



**SOUVENIR  
PROGRAMME**  
45TH EDITION





YACHTING MALTA



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Dear Rolex Middle Sea Race Competitors

On behalf of the Royal Malta Yacht Club, it is my great pleasure to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to each of you as we prepare for the 45th edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race.

This 606 nautical mile offshore race is truly extraordinary. Departing from Malta's iconic Grand Harbour, the anti-clockwise course around Sicily reveals a series of breathtaking sights, including active volcanoes and enchanting islands such as Lampedusa. Beyond its spectacular scenery, the route offers a challenging course with the need to navigate the Messina Strait and face a multitude of tactical trials influenced by ever-changing weather conditions, providing an unparalleled experience for those eager to test their skills.

We are thrilled to see an expanding and diverse fleet this year, from classic yachts to cutting-edge modern designs, which we hope are poised to challenge the Course Record if conditions permit. It brings us immense satisfaction to welcome such a rich variety of participants, adding depth and vibrancy to the race.

The Royal Malta Yacht Club, in collaboration with the Royal Ocean Racing Club, has assembled a professional, qualified, and dedicated Race Management Team. Their expertise will ensure that this year's edition continues to meet the high standards expected of such a prestigious event.

Last, but not least we continue to be deeply grateful to Rolex S.A. for their longstanding support.

We eagerly look forward to welcoming you in October.

**David Cremona**

*Commodore  
Royal Malta Yacht Club*

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Maria Vella-Galea

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# How to follow the 2024 Rolex Middle Sea Race

## Online

The official website has regular updates, images and information:  
[www.rolexmiddlesearace.com](http://www.rolexmiddlesearace.com)

www

## # Social

The official race hashtags are  
#rolexmiddlesearace  
#rmsr2024

## f Facebook

/rolexmiddlesearace  
News, interviews, video, images from the course and the boats

Live Start from 10:30 CEST, Saturday 19 October; English commentary

Live Morning Updates starting 09:00 CEST, Sunday 20 October; English language

## Instagram

/rolexmiddlesearace  
Images and video

## X (Twitter)

/rolexmiddlesea  
News and updates

## YouTube

/royalmaltayachtclub  
Live Start from 10:30 CEST, Saturday 19th October; English commentary

## TikTok

@rolexmiddlesearace  
Images and video

## TV

Live Start from 10:30 CEST, Saturday 19th October; Maltese commentary

[www.tvm.com.mt](http://www.tvm.com.mt)

## Rolex YouTube

/rolex  
Race Highlights (October)  
Spirit of Yachting, 26-minute feature programme (November 2024)

## Live Start

The race start on Saturday, 19 October will be broadcast live on YouTube and Facebook (English commentary) and TVM (Maltese commentary) (details above)



## Be an expert:

**Organiser:**  
Royal Malta Yacht Club

**First race:**  
1968

**First winner:**  
Josian (MLT)  
John Ripard Sr.

**Number of Races:**  
44 (2024 is 45th)

**Number of Maltese winners:**  
Nine

**2023 Overall Winner:**  
Bullitt (ITA) Andrea Recordati, Wally 93

**2023 Multihull Line Honours:** Limosa (FRA)  
Alexia Barrier, MOD 70

**2023 Monohull Line Honours:**  
Leopard 3 (NED)  
Chris Sherlock, Farr 100

**Race record:**  
33 hours 29 minutes 28 seconds  
- Argo (MOD 70, USA) Jason Carroll (2021)

# Race Organisation

Organising Authority – Royal Malta Yacht Club

## Race Committee

Georges Bonello DuPuis	Race Director
Steve Cole	Principal Race Officer
Chris Jackson	Race Officer
Martin Azzopardi	Race Officer
Luca Lacitignola	Race Officer
Kristen Lloyd	Race Team

## Royal Malta Yacht Club Committee

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David Cremona	Commodore
Mark Napier	Vice Commodore & Honorary Secretary
Mark Vella	Honorary Treasurer
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Adrian Gauci Borda	Rear Commodore Sailing
Georges Bonello DuPuis	Rear Commodore Special Events
Amata Camilleri	Member
James Villette	Member
Edgar Warrington	Member

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David Dalli (MLT)	NJ Member
Godwin Zammit (MLT)	NJ Member
Josje Hofflan (NED)	IJ Member
Gordon Stredwick (GBR)	IJ Member

## RMYC Media Office

Maria Vella-Galea, Giles Pearman, Louay Habib, Myles Warden Owen

## Race Office & Registration

Alana Meadows  
Rachel Ferry

## Volunteers

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Veronica Bonnici

## Finance

Rita Farrugia

## RMYC Marina & Berthing

Steve Dimech  
David Rincon

## Weather Briefing

Mike Broughton

The Royal Malta Yacht Club wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to the many other volunteers, too many to mention, who assist in the successful organisation of this event. These include helpers at the RMYC and Marina offices, Safety Inspectors, Race Control Watch Keepers and many others.



# Fleet List

Correct as at 23.09.24

Boat Name	Sail Number	Design	LOA (metres)	Owner	Boat Country	Person in Charge
SCALLYWAG 100	HKG 2276	Dovell	30,48	Seng Huang Lee	Hong Kong	David Witt
BLACK JACK 100	525100	Reichel/Pugh	30,48	Remon Vos	Malta	Matiu Te Hau
BULLITT	ITA 1493	Wally 93 Judel/Vroljik	28,30	Andrea Recordati	Italy	Claudio Novi
LUCKY	USA 2872	Juan K Custom	27,00	Bryon Ehrhart	United States	Daniel Hedges
LUCE GUIDA	FRA 53361	Vismara 80	23,60	Jean-Michel Caye	France	Jean-Michel Caye
BALTHASAR	MLT 5	Maxi 72	21,95	Rogier van Overveld	Malta	Rogier van Overveld
DINZER DOO	FRA 1953	VO 70	21,50	Daniel Thomas	United States	Daniel Thomas
12 NACIRA 69	ITA 17498	Nacira 69	21,00	Diego Paternò Castello di San Giuliano/ Federico Marchi	Italy	Federico Dosso
EL ORO	GBR 2080L	Auzepy-Brenneur 68	20,72	Timothy Wilson	Australia	Kent King
SISI	AUT 1	VO 65	20,37	Ocean Racing GMBH	Austria	Gerwin Jansen
AMBERSAIL 2	LTU 001	VO 65	20,37	Raimundas Daubaras	Lithuania	Raimundas Daubaras
HAGAR V	ITA 17565	Scuderia 65	20,06	Gregor Stimpfl	Italy	Gregor Stimpfl
SPIRIT OF LORINA	FRA 2025	Botin 65	19,98	Jean Pierre Barjon	France	Benjamin Enon
EVE	8565	Swan 65 Ketch	19,68	Steve Capell /Fraser Welch	Australia	Benjamin Roulant
BOUDRAGON	NED 20002	Whitbread 60	19,38	Marleen Zondervan	Netherlands	Bas Sibeijn
YORU	ITA 77007	Vismara Mills 62	19,00	Luigi Sala	Italy	Giulio Del Ministro
COCO DE MER	GBR 69R	Swan 62 RS	18,51	Jonathan Butler	United Kingdom	Jonathan Butler
RETARDE	CAY 5812	Swan 58	17,94	Juan Carlos Oliva	British Virgin Islands	Juan Carlos Oliva
AZAHAR	FRA 5641	Swan 56	17,18	Hervé Grünig	France	Herve Grünig
BLACK PEARL	GBR 7017R	Botin 56	17,10	Tortuga Marine	Germany	Marc Lagesse

