable for windward-leeward or coastal racing. Each event was different and the parties, held on the club's terrace overlooking the harbour, attracted guests from all over the world."

Thanks to this, the club's membership has doubled in 20 years to around 600.

Jewel in the crown of the YCCS calendar since it was first held as the ICAYA World Championship in 1980 is the present-day Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, held annually in early September.

Recchi recalls: "I remember the sense of wonder watching the maxi fleet gather, day after day, at the beginning of September in the early 2000s. It was a breathtaking sight, even for those of us who had been working on the entry lists for months. I remember *Virtuelle* entering the harbour, the captivating beauty of the first Wally boats, my awareness of the enormous privilege in simply being able to watch these magnificent yachts sail.

"Those were the years of the great Greek and American owners like George Andreadis, George Coumantaros and Bill Koch, or Alberto Roemmers from South America with his *Alexia*. But there were also some excellent Italian owners too, like Riccardo Bonadeo and Claudio Recchi. They would invite me out on their boats for training races or to celebrate after the awards ceremony. In their bermuda shorts, they would stop by the office before going back home once the event was finished, making sure to book one of the club's 24 suites for the following year.

"Over the years, there has been a steady growth in the number of entries to the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in September: in recent years we've regularly reached



Today's Yacht Club Costa Smeralda clubhouse, after renovation works by the New York-based architect Peter Marino.
Photo: ROLEX/Carlo Borlenghi

50 maxi yachts racing. The event turned 35 in 2025. Moving it from the first to second week of September proved to be a good choice. Maxi boats are getting faster and faster, often the result of extreme designs and expressing the intense competitiveness among owners. Currently the pure racing maxis, the most technical, are the Maxi 72s (Maxi Grand Prix); but there are also the larger 100-footers, equally fierce now on the race course."

So, a quarter of a century has flown by, during which Recchi and YCCS achieved many great things, but it has taken its toll, the intense workload leaving little room for anything else. Therefore, before the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in September 2025, Comandante Recchi announced his

retirement and resignation from his duties at the club. He is succeeded by Giorgio Benussi, who will lead the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda into a new era.

In honour of his service, Recchi received two important awards. During the 2025 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, IMA Secretary General Andrew McIrvine awarded him the Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy for his enormous contribution to the development of the maxi yacht class and yacht racing in general.

Then, a month later, the YCCS Board of Directors appointed him an Honorary Member of the club to which he gave so much to shape.

by Maria Luisa Farris

This 2026 season holds the promise of more J Class activity than we saw in 2025, a year largely dedicated to cruising by some of the teams which had raced relatively hard and often during 2024. This seems to be the cyclical rhythm that event participation has followed over the last few years.

It is encouraging to report that *Rainbow* has been sold to an enthusiastic new owner: Admiral's Cup winner and long-time successful grand prix racer Peter Harrison. The potent, 2012-launched replica of the 1934 America's Cup-winning *Rainbow* was updated with modern systems by her last owner, Neville Crichton, who upgraded the winches and fitted a new rig and deck layout before then racing at the J Class Barcelona Regatta during the 37th America's Cup. Harrison, whose Jolt Sailing Team campaigns a 72ft maxi and a 52-footer, plans to race *Rainbow*, enjoy some cruising (as time permits) and entertain guests of Richard Mille, the watch brand of which he is CEO for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"The opportunity came up to take on *Rainbow* and Peter seized it," enthuses Matt Adams, who runs Harrison's boats. "They are such beautiful boats – why would you not want to own and sail one? *Rainbow* is a good racing boat which has just been refitted, but from Peter's point of view the race boats we have are quite hard to activate sponsorship with so we can also use the J Class as a corporate hospitality platform for Richard Mille – we can take guests out when we are racing, and that appeals. We will take this year as a stepping stone but really hope to build some buzz around the class and hopefully get a few more boats out in the future. This year we are dipping our toes in the water with

a couple of events and we will go from there. But we are very excited to be going racing."

As to the team onboard, Adams confirms the plan is "to roll the *Jolt* crews across on to *Rainbow*. Peter will drive and we have not quite decided on the actual afterguard yet. And we have a great synergy with the *Svea* team." Throughout the Admiral's Cup especially, the *Rainbow/Jolt* team built an excellent relationship with *Svea*'s owners and crew, including Tim Powell who runs *Svea* and sailed in 2025 on Harrison's previous 72-footer (ex-*Ràn II*).

So this duo, *Rainbow* and *Svea*, will be at the core of this year's racing activity, which in due course should lead on to another showcase J Class regatta during the America's Cup period in Naples in 2027. Meanwhile this year the J Class will return to the ever-popular Superyacht Cup Palma Richard Mille in Mallorca (24-27 June) and the French showcase at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez (26 September-4 October). *Svea* and *Rainbow* will race at the Palma event and *Shamrock V* is expected to join them at Les Voiles.

Like their *Jolt* counterparts, the *Svea* crew has an active season planned with its other race boats, not least collaborating together in a team for the Sardinia Cup. "Last year was fun for us on *Svea* as we got all the way up the East Coast of the USA and cruised in the Caribbean," comments Paul Kelly, Boat Captain of *Svea*. "It was all great and we got some big miles under the boat, but we are looking forward to having this season bookended by regattas. We have a handful of new crew coming on which is good and we are doubly motivated by *Rainbow* – Peter Harrison and the crew will bring a whole new energy to the class which is exciting.

Despite the age of their designs, the Js provide extraordinary racing.
Photo: Sailing Energy







J CLASS UPDATE



“I think our ideal is the same as it has always been for the class: to get as many boats involved as possible. We have a rule in place, which worked well last year and it is settled – everyone needs to embrace that, to get out there and enjoy these boats for what they are and what they offer us. There are such fine margins involved racing that one bad gybe or tack makes all the difference.

“Personally I can’t wait to be back in Saint-Tropez this year. I have been there so many times, but never on *Svea*, so that is going to be great to have the boats taking centre stage in the port.

“The boat is just the same now as in Barcelona, we just need to remember how to race her!”

Since being launched last year after her massive refit, *Shamrock V* has been active and they are reported to be especially looking forward to being in Naples during the next America’s Cup. *Shamrock V*’s spokesman comments: “In the late season of 2025, fresh out of the yard, *Shamrock V* embarked on a shakedown cruise covering some 4,500 miles, culminating in some great sailing at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. After such a major restoration we continue to optimise the boat and her systems while planning for full commissioning in spring 2026.”

Meanwhile, sitting out 2026 will be *Velsheda* as the beautiful 1933 Charles Nicholson original undergoes a programmed refit. The iconic J Class, which has been the standard bearer for the class over recent years, will be missed but will hopefully be back in action in the near future.

We also eagerly await the newest J Class, *J-2*, which is making good progress. The build continues apace

and the boat is expected to be actively participating in J Class events in 2027.

Behind the scenes, our thanks and great credit are due to Stuart Childerley who has kept the class on course since February 2022, notably delivering a fabulous Barcelona regatta, maintaining the connection with the America’s Cup and showcasing some great racing as the perfect counterpoint to the modern AC75s. Hopefully AC38 will prove equally receptive, its venue of Naples being one many owners and crews want to visit.

With his roster of work growing all the time, Stuart stood down late last year and the Class Association is fortunate to welcome back Louise Morton. Her intention is to align with the objectives and expectations of existing and new owners to build a strong future, reinforced by lessons learned from recent years – what has proven to be successful and popular, while avoiding what has not worked as well.

“I am pleased to be back with the J Class,” says Louise Morton. “It is my third time; I am not sure why I keep coming back except that I haven’t liked seeing the class in decline. 2026 brings a new owner for *Rainbow* and a replica in build to be launched later this year. It is important to look after all these owners and make sure that we all work together for the good of the class. Short to medium term, my aim is to provide the best environment for those who want to race, rendezvous and be active in the class. I hope in the fullness of time we can encourage other owners, or new owners, to join in.”

by Andi Robertson

*Niklas Zennström and Filip Engelbert’s Svea is the present benchmark in the J Class.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*



It is rare that a maxi yacht wins one of our IMA Rolex World Championships on its first attempt, but in September Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's remarkable wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X* did just this. Naturally, being the Rolex IMA Maxi Grand Prix World Championship, part of the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and acknowledged as one of the most competitive events in sailing, it came down to the last race. In this, a second for *Django 7X* left her two points ahead of Peter Harrison's *Jolt* and Hap Fauth's *Bella Mente* in the final results tally.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. *Django 7X* is the first new yacht in the class to be launched since Hap Fauth's *Bella Mente* in 2018 and much development has occurred since then both in this class, other maxi classes and particularly the hotly competitive TP52 class; this latest racing machine drew from lessons learned and refinements made in all of these classes. Most notably, in *Django 7X's* case, water ballast was identified as a cheap way, in terms of rating, to gain performance. While all the Maxi Grand Prix class yachts (the former Maxi 72s) now have this, *Django 7X* is the first in the class to have had this tech incorporated into her design from the very outset.

For Mr Stronati, this latest *Django* adds to his ever-growing fleet of racing yachts. It directly follows his campaigning the 82ft former *Highland Fling XI* and forms part of an ambitious sailing programme that in 2025 spanned representing the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in the rejuvenated Admiral's Cup with his own two-boat campaign, to taking delivery of the first Swan 128, *BeCool* (replacing his Swan 98 of the same name).

The wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X* is the culmination of Botin Partners' previous maxis such as the 85ft *Deep Blue*, their Maxi 72s *Jolt* and *Bella Mente* and especially their latest generation TP52s. Photos: Gilles Martin-Raget

The new *Django 7X* is the child of designers Botin Partners (who also designed *Bella Mente* and Peter Harrison's *Jolt*, the two most recent Maxi 72/Maxi Grand Prix class yachts prior to *Django 7X*) and builders King Marine in Valencia, plus a team led by well known Italian tactician Vasco Vascotto, who also provided the link to Wally Yachts. The arrangement with Wally Yachts, like that of the first wallyrocket 51, is such that the company owns the tooling to the wallyrocket 71, enabling more to be built should someone else desire one.

According to Vascotto, the concept for the wallyrocket 71 was similar to that of the wallyrocket 51: both boats benefitting from having no constraints of a box rule, such as the TP52 or Maxi 72 rules; the primary design parameters were only IRC, their intended race programme and the anticipated weather the latter presented. "We want a very enjoyable boat that can sail fast reaching/downwind with a light displacement without having a huge rating. So the way to do that is to make it a little shorter compared to the others." As a result *Django 7X* is 71ft compared to the rest of the Maxi Grand Prix class which, having all once upon a time conformed to the Maxi 72 rule, are all at least 72ft, with *Bella Mente* at 74ft and the longest being Sir Peter Ogden's *Jethou* at 77ft. "Obviously doing that you pay a little bit upwind. Initially this boat was going to have a trim tab, but unfortunately the rule changed."

