



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

Sunday 29 September 2024

Playtime in the Gulf!

Following yesterday's strong gusts, conditions were dreamy today with a gentle ten knots of thermal breeze and the ever-faithful sunshine. Offering up champagne sailing to the Modern and Maxi fleet having a ball out on the water training, the Gulf of Saint Tropez also reserved a warm, welcoming embrace early this afternoon for the 41 Classic yachts racing from Cannes in the Yacht Club de France's Coupe d'Automne.

The first official races of this anniversary edition of Les Voiles de Saint Tropez will kick off tomorrow for the Modern and Maxis, whilst the Classics have another day to hone their weapons for battle from Tuesday onwards.

The Coupe d'Automne, a major classic

Each year, the Yacht Club de France's Coupe d'Automne is welcomed into the bay by the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez and forms the link between Les Régates Royales de Cannes and Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Contested in ideal conditions, this 35th edition had a revenge match vibe as the 2023 edition had to be cancelled due to the weather not being favourable.

Blown along by 10 to 12 knots of N'ly wind today, the 23 miles between Cannes and Saint Tropez were soon devoured by the fleet of 41 Classics. Setting sail at 11 a.m. this morning, the front runners powered across the line off the Portalet tower at 2:06 p.m. *French Kiss* took the win and in the wake of her red spinnaker were four other 12mRs. It was a sight to behold with a backdrop of Maxis and Moderns tacking about at the end of the gulf as they made their final tweaks before tomorrow's racing.

The first of the classic 12mRs, *Jenetta II*, which stands out from the rest thanks to her bonny Scottish livery, tied up to the Quai d'Estienne d'Orves alongside the other Twelves, proving a faux America's Cup ambiance at the entrance to the village! A total of nine 12mRs will be competing at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, which is also the final leg of the 55th Coupe de France.

Just opposite them, next to the harbour office, the crews of the other Classics hot off the Coupe d'Automne racetrack were all bowled over by today's fantastic sea passage in heavenly conditions: "It was the perfect day" admitted the Brazilian sailor Torben Graël, who is helming the magnificent gaff-rigged 10mR *Marga*, which won the Epoque Aurique category. "We fought hard in our category, especially with the P Classes. It's fantastic to be here and to reap the benefits of this amazing setting," added the five-time Olympic medallist, who has certainly enjoyed his share of spectacular venues. Behind these trailblazers, the battle was just as fierce within the classic fleet (post-1950 boats), the Epoque Marconi and Auriques. In this latter category of gaff rigs, there was a race within a race among the four American P Classes, designed according to Nathanaël Herreshoff's Universal Rule. Set to perform at Les Voiles, today's prize was awarded to *Olympian*.

All these new arrivals will get the chance for a little breather this evening before the 79 Classic yachts calmly prepare for battle to begin on Tuesday.

The Modern and Maxi yachts take centre stage tomorrow

Champing at the bit throughout the day as they powered across the Gulf of Saint Tropez, the huge crowds that came to the village this Sunday were treated to an absolutely eye-popping show, which augurs well for tomorrow's action. Hostilities commence at 11 a.m. tomorrow with the Modern yachts setting sail from the Portalet tower. Boasting a fleet of 127 yachts ranging from a 9-metre sportsboat to the vast racer-cruisers measuring over 15 metres in length, they will be split into four classes in line with the IRC rule. "We've been working on the different rating bands in a bid to create some dense and uniform fleets with the emphasis on safety. It's dangerous to have boats which perform very differently on the same starting line. For example, we've grouped together the IRC 0 and 1 into one very racing-oriented IRC B class," explains Sylvain Bretagne, vice-president of sailing at the SNST.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Tofinou 9.50s have been specially confined to IRC E to prevent them having to race alongside much larger boats with very similar ratings.

As for the 41 Maxis, much to the delight of spectators, they are due to dock out late morning tomorrow but they'll be jousting in the bay off Pampelonne from noon. The Maxis will also be split into four categories with the class competing in two different types of races: windward-leewards for two of them, coastal courses for the other two, each of these involving two fleet starts with around 10 boats. "Given that they share similar performances, this is largely sufficient for putting on a show. The crews come to Les Voiles to race against their direct rivals. There's nothing to gain from it; it's all about the sheer pleasure of sharing a moment in time," explained Georges Korhel, Principal Race Officer of Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, on the eve of the first start procedures.

On the programme for tomorrow's racing are light airs, which might well pick up over the course of the afternoon with a flukier SW'ly potentially increasing to around 15 to 18 knots.

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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