



## **Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez – Saturday 28 September - Sunday 6 October 2024**

**Wednesday 2nd October 2024**

### **Dramas and Delights Downwind!**

**The Maxis enjoyed a day off today, with only *My Song* and *Balthasar* out on the racecourse as they duelled for the Club 55 Paul Watson Maxi Yachts Cup. As such, it was the Modern and Classic yachts who were tasked with putting on the entertainment in front of the Village des Voiles in Saint-Tropez with a series of dramatic downwind starts, the Modern boats bound for Les Salins and the Classics heading to Les Issambres. Needless to say, it was a veritable feast for the eyes and ears in a W'ly wind, gusting to around 20 knots at midday...**

#### **Breezy conditions and downwind starts**

As a result of the low pressure systems centred over the Gulf of Genoa, the light airs of the early morning soon gave way to a solid W'ly wind of 20 knots resulting in some spectacular downwind starts.

Crews had already had a taste of being nabbed by the breeze yesterday as it suddenly packed a punch during the sprint back to Saint Tropez, increasing from 10 to 25 knots in a matter of minutes and creating mayhem for a number of the Classic yachts.

Several competitors, like the yawl *Hermitage*, found themselves fully canvassed with light sails on impossible to replace furlers, and rigs severely put to the test, resulting in a broken top mast on *Sky* and a snapped spreader on *Elena of London*, fortunately all without injury to the crews.

The order was one of caution this morning then with the Race Committee opting to confine the Classic yachts to a 15-mile course bordering Les Issambres and Saint Raphaël, which was the coastline best protected from the W'ly winds. The seas weren't as heavy there as they were at Les Salins and Pampelonne, where the Modern yachts got down to business from 11:00 a.m. with an 18-mile course for classes B and C and 14 miles for the smaller ratings.

Meantime, the ambiance was one of relaxation today for the Maxi fleet, save for *My Song*, which was originally supposed to be duelling with the new *Capricorno*.

Regrettably the latter had to decline following yesterday's damage and so it was *Balthasar* who took up the gauntlet on the legendary course leading the boats to the famous Club 55, which takes them around the shallows of Nioulargue.

### **A big tick for the Modern yachts**

There was no hanging about today! At exactly 11:05 a.m., the large IRCs set sail from Portalet with downwind starts to quickly tease out the spinnakers. "With the line in front of the port, the downwind starts are frequent and par for the course, explains Georges Korhel, Principal Race Officer. However, you have to be completely over the line before hoisting the spinnaker and you can't just rely on the sound of the starting gun!". Good advice indeed, which all the crews adhered to.

Once classes B and C were under way, it was over to the small IRC boats to set off on a course comprising a single looped circuit that was five miles shorter. As such, it was classes D and E which were first to nose their way into the gulf after a little over two hours out on the racetrack in the early afternoon. Competing for the Trophée Suzuki Marine, the JPK 1010 *Expresso* (IRC D) stole the show again, remaining undefeated since Monday. *Pride*, the Swan 44 and American veteran of both the Nioulargue and Les Voiles, has steadily been raising her game since Monday, pocketing her first race win.

Meanwhile, each new day has seen a different champion in IRC B and C, with the fleet trading places with ease and leaving the competition wide open for the coming days. This Wednesday, the TP 52 *Blue Carbon* and the Grand Soleil 50 *Mad IV* took the honours. Following a collision with a spectator boat, *Daguet 5* broke one of her two rudders yesterday and has sadly had to withdraw from this edition of Les Voiles. Hauled out for an inspection at Grimaud, the new Carkeek design has nevertheless managed to return to her berth in Bassin Jean Lescudier where she had her naming ceremony this evening at 4:30 p.m.

### **Acrobatics among the Classics**

To the tune of Verdi's 'Va, pensiero' played on the trumpet by a member of the crew on the large Marconi-rigged *Eileen 1938*, the Classic fleet headed over to the waiting area late morning today. A premise of what was to come for the crews in this spirited W'ly wind perhaps? Some boats, like *Ninn*, left port with two reefs in the main, whilst others came out fully canvassed, according to their temperaments!

As the Race Committee unleashed them on five separate starts, they immediately responded to the call to action, the bit between their teeth, giving rise to some superb battles on the line, Certain boats paid the price, including little *Lulu*, whose bowsprit fitting broke after making contact with a fellow competitor.