The trim tab on the keel, with which Vascotto is highly familiar following his years racing RC44 one-designs, was designed to redress *Django 7X*'s upwind disadvantage. With IRC raising the rating for trim tabs, the wallyrocket 71 and 51 jettisoned theirs in favour of conventional keels, but *Jolt* kept hers



and over the course of the 2025 season seemed more than able to sail to her new rating.

Being fast downwind but relatively slow upwind bucks typical wisdom which dictates that a boat which is first to the top mark has the advantage of sailing in clear air and can extend away by being the first to hoist their spinnaker on the run. Nonetheless *Django 7X*'s reverse approach seems to have paid off. As Vascotto points out: "The reality is that in windward-leewards and offshore races you might lose upwind, but as soon as you hoist the kite you can recover downwind. Obviously it was a big bet, but it seems to work!"

When it comes to her displacement and water ballast, *Django 7X* is a massive step forward. Her displacement of 12.1 tonnes compares favourably to *Bella Mente*'s launch weight of 16.3, although a strict diet has since got the American maxi down to 14.6. Getting ever lighter has been a trend in maxi yachts ever since they started to carry water ballast as this has allowed teams to remove lead from their keels, effectively making the boats 'variable displacement', able to power up when righting moment is required (ie upwind and reaching), while shedding weight on the runs. *Django 7X*'s designers are fully on trend: In addition to her lighter bulb, her draught is a massive 70cm less than *Bella Mente* and *Jolt* and she also has a shorter rig. As a result overall she sees less load so her sails, mast, rigging, deck gear – in fact, everything – can be built lighter, sparking a progressive downward weight spiral which in turn translates into a rating benefit under IRC.

Then there is the amount of water ballast she is designed to carry. While her Maxi Grand Prix class

competitors typically can carry 1.5-2 tonnes, *Django 7X* can load on 2.7 tonnes. The end result is that in some conditions off the breeze *Django 7X* can be as much as two knots faster than her opponents. Not only this but her lighter displacement makes her more 'dinghy-like'; her crew better able to get her to accelerate faster in gusts.

Placement and size of water ballast tanks have also evolved, with boats carrying two or three water ballast tanks each side. Botin Partners' Adolfo Carrau says that when they first installed water ballast on the IRC 52 *Caro*, they positioned the tanks fully aft in each stern quarter of the boat. However, as water ballast increased and bulb weight dropped, this started to affect the trim of the boats in an unwelcome way, making them more bow-up. As a result, since then tanks have started edging forward (no mean feat) and getting bigger.

The spec of the water ballast's plumbing has advanced considerably too, with massive pipes now able to transfer water from one side to another in seconds during manoeuvres, while powerful pumps can bring water on board or expel it. "Originally they had offshore-type systems," remembers Carrau. "Today they are very efficient – you can tack the boat and the water transfers so quickly you don't even notice it."

Django 7X is all set up to accept a trim tab and Carrau very much hopes the team goes ahead and treats this as a next development, as *Jolt* have. "It took a year for *Jolt* to really master how to use it. It's not like in the old Version 5 America's Cup boats where you just cranked the top from side to side. These trim tabs are very active; you need a dedicated

trimmer for them." On *Jolt* it is controlled by the main sheet trimmer. Carrau also notes that the water ballast can be so tweaky that some boats also have a crewman dedicated to monitoring and trimming that according to the point of sail and conditions.

In designing water ballast into *Django 7X* from the outset there was a trade-off, according to Carrau, between increasing beam to ensure the water ballast was used to maximum effect by being as far outboard as possible, versus the added parasitic drag from being too beamy. In fact, *Django 7X* is marginally narrower than *Bella Mente* and *Jolt* (also contributing to her lower displacement).

Like most of the other racing maxis, *Django 7X* also has an interceptor, effectively a shallow wedge added to the outer lip of her transom. This is far from being a maxi yacht fashion accessory, says Carrau. "Every boat we have designed has had its own CFD analysis on the interceptor to ensure it is the right size and depth. That depends on the hull shape, displacement, rocker... It's an interesting feature."

On powerboats, interceptors or trim tabs move and can be adjusted to alter fore and aft trim. This technology was tried in various forms in the IMOCA class 20+ years ago, but then discarded. "It's supposed to put the bow down and extend the transom wave a bit," explains Carrau. "In some conditions, it can get you planing a bit earlier."

Twin rudders are also popular, which Carrau attributes to round the world race winner Mike Sanderson insisting upon having them when they developed *Bella Mente* eight years ago. "Our simulations for upwind show the single rudder as the more efficient. But now with the change of



Giovanni Lombardi Stronati at the helm of his latest steed, the newest in the Maxi Grand Prix class, Django 7X. Photo: Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi



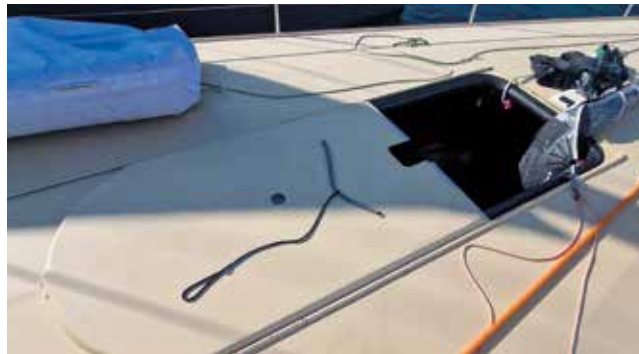
Immaculate carbon fibre detailing.



Aero-friendly below deck jib sheet tracks.



Hydraulic rams aplenty! Down below looking forwards.



Foredeck hatch with pneumatic seal.



Bow area shows lines running aft below decks.



Bowsprit and sunken forestay chainplate.



The pit with one driven and one snubber winch.



Hydraulic functions within easy reach of the trimmers.

	<i>Rán II</i> (in 2010)	<i>Jolt</i>	<i>Bella Mente</i>	<i>Django 7X</i>
Launched	2009	2017	2018	2025
Crew		22	22	21
LH (m)	21.91	21.95	22.55	21.4
Beam max (m)	5.74	5.73	5.75	5.55
Displacement (kg)	17560	15134	14697	12162
DLR	61	52	49	42
Draft (m)	4.81	5.64	5.59	4.89
P (m)	28.96	29.82	30.2	28.52
E (m)	10.23	9.86	9.66	9.65
J (m)	8.39	8.38	8.4	8.35
SPA (m²)	468	491	497.54	450
Water ballast (kg)	0	1820	1965	2709

courses and more coastals, whenever you have running or reaching, twin rudders have more control, you can push harder and go knots faster." When hard pressed reaching, single rudders also tend to produce too much vertical lift, pushing the bow down. Over the years, Carrau continues, they have evolved the design of their twin rudders so that the windward one mostly clears the water.

Seasoned pro-sailor Chris Hosking, who looks after the runners on board *Django 7X*, adds: "We're obviously a quick boat reaching anyway, but we can push the boat a lot harder than the boats that have a single rudder on the centreline."

Django 7X features a state-of-the-art Southern Spars mast with some curvature in her spreaders, a cunning feature that permits a slightly bigger LP lateral measurement on her jibs. They looked at using a 'twisting rig' such as *North Star* had fitted in 2024, however Hosking says this was one development too far for *Django 7X*, observing: "The boat is on the edge enough without spooking IRC too much and getting penalised. I think you don't want to be on the

extremes with IRC – if you stay in the middle then you're not going to get hit too hard." North Sails has conjured up their sail wardrobe with design work from Marco Capitani and Robert Hook, particularly focussing on their A-sails.

In terms of cockpit layout, they have five pedestals, following Hosking's mantra that you can never have too much power on these boats. "The whole idea is to utilise all the people that we have on board. Anybody who's sitting around doing nothing can get on the handles and contribute to providing more power, which results in faster hoists, faster gybes, faster spinnaker drops. You can push the boat into the bottom mark harder and the manoeuvres are better."

The pit area naturally has a winch, driven by the pedestals for speedy hoists, alongside a snubber winch typically used for tack lines and transferring halyard loads off the primary pit winch to prepare for the next manoeuvre. Jibs are cross-sheeted to the windward primary winch, enabling the jib trimmer to keep their weight up to weather and stay in the loop with the other trimmers – all long-standing

TP52 tech. Similarly, on deck there is a jib cunningham system as well as through-deck lateral jib tracks, which are good for reducing windage, but usually at the expense of a leaky deck.

Jon Williams' company STAYINPHASE has created the masterpieces of engineering and carbon fibre that are *Django 7X*'s winch, pedestal and sail handling systems, while Caraboni supplied her complex hydraulic systems. Southern Spars made her rig, held up by Future Fibres AEROrazr lateral rigging and forestay and ECsix backstays.

A promising development is that *Django 7X* is fully spec'd to race offshore as well as inshore, something they have achieved by building an offshore mast which is both more robust and permits reefing. To make the point it is very likely that *Django 7X* will compete in a major offshore race this season, such as the Rolex Middle Sea Race. As Carrau notes: "Admiral's Cup boats have given us a lot of inspiration; with the mix of inshores and offshore, having to make a boat that doesn't have too many weaknesses. I can see in the future not having specialist boats."

Less than a year in, the development curve for *Django 7X* remains a steep one. While physics may mean that she will not be the first on the upwind legs, the team are not giving up. "Obviously the boat's incredibly effective reaching and running and we've got a few tricks up our sleeve to improve the performance upwind," says Hosking.

While *Django 7X* is a large positive step in maxi yacht evolution, we wait to see how her traits are adopted across the maxi fleet, from the much-anticipated new generation of 100-footers down to 60s and cruiser-racers.

NEW MAXI YACHTS

Watch out this season for...

A full-on new racing yacht for the Maxi Grand Prix class: judel/vrolijk did the design and optimisation; SDK did the structure and Persico is building the yacht. Final dimensions are not yet available, but it follows the pedigree of the existing Maxi Grand Prix (ex-Maxi 72) yachts: fully

optimised carbon fibre prepreg, Kevlar honeycomb core race yacht construction with a deck layout fully optimised for inshore and coastal racing in the Mediterranean. Fitted with a latest generation Southern Spars mast, she can be raced with either full or reduced crew.



Wally Yachts

Following the launch of the first wallywind 110 *Galma*, owner Alberto Palatchi's step-up from his Wally 94 of the same name, so Wally Yachts has launched the second wallywind 110, which was first displayed at Cannes Yachting Festival last year.