Boat Name	Sail Number	Design	LOA (metres)	Owner	Boat Country	Person in Charge
GALBULA 10	ESP 15500	X-56	16,58	Pedro Gonzalo	Spain	Pedro Gonzalo Ybarra
TEASING MACHINE	FRA 8668	NMYD 54	16,54	Eric de Turkheim	France	Laurent Pagès
BEDOUIIN	AUS 8777	Swan 53	16,46	Linda Goddard	Australia	Linda Goddard
NOTRE MEDITERRANEE	FRA 4	JP 54	16,45	Jean-Pierre Dick	France	Jean-Pierre Dick
SOLEAG	FRA 15043	ICE 53	16,15	Jean Yves Thomas	France	Jean Yves Thomas
PICOMOLE	ITA 240M	Rapido 53XS	16,14	Aldo Fumagalli	Italy	Aldo Fumagalli
SKYE	MLT 532	Swan 53	16,08	Cavitate	Malta	Joshua Pennell
TULIKETTU REDKIK RACING	FIN 1527R	Infiniti 52	16,02	Arto Linnervuo	Finland	Aleksi Kasvi
AQUIS GRANIS IV	GER 1375	Lutra 52	16,00	Akademischer Seglerverein in Aachen	Germany	Serjoscha Bender
YAGIZA	FRA 9845	Beneteau First 53	15,97	Nikki Henderson - 59 North	France	Nicola Henderson
AROBAS 2	FRA 5200	IRC 52	15,86	Gerard Logel	France	Gerard Logel
RED BANDIT	GER 8399	TP 52	15,85	Forstar Offshore Foundation	Germany	Oliver Oczycz
OTRA VEZ	MLT 5200	ICE 52 RS	15,82	Aaron Gatt Floridia	Malta	Aaron Gatt Floridia
SNOWWHITE	GER 8206	Solaris 50	15,38	Joerg Olaf Zieron	Germany	Joerg Olaf Zieron
KUKA 3	SUI 1212	Cookson 50	15,20	Franco Niggeler	Switzerland	Franco Niggeler
PHOENIX	GER 8585	Xp50	15,00	Tom Wenzel	Germany	Thomas Wenzel
SPORTSKI VUK 44	CRO	Grand Soleil 44R	14,32	UB2 Racing Team	Austria	Ursula Berger
BLUE HORIZON	POL 10664	Delphia 47	14,05	Jacek Sultan Chabowski	Poland	Anna Majewska
SAGOLA SPARTIVENTO	MLT1551	Farr 45	13,80	Battistoni Sorrentino Fornich	Italy	Peppe Fornich
TIMERIESCI	ITA 15939	Comet 45S	13,80	Luca Lualdi	Italy	Ottavio Cimarosti





Boat Name	Sail Number	Design	LOA (metres)	Owner	Boat Country	Person in Charge
DADDY COOL	HUN 12000	Comet 45S	13,72	Peter Szabó/Béla Simó	Hungary	Béla Simó
DIMM	MLT 4515	Beneteau First 45F5	13,72	Kevin Pisanni Zammit	Malta	Kevin Pisanni Zammit
INO NOIR	GBR 2747R	Carkeek 45	13,70	James Neville	United Kingdom	James Neville
JULES	ITA 4601	Oceanis 46.1	13,69	Manuel Costantin	Italy	Manuel Costantin
ELUSIVE II	MLT 450	Beneteau First 45	13,68	Christoph, Aaron & Maya Podesta	Malta	Aaron Podesta
PAPAZULU	ITA 17108	RM 1360	13,60	Aere srl	Italy	Francesca Scendrate
KARPO	SLO 1715	Elan 450	13,58	Maks Vrecko	Slovenia	Maks Vrečko
ALMAR	CRO 2508	Dufour 460 GL	13,48	Sailing and Cruising Adriatic d.o.o	Austria	Thomas Murlasits
BENNU ASAR	ITA 18080	Nelson 46	13,41	Guiliano Solenni	Italy	Fabio Romano
JANISSAH	MLT 158	Sun Odyssey 45	13,41	Mario Debono	Malta	Mario Debono
HEAVEN	ESP 3462	Pogo 44	13,41	James Gallagher	Spain	James Gallagher
TON TON LAFERLA	MLT 274	Dufour 44	13,35	Jonathan Gambin	Malta	Jonathan Gambin
GAZELLE	GRE 1915	Xp44	13,29	Purposia Sailing Team	Slovakia	Marek Culen
VINETA	GER 8501	Judel/Vrolijk 43	13,12	Wolf Scheder-Bieschin	Germany	Wolf Scheder-Bieschin
LONG COURRIER	FRA 44631	Sydney 43	13,11	Gery Trentesaux	France	Gery Trentesaux
MORPHEUS	BEL 733	Sydney 43 GTS	13,09	Forza Sailing Academy	Belgium	Steven Verstraete
AFAZIK IMPULSE	FRA 9967	Neo 430 Roma	13,06	Yves Grosjean	France	Yves Grosjean
BEWILD	GBR 3098L	Swan 42	12,98	Renzo Grotessi	Italy	Renzo Grotessi
LION'S STORY	ROU 042	Swan 42	12,96	Valentin Oeru	Romania	Oeru Valentin
ATAME	GBR 2742R	FAST 42	12,80	Giuseppe Bisotto	United Kingdom	Giuseppe Bisotto

Boat Name	Sail Number	Design	LOA (metres)	Owner	Boat Country	Person in Charge
X-DAY	GER 8419	GP 42	12,79	Lars Hueckstaedt	Germany	Lars Hückstädt
ALEMARO	GER 1807	Neo 400 Plus	12,70	Roman Puchtev	Germany	Roman Puchtev
ARTIE III	MLT 2222	HH 42	12,59	Lee Satariano	Malta	Lee Satariano
JACKKNIFE	GBR 8859R	J/125	12,53	Sam Hall	United Kingdom	Sam Hall
QUO	AUT 4808	Eleva 42 GT	12,50	Gerald Boess	Austria	Gerald Boess
DAJENU 4	GBR 562R	MAT 1245	12,45	Marco Cohen	France	Marco Cohen
HOBART	POL 12218	Dehler 41 R	12,35	Ryszard Szostak	Poland	Grzegorz Szostak
NOLA	EST 773	MAT 1220	12,21	Margus Uudam	Estonia	Margus Uudam
CENTRAKOR	FRA 183	Class 40	12,20	Mikael Mergui	France	Mikael Mergui
GLACES ROMANE/GUERIR EN MER	FRA 179	Mach 2	12,20	Laurent Camprubi	France	Laurent Camprubi
CROSSCALL	FRA 166	Class 40	12,19	Aurélien Ducroz	France	Aurélien Ducroz
NOISY OYSTER	FRA 9687	J/122	12,19	Mark Wilson	Ireland	Mark Wilson
INFLUENCE 2	ITA 193	Class 40	12,19	Andrea Fornaro	Italy	Andrea Fornaro
TYROLIT	FRA 180	Class 40	12,19	Matteo Sericano	Italy	Matteo Sericano
TALANTA	AUT 95	Pogo 40	12,18	Michael Pühse	Austria	Michael Pühse
SUKA 2	FRA 7668	Pogo 40	12,18	Michel Rivassou	France	David Latham
CHENAPAN IV	FRA 53205	Ker 40	12,15	Gilles Caminade	France	Gilles Caminade
GEISHA	MLT 4041	IMX 40 MOD	12,10	Stefan Debattista	Malta	Stefan Debattista
SPIRIT OF THE WINDS	MLT 165	Dufour 40	12,07	Simon Xuereb	Malta	Simon Xuereb
RENOIR	ITA 14689	Grand Soleil 40	12,02	Mario Pellegrini	Italy	Mario Pellegrini