In the fight which features 14 boats competing for the Rolex Trophy, the New York

40 Rowdyled the way for quite some time. However, the Herreshoff design, which has swapped her Bermudan rig for her original gaff rig this year, let two P Classes slip ahead of her at the finish and, like yesterday, victory in corrected time went to her little sister, the New York 30 *Oriole*.

The wind picked up swiftly at lunchtime for the final starts, with some interesting acrobatics among the 12mRs as their spinnakers were hoisted. The highlight of the show though went to the Big boats as *Tuiga* and *Mariska* barrelled along towards the line under full sail with the three-masted schooner *Atlantic* in the background, which was out on the water as a spectator. Sublime!

For these elderly ladies of yachting, it was important to have a firm hand under spinnaker, whilst demonstrating amazing foresight on a reach. Getting off to a more cautious start, the Frank Paine design *Viveka* came off best.

There was also a battle royal among the 12mRs with the top trio grouped within three minutes of one another after more than two hours of racing. Like yesterday, victory went to *Crusader*, which is showing real flair here and won't be easy to catch. The other classes saw bigger gaps however with *Belle Aventure* sealing the win in Grands Tradition, *Blitzen* and *Stormy Weather* following suit in Epoque Marconi and *Eugenia V* excelling in Classique Marconi.

### **Club 55 Paul Watson Maxi Yachts Cup: So, who won?!**

The duel between *My Song* and *Balthasar* promised to be a thrilling mano a mano as the two boats are neck and neck in the provisional Maxi A ranking, with *My Song* boasting a slight advantage. The match racing did not get off to a great start though for the Club Swan 80 in her black livery as she lamented a ripped spinnaker on the line! By the time she'd hoisted another one, the Kouyoumdjian design helmed by her owner Pier Luigi Loro Piana, had managed to hook back up with *Balthasar*, making it round Nioulargue in the top spot and holding onto her lead to the finish. The frenetic downwind sprint with gusts of more than 20 knots was a delightful moment for Pierre Roinson, President of the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, aboard *My Song*: "These Maxis are amazing boats and Pier Luigi is an amazing helmsman! *My Song* was stripped for the race but he cruises on this machine with his family in the summer. Suffice to say that he knows her inside out!" On the pontoon of the Club 55, host Patrice de Colmont awaited the crews for a boozy meal in line with a tradition that dates back to the first Nioulargue. But who should the cup be awarded to? Traditionally, the Challenges are contested in elapsed time. "The boat that is first to cross the finish line normally wins, confirms Pierre Roinson. Today though, there was such a big difference in the rating and that worried everyone. As such, the only solution was for Patrice to declare two winners this year, which is very much in

keeping with the spirit of the Nioulargue! And for next year we've decided to change the rules: we're going to have staggered starts according to the ratings so the winner in elapsed time will secure the win as they arrive at the club!" Elementary my dear Watson!

**PROGRAMME for LES VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ 2024** (details of the programme on shore can be viewed on the event's website)

**Saturday 28 September:** Registration for Maxis (over 18.28m), Classic and Modern yachts up to 18.28 metres.

**Sunday 29 September:** Registration for Maxis (over 18.28m), Classic and Modern yachts up to 18.28 metres. Arrival of the YCF Autumn Cup (Cannes – Saint Tropez)

**Monday 30 September:** Regattas for Modern and Maxis yachts

**Tuesday 1 October:** Regattas for all fleets

**Wednesday 2 October:** Regattas for Modern and Classic yachts Day Off for the Maxis and Club 55 Paul Watson Maxi Yachts Cup

**Thursday 3 October:** Challenge Day and Club 55 Paul Watson Cup for Modern and Classic yachts, Centenarians' Regatta YC Gstaad Trophy, Regattas for Maxis

**Friday 4 October:** Regattas for all fleets

**Saturday 5 October:** Regattas for all fleets. Prize-giving ceremony for the Maxis

**Sunday 6 October:** Prize-giving ceremony for Modern and Classic yachts

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**Organisation :**

Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, Président : Pierre Roinson

Principal Race Officer : Georges Korhel

Regatta Secretary : Frédérique Fantino

On-the-water logistics : Gilles Doyen

Communication and Executive Assistant : Chloé de Brouwer

Editorial : Pierre-Marie Bourguinat

Internet sites : [www.lesvoilesdesaint-tropez.fr](http://www.lesvoilesdesaint-tropez.fr) ; [www.societe-nautique-saint-tropez.fr](http://www.societe-nautique-saint-tropez.fr)

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**Press Relations :**

Maguelonne Turcat

**Photos :**

Gilles Martin-Raget