Nautor Swan

As usual, much is happening in the world of Nautor Swan. While Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's Swan 128 *BeCool* made her first competitive outing in January's RORC Transatlantic Race and was entered in this spring's St Barths Bucket, hull #2 of what is their second longest model of all time is now in production at the Finnish yard. Due to be launched in June, both she and *BeCool* are set to compete at the Rolex Swan Cup in Porto Cervo in September, immediately after the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

Meanwhile Nautor is pushing a new Swan 80 design, with hull #1 sold. This is an evolution of the

successful Swan 78 (of which 10 were sold without modifications). Designed by Frers, with exterior and interior styling handled by Lucio Micheletti and Misa Poggi respectively, the new design features twin rudders while her construction is in foam cored glass-epoxy with unidirectional carbon fibre reinforcement. Fixed keels of two different drafts are available along with a lifting deep keel option. The first Swan 80 is scheduled to be unveiled at Cannes Yachting Festival this September.

The Swan Maxi range now spans the Swan 80 to the 128, via the Swan 88, 98, 100, 108 and 120.



Baltic Yachts

Baltic Yachts are still toasting the success of their semi-foiling superyacht, the Carkeek-designed 111-footer *Raven*, following her successful line honours victory in January's RORC Transatlantic Race. It appears that more is in store for this radical machine as she heads up to the US East Coast this year.

Meanwhile Baltic Yachts have completed four of their Café Racer 68 high performance day sailers to date, three of which competed at last year's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, including former IMA President Thomas Bscher's *Open Season*. More recently Baltic has sold the first example of the 68's big brother, the Café Racer 80. Once again this is a

design by Spanish naval architect Javier Jaudenes and aims to be a lightweight, luxurious, high performance yacht, suitable for cruising but also eminently capable of performing well on the race course – simple and easily accessible too. The first 80 is set for launch in the summer of 2027 and we look forward to seeing her out on the race course.





Grand Soleil 'Plus' maxis

Following on from their sleek-looking Ceccarelli-designed 80 *Essentia*, which raced at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in 2019, so Grand Soleil today has their 'Plus' line featuring 65, 72 and 80ft models. All are available in 'Long Cruise' or 'Performance' versions and come from the drawing board of Matteo Polli, working with Nauta Design. The yachts are highly customisable, while thought has gone into their sustainability, with eco resin used in the construction, plus sustainable teak decking and solar power. The 80 has a fixed keel with a draft of just under 4m and the option of twin rudders. The standard layout has the owner's cabin forward plus three guests' cabins and separate accommodation for the crew with their own access. Among its various yachts under construction, the yard has both versions of the 80, and a 72 Performance in build.

Solaris 74

The story is similar with the 74 from Solaris Yachts, which, in addition to a raised deck saloon option (of which two have now been launched), comes a flush deck version sharing the same hull (below). This is a design from Argentine naval architect Javier Soto Acebal with the interior by Lorenzo Argento and is built semi-custom. With a draft of 3.5m, her lines are modern with a bluff bow and stern and a chine culminating in twin rudders. Sail controls are electric, enabling easy handling by the smallest of crews. It comes with a layout for either three or four cabins, plus crew quarters, although there are numerous possible options.

Since 2021 Solaris Yachts has owned CNB Yacht Builders, which continues to do well with their popular Philippe Briand-designed range of cruiser-racers. While the 'B' in 'CNB' once stood for Bordeaux, production of their yachts has since transferred to Solaris' build facility in Aquileia, close to Venice. At Dusseldorf Boat Show the French yard

was exhibiting hull #3 of their CNB 62 model (below). Five of their boats competed at last autumn's Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – two 78s, two 76s and a 66.





NEW MAXI YACHTS

Mills 62 canting keeler

An exciting new 62ft custom racer-cruiser is in build at Fibre Mechanics from designer Mark Mills for launch this autumn. The new yacht is designed more for offshore than inshore and will feature a canting keel, a steerable daggerboard and twin rudders. It will have a full carbon-fibre race boat build but will also feature an interior, much like the successful 60 footers Mills created with *Vismara*.

Ferrari Hypersail

A step-up from Roberto Lacorte's *FlyingNikka* will be the new Ferrari Hypersail project, led by well known Italian offshore sailor Giovanni Soldini and due for launch this season. This 100ft Guillaume Verdier-designed beast has a similar foil configuration to *FlyingNikka* with AC75-type flip-up foils and a rudder elevator. However Ferrari Hypersail is unique in having an elevator on her canting keel too – a set-up similar to that which Soldini had on his modified MOD70 trimaran *Maserati's* daggerboard. Despite having numerous hydraulic features, the intention is for her to run entirely on energy derived from wind, solar and water – to the extent that there will be no engine on board. The rig will employ a D-section mast and double-skin mainsail, similar to those used on AC75s, although this will be the first time it is employed on an offshore boat.

At the time of writing, Soldini and President of Ferrari John Elkann (who frequently sailed on the *Maserati* MOD70, and the VO70 before that) had not announced Ferrari Hypersail's programme, but it is certain to include record attempts and probably races too.



Gitana 18

IMA founder member and first President Baron Edmond de Rothschild would no doubt be beaming with pride following the launch of the latest yacht in his family's Gitana stable. Having started in 1875 with Baroness Julie de Rothschild's *La Gitana*, while Baron Edmond himself was racing his 20m S&S-designed *Gitana VI* at the time of the IMA's founding in 1979, latest in the Gitana family of yachts is number 18. Led since 2023 by Baron Edmond's daughter-in-law Ariane de Rothschild, Team Gitana's newest steed is their second revolutionary 32 x 23m Ultim trimaran. This year's programme for *Gitana 18* will be races and record attempts, both crewed and – remarkably considering her colossal scale – singlehanded under skipper Charles Caudrelier, culminating in November's Route du Rhum-Destination Guadeloupe.





2026 Season Preview



*Blasting downwind at the 2025 Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi*

2026 MAXI RACING SEASON PREVIEW

2026 is set to be a busy season for maxi racing. Once again the IMA will be holding its Mediterranean Maxi Inshore and Offshore Challenges (MMIC and MMOC) for monohulls, with separate series in the Caribbean and Mediterranean for the burgeoning multihull fleet. One of the main remits of the Association is to attempt not only to attract new owners into maxi yacht racing, but to also encourage existing owners to race their yachts more and our challenges, with their championship structure, aim to do exactly that.

In 2025 we revised the scoring of our challenges, to make it fairer and more transparent, by publishing updates on the IMA website after each event, so that owners could keep abreast of how they were doing as the season progressed.

Fundamental to the MMIC and MMOC is that they are only open to IMA members, whose yachts must compete in a minimum of three events in order to qualify. This is potentially easier in the MMOC, which comprises seven events; in fact in this respect the 2024/25 winner, *Spirit of Lorina*, had

qualified by the third event of the series – Regata dei Tre Golfi.

For 2025, in a move further designed to encourage participation, we also made the MMIC and MMOC scoring cumulative. Previously teams could score their best three results, discarding their worst if they sailed four or more. Today the more races a yacht competes in, the more points she gathers and the better the chances of her winning one of the prestigious silver trophies on offer to the series winner.

For 2026 the MMIC and MMOC remain little changed. The latter as usual doesn't run over a calendar year but started with last October's Rolex Middle Sea Race and will culminate in the Palermo-Montecarlo, enabling the MMOC winner to be presented with their prize at the IMA Members' Dinner during September's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup. In the Rolex Middle Sea Race the Balcaens' *Balthasar* not only won the maxi class, but the entire race outright under IRC. Thus their blue Maxi 72 got

off to the strongest start in the MMOC, taking an early lead.

The only change to the MMIC for 2026 is that, at the insistence of several maxi owners as well as the Real Club Náutico de Palma, we have once again included one of the Mediterranean's top multi-class inshore regatta in our programme – August's Copa del Rey MAPFRE. Taking part in the height of the summer, much kudos is added to the event by the participation of Spanish royalty, with His Majesty King Felipe VI usually racing with the Spanish navy crew on board the TP52 *Aiños*. In 2025 the King finished second and was joined at the regatta bearing his name by his daughter, Crown Princess Leonor.

This season top competition is expected again between the Maxi 1s where, despite some of the yachts soon to celebrate their 20th birthdays, they are more competitive than ever. In particular *Leopard 3* has been working hard on her optimisation which led to them fitting new twin rudders, a new aero package plus an interceptor. This certainly seemed to give her



Maxi action at the RORC Nelson's Cup. The 2027 Maxi event will also include the Antigua 360.



Deep Blue's Wendy Schmidt with RORC Commodore Deb Fish.



legs at her opening regatta of this season in Antigua where she won the Maxi class at the RORC Nelson's Cup, set a monohull race and course record in the Antigua 360 and went on to win the RORC Caribbean 600 outright under IRC. Development work over the winter on Sir Lindsay Owen-Jones' *Magic Carpet e*, newest of the 100s, is likely to see her performance much improved this season.

Galateia and *V* were set to continue their rivalry on to the St Barths Bucket with a grand gathering anticipated for the second edition of the North Sound Maxi Regatta in Virgin Gorda. This was set to feature *Black Jack 100*, *Galateia*, *Leopard 3* and *V* in the Maxi Class; *Balthasar*, *Bella Mente* and *Deep Blue* in the Maxi Grand Prix; and in the Performance class the Carbon Ocean 82 *Aegir*, the Swan 90s *Freya* and *Hummingbird*, and the Southern Wind 96 *Ammonite*. Many of these were then due to speed back to the Mediterranean by ship to compete in May's IMA Maxi European Championship in Sorrento.

Set to return to the northern hemisphere this summer is the former *Wild Oats XI*. Under original owner Bob Oatley she last competed at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in 2007 when she dismasted. Following Oatley's death in 2016 the narrow 100-footer was acquired by her long term skipper Mark Richards and was unveiled last October as *Palm Beach XI* (named after Richards' company Palm Beach Motor Yachts). Throughout her history the yacht has developed constantly and her latest iteration has a deeper fin and bulb for her canting keel plus a combination of both daggerboards (for use upwind) and C-foils (for reaching/downwind). At the time of writing she was entered in the Newport-Bermuda Race and one hopes that at some point she will again line up against her nemesis and sistership, the former *Alfa Romeo II*, *Black Jack 100*.

Following the launch of Giovanni Lombardi Stronati's wallyrocket 71 *Django 7X* last year and her subsequent victory in September's Rolex IMA Maxi Grand Prix World Championship, the Maxi

Grand Prix class is set to see another new addition this summer with the launch of the latest yacht for *North Star* owner Peter Dubens. While details of this new weapon were scarce at the time of writing, Dubens is also presently supporting the Royal Yacht Squadron's British challenger for the America's Cup and one wonders if there will be some synergy between these two campaigns.