Boat Name	Sail Number	Design	LOA (metres)	Owner	Boat Country	Person in Charge
BUTTERFLY	AUT 2407	A40	11,99	Hans Kastenhofer	Austria	Hans Kastenhofer
FIRECREST	FRA 9815	S-40	11,98	Benoit Tuduri	France	Benoit Tuduri
GOZO DREAM	MLT 974	Beneteau First 40.7	11,92	Noel Grech	Malta	Noel Grech
ESCAPADO	GBR 1321L	Beneteau First 40.7	11,92	Germaine Williams	United Kingdom	Germaine Williams
GARM	SWE 918	JPK 1180	11,82	Per Roman	Sweden	Josemi Segura
VIVACE	MLT 7387	Reflex 38	11,59	Andrew Agius Delicata	Malta	Andrew Agius Delicata
SEAWOLF	GBR 6738RC	Pronavia 38	11,59	London School of Sailing	United Kingdom	Ruaraidh Plummer
CHILLAX	IRL 3700C	X-37	11,35	Paul Sheahan	Ireland	Paul Sheahan
JEDI	KAZ 36	J/112	11,00	Peter Lezhnin	Kazakhstan	Peter Lezhnin
OPENPAYD BEFREE	MLT 1313	J/112	11,00	Horst Huelsey	Malta	Jonathan Camilleri Bowman
MARINA 21	GRE 3622	Beneteau First 36	10,97	Victor Abdelkerim	Greece	Milan Kolacek
COLOMBRE	GBR 880X	JPK 1080	10,88	Massimo Juris	Italy	Massimo Juris
WINDRAUSCH	CRO 2872	Pogo 36	10,86	Roland Weber	Austria	Roland Weber
INFINITY	GRE 1835	Pogo 36	10,86	Stefan Hümmeke	Germany	Stefan Hümmeke
LUNATIKA	ITA 16950	Sun Fast 3600	10,80	Guido Baroni	Italy	Guido Baroni
LOLI FAST/KOA/CROC	ITA 17300	Sun Fast 3600	10,80	Ward/Paiolletti	United States	Scott Ward
SOUTH KENSINGTON	ITA 16406	Beneteau First 35	10,66	Massimo Licata D'Andrea	Italy	Massimo Licata D'Andrea
PALBY MARINE	DEN 35551	Elliott 35SS	10,61	Michael Møllmann	Denmark	Michael Møllmann
LANN AEL 3	FRA 346	MN 35	10,60	Didier Gaudoux	France	Didier Gaudoux
DIAVOLINA	ITA 3010	JPK 1030	10,31	Michele Puggioni	Italy	Michele Puggioni

Boat Name	Sail Number	Design	LOA (metres)	Owner	Boat Country	Person in Charge
DUFFY	ITA 16134	Dufour 34	10,30	Enrico Calvi	Italy	Enrico Calvi
IF	FRA 49	Figaro 2	10,09	Didier Vernhet	France	Didier Vernhet
ARETUSA F	FRA 38F2	Figaro 2	10,06	Xavier Engelhard	France	Xavier Engelhard
MUNJEK RS	CRO 2739	Sun Fast 3300	10,00	Dusko Tomić	Croatia	Dusko Tomić
OBSESSION	GBR 1664X	Sun Fast 3300	10,00	Steve Lawson	Gibraltar	Stephen Lawson
ALQUIMIA	ITA 33000	Sun Fast 3300	10,00	Matteo Uliassi	Italy	Francesco Cerina
ZEPHYR	GBR 1394R	Sun Fast 3300	9,99	Simon Toms	United Kingdom	Simon Toms
CALYPSO	MLT 30	Farr 30	9,94	Sebastian Ripard	Malta	Sebastian Ripard
LUNG'TA	FRA 43724	Sun Fast 3200	9,78	Jean Christophe Cascailh	France	Jean Christophe Cascailh
MUTTLEY - BDM AUDIT	ITA 3022	Figaro 3	9,75	Luca Bettiati	Italy	Luca Bettiati



# 2024 Fleet Review

The raw statistics (as at 20.09.24) are as follows:

Largest yacht	Scallywag & Black Jack 100 - 30.48 metres (100 feet)
Smallest yacht	Muttley-BDM Audit - 9.75m (32ft)
Number of monohulls	109
Number of multihulls	1
Number of countries	29
Most entries:	France - 21, Italy - 21

A close of business on Friday, 20th September the 45th Rolex Middle Sea Race had amassed a fleet of 110 yachts. Whether that number start the race on 19th October is another matter. A month is a long time in preparing for a yacht race. The entry process is complex and demanding, with regulations to be met for boat, equipment and crew. Plus, many of the yachts have to make the passage to Malta from their homeport arriving unscathed. In past years, the Mediterranean weather has conspired to prevent several yachts from making the seemingly innocuous journey from mainland Europe to the island of Malta. A reminder that this race is deliberately timed in a period when the conditions can vary from the benign to the severe. A true offshore test for even the best prepared crews. In any event, the Royal Malta Yacht Club and its race organizing committee are thrilled with the continued enthusiasm shown for this classic race.

## Monohull Front-runners

With Leopard 3 occupied elsewhere after consecutive line honours victory, the field looks open for two first-time entries. Scallywag 100 is from Hong Kong, owned by Seng-Huang Lee and skippered by David Witt. The Dovell design, formerly Maximus, which raced here in 2006 finishing third in class, has spent much the intervening period in Australia taking part in the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race and Asia, securing the 390nm Hong Kong to Hainan Race record along the way. Scallywag competed in the 2019 Rolex Fastnet Race finishing second on the water to Rambler 88 (five-time line honours winner at Rolex Middle Sea Race, and now named Lucky). Black Jack 100 has recently changed hands, and is now owned by Remon Vos from The Netherlands, who has already notched up line honours victory at the Palermo-Montecarlo



Race this summer, setting a new course record in the process. Black Jack was launched as Alfa Romeo II in 2005, securing multiple line honours victories around the world including the 2006 Rolex Middle Sea Race and 2009 Rolex Sydney Hobart. Then, as Esimit Europa 2, the boat scored four more line honours wins at this race between 2010 and 2014, before heading to Australia again.



The 28.3m (93ft) Bullitt is a Judel & Vrolijk designed Wally Yacht. The first ever Wally to participate in the Rolex Middle Sea Race, in 2022 Andrea Recordati's Italian maxi finished an hour behind Leopard 3 and 10th under IRC Correction. A year later as she was back, finishing second on the water again, but claiming Class 1 and the Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy by 24 seconds from the much smaller Red Ruby. With an already impressive record in the race, Bullitt's return is arguably proof that the course offers so much more than just competitive racing for all yachts, including the Maxis.

Bryan Ehrhart returns to the Rolex Middle Sea Race having won the race overall on his first appearance with the TP52 Lucky in 2010. Back with his latest Lucky, (former Rambler 88), the 27m (88ft) Juan K design is a past five-time line honours victor at the Rolex Middle Sea Race. Last year, Lucky's challenge ran out of steam shortly after reaching the north-westernmost corner of the race, when she was dismasted. All crew were safe, and expectation will be high for the canting keeled flyer to be challenging her larger rivals to be first home. Lucky finished 45 minutes after Black Jack in the Palermo-Montecarlo, following a hard fought tussle.

## More Maxis – 18 metres and above

Aside from the three standout contenders to finish first, there are 13 more entrants in the Maxi division. The Maxi 72 Balthasar looks to be the pick of the bunch, albeit on a first offshore race. The Balthasar team has competed previously in 2020 with a ClubSwan 50, finishing sixth overall and first in IRC 2. Bouwe Bekking has long been a core element in the crew. The VO70 Dinzer Doo (formerly Ericsson I of 2005/06 ocean race vintage and E1, which was a close second on the water at this race in 2020, three minutes behind the winner). Entered by new owners, Daniel Thomas and his daughter Mika, both of the United States, the team mostly comprises a group of family, friends and adventure seekers, supported by a core of professionals. Diego Paternò Castello from Italy has entered his 21m (69ft) 12, a Nacira 69. This will be the yacht's first time competing at the race, and according to skipper Federico Dosso "What the owner and the rest of the crew really like about offshore racing is the fact that you must be more than 'just' a good sailor, and demonstrate the right mix between being that and a good seaman." Eve was the 35th Swan 65 to be delivered. Ketch-rigged and built in 1981, seven

years after her sibling Sayula II's ground-breaking achievement in the 1973/74 Whitbread Round the World Race. Now owned by Australians Steve Capell and Fraser Welch, Eve is on a round the world trip, which started from Sydney in 2022. Jean Michel Caye's Vismara 80 Luce Guida (FRA) is making a third appearance after two previous attempts, in 2020 and 2023, both of which ended in retirement. The 70ft mahogany ketch, El Oro, was built in 1974 and originally owned by Baron Marcel Bich, the founder of Bic pens and built as a cruising version of his 1973 Whitbread racer, Kriter. Rescued and restored in 2008 by Dr Timothy Wilson, El Oro has been cruised extensively ever since. The VO65 Sisi (ex. Vestas 11th Hour Racing), launched in 2014 and skippered by Gerwin Jansen has competed previously in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2023 with a best result of fourth in IRC 1 last year. A close race is expected with Ambersail 2, another VO65 but with three appearances (2019, 21 & 23) entered by Raimundas Daubaras from Lithuania, and which finished fifth in IRC 1 in 2023 one hour behind Sisi. Gregor Stimpfl's 20 metre Scuderia 65 Hägar V competed in 2020 finishing fourth in IRC 2, and again in 2022 finishing 15th. Jean-Pierre Barjon's Botin 65 Spirit of Lorina launched in 2015,

first attended in 2022 with a dream debut, winning IRC 1 and finishing second overall, 21 minutes behind the race winner. Three yachts are making their debut: Boudragon, the Dutch W60 and former Silk Cut in the 1997/98 Whitbread Race; Yoru, the Italian Vismara Mills 62 whose name means 'night' in Japanese was launched in 2016; and, Coco de Mer, Jonathan Butler's Swan 62RS, which came fifth in class at the 2024 Rolex Swan Cup.

