



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

Thursday 3th october 2024

Time-honoured

At Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, Thursday is traditionally dedicated to Challenges, a playful nod to the origins of the Nioulargue and a wonderful way to gauge just how far we've come since then. The passage of time was also a hot topic today with the Centenarian Trophy, which pitted 19 high-spirited classic yachts against one another, powered up in a race featuring staggered starts according to the speed potential of each of them. Joining the fray, albeit in the bay of Pampelonne, the Maxis had a real spring in their step after yesterday's day off, adding to the eclectic, good-natured racing out on the water in glorious sunshine.

Meaningful Challenges

Following the Club 55 Paul Watson Maxi Yachts Cup, the match contested yesterday between *My Song* and *Balthasar*, today it was the turn of *Belle Aventure* and *Il Moro di Venezia I* to cross swords of friendship in the battle for the Club 55 Paul Watson Cup. "These Challenges in Paul Watson's name are not a homage, rather they are designed to assist the president of Sea Shepherd, explains Patrice de Colmont, founder of the Nioulargue and boss of the Club 55. Paul Watson is the spark that fuels questions about wider society. When you begin imprisoning people who are defending nature, it's a sure sign that things are going very badly..." In the same vein, a public auction of marine paraphernalia will be organised at the CNB Villanova yard on Friday from 19:00 hours for the benefit of Watson.

In the meantime, the match between the two big classic yachts, the immaculate *Il Moro di Venezia I*, a 20-metre Frers design, and *Belle Aventure*, a 25-metre Fife design, kicked off proceedings today at 12:15 hours in front of the Portalet tower. It was a sumptuous generational clash just the way we like them at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez between Raul Gardini's first Maxi (1976) and the nearly century-old Marconi ketch (1929)! It didn't matter that the former's speed potential was far greater than the

second, today was first and foremost a celebration of the pleasure of being together in Saint Tropez!

Around twenty other crews echoed this sentiment. In all, on the sidelines of the Club 55 Paul Watson Cup, eleven Challenges were put up by the competitors, a move that is traditionally encouraged at Les Voiles. Sometimes they combined Modern and Classic yachts, as was the case for *Notre Méditerranée*, Jean-Pierre Dick's JP 54, pitted against the 1968 Bermudan cutter *Eugenia V*; other times they revived old rivalries like that of *Serenade* and *Oiseau de feu*, both of them created just before the war and first across the line at noon.

Centenarians belying their years

The thirteenth edition of the Gstaad Centenary Trophy gathered together 19 traditional yachts built before 1925 for an exciting chase, where each boat took a staggered start according to their rating, which was established according to the rules set out by the Comité International de Méditerranée.

Measuring just 8 metres, special guest *Dainty* led the way out of the starting blocks shortly before 13:00 hours local time. Her pursuers then had to set their stopwatches in motion to nail the timing of the VHF call from the Race Committee. Though some weren't super attentive to the timer, others were very serious, like *Oriole*, whose Spanish crew had bent on a new, stiffer mainsail this morning in anticipation of light airs, though conditions ultimately picked up to around a dozen knots in the early afternoon. The four P Classes took up where they left off on Tuesday with the advantage going to *Olympian* for now, which is particularly well-versed in the event since she is the only triple winner of the Centenary Trophy (2014, 2019 and 2021). Reputation aside, on-board tactician Cécile Poujol admitted to "keeping an eye out for *Joyant*, the longest and most powerful of the P Classes, which will likely raise her game over the course of the competition." Restored and relaunched this year, the last of the P Classes has just turned a hundred, like her British playmate *Arrow*.

In such a race format, is it better to have a high or a low rating? "It all depends whether the wind is stable. If it picks up, that favours our performance!" responded the crew of the New York 40 *Rowdy* this morning, which has one of the fleet's high ratings, meaning she set sail over 30 minutes after *Dainty* over the 9-mile course. Fortunately no calculations are needed at the finish here. The first across the line is the winner! Ultimately it was *Oriole* who took victory, followed by the 10mR *Marga* and the P 14 *Olympian*, neck and neck with *Rowdy*.

Role reversal among the Maxis

With the Maxis performing off Pampelonne this morning, it was all change between classes A and B on the one side, and classes C and D on the other, with the former

now racing on coastal courses and the latter embroiled in windward-leewards. The 25-mile Course 3 involved several return legs with beats and runs, something the big Maxis relished after two days of windward-leewards...

In Maxi C, *Lady First 3* completed the first windward-leeward three seconds ahead of *Wallyño*, which took the win in corrected time and in Maxi D, with the Swan 65 *Six Jaguar* continuing her flawless performance, only conceding a bullet to *Blue Oyster* in the second windward-leeward.

There are days when even the most high-performance monohulls is helpless against the weather. Stuck in a windless hole for nearly an hour at Cavalaire for their coastal course, the big Maxi A and B classes were still struggling to cross the finish line at 18:00 hours this Thursday evening.

The Grand Parade: This evening at 18:30 hours, the crews who have made it back to port will parade around the old port in all their finery. Indeed, in line with the spirit of the first Nioulargue competitions, the crews will don disguises in front of a jury positioned on the podium at the foot of the giant screen. This jury will comprise members of the town hall, the harbour office, the Société Nautique de Saint Tropez and the Esprit Village's shopkeepers. Always very popular, it's an absolute must and the winner wins a lovely boozy prize from the Domaine Bertaud Belieu!

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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