Elsewhere in the cruiser-racer fleet we can look forward to the return of former IMA President Benoît de Froimont's Wally 60 *Wallyño*, three-time winner of our MMIC, after her grounding during the IMA Maxi Europeans last year. We can expect to see her back on the race course at Loro Piana Giraglia, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, where the silver Farr design is a past winner of all. Another exciting launch later in the season will be the new *Lady First IV*, a Mylius 80 for Jean-Pierre Dréau. This represents a major step up from their Mylius 60 FD for the French team.



IMA-sponsored prize-giving for the RORC Nelson's Cup maxi fleet held at the Admiral's Inn in English Harbour.



Joost Schuijff at the helm of *Leopard 3*.

IMA Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge 2025-26

- Rolex Middle Sea Race – 19 October 2025
- La Larga (PalmaVela) – 25 April 2026
- Regata dei Tre Golfi – 22 May 2026 (IMA Maxi European Championship)
- 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar – 30 May 2026
- Loro Piana Giraglia (offshore) – 17 June 2026
- Aegean 600 – 5 July 2026
- Palermo-Montecarlo – 18 August 2026

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



Photos: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo; Ugo Fonolia/RCNP; Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi; Studio Taccola; Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi; ALEN Photography/ Nikos Alevromytis; CVS/Studio Borlenghi





Now in its 8th edition, the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Offshore Challenge (MMOC) was the first series conceived by Secretary General Andrew McIrvine, with an aim to boost maxi yacht participation in offshore events. The 2025-26 MMOC comprises seven of the most prestigious offshore races in the Mediterranean, starting, as usual, with the previous year's Rolex Middle Sea Race and concluding with Palermo-Montecarlo in August. The eventual winner will be presented with the trophy, a 1913-vintage, silver, half-fluted bowl, at the IMA Members' Dinner held during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in Porto Cervo.

Members wishing to be in with a chance to win must compete in a minimum of three of its seven races. Competition is tight, with the winner in 2024-25 being Jean-Pierre Barjon's *Spirit of Lorina*, which capitalised on a strong opening performance in the

2024 Rolex Middle Sea Race to take the overall win by some margin.

Opening the present series was the Rolex Middle Sea Race, held in October 2025 and run by the Royal Malta Yacht Club. This is one of the Mediterranean's most famous events, its reputation for a stunning and dramatic course only matched by its mercurial conditions, where fleets could expect to see anything from flat calms to raging storms, usually within the same race.

Certainly nothing can compare to starting under the fortified medieval ramparts of the Grand Harbour in Valletta, to the tune of cannon fire, and watched on by a huge crowd of spectators. From here competitors saddle up for an anticlockwise lap of Sicily; first passing the smoky top of active volcano Etna, before navigating through the dense traffic and strong tidal flow of the Strait of Messina which separates Sicily from the toe of Italy. On exiting, competitors progress to the iconic turning mark of the glowing cone of Stromboli, the second active volcano on the course and then head along the north and western coasts of Sicily and on south to Pantelleria and Lampedusa, the former just 37 miles from the Tunisian coast. It is then back to Malta, passing through the Comino Passage to finish off Valletta.

Rounding off the race is the memorable prize-giving held in Valletta's Sacra Infermeria, the 16th century hospital built by the Knights of St John. The 2025 race saw *Balthasar* win overall while *Black Jack 100* took line honours (see full report on p58).

The series resumes in 2026 with April's La Larga, the opening offshore race of Sandberg PalmaVela, the

event that heralds the start of the Mediterranean race season. Run by the Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP) La Larga's course is decided in the days preceding the race based on weather conditions, with the potential for different courses being set for different classes. Always starting and finishing off Palma, the longest course of 350 miles takes the fleet round the white sandy shores of Ibiza, Formentera and Isla del Aire, near the coast of Menorca; meanwhile a shorter course may be around 225 miles, passing Dragonera, Ibiza, Formentera and Cabrera.

Third in the series is the 71st Regata dei Tre Golfi offshore, a regional classic run by Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia (CRVI). The start takes place off Naples' Porticciolo di Santa Lucia, where the CRVI's clubhouse is based. The midnight start of old has been replaced with a more practical afternoon departure at 16:00 enabling the fleet to make the most of the remaining sea breeze to exit the Gulf of Naples.

The 150-mile course makes it one of the shortest offshores in the MMOC and, as its name suggests, it incorporates three gulfs. After starting, the fleet heads WNW out of the Gulf of Naples to Ponza, before returning past Ischia and Capri to a southerly turning mark at Li Galli islands off the Amalfi coast and then the final leg back to Naples.

The race is the most popular offshore for maxis in the Mediterranean season, its dual role as being the offshore component for the IMA's Maxi European Championship giving the well-established event a significant boost. In 2025 it attracted over 20 maxi entries, out of which it was David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers' 100ft *Galateia* which won line honours,

setting a new course record of 13 hours 19 minutes 42 seconds, however it was Hap Fauth's *Bella Mente* that won the maxi class overall under IRC.

Next in the MMOC calendar is a race founded by one of the IMA's own, former Vice President Roberto Lacorte: The 17th edition of the 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar again starts from Livorno and, as in 2025, the revised course now no longer rounds Giraglia.

Instead the fleet sails a short leg to a turning mark off Marina di Pisa from where they pass the islands of Gorgona and Pianosa. They proceed to Formiche di Grosseto, after which they head north to round Cerboli and Sparviero before returning southeast to finish at Punta Ala.

The 151 Miglia-Trofeo Cetilar has cultivated a strong following, attracting almost as many entrants as the

older Loro Piana Giraglia. This is, no doubt, aided by its generous shoreside offerings, with a lavish party organised in the magnificent grounds overlooking the sea of the Punta Ala Yacht Club where a dinner is laid on for 1,800 guests, complete with live music, DJ and fireworks.

The series then moves on to southern France for the fifth event: the Loro Piana Giraglia offshore. The oldest event in the calendar, the Loro Piana Giraglia was first held in 1953 as a joint enterprise between the Yacht Club Italiano and Yacht Club de France, the race seen as a way to rebuild post-WWII relations between the two nations. Yacht Club Italiano continue to organise the event, now in collaboration with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez.

The course is the same as usual. Starting from bohemian Saint-Tropez the day after the inshore portion of the event has concluded, the offshore race takes the fleet out west to a turning mark and beyond to the iconic island of Giraglia, north of Corsica, before continuing to the finish off the ancient maritime port of Genoa.

In 2025 the race was beset by high pressure and light winds, competitors chasing pockets of breeze to edge round the course. However it still finished in dramatic style with a match race between two 100-footers: *SHK Scallywag* nudging out *Magic Carpet e* by 2 minutes 13 seconds after over 30 hours of racing to win the Loro Piana Trophy for line honours.

From the oldest, to the youngest: the sixth event in the series is the Aegean 600. Organised by the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club in conjunction with Olympic Marine, the Aegean 600 was first held in



The Cetilar-backed party in the seaside grounds of the Yacht Club Punta Ala at the end of the 151 Miglia is one of the best in sailing.



Passing Isola di Strombolicchio on the Rolex Middle Sea Race.
Photo: ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo

2021 and has fast become a popular addition to the '600-miler' club.

The course is a sensational odyssey through Greece's 'wine dark sea', weaving around historic islands steeped in myth and legend. This is true from the very start itself at Cape Sounio, the tip of the peninsula south of Athens, beneath the Temple of Poseidon. From here the fleet races to Milos, ancient home of the Venus de Milo statue, before heading to the iconic white-walled and azure-domed Santorini. The course heads on south then eastwards, past Kassos and Karpathos, the latter the mythological home of Prometheus and birthplace of Athena, then onwards to round Rhodes, not only once the home

to one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – the bronze Colossus – but also, in more recent history, home to the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes. Competitors must then wind their way north through more Greek islands off the Turkish coastline, including Kos and Kalymnos, and on to Agathonisi, the northeasterly turning mark. From here the fleet returns west, passing Patmos, the home of St John and location of the Caves of the Apocalypse, and heads for the islands of Mykonos, Delos, Giaros and Kea, before finally arriving back at Cape Sounio.

In its short history the Aegean 600 has proved very popular with maxis which have often won it, including appropriately the VO70 *Aiolis*, IRC Overall winner in 2024 and line honours winner in 2025, campaigned by George Procopiou, whose firm, Olympic Marine, sponsors the event.

One of the most beautiful race courses, the Aegean 600 is also internationally renowned for its two amazing parties, at the beginning of the event – the crew party at Olympic Marine the night before the start – and the awards' ceremony at the Technological Park in Lavrion, which features Greek dancers and food.

The concluding event in the MMOC sees the fleet return to Italy for the 450-mile Palermo-Montecarlo in August. Starting from Mondello, close to Sicily's capital city Palermo, the course proceeds to a gate off Porto Cervo, monitored by the YCCS, after which the fleet have options: They can either negotiate Bomb Alley and then the Strait of Bonifacio, leaving Corsica to starboard, or, should conditions look favourable, take the longer route leaving Corsica to

port. Either way, upon approaching the finish in Monaco, competitors must beware the effects of the mountainous region behind the city which, at 1km high, frequently causes the wind to shut down just short of the finish line. All competitors are warmly welcomed by the prestigious Yacht Club de Monaco at their grand clubhouse designed by award-winning architect Sir Norman Foster.