### 15 – 18 metres

Some 18 yachts, and a number of outstanding contenders, fill this segment. 2022 Rolex Middle Sea Race winner Teasing Machine, Eric de Turckheim's NMYD 54 with Laurent Pagès onboard is an undoubted highlight. Franco Niggeler's Swiss Cookson 50 Kuka 3 is always a popular entrant and finished third in class in 2023. Niggeler is a past winner of the RORC Transatlantic Race and the Dhream Cup (Grand Prix de France Course au Large). Other yachts to look out for include Red Bandit, winner of the 2023 Rolex Giraglia but sadly forced to retire from last year's Rolex Middle Sea Race. The Black Pearl team have plenty of experience having campaigned their previous Carkeek 47 here, winning class in 2019. 2022 marked the debut appearance of the water-ballasted Botin 56, claiming seventh overall. "We really enjoy the Rolex Middle Sea Race. It's a good test of man and machine as there is always a bit of everything and is a spectacular course," says crew member Marc Lagesse. Ocean racing is a central part of the Black Pearl DNA, which this year won the Aegean 600. Gerard Logel's well-sailed French IRC52 Arobas2 made its debut in 2018 finishing third in class, repeated in 2019 and 2022

A quartet of Swans may well enjoy some internal rivalry. Retarde, the Swan 58 entered by Juan Carlos Oliva is making its debut, alongside two Swan 53s: Skye and Linda Goddard's Bedouin from Australia, twice a participant in the Aegean 600. Meanwhile Hervé Grünig is embarking on his second Rolex Middle Sea Race with his Swan 56 Azahar, hoping to improve on last year's retirement. Aaron Gatt Florida's ICE 52 Otra Vez, returns again despite retirement in 2023. Tulikettu RedKik Racing, the DSS foil equipped Inifiniti 52 makes its much anticipated debut. The First 53 Yagiza has raced the course previously in 2021, and 2022, but under different leadership. This time, Nikki Henderson, youngest ever skipper to lead a Clipper Round the World Race team, takes charge. In 2019, she led the all-women crew on JYS Jan. Joerg Olaf Zieron's Snowwhite from Germany competes for the third time. Jean-Pierre Dick, the short-handed legend and twice-winner of the Barcelona round the world race, embarks on his fourth race with Notre Méditerranée following a debut in 2019. Soleag, Aquis Granis and Phoenix all make their debut.

### 12 -15 Metres

Five of the last 10 races have been won by boats between 12m (40ft) and 15m (50ft). Some 44 yachts from 15 nations fit into this bracket. Headline acts are again easy to find. Two-time winner, Elusive 2 is led by the Podesta siblings, Aaron, Christoph and Maya, with the long-term support of David Anastasi. The crew of the HH42 Artie III are guided by owner Lee Satariano and Maltese legend Christian Ripard, about to embark on his 34th race. The Artie team has won the race on two occasions, in 2011 and

2014, on Satariano's previous boat a J/121. The best result in the current yacht is second in class in 2022. Géry Trentesaux returns to the fray following two successful forays in 2018 (overall winner) and 2019 (second overall) with his then JPK1180. This year he enters his Sydney 43 Long Courier. Direct competition comes in the form of Morpheus, another Sydney 43, skippered by Steven Verstraete from Belgium. James Neville, a past RORC Commodore, is once again bringing his latest weapon, the Carkeek 45 Ino Noir, launched in 2023 and which finished fifth in class.

Ton Ton Laferla (MLT) also returns, with fellow Maltese entries Stefano Debattista's IMX 40 Geisha, Mario Debono's Sun Odyssey 45 Jannissah and Simon Xuereb with his Dufour 40 Spirit of the Winds, now on his second race. Kevin Pisani Zammit's First 45f5 Dimm makes its debut. Gilles Caminade's Ker 40 Chenapan IV (FRA) was third in class in 2023 and 2022 having finished fifth in 2021. The 2023 Rolex Middle Sea Race will be his fourth trip in four successive years. For Renzo Grottesi and BeWild (Swan 42, Italy) dreams almost came true in 2019, when he led the overall standing for a few hours before finishing third overall and second in class, something he repeated last year. BeWild will once again be in direct competition with Valentin Oeru's Lion's Story, another Swan 42. The ever popular Beppe Bisotto is back with Atame.

A pair of Comet 45s (Timeriesci from Italy and Daddy Cool from Hungary) will enjoy private battle, as will a group of three Class 40s and three Pogo 40s. David Latham on Suka 2 is very familiar with course having participated for many years with SeaWolf of



Southampton. Michael Pühse and Talanta made their debut in 2022 and competed again last year. Laurent Camprubi's last outing with his JPK1030 ended in retirement, so he will be hoping for better from his Mach 2 Glaces Romane/Guerir En Mer. Austrian Gerald Boess first took part in 2020 racing double-handed and winning the class, racing again in 2021. 2023 marked the debut of his Eleva 42GT Quo finishing sixth in class. Mats Vrecko also returns with his Elan 450 Karpo from Slovenia. Following a solid first appearance in 2022, in 2023 the team finished first in IRC 5 and a very creditable eighth overall. Ursula Berger's mostly Austrian crew on the 14.35m (44ft) Sportski Vuk 44, have sailed together since 2017. Their first attempt at the Rolex Middle Sea Race ended in disappointment when, along with close to 50% of the fleet, they were forced to retire due to a lack of wind on the course. "It's unfinished business," says Berger. "It is a

really, very special race, with true flair, and an international spirit."

### 9 -12 Metres

Significantly, Rolex Fastnet Race winner, Didier Gaudoux, is making a debut with his latest yacht, a MN35, Lan Ael 3. Elsewhere, Noel Grech's Gozitan team on the Beneteau First 40.7 Gozo Dream, Horst Huelsey's J/112 OpenPayd BeFree, Andre Agius Delicata's Reflex 38 Vivace and Sebastian Ripard's Farr 30 Calypso are the four local entries among the smallest competitors. Some 30 yachts from 15 countries make up this size bracket, including one from Kazakhstan, Peter Lezhnin's J/112 Jedi, taking up the reins from ground-breaker Jenis.

The other First 40.7 is Germaine Williams' Escapado from United Kingdom. Two Pogo 36s are aiming to make their mark: Roland Weber's Windrausch and Stefan Hummeke's Infinity from Austria and Germany respectively. Per Roman and the

JPK1030 Garm from Sweden are back after a sound debut last year finishing fifth in IRC 5. Croatian Dusko Tomić is a regular attendee with the Sunfast 3300 Munjek RS, and competing against three others no doubt encouraged by Red Ruby's impressive showing in 2023. Simon Toms and Zephyr, Stephen Lawson and Obsession and Matteo Uliassi and Alquimia complete the quartet.

Enrico Calvi and the Dufour 34 Duffy have participated on eight previous occasions, since their debut in 2011. A seventh in class has been their best result to date, but the crew brings plenty of offshore racing to bear having competed at the Palermo-Montecarlo, Roma x tutti, Rolex Fastnet Race, and the RORC Caribbean 600.