MMOC past winners

2015-16	<i>Rambler 88</i>	George David (USA)
2017-18	<i>Atalanta II</i>	Carlo A Puri Negri (ITA)
2018-19	<i>Vera</i>	Miguel Galuccio (ARG)
2021-22	<i>Spirit of Lorina</i>	Jean-Pierre Barjon (FRA)
2022-23	<i>Black Jack</i>	Peter Harburg (AUS)
2023-24	<i>Atalanta II</i>	Carlo A Puri Negri (ITA)
2024-25	<i>Spirit of Lorina</i>	Jean-Pierre Barjon (FRA)

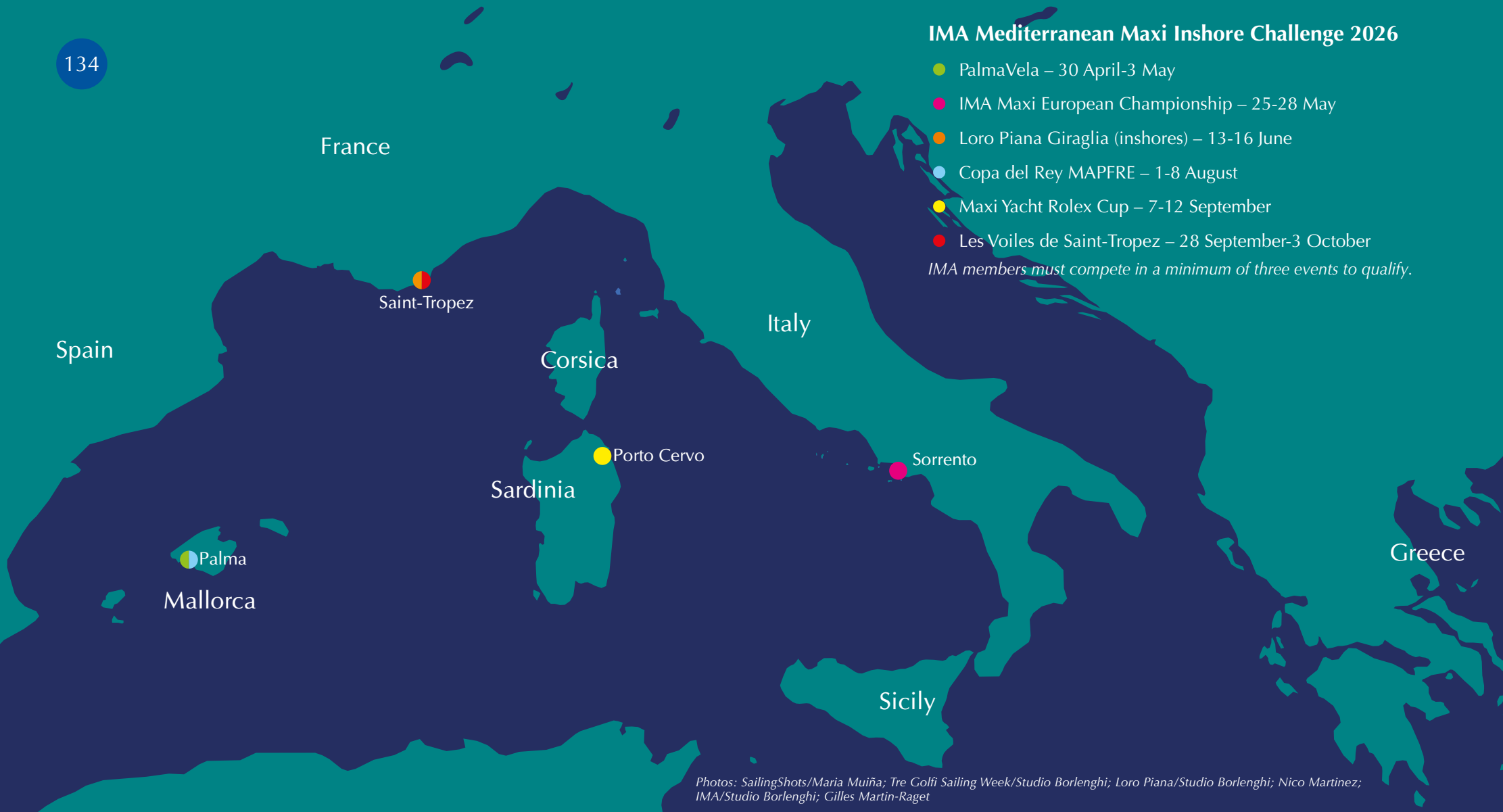
The Aegean 600 course takes competitors through the Santorini caldera.
Photo: ALEN Photography/Nikos Alevromyitis



IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge 2026

- PalmaVela – 30 April-3 May
- IMA Maxi European Championship – 25-28 May
- Loro Piana Giraglia (inshores) – 13-16 June
- Copa del Rey MAPFRE – 1-8 August
- Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup – 7-12 September
- Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – 28 September-3 October

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



Photos: SailingShots/Maria Muiña; Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi; Loro Piana/Studio Borlenghi; Nico Martinez; IMA/Studio Borlenghi; Gilles Martin-Raget





The 6th edition of the IMA's Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge (MMIC) continues to gather together the best inshore events from around the Mediterranean into one championship series. Held between April and October, this edition has expanded to again include Copa del Rey MAPFRE, making for six events spanning locations in Italy, France and Spain rather than just five. IMA members will, as usual, need to compete in a minimum of three events to qualify for a series result, with participation at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup mandatory. Results in this, along with the IMA Maxi Europeans will be weighted.

Competitors will be expected to race under IMA Rules, including the owner/driver rule, while competing maxis can take advantage of the IMA's IRC Reduced Crew rating which permits them to

race with 70% (rounded up) of the maximum crew number stated on their IRC Certificate. Newly agreed for this year is that, where the organising authority allows, if a competitor's crew includes two females, or two crew aged under 21, then the total crew on board may be one more than the crew number stated on their IRC Certificate.

After winning three times total, and twice back-to-back in 2023-24, in 2025 IMA President Benoît de Froidmont and his Wally 60 *Wallyño* had to hand over the 1911-vintage silver perpetual trophy to a new winner in David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers' 100ft *Galateia*. In true MMIC style, the title was only decided in the last race of the final event, when *Galateia* was finally able pull ahead of V to win by just 2.3% – again denoting the sustained intensity of this remarkable competition.

The opening event of the 2026 MMIC will again be PalmaVela at the end of April, once more sponsored by Sandberg and run by the Real Club Náutico de Palma (RCNP). PalmaVela's origins may appear to be in the Maxi Race Week, first held in 2004, but in fact the Bay of Palma was a favourite of maxi owners well before this, thanks to its consistent breezes and sheltered waters. Over the years the event has evolved considerably, expanded to include one-design classes and smaller yachts racing under handicap, while an offshore component in La Larga was added in 2021, forming part of the IMA's 2026 MMOC.

Now in its 22nd edition, Sandberg PalmaVela continues to present the maxi fleet with the perfect warm-up event for the Mediterranean season. In the wake of the La Larga offshore, the fleet will

reassemble at the RCNP in Palma for four days of racing, the schedule set to include two coastal races and four windward-leewards.

Second in the MMIC again will be the inshore element of the IMA Maxi European Championship, held out of Sorrento in the Bay of Naples. Now in its fifth edition, the IMA Maxi Championship is jointly run by the Circolo della Vela Italia (CRVI) and the IMA, while berthing is provided in Sorrento's Marina Piccola.

Preceded by the offshore part of the championship, the Regata dei Tre Golfi, competitors in the MMIC will take part in six races scheduled across four days, featuring both windward-leewards and coastal courses in and around the Gulf of Naples. Benefitting from onshore sea breezes, this large race area is bounded by Sorrento to the southeast and Naples to the northwest with Mount Vesuvius, the infamous volcano as a backdrop. Courses may also be set in the waters off Capri with, if conditions permit, the popular option of a lap around the stunning island and its picturesque landmarks, such as the Faraglioni rocks and the Blue Grotto.

In 2025 the IMA Maxi European Champion was Hap Fauth's 74ft *Bella Mente* which, after discards, podiumed in every inshore race to score nine points against their nearest competition's 17, deftly defending the title they won in 2024.

From Naples the MMIC fleet will next rendezvous in Saint-Tropez where the third event will be the inshore races that precede the famous offshore race of Loro Piana Giraglia. Organised by Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the Société Nautique



Sorrento's Marina Piccola, home of the IMA Maxi Europeans.
Photo: Tre Golfi Sailing Week/Studio Borlenghi

de Saint-Tropez, Loro Piana Giraglia is one of the most prestigious maxi events held in the Mediterranean. While the inshore races had been a part of the event for many years as a warm-up to the offshore, when Loro Piana took over title sponsorship in 2024 they requested that these were extended from three to four days, formalising the competition and giving the event a boost with over 130 yachts competing in 2025.

Racing for the maxis comprises a series of windward-leewards within the Bay of Pampelonne, south of Saint-Tropez, while coastal courses of no more than 35 miles are typically set to take the fleet to a mark either off Cavalaire-sur-Mer to the southwest, or off Saint-Raphael to the northeast. The maxi fleet is assigned its own dedicated race officer for the duration of the event.

Ashore, as befitting an event of this stature, there is a dedicated race village on the seaward side of the Port de Saint-Tropez, where competitors gather for drinks and prize-givings at the conclusion of each day's racing.

Reinserted into the MMIC programme for 2026 will be the Copa del Rey MAPFRE. Hosted by the RCNP in Palma, this is one of the Mediterranean's most significant multi-class regattas in the calendar, noted for, as its title 'The King's Cup' suggests, its close relationship with the Spanish royal family. While the event in principle was established in 1905 by Alfonso XIII as a rival to Cowes Week, it was keen yachtsman HM Juan Carlos I who reinstated it in its current format in 1982. Since then, members of the royal family not only traditionally present the trophies at the prize-giving, but compete as well,



The Maxi fleet in Porto Cervo Marina for the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.
Photo: IMA/Studio Borlenghi

including HM King Felipe VI who regularly races on board the TP52 *Aifos*.

In previous years the event found a niche for the Maxi 72s, providing keen competition as part of their circuit for several editions until the class was dissolved. After a hiatus, this 2026 edition is returning with a new IMA Class specifically for maxis racing under IRC. Over five days there will be up to 10 races: a mix of windward-leewards and up to two coastal courses, all set in the beautiful waters of Mallorca and in the Bay of Palma.

Rounding out the MMIC are the two biggest events in the calendar, the penultimate regatta being the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, organised by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in conjunction with the IMA. Regularly hosting between 45-50 maxi yachts, this flagship event celebrates all forms of maxi yacht racing. This year classes are set to include supermaxis and, once again, maxi multihulls. The maxi fleet is subdivided into Maxi 1, Maxi Grand Prix (ex-Maxi 72/Maxi 2) and Maxi 3-5. Once again, elevating the competition to the next level, both the Maxi 1 and Maxi Grand Prix will, thanks to the IMA, each be racing for their own World Championships.

The six-day schedule allows for five days of racing with a layday midweek. While some classes will race some windward-leewards, the schedule is weighted in favour of the coastal courses for which racing from Porto Cervo is best known. Competitors can expect to race around the famous La Maddalena archipelago, taking in Bomb Alley – the channel separating the islands from the Sardinian mainland – and enjoy the azure waters and sandstone outcrops that define the landscape.



Champagne flies for Galateia’s Chris Flowers and co-helm/daughter Lizz as they receive the MMIC trophy in 2025. Photo: IMA

Off the water the schedule remains just as busy: the vibrant regatta village the base for post-race gatherings while the YCCS’s magnificent 5* clubhouse hosts the Welcome Cocktail Party and Rolex Gala Dinner. However the hot ticket is for the IMA Members’ Dinner, once again set to be held at the Surrau Winery on the Wednesday night.

The climax of the MMIC will be Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, where the winner of the series will be decided. Run by the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez with input from the IMA, this event is a festival of sailing but has evolved over the years to

become a competitive end-of-season showdown as befits the concluding event of the MMIC. As such the maxi fleet has swelled in size, even rivalling that of the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, while the wider fleet includes classics (for which the event is famous) and smaller ‘modern’ yachts, totalling around 250 entrants altogether.

Like the Loro Piana inshores, maxi racing in Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez takes place out of Pampelonne Bay, south of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez. Courses are a mix of windward-leewards and coastals, while a layday is scheduled to allow competitors to fully enjoy the beautiful and lively location, with many crews looking forward to the traditional lunch at Club 55 on Plage de Pampelonne.

What makes the event particularly special is its location on the Cote d’Azur, Saint-Tropez known for its for excellent restaurants, luxury shopping and nightlife all with a bohemian, glamorously laid-back vibe. Shoreside, a lively festival-feel is to be found around the port and the race village on Môle d’Estienne d’Orves. Here the prize-giving is hosted at the conclusion of the event and the winner of the MMIC is proudly announced.

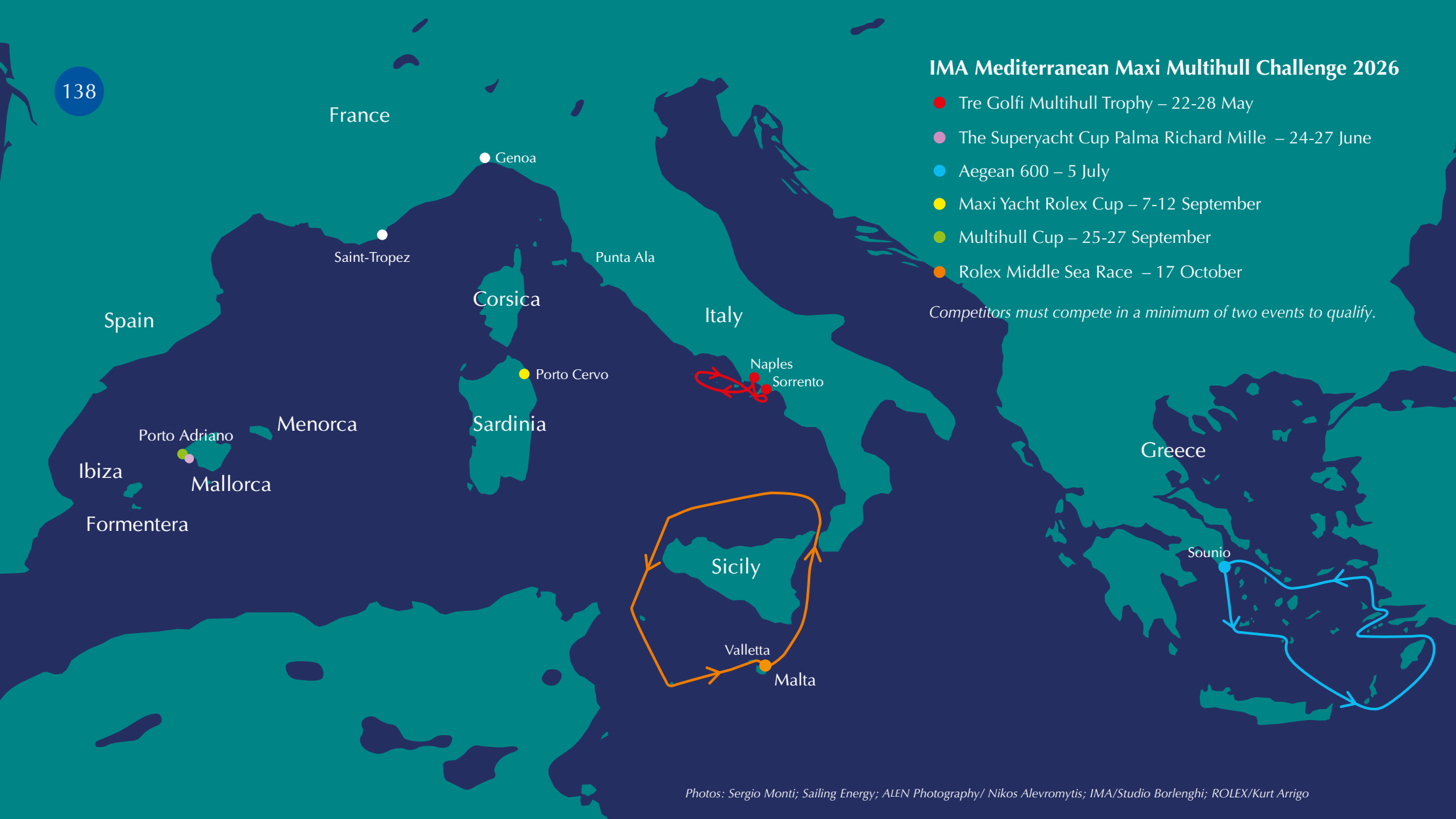
MMIC past winners

2019	<i>Wallyño</i>	Benoît de Froidmont (BEL)
2022	<i>Capricorno</i>	Alessandro Del Bono (ITA)
2023	<i>Wallyño</i>	Benoît de Froidmont (BEL)
2024	<i>Wallyño</i>	Benoît de Froidmont (BEL)
2025	<i>Galateia</i>	David M Leuschen and Chris Flowers (USA)

IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge 2026

- Tre Golfi Multihull Trophy – 22-28 May
- The Superyacht Cup Palma Richard Mille – 24-27 June
- Aegean 600 – 5 July
- Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup – 7-12 September
- Multihull Cup – 25-27 September
- Rolex Middle Sea Race – 17 October

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



Photos: Sergio Monti; Sailing Energy; ALEN Photography/ Nikos Alevromyitis; IMA/Studio Borlenghi; ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo





For 2026 the IMA's maxi multihull series in the Mediterranean will grow to six events. Like its Caribbean counterpart it will comprise a mix of inshore and offshore events, rewarding crews willing to put themselves and their yachts through the broadest of tests.

The Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge (MMMC) kicks off with the Tre Golfi Multihull Trophy, run by the Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia (CRVI). As in 2025 this will take place alongside the IMA Maxi European Championship, with which it will share a race committee. The event is unique in the MMMC in that it comprises both inshore and offshore races, starting with the Regata dei Tre Golfi overnight race. This starts and finishes off the CRVI's clubhouse in Naples, taking the fleet northeast as far as the island of Ponza and southeast round the Li Galli islands immediately off the Amalfi coast.

Last year Sir Irvine Laidlaw's Gunboat 80 *Highland Fling 18* was first home, however it was Riccardo Pavoncelli's Gunboat 68 *Gaetana* that won under ORCmh. *Gaetana* went on to record a perfect scoreline in the subsequent coastals, with PRO Stuart Childerley twice sending the multihulls off on a picturesque lap of Capri. Typically the multihulls sail coastal courses that avoid the rest of the maxi monohull fleet. Sadly Pavoncelli looks unlikely to be back to defend his title this year after *Gaetana* sustained damage when a boat nearby her caught fire while in Olbia.

New to the MMMC for 2026 is The Superyacht Cup Palma Richard Mille, held at Club de Mar-Mallorca with race management provided by the Real Club Náutico de Palma. While the event is traditionally

open only to superyachts, event director Kate Branagh has decided to include a multihull class for 2026 as part of the regatta's 30th anniversary celebrations.

At the time of writing this was attracting four catamarans – *Highland Fling 18*, Andrew and Anne Nisbet's Gunboat 72 *Layla*, Zachary Plavsic's Morelli & Melvin-designed 65 *Gaea* and Adrian Keller's Irens-designed 84 *Allegra*, winner of the MMMC in 2025. Following registration and a Welcome Cocktail Party on the Wednesday, racing will take place over the following three days on and around the Bay of Palma, culminating in a prize-giving.

Third in the MMMC is one of the two offshore races featured in the series: the Aegean 600. One of the toughest events in the Mediterranean, after two severe editions the 2025 race was thankfully lighter. The course starts from beneath the Temple of Poseidon at the tip of the Sounion peninsula, south of Athens and follows an anticlockwise lap of the Aegean Sea, venturing southwest as far as Kasos, then northeast to round Rhodes, before heading up the Turkish coast to the northeasterly turning mark of Agathonissi and returning west to finish off Sounion. Run by the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club, the Aegean 600 should be on the bucket list of any serious sailor. At present the race record is held by Erik Maris' MOD70 *Zoulou* with a time of 37 hours 18 minutes 52 seconds.

At the initiative of the IMA, in 2023 60-ft multihulls were for the first time allowed into maxi yacht racing's pinnacle event, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, organised by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in association with the IMA. After a few tentative editions, this year the class was fully subscribed by

March with a record six entries (numbers are restricted due to berthing limitations in Porto Cervo Marina). Lining up are the usual suspects: *Allegra* and *Highland Fling 18*, plus *Gaea*, *Layla* and *Sophia* – with potentially *Coco de Mer*, the Gunboat 66 freshly repaired after her unfortunate capsize in the UK's Round the Island Race. They will get to experience the magnificent azure waters of Bomb Alley and La Maddalena archipelago.

The sole exclusively multihull event in the IMA Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge is the aptly-named Multihull Cup. Supported by *Allegra* owner Adrian Keller and taking place out of Porto Adriano, the superyacht marina just west of the Bay of Palma, racing mostly takes place over coastal courses around the southwest Majorcan coast. This intimate but competitive event has proved highly enjoyable, demonstrated in its loyal following. Competitors registered so far of course include *Allegra*, alongside *Highland Fling 18*, *Layla*, *Gaea* and *Coco de Mer*.

The season concludes with another event of mixed conditions – the Rolex Middle Sea Race. Like the Aegean 600, the Royal Malta Yacht Club's race provides a feast for the eyes, from the spectacular start to cannon fire from within Valletta's heavily fortified ancient harbour, to the anticlockwise lap of Sicily passing active volcanos such as Mount Etna and Stromboli.

To qualify for the Mediterranean Maxi Multihull Challenge, competitors must race in a minimum of two events.