The Sun Fast 3600 Loli Fast has a different crew onboard this year. Scott Ward is the American co-skipper of US/Australian team chartering the boat. Andy Kearnan is the co-skipper from down

under. Lunatika, another Sun Fast 3600 has been entered by Guido Baroni, who took part last year. One JPK1030 is making the trip, with Diabolina from Italy entered by Michele Puggioni. Luca Bettiati's Figaro 3 Muttley – BDM Audit – Migliaccio Group from Italy first appeared in 2019, and raced in 2022 and 2023. Bettiati has the honour of the smallest boat and has always taken on the race double handed. This year with Marco Trincia. Jean Christophe Cascailh almost claimed the smallest boat with his debutante Sun Fast 3200, Lung'ta.

#### Multihulls

The last few editions have seen the MOD 70s grabbing the headlines in this division. Currently, there is only one multi Aldo Fumagali's Rapido 53XS, Picomole. Fumagali has undertaken the race on previous occasions with his Neel 47 in 2021 and 2022, and a Rapido 40 in 2023, when he finished second overall under MOCRA.



 GRAND HARBOUR, VALLETTA

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ROLEX/Kurt Arrigo



# Yachting Malta's

## Strategy to develop Malta as the Mediterranean's Yachting Hub

**Yachting Malta, a collaborative venture between the Government of Malta and the Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC) has, since its inception in 2015, played a pivotal role in establishing Malta as a premier sailing destination in the Mediterranean. Over the years, it has not only helped to foster the growth of local yachting initiatives, but also contributed towards initiatives that attract international sailing events to Malta, thus elevating the island's profile in global yachting circles.**

**With its strategic location, pristine waters, and rich maritime heritage, Malta is perfectly positioned to become a hub for both competitive and leisure yachting. Yachting Malta has been at the forefront of promoting these strengths, engaging with various stakeholders to ensure that the Maltese islands are not just a stopover, but a prime destination for sailors from around the world. Malta's favourable Mediterranean climate and consistent winds, like the northwest sea breeze and the warm Scirocco from the southeast, make it an ideal sailing destination. These conditions offer a perfect mix of challenge and comfort, making Malta a top choice for both competitive and recreational sailors year-round.**

### A Platform for International Sailing Events

Yachting Malta's efforts are most visibly reflected in the support it gives towards a number of quality international sailing events that the island hosts. A prime example is the Rolex Middle Sea Race, considered to be one of the most prestigious offshore races in the yachting world.

Beyond this, Yachting Malta has supported several other key events, including the Yachting Malta Coastal Race, a yearly precursor to the Rolex Middle Sea Race, the ORC European Championships, and dinghy regattas like the EurlLCA Masters Series, Birzebbugia International Regatta, and Euromed International Regatta. These events attract international participants and spectators alike, contributing to the growth of Malta's tourism and hospitality industries.

### Collaboration with Industry Stakeholders

Yachting Malta's success is deeply rooted in its close collaboration with key industry stakeholders, including yacht service providers, marinas, the hospitality sector, and government agencies. This collective effort ensures that Malta remains a top-tier sailing destination. Visit Malta and

Transport Malta play vital roles in positioning the island as a premier hub for international yachts and sporting events, with a focus on continuously enhancing the infrastructure and services that cater to superyachts and regattas.

Additionally, the Super Yacht Industry Network – Malta, endorsed by both Transport Malta and Yachting Malta, provides shipowners and captains with a reliable network of partners. Its "stamp of approval" is awarded to members who meet stringent standards, with regular monitoring to maintain quality and ensure the highest level of service.

### The New Yacht Code: A Significant Development

Although Yachting Malta was not directly involved in the introduction of the Small Commercial Yacht Code, which took effect earlier this year, it has expressed satisfaction with the Merchant Shipping Directorate's efforts to establish legislation specifically for commercial yachts between 6 and 24 meters in length, carrying up to 12 passengers.

The Code outlines detailed regulations for safety, compliance, and operational standards for these vessels. While it primarily targets commercial yachts, it also



encourages private pleasure yachts of similar size to follow its guidelines voluntarily for enhanced safety and a smoother transition between pleasure and commercial use. This new legislation has been well received within the industry, enhancing the appeal of the Valletta Flag for small commercial yachts and addressing a previously unmet need in the market.

### Looking Ahead

Through the combined efforts of Yachting Malta, the government, and various industry stakeholders, Malta is firmly establishing itself as a premier yachting destination in the Mediterranean. The island has demonstrated its commitment to the industry by hosting world-class events, investing in state-of-the-art infrastructure, and creating favorable regulatory frameworks, such as the new Malta Yacht Code.

Yachting Malta plays a crucial role in ensuring that the Maltese islands continue to attract international attention from both competitive sailors and leisure yacht owners. Its ongoing efforts guarantee that Malta will remain a leading player in the global yachting scene for years to come.

[www.yachtingmalta.org](http://www.yachtingmalta.org)



# Destination Malta

Sailing is more than just a hobby for those who live in the Maltese Islands. It has been the oldest form of transportation to and from the archipelago for centuries with Mediterranean cultures who have stopped here for trade, resources, or shelter. The sea also brought Christianity to our shores in 60AD when St Paul was shipwrecked on the island while on his way to Rome to be tried by the emperor. The Knights of St John found our natural harbours to be of great naval advantage for their galleys while defending the islands from attack. Napoleon too, managed to grasp the position for two years, until the British Empire included Malta as part of its colonies. Later, suffering no less than 3,000 bombing raids over two years, Malta saw 6,700 tons of bombs dropped on the Grand Harbour area alone during WW II. A testament to the thirst that so many nations have had, to occupy the Maltese Islands.

Today, Malta, Gozo and Comino continue to welcome vessels and mariners from around the world, albeit from a more peaceful, commercial and leisure perspective. Companies and ship owners seek out the attractive Maltese flag registration conditions that the islands offer, while major cruise liners have firmly placed Malta on their itinerary as a Mediterranean port of call. Cruise visitors have the advantage of alighting from the ships immediately below the UNESCO world heritage city of Valletta. In the off-season, our ship repair, services yards and other auxiliary services are also available for commercial and private motor and sailing yachts, such as bunkering, refits, berthing and sail repair. Meanwhile, we have seen a steady increase in the number of sailing events, training camps for Olympic Class sailors and European Championships for various classes. This has all been the positive result of collaborative efforts between clubs, associations, the Malta Sailing Federation, the

Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) and Yachting Malta Ltd.

On the other hand, the decision by tourists and visitors to sail to the Maltese Islands and navigate its ancient waters either for leisure or for competition, is based also on the visual attractiveness of the islands. One of the first scenes that greets the eyes while sailing toward the islands are the stunning landscapes and rock formations. The historical entrance to the Valletta Grand Harbour for example, is flanked on both sides by fortifications, constructed by the Order of St John between 1530 and 1798.

The Grand Harbour itself, together with Marsamxett Creek which lies to the north side of the peninsular of Valletta, all leave an unforgettable impression on those entering or exiting the several marinas in these natural harbours. The dramatic 130 metre high cliffs along the southern coastline, plunge straight down into the deep azure of the Mediterranean. Malta lies on the Pantelleria fault line, separating Europe from the African continent, and one is left with a lasting impression on seeing these limestone walls, which glow a honey-gold colour as the rays of the setting sun bounce off the Maltese strata that date back to the Miocene epoch.

Sailing whether for sport or leisure, is considered an important part of the visitor experience of the Maltese Islands, as it adds value to the product offer sought. The MTA therefore includes the sport as an activity to be promoted by the Active Sea Segment as part of the marketing planning. The work done by the MTA is geographically focused and is driven by specific segments which allows it to target distinct demographics across various source markets throughout the year. This approach effectively leverages Malta's prime offerings during different seasons, appealing to the

diverse cultures and markets around the world. In this way, its actions play a crucial role in encouraging travel to the Maltese Islands, especially during the Autumn, Winter, and Spring months. With the seasons extending, sailing in Malta completes the profile for those visitors who seek a quality stay during the quieter months of the year. Furthermore, MTA's marketing strategy capitalizes on the evolving consumer perceptions and trends that highlight the beneficial impacts of sea-related vacations on both mental and physical well-being. In fact, there are a growing number of tour operators, destination management companies and tourists who are requesting more information about licenced charter vessels and companies available in Malta. This is a testimony to the promotional investment being made by the MTA, the local yachting industry, sailing associations and clubs alike.