Past winners

2025 <i>Allegra</i>	Adrian Keller (SUI)
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IMA Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series 2027

- Caribbean Multihull Challenge – 3-7 February 2027
- RORC Nelson's Cup and Caribbean 600 – 16-19/22 February 2027
- St Maarten Heineken Regatta – 4-7 March 2027
- BVI Spring Regatta & Sailing Festival – 29 March-4 April 2027

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

Photos: saltcolours.com/Laurens Morel; RORC/Tim Wright; Souleyman Titah; BVI Spring Regatta/Tidal Pulse/Alex Turnbull





Once upon a time 10 or so big multihulls regularly competed in Caribbean regattas, but, after this numbers dwindled to almost nothing in the 2010s, and it has only been in recent years that this trend has begun reversing. Numbers are expected to increase again for 2027, aided by our Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series (CMMS) which comprises four events including one offshore race and three inshore/coastals.

In 2027 the CMMS will kick off with the Caribbean Multihull Challenge in St Maarten. Conceived by the event's Race Director Robbie Ferron with fellow Sint Maarten Yacht Club members Stephen Burzon and Petro Jonker, the first edition was in 2018.

Held over four days, racing is typically coastal courses, including around St Maarten, with the race committee able to set longer courses around Saba and St Barth if conditions suit. In 2026 conditions started light and built to 20 knots. In

CSA 1 defending CMMS champions, the Nisbet family's Gunboat 72 *Layla*, won the first race, but the next three went to Dr J Marcus Sirota's *Sophia*, subsequently winning class. While new to Sirota, *Sophia* – a 63ft Irens-designed cruiser-racer trimaran – had been campaigned here extensively as *Paradox* by original owner Peter Aschenbrenner.

Next up is the RORC Caribbean 600. For 2026 the RORC also invited multihulls to compete in the warm-up events to this – the three days of coastal courses in the RORC Nelson's Cup followed by the Antigua 360 race – however due to a lack of take-up there was no multihull class. This offer is still likely to be available in 2027.

Conceived in 2008, the Caribbean 600 is today a bucket-list item among the world's 'classic 600 mile offshore races'. It differs strongly from races like Newport-Bermuda and Rolex Sydney Hobart due to its complex course: Starting and finishing in Antigua, it weaves around 11 islands, from St Maarten in the north to Guadeloupe in the south. In typical conditions the race is held in brisk trade winds and Atlantic swells.

2026 again saw a battle royal between two highly refined, well sailed, MOD70s: Jason Carroll's *Argo* and *Zoulou*, on charter to Jon Desmond's Final Final team. *Argo* was favourite over the charterers, yet the racing was very close; while *Final Final-Zoulou* got ahead at one point, *Argo* ultimately beat her by just 3 minutes 17 seconds after a race time of 1 day 12 hours 1 minute 46 seconds (outside of her 1 day 5 hours 48 minutes record). Under MOCRA corrected time both were beaten by *Sophia*, which was second overall in the Multihull class.

Then it is back north to St Maarten Heineken Regatta, organised by Sint Maarten Yacht Club. Racing here is typically on coastal courses, often including a lap of St Maarten or up to four inshore races. The event is renowned for its world-class entertainment, with Heineken-supported parties featuring top acts like the Black Eyed Peas, UB40, The Commodores and The Jacksons.

This year the multihulls were divided into two classes, again racing under the local CSA rating system. The maxis, of which there were just two (*Sophia* and Richard McKinney's Gunboat 68 *Little Wing*), were racing in a class of seven multihulls. *Sophia* once again performed exceptionally, discarding a second to finish with an otherwise perfect scoreline.

The CMMS concludes with the Royal BVI Yacht Club's BVI Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival, held out of Nanny Cay Marina, Tortola. The event's rather complex format starts with the Round Tortola Nanny Cay Cup followed by the Scrub Island Invitational, before the BVI Spring Regatta's three days of racing on the BVI's magnificent St Francis Drake Channel. The showdown in 2026 was set to be between *Layla* and *Sophia*, joined by the Gunboat 69 *Break Free* and Gunboat 62 *Dreadknot*.

The winner of the CMMS is presented with their crystal trophy at the IMA Members' Dinner during the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup in Porto Cervo in September.

Past winners

2024	<i>Allegra</i>	Adrian Keller (SUI)
2025	<i>Layla</i>	Andrew and Anne Nisbet (GBR)

Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy

Comandante Gianfranco Alberini was the much admired and long-serving Secretary General of the Association, from its early days as the International Class A Yacht Association (ICAYA). He took on running the IMA due to his position as Secretary General of the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda (YCCS), from 1975 and then as YCCS Commodore from 1981. It is because of this arrangement that such a strong bond remains between the IMA and the YCCS to this day. It was also thanks to Alberini that the ICAYA World Championship was created and he was also responsible for bringing in Rolex as title sponsor, resulting in today's Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.

Upon his death in June 2013, the IMA Board established the Gianfranco Alberini Challenge Trophy in memory of this formidable individual who was for so long the Association's guiding light.

This perpetual trophy is a dodecagonal silver cup, mounted on a juniper plinth. Originally it was awarded to the IMA member whose crew demonstrated best sportsmanship in the Volcano Race, an event Alberini had established. Since that race is no longer held it is now down to the IMA Secretary General to decide when and how this special trophy will be awarded.

However, in a departure from the choice of recipient usually being event-related, in 2025 it was awarded to Alberini's successor at the YCCS, Secretary General and Sports Director Comandante Edoardo Recchi, following his retirement after 25 years of service to the club (see p106). During this time he worked closely with the IMA, especially as joint organisers of the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup.



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)
2025		Edoardo Recchi (ITA)

IMA Trophy for the RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race

Racing westwards across the Atlantic on the tradewinds route to the Caribbean should be on every sailors' bucket list. The IMA has been supporting the RORC Transatlantic Race since its inception in 2014, when the RORC first held their race from Calero Marinas' Marina Arrecife in Lanzarote to the finish off Camper & Nicholson's Port Louis Marina in Grenada. In recent years the race has gained popularity thanks to the RORC moving its start to January to avoid Christmas and New Year's Eve.

The IMA Trophy, awarded to the race's monohull line honours winner, is an 'Adam Style' vintage silver trophy. The 2026 race was a special one as it was the first occasion the race's finish had moved to Antigua, making the course marginally shorter at around 2,895 miles, down from 3,000. At the front of the fleet there was another battle royal between the MOD70 trimarans *Argo* and *Zoulou* with the American MOD70 prevailing. Behind, leading the monohull race on the water was one of the most extraordinary, groundbreaking yachts ever created: the Baltic Yachts-built 111ft *Raven*, the world's first semi-foiling superyacht.

Raven was first home in a record time of 6 days 22 hours 27 minutes establishing a new record for the new course. However this was still substantially faster than the record for the old course set by Bryon Ehrhart's 88ft *Lucky* with a time of 7 days 20 hours 34 minutes 41 seconds. Remarkably *Raven* also went on to win the IRC Zero class under corrected time in a field that included the new Swan 128 *BeCool*.



Photo: RORC

Past winners

2015	<i>Nomad IV</i>	Jean-Paul Rivière (FRA)
2016	<i>Leopard 3</i>	Mike Slade (GBR)
2017	<i>CQS</i>	Ludde Ingvall (FIN)
2018	<i>My Song</i>	Pier Luigi Loro Piana (ITA)
2019	<i>Childhood</i>	Bouwe Bekking (NED)
2021	<i>Green Dragon</i>	Johannes Schwarz (AUT)
2022	<i>Comanche</i>	Mitch Booth (AUS)
2023	<i>I Love Poland</i>	Polish National Foundation (POL)
2024	<i>Leopard 3</i>	Joost Schuijff (NED)
2025	<i>Lucky</i>	Bryon Ehrhart (USA)
2026	<i>Raven</i>	Klukenstock Marine Ltd (SWE)

George Andreadis Challenge Trophy

Following the death of George Andreadis in 2023, the IMA introduced the George Andreadis Challenge Trophy to be awarded to ‘the highest placed IMA member in the Aegean 600’.

The creation of this came with the blessing of George’s widow Anna Andreadis, the trophy created by the IMA as a tribute to one of our greatest supporters. Andreadis’ endeavours on the water, twice representing Greece at the Olympic Games, followed by numerous championship victories across a wide range of keelboat classes, were only matched by his huge contributions to the sport ashore, including for several decades helping to steer World Sailing and the ORC among many other

organisations. Andreadis was a member of the IMA campaigning his 86ft Garcia-designed *Meliti* and also served as a long term board member and Vice President.

Appropriately the winner of the Trophy in 2025 was the VO70 *Aiolos* campaigned by President of the Yacht Club of Greece George Procopiou, also the Aegean 600’s principal supporter. Procopiou successfully defended his title, *Aiolos* having also won the Trophy in 2024.

Past winners

2024	<i>Aiolos</i>	George Procopiou (GRE)
2025	<i>Aiolos</i>	George Procopiou (GRE)



Photo: ALEN Photography/ Nikos Alevromyti



OTHER MAXI EVENTS

In addition to the IMA programme in the Mediterranean and Caribbean, pockets of maxi racing or events that are 'maxi friendly', or historically so, take place in other parts of the world, often with their own domestic maxi fleets.

In 2025 several major British yacht clubs had significant anniversaries – the Royal Thames Yacht Club enjoying their 200th and the Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) their centenary – but in 2026 there is again good reason to visit the British Isles. This year it is the turn of events: Cowes Week marks its 200th birthday with much celebration as well as races for historic trophies such as the Queen's Cup (presented by Queen Victoria in 1897 to coincide with her Diamond Jubilee), Britannia Cup (presented by King George V in 1950) and New York Yacht Club Challenge Cup (presented in 1951 to mark the centenary of *America's* victory in the first America's Cup race).

Cowes Week neatly feeds into the RORC's four-yearly Round Britain & Ireland Race; an event that is unquestionably the toughest in the RORC calendar and which is enjoying its 50th birthday in 2026. Here competitors experience the full brunt of the North Atlantic as they sail up the Irish and Scottish west coasts before rounding Muckle Flugga, the northernmost point of the Shetland Isles and, at almost 61°N, significantly further north than Cape Horn is south. Then they must negotiate the obstacle course of wind farms and oil/gas platforms in the North Sea, as well as its shallows and potential for severe weather. The race's monohull record, held by the VO65 *Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing*, stands at 4 days 13 hours.

Prior to these is the Round Ireland Race in June. Run by Wicklow Sailing Club, located in the southeast of the Emerald Isle, the race's present record was set by George David's *Rambler 88* in 2016 with a time of 50 hours 24 minutes.

Another option for the summer months is to head to the Baltic where there is the possibility of both competing in the Royal Swedish Yacht Club's Gotlund Runt, starting and finishing from the KSSS' base in Sandhamn at the end of June, followed in early August by the RORC's Baltic Sea Race starting and finishing in Helsinki. Both races round the island of Gotland and benefit from long hours of daylight.

In the USA, it being an even-numbered year means that on the West Coast the Transpacific Yacht Race is replaced by the Pacific Cup. The biennial Transpac last year saw a turn-out of 13 maxis with the Barn Door Trophy (line honours) going to Bryon Ehrhart's *Lucky*. In contrast to the Transpac, which starts from Los Angeles and concludes off Diamond Head, Honolulu, the Pacific Cup sets sail from San Francisco bound for Kaneohe on the north coast of Honolulu. Already entered at the time of writing were Roy P Disney's *Pyewacket*, plus the classic maxis *Ragtime* and original Bill Lee-designed ULDB sled *Merlin*.

Meanwhile on the East Coast is the 'granddaddy' of offshore races, the Newport-Bermuda. This is set to have a strong maxi turnout. Leading the charge will be the 100ft *Palm Beach XI* (the former serial Rolex Sydney Hobart winner *Wild Oats XI*), now under the ownership of her former skipper Mark Richards. Chasing her will be several other well-known

maxis such as the RC66 *Boudicca* (ex-*Blue Yankee*), *Interlodge* (ex-*Spirit of Lorina*, IMA's 2024-25 MMOC winner), the maxZ86 *OC86* (ex-*Morning Glory*), the JV66 *Temptation Oakcliffe* (ex-*Numbers*) plus various others.

Maxi visitors to Sydney for the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race are encouraged also to sign up for the Australian Maxi Championship, run by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. Over five days, this comprises the challenging mix of the Cabbage Tree Island offshore race and two days of shorter coastal courses, culminating in the SOLAS Big Boat Challenge – all good warm-ups for the main Boxing Day flight south to Tasmania. The Rolex Sydney Hobart is of course one of the world's premier offshore races and uniquely features perhaps the most hotly contested battle for line honours of all offshore races. In 2025 this was won by *Master Lock Comanche*, the fifth time the powerful VPLP/Verdier design has claimed the John H Illingworth Challenge Cup for line honours.









Palm Beach XI's latest generation foils are permitting her to semi-foil.














DATE	EVENT	LOCATION/COURSE
IMA AFFILIATED EVENTS IN 2026		
19 June	54th Newport Bermuda Race	Newport, RI, USA to Bermuda
11 October	Barcolana	Trieste, Italy
17 October	Venice Hospitality Challenge	Venice, Italy
26 December	Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race	Sydney-Hobart, Australia
OTHER MAXI EVENTS IN 2026		
24-26 April	Newport To Ensenada International Yacht Race	Newport Beach, CA, USA-Ensenada, Mexico
30 April-3 May	Regate di Primavera	Portofino, Italy
12-14 June	172nd NYYC Annual Regatta	Newport, RI, USA
20 June	Round Ireland Race	Wicklow-Wicklow, Ireland
20 June-2 July	25th Trophée Bailli De Suffren	Saint-Tropez, France-Malta
28 June	Gotland Runt	Sandhamn-Sandhamn, Sweden
10 July	Pacific Cup	San Francisco, CA, USA-Kaneohe, Hawaii
16-19 July	Newport Race Week	Newport, RI, USA
11 July	Chicago-Mackinac	Chicago-Mackinac, USA
22 July	Noakes Sydney Gold Coast Yacht Race	Sydney-Main Beach, Gold Coast, Australia
1-7 August	Bicentenary Cowes Week	Cowes, UK
8 August	RORC Baltic Sea Race	Helsinki-Helsinki, Finland
9 August	RORC Round Britain & Ireland Race	Cowes-Cowes, UK
15-22 August	Hamilton Island Race Week	Hamilton Island, Australia
4 December	Australian Maxi Championship 2026 – Cabbage Tree Island Race	Sydney-Cabbage Tree Island-Sydney, Australia
6-7 December	Australian Maxi Championship 2026 – Offshore Passage Races	Sydney, Australia
8 December	Australian Maxi Championship 2026 – SOLAS Big Boat Challenge	Sydney, Australia
...AND BEYOND IN 2027		
10 January	RORC-IMA Transatlantic Race	Lanzarote, Spain to Antigua
10 April	Pineapple Cup	Miami, USA-Montego Bay, Jamaica
5 July	Transpacific Yacht Race	Los Angeles-Hawaii, USA
24 July	Rolex Fastnet Race	Cowes, UK-Fastnet Rock-Cherbourg, France
10 October	Sydney to Auckland Ocean Race	Sydney, Australia-Auckland, New Zealand

2026 IMA PROGRAMME EVENTS – DETAILS AND CONTACTS


















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

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
11 January	RORC-IMA TRANSATLANTIC RACE Course: Puerto Arrecife, Lanzarote to Antigua Distance: 2,895 miles	Organiser: Royal Ocean Racing Club e: racing@rorc.org t: (44) 1983 295 144 rorctransatlantic.rorc.org
29 January-1 February 	CARIBBEAN MULTIHULL CHALLENGE Where: St Maarten Courses: Coastals	Organiser: Sint Maarten Yacht Club e: saskia@smyc.com t: +1 721 522 1639 www.caribbeanmultihullchallenge.com
17-19 February	RORC NELSON'S CUP MAXI REGATTA Where: Falmouth Harbour, Antigua Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	
20 February	ANTIGUA 360 Course: Starting and finishing from Fort Charlotte, anticlockwise around Antigua	
23 February 	RORC CARIBBEAN 600 Course: Starting and finishing off English Harbour, Antigua, passing Barbuda and rounding the islands St Kitts and Nevis, Saba, St Barth, St Maarten, Tintamarre, Guadeloupe, La Désirade and Redonda Distance: 600 miles	
5-8 March 	ST MAARTEN HEINEKEN REGATTA Where: St Maarten Courses: Coastals	Organiser: Sint Maarten Yacht Club e: info@heinekenregatta.com t: +1 721 544 2079 www.heinekenregatta.com
23-29 March 	BVI SPRING REGATTA & SAILING FESTIVAL Where: Nanny Cay Marina, Tortola, British Virgin Islands Courses: Round Tortola, coastals and windward-leewards	Organiser: Royal BVI Yacht Club e: info@bvispringregatta.org t: 284-346-8292 www.bvispringregatta.org
25 April 	SANDBERG PALMAVELA LA LARGA (offshore) Course: Starting and finishing in Palma, Mallorca, via Dragonera, Ibiza, Formentera, Cabrera or via Dragonera, Tagomago and Cabrera Distance: 165-225 miles	Organiser: Real Club Náutico de Palma e: coordeportiva@rcnp.es t: +34 971 72 68 48 www.palmavela.com

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

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
30 April-3 May 	SANDBERG PALMAVELA (inshores) Where: Palma, Mallorca Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	
22 May  	<u>IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP</u> REGATA DEI TRE GOLFI (offshore) <i>Part of Tre Golfi Sailing Week</i> Course: Naples to Naples, Italy, via Ponza and Li Galli Distance: 155 miles	Organiser: Circolo del Remo e della Vela Italia and Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with the IMA e: info@tregolfisailingweek.com t: +39 081 764 6393 www.tregolfisailingweek.com
25-28 May  	IMA MAXI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP (inshores) Where: Sorrento, Italy Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals on Gulf of Naples and around Capri <i>also including</i> TRE GOLFI MULTIHULL TROPHY	 
30 May 	151 MIGLIA-TROFEO CETILAR Course: Livorno to Punta Ala, Italy, via Marina di Pisa, Gorgano, Pianosa, Formiche di Grosseto, Cerboli and Sparviero Distance: 151 miles	Organiser: Yacht Club Punta Ala, Yacht Club Livorno, Yacht Club Repubblica Marinara di Pisa e: segreteria@151miglia.it t: +39 050 310023 www.151miglia.it
13-16 June 	<u>LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA</u> LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA (inshores) Where: Saint-Tropez, France Inshore courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	Organiser: Yacht Club Italiano in collaboration with Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez e: info@yci.it t: +39 010 253381 www.loropianagiraglia.com
17 June 	LORO PIANA GIRAGLIA (offshore) Course: Saint-Tropez, France to Genoa, Italy via Giraglia Distance: 241 miles	
24-27 June 	THE SUPERYACHT CUP PALMA RICHARD MILLE Where: Palma, Mallorca Courses: Coastals	Organiser: Aquamarine Events with Real Club Náutico de Palma e: kate@thesuperyachtcup.com t: +34 971 615 238 www.thesuperyachtcup.com

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

DATE	EVENT	CONTACTS
5 July  	AEGEAN 600 Course: Starting and finishing off Sounio, Greece, via Milos, Santorini Caldera, Kassos, Karpathos, Rhodos, Kandelousa, Kos, Kalolimnos, Farmakonissi, Agathonissi, Patmos, Mykonos-Dilos and Kea Distance: 605 miles	Organiser: Hellenic Offshore Racing Club e: info@aegean600.com t: + 30 210 4123357 whatsapp: +30 6932708404 www.aegean600.com 
1-8 August 	COPA DEL REY MAPFRE Where: Palma, Mallorca Course: Windward-leewards and coastals	Organiser: Real Club Náutico de Palma e: coordeportiva@rcnp.es t: +34 971 72 68 48 www.regatacopadelrey.com 
18 August 	PALERMO-MONTECARLO Course: Palermo, Sicily to Monte Carlo via YCCS gate off Porto Cervo Distance: 437 miles	Organiser: Circolo della Vela Sicilia, Yacht Club de Monaco and Yacht Club Costa Smeralda e: info@palermo-montecarlo.it t: +39 091 347731 www.palermo-montecarlo.it 
7-12 September  	MAXI YACHT ROLEX CUP Where: Porto Cervo, Sardinia Courses: Coastal and windward-leewards	Organiser: Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in conjunction with the IMA e: secretariat@yccs.it t: +39 0789 902200 www.yccs.it 
25-27 Sep 	MULTIHULL CUP Where: Port Adriano, Mallorca Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	Organiser: Multihull Cup e: info@multihullcup.com t: +34 637 918 404 www.multihullcup.com 
28 Sept-3 Oct 	LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ Where: Saint-Tropez, France Courses: Windward-leewards and coastals	Organiser: Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez e: info@snst.org t: +33 494 973054 www.lesvoilesdesaint-tropez.fr 
17 October  	ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE (2026-27 MMOC) Where: Malta Course: Starting and finishing in Valletta, Malta, anticlockwise lap around Sicily via the Strait of Messina, Stromboli, Favignana, Pantelleria and Lampedusa Distance: 606 miles	Organiser: Royal Malta Yacht Club e: info@rolexmiddlesearace.com t: +356 21 333109 www.rolexmiddlesearace.com 



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