Apart from the advertising and marketing campaigns that the entity carries out, it also hosts several international media, which are also given a sailing experience within a customized programme. Media go on to produce television documentaries, articles for publications and newspapers in both print and online versions. Additionally, celebrity social media influencers and specialized digital creators produce unique content that communicates messages to their followers, giving them personal recommendations regarding the destination. Whatever the case or the segment being promoted, the MTA implements the right marketing mix to showcase the strengths that Malta, the local sailing community and the industry have to offer. Concurrently, the international network of offices and public relations representatives of the MTA, leverage advertising and marketing opportunities, as part of an overall strategy, to effectively represent the Maltese Islands to trade and consumers in various markets.

In a nutshell, the Malta Tourism Authority collaborates with various stakeholders in the yachting industry to assist in enhancing Malta's appeal as a premier destination that meets all travellers' needs. Through the different types of collaboration that it enters with stakeholders, it markets and promotes the islands for visitors to take advantage of the fact that it can offer a variety of activities and experiences to make their stay more enjoyable.

Finally, the Malta Tourism Authority is thrilled to be a part of the Rolex Middle Sea Race once again. It invites all participants to take advantage of their time here, to explore more of the island's incredible history, gastronomy and culture. Guests and sailors are encouraged to follow VisitMalta on Instagram and Facebook and to make use of the hashtags #exploremore #visitmalta. By adding @visitmalta to their posts and stories, the Malta Tourism Authority will be able to share the incredible memories made during the race, with thousands of destination followers around the world.

**Wishing Fair Winds to All!**



# Family, Legacy, and Passion:

## Malta's Crews Prepare for the 2024 Rolex Middle Sea Race

The 2024 Rolex Middle Sea Race once again showcases the deep connection between Maltese crews and the rich maritime heritage of this iconic event. Over its history, Maltese boats have claimed overall victory nine times, with local crews frequently winning their classes. The anticipated Maltese fleet for this year includes seasoned veterans, winners, and legacy carriers like the Podesta siblings aboard the two-time winner Elusive II, and Lee Satariano and Christian Ripard's Artie III, also two-time victors with a previous iteration of Artie.

### Race Legends and Champions

Aaron Podesta and his siblings Maya and Christoph are continuing their family's proud tradition, one started by their father, who raced in every edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race until his passing in 2015. The Podestas' boat, Elusive II, claimed back-to-back victories in 2019 and 2020, and remains a strong contender. Aaron reflects on the dedication required, saying that preparing the boat to the highest standard is critical for both safety and performance.

Keeping the race at the forefront of their minds throughout the year, they regularly brainstorm improvements, even during family gatherings. However, Aaron admits, the challenge often lies in finding the time to put these ideas into action. The passionate and dedicated core team has been key to their continued success. Aaron stressed about "the importance of enjoying the process and giving it their all. Maintaining the boat to the highest standard year-round, for both performance and safety, is a critical part of their preparation". Their primary and realistic goal is always to achieve a strong result

in their highly competitive class, one of the largest in the Race. The Podestas know that many variables need to align in a race like the Rolex Middle Sea Race. For the Podestas, whilst completing the race is an achievement, a strong class result is always their primary goal.

Another family deeply committed to preserving their sailing legacy is the Ripard family. Following in the footsteps of Paul and John Ripard, both involved in the founding of the race, a Rolex Middle Sea Race

would not feel complete without at least Ripard on the start list. Skipped by Sebastian Ripard, a grandson of John, and with a largely unchanged crew, the latest project, a new Calypso, focuses on the complete refurbishment of a 27-year-old Farr 30, carried out in Malta. The overhaul included converting the boat from its original symmetrical setup to a more modern asymmetrical configuration. This extensive work required significant boat-building expertise, with RLR Yachting and



Antoine Abela playing key roles. "The philosophy behind the project is to create a high-performing sports boat capable of handling Category 2 offshore sailing. We are eager to see how the Farr 30 will fare in the upcoming Rolex Middle Sea Race," commented Sebastian.

Having won the Rolex Middle Sea Race twice and narrowly missing out on victory at this year's Aegean 600, Lee Satariano has focused on refining his current Artie, an HH42, and its crew for peak performance. Reflecting on Artie III's performance in the Aegean 600, Lee noted that while the crew excelled and the boat thrived under ideal conditions, the race highlighted areas for improvement. "This experience was crucial for Artie III's preparation and resulted in a detailed list of tasks aimed at enhancing the boat's performance for this year's campaign," Lee noted.

Regarding Artie III's crew, the core team remains largely the same, with a few strategic adjustments planned to enhance their approach. This includes forming two strong teams for different shifts throughout the race, leveraging their collective skills and character to ensure a cohesive and effective unit.

Stefan Debattista, a seasoned race veteran, returns for his second year with Geisha after a strong performance last year, where the crew finished 7th in IRC 5. Reflecting on last year's race, Stefan highlights that the approach remains the same: "enjoying the experience and sailing Geisha fast without pressure. After some work on the boat, we're now focusing on fine-tuning its performance." With a new kite and enhancements to the rig and sails, the crew is optimising the boat's data, instruments, and software setup.

The team dynamic has evolved with a mix of returning sailors and new faces. In addition to three members from last year, Stefan has added local sailors and international friends, some of whom have raced the Middle Sea Race with him before. Despite the mix of experience and fresh energy, Stefan is approaching the race with a relaxed attitude, aiming for the IRC 5 podium while ensuring his crew enjoys the adventure and excitement of the race.

Joining the race again are Jonathan Gambin's Ton Ton Laferla and Aaron Gatt Florida's Otra Vez. Last year, Aaron's crew faced disappointment with mast failure early in the race, leading to their retirement. Since then, they have received a new rig and made small improvements to the boat. With the core crew unchanged and extensive offshore experience together, Aaron is optimistic about



a strong performance this year. *“Despite the preparation challenges, we are eagerly anticipating a good showing,”* he concluded.

### The Corinthian Spirit

Maltese Corinthian crews, known for their dedication despite their amateur status, enrich the race with their talent and passion, showing resilience and spirit.

Mario Debono, Rear Commodore of the Royal Malta Yacht Club, is a staunch advocate for the Corinthian spirit in sailing. Reflecting on the Rolex Middle Sea Race’s amateur origins, he contrasts it with today’s professional, well-funded teams. For Mario, the essence of amateur sailing—driven by passion rather than competition—remains highly desirable. He values achieving something remarkable, respecting the sea, and finding personal fulfillment over winning.

Recalling the 2021 race, Mario describes it as a monumental challenge marked by a severe storm with 55-knot winds. This experience reinforced key lessons: meticulous boat preparation, respect for the sea, and careful decision-making. Safety and risk management became even more critical. This year, Mario’s boat, Janissah, continues to race with a mix of veteran sailors and young talent. He emphasizes his personal commitment to give young sailors opportunities to race alongside experienced crew members, believing they will uphold and advance the Corinthian spirit and traditions of sailing.

In 2023, Gozo Dream, skippered by Noel Grech, made history as the first all-Gozitan crew in the Rolex Middle Sea Race, finishing 51st in IRC Class. Building on this achievement, the crew has refined their approach for 2024, incorporating advice from mentors and improving their

boat handling. With three new members in the crew, they remain committed to the Corinthian spirit, focusing on completing the race safely and efficiently. Upgrades to sails and instruments, supported by new sponsorships, aim to enhance performance this year. As Noel Grech notes, *“We’re combining traditional sailing knowledge with improved technology for better results.”*

### Returning Crews

Simon Xuereb’s Spirit of the Winds and Horst Huelsey’s BeFree OpenPayd, both made their debut in the 2023 Rolex Middle Sea Race, and are set to return this year.

Simon Xuereb’s Spirit of the Winds did not have the start they had hoped for when they encountered damage early in the race. Despite the setback, they persevered and successfully completed the course, achieving their goal of overcoming

any obstacles and gaining valuable experience. This year, three crew members from the previous race are returning, joined by three new sailors. Building on the lessons learned from last year, the Spirit of the Winds’ crew is focused on delivering a competitive performance they can be proud of.

BeFree OpenPayd, skippered by Horst Huelsey, finished 25th in 2023 and has since made significant improvements. With a new permanent team member and a focus on night sailing, they’ve refined their skills and boat setup. Horst emphasises the importance of teamwork, nutrition, and endurance, noting that the final hours of the race demand both physical and mental strength.

*“We’ve enhanced the skills of individual sailors, allowing for*

*more frequent position changes to combat fatigue,”* Horst noted. *“Strict adherence to shifts has improved concentration, and good nutrition along with plenty of hydration is crucial. The final 30 hours of the race require immense physical and mental strength, but it’s in these moments of high intensity that everyone’s true abilities shine.”*

After taking a break from double handed racing and racing with a full crew, Andrew Agius Delicata and Matthew Gabriele, co-owners of the Reflex 38 Vivace, are returning to double-handed racing, drawn by its unique challenge. They have previously thrived in this format and are confident in their ability to perform well, given their deep familiarity with the boat and past podium finishes.

The experience from the fully crewed 2022 race has informed their approach this year, leading to improved techniques for speed and manoeuvrability. Although their full crew is not racing with them, their insights and preparations remain invaluable. Facing increased competition from greater professionalism in the competition, Andrew and Matthew are determined to aim high and potentially outperform fully crewed boats.

The 2024 Rolex Middle Sea Race will undoubtedly see all these crews put their preparation, passion, and perseverance to the test. Whatever the outcome, they are certain to add another chapter to Malta’s rich sailing legacy.



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## The Principal Trophies

**Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy** - awarded to the overall winner of the Rolex Middle Sea Race under IRC Time Correction.

**RLR Trophy** - awarded to the first monohull boat to finish the race.

**Boccale del Mediterraneo Trophy** - awarded to the overall winner on corrected time in the ORC Category.

**Captain Morgan Trophy** - awarded to the overall winner on corrected time in the MOCRA (Multihull) Category.

**Alessandro Vattani Trophy** - awarded to the first boat to finish the race in the Double-Handed Class.

**John Ripard Trophy** - awarded to the monohull boat that breaks the monohull race record.

**Current record established in 2021 by Comanche:** 40hrs 17mins 50secs over a distance of 606 nautical miles. A new record will set by taking the highest average speed over the course sailed and if this speed is greater than 15.05 knots.

**Malta Tourism Authority Trophy** - awarded to the first foreign boat to finish the race.

**FIV Trophy** - awarded to the first Italian Boat on corrected time in the ORC Category.

**Transport Malta Trophy** - awarded to the first boat to finish the race where the Person in Charge and more than 50% of the crew (including Person in Charge) hold a Maltese passport.

**Arthur Podesta Trophy** - awarded to the first boat on corrected time in the IRC Category where the Person in Charge and more than 50% of the crew (including Person in Charge) hold a Maltese passport.

**Teddy Borg Trophy** - awarded to the first boat on corrected time in the ORC Category where the Person in Charge and more than 50% of the crew (including Person in Charge) hold a Maltese passport.

**Italian Ambassador's Cup** will be awarded to a boat that is deemed to have performed an outstanding act of seamanship or sportsmanship.

**Malta Rolex Cup** will be presented to the overall winner of the Yachting Malta Coastal Race on corrected time.



NB: A Rolex Timepiece will be awarded to the first monohull boat to finish the race and to the overall winner on corrected time in the IRC Category.

First, second and third prizes will be awarded in each class where the number of entries is six or more boats and first and second prizes where there are only five or less boats in a class.

For the purpose of assigning the Malta Tourism Authority Trophy and the FIV Trophy, the nationality of a boat will be the nationality of the entry, which is the country of which the entrant is a citizen and shall be declared when making the entry.

# From Dinghy Sailing to Offshore Racing:

## The Next Generation of Rolex Middle Sea Race Competitors

Among the crews competing in the 45th Rolex Middle Sea Race are several young, homegrown sailors who grew up racing on the water in dinghy classes before embracing the challenges of keelboat and offshore racing. Emma Borg (Malta Young Sailors Club), Gary Mercieca (Birzebbugia Sailing Club), Dimitrios Vertsonsis (Royal Malta Yacht Club), and Matthew Wallis (Vikings Sailing Club) share a common journey—from dinghy sailors to competitors in the one of the world's most challenging offshore races.

Many of today's successful yacht racers began their journey in dinghy sailing, where they developed vital skills in small, fast boats. As they advanced, these sailors transitioned into the more complex world of keelboat racing, using their early experiences to race in larger, team-based competitions. Some have already made their mark in the Rolex Middle Sea Race, while others are set to follow in their footsteps, continuing the tradition of youth sailors rising to the highest levels of the sport.

### Early Experiences

All sailors agree that their early experiences on dinghies taught them how to adapt to diverse sailing conditions. These formative years provided invaluable lessons in reading wind angles, trimming sails efficiently, and handling various weather conditions, all while maintaining constant vigilance—key skills essential to successful sailing.

Twenty-one-year-old Emma Borg, with years of experience in Optimist and ILCA Class single-handed sailing, explains that dinghy racing taught her a lot about precision and tactical thinking. *"In dinghy sailing, you constantly adjust to changing conditions and focus on boat handling and speed. These skills directly translate to offshore racing, where precision in navigation and sail trim are crucial. The emphasis on optimizing performance in a Laser helped me develop a keen sense for making quick decisions and adapting strategies, which proved invaluable in the Rolex Middle Sea Race,"* she remarked.

Echoing her sentiments is 25-year-old Gary Mercieca, who has competed in three Rolex Middle Sea Races and will be skippering

the Jarhead Foundation's J/109, JYS Jan, this year. He emphasizes that his dinghy sailing background gave him a strong foundation in understanding wind, boat handling, and race tactics. *"Dinghies are very responsive and unforgiving, which forces you to develop quick reactions and fine-tune your sensitivity to changing conditions. This kind of instinct is crucial in offshore racing, especially in a race like the Rolex Middle Sea Race, where the weather can shift dramatically,"* he added.

Matthew Wallis, 27, has built a diverse sailing background, starting with boats like the Optimist, Mirror 10, Miracle, and ILCA 4, 6, and 7. For the past eight years, he's been sailing tall ships, and this will be his 8th Rolex Middle Sea Race.

*"My early experiences with dinghy sailing were crucial in understanding boat handling and sail sensitivity. Sailing the Mirror 10 and Miracle taught me the importance of crew dynamics, as well as evaluating team strengths and weaknesses. Dinghy sailing also instils the need to stay focused on keeping the boat moving, especially when fatigue sets*



Emma Borg



Gary Mercieca



Matthew Wallis - Credit Victor Bugeja

*in during longer races."*

### Challenges

Dimitrios also began his sailing journey in dinghies, where he was mostly accustomed to sailing solo. Transitioning to offshore keelboats for events like the Rolex Middle Sea Race posed a new challenge. *"The biggest challenge was working with a team, since most of my sailing career I sailed alone,"* Dimitrios explains. Offshore racing requires constant communication, trust, and the ability to integrate feedback from crew members. Dimitrios adapted by learning to listen to his crew's input while offering his own insights, realising that collaboration is key in navigating the complex dynamics of offshore racing.

Emma also found the transition from dinghies to larger offshore boats challenging, particularly due to the complexity of the vessels and the extended race durations. *"In dinghy sailing, you're accustomed to rapid manoeuvres and short-term planning, whereas offshore racing requires long-term strategy, endurance, and managing a bigger*

*crew,"* she says. To adjust, Emma focused on understanding the new dynamics of offshore boats, honing her teamwork skills, and gradually building confidence through smaller offshore races. This methodical approach helped her navigate the more strategic and endurance-focused aspects of offshore racing, where precise execution and coordination are essential.


At 25 years old, Gary is no stranger to the Rolex Middle Sea Race, having competed in three editions. However, this year marks a significant milestone as he takes on the responsibility of skippering his own boat – JYS Jan – for the first time, a challenge he does not take lightly. *"In dinghies, you're in control of everything—on a keelboat, you have to trust your crew and delegate effectively,"* Gary explains. Transitioning from solo or small crew racing to managing a full team and a more complex vessel comes with added layers of responsibility. Systems like electronics and navigation require a new level of technical understanding, which demanded a shift in mindset. To prepare, Gary focused on studying

the technical aspects of offshore racing, learning from experienced crew members, and refining his leadership and communication skills—crucial for leading a cohesive team in the demanding conditions of offshore racing.

Interestingly, Matthew didn't find the switch from dinghies to keelboats particularly difficult. He and a fellow dinghy sailors were invited to join a crew for a race, which led to many more races with different teams. His main challenge was earning the trust of boat owners to prove that his skills could help the yacht sail faster and more efficiently.

### Performance and Preparation

As the Rolex Middle Sea Race approaches, sailors are fine-tuning their preparation strategies to match their growing offshore racing expertise. Among them, Matthew Wallis stands out as the most experienced, with his role as an officer on a sailing cruise ship sharpening his leadership and tactical decision-making, enabling him to work closely with skippers and yacht owners.



Meanwhile, Dimitrios, Emma, and Gary are increasingly focused on endurance and fitness for the long stretches at sea. Emma has shifted from basic logistics to advanced strategic planning, focusing on weather analysis, boat handling, and crew management. She notes that her ability to anticipate weather patterns and make proactive decisions has improved significantly, contributing to more consistent performances. Her preparation now encompasses not only the race course but also mental and physical endurance.

*"My ability to anticipate weather patterns and make proactive decisions has improved, and I've become more adept at optimizing boat speed and handling during challenging conditions. Experience has also made me more resilient and adaptable, contributing to more consistent and competitive performances".*

Gary combines physical fitness with tactical refinement, having grown more confident in managing crew

energy and making key tactical decisions, such as sail choices during tricky wind transitions. He emphasizes that experience has allowed him to approach each race with a clear strategy, rather than just aiming to reach the finish line.

Newcomer Dimitrios highlights team cohesion and mental readiness, using team-building exercises to foster a strong, efficient crew. Both Emma and Gary use visualisation techniques to mentally rehearse race scenarios, helping them make proactive decisions and manage stress more effectively when faced with setbacks. This balanced approach has made them more adaptable and resilient during challenging moments at sea.

*"The first few races were more about surviving the long hours, erratic weather, and unpredictable seas. But as I gained more experience, I learned how to manage both myself and the crew's energy levels, making sure we were fresh when it*

*counted. I've also grown more confident in tactical decision-making—whether it's choosing the right sail for a tricky wind transition or plotting a better course to avoid unfavorable weather patterns"—Gary who now approaches the start line "with a clear strategy rather than just focusing on getting to the finish line."*

As the next generation starts to make its mark in the competitive offshore sailing community, these sailors have demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to the complexities of the sport. As they continue to hone their skills and gain confidence, they represent the evolution of Maltese sailing, launching themselves into one of the Mediterranean's most challenging races. The Royal Malta Yacht Club could not be more proud to have this group of skilled and enthusiastic young sailors and their peers within the crew rosters of Rolex Middle Sea Race participants.



Dimitrios - Credit Edward Flores

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# Smart Bullitt

## Focus on the Target

Andrea Recordati's Italian Wally 93 Bullitt put in a phenomenal performance to win the 2023 Rolex Middle Sea Race. As one of five Maxis in the race, Bullitt was expected to have its hands full just winning the big boat class after IRC time correction. However, Bullitt's superb performance around the 606nm course put her in pole position.

Bullitt's win was even more extraordinary as it was by just 24 seconds after time correction. Finishing the race over 43 hours after Bullitt, Sun Fast 3300 Red Ruby, sailed double-handed by Christina and Justin Wolfe from the United States, came within a whisker of scoring one of the biggest ever upsets in offshore racing.

The Rolex Middle Sea Race is renowned for changeable weather and the 44th edition was true to that portrayal. After a classic start in Grand Harbour, Bullitt experienced wind strengths ranging from mere zephyrs of breeze to near gale force conditions. Bullitt's navigator Marc Lagesse adds some devil to the detail for this astonishing win.

*"Bullitt has a fantastic team from bow to stern, including tactician Joca Signorini. My role as navigator is to 'paint the picture' and ultimately Joca makes the decision. I am a small cog in the process, but when it goes wrong, it all gets dumped on me and when it goes right, we share the praise equally!"*

*"Having someone like Joca beside me, helps me raise my game. He comes with huge ocean racing experience and a cool head, happy to challenge or agree with the me. This gave the team confidence that we were on the right track and stopped self-doubt creeping in."*

*"Once we passed Capo Passero, we were expecting a strong westerly to materialise. We were running the gauntlet about how long to position Bullitt in the existing southerly before the new wind arrived. The wind speed went up to well over 20 knots, which was not good for Bullitt given the competition. We made the decision to stick to our pre-race plan, so we did not take every shift, looking instead for flatter water."*

By dawn on the second day, as the leaders were approaching the exit to the Messina Strait, the wind speed was dropping. The 93ft fixed-keel Bullitt was in a great position, exchanging tacks with two canting-keeled boats; the 100ft Leopard 3 (line honours winner in 2009 and 2022) and the 88ft Lucky (five times line honours winner as Rambler 88). Bullitt and Leopard played the mainland shore, while Lucky stayed more offshore.

*"Both Leopard and Lucky should have been miles in front of us and that gave us confidence because they were so close by. In previous races, I had learnt that it was a good tactic to hook up close to the Italian mainland shore and both Bullitt and Leopard were pushing hard inshore to stay out of the current and in the hope of more breeze. It is so deep in there that you can go right in, but you don't want to be the idiot that hits a rock or a mooring buoy, you have to manage the risk. Having said that, if we hadn't gone in and Leopard found more breeze, we would have regretted that, so it was a covering manoeuvre as well as a performance one."*

Bullitt and Leopard made a massive gain along the mainland shore. Bullitt was the first to exit the Messina Strait, leading Leopard by about a mile. Lucky had fallen

back four miles and more importantly, had run out of wind and was stuck in unfavourable current, effectively trapped in the jaws of the Messina Strait.

Bullitt and Leopard had a terrific battle to Stromboli in fresh breeze, increasing their advantage on the boats behind. At Stromboli, Leopard had regained the lead by two minutes. It would be three hours before Lucky rounded volcanic island. Sadly, Lucky's race took an even worse turn off the northwestern corner of Sicily when she was dismantled, although fortunately with no injuries on board.

*"Although we led out of Messina, we sailed Bullitt into a wind-hole. Leopard saw that and got abeam of us. After that it was really close racing with multiple sail changes and the lead changing continuously. You would have thought that Leopard would have sailed away from us, but the wind was very changeable. The race to Stromboli was not just about boat speed."*

After Stromboli, Leopard concentrated on pursuing their main objective in the race: Monohull Line Honours. Having gained the lead on the water, improving conditions enabled Leopard to loose-cover Bullitt from in front, positioning themselves between Bullitt and the next mark of the course.

*"After Favignana, the wind went south again and began to build significantly. This heavy weather beat suited Leopard more than Bullitt, but Leopard continued to cover us to Pantelleria and on to Lampedusa. After rounding Lampedusa, we were on a tight reach towards the finish with little in the way of tactical options. Leopard was virtually secure for line honours, and we could see from the tracker that we had a significant lead after IRC time correction in the big boat class. We also knew we were in the game for overall and continued to sail the shortest distance."*

The final play of the duel between Leopard and Bullitt was at the Comino Channel. Although the outcome was to have no effect on Leopard winning Monohull Line Honours, Bullitt's tactics had a massive impact on their eventual position in the race for the Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy.

*"Initially, it looked like our approach on the rhumb line would allow us to pass through the Comino Channel without tacking, but we noticed a change when Leopard was within three miles of the channel. Leopard got a big header, could not lay and had to double-tack in the channel. On Bullitt, we went up ten degrees to put something in the bag. When we got the same header, we were able to lay the channel. Ultimately, in hindsight, this was a big gain towards winning the race overall on corrected time."*

Lagesse looked back on a job well done, sailing smart and taking advantage of the conditions presented to them on each section of the course.

*"Not once during the race did we look back to see what boats like Red Ruby were doing. You have no influence on any of the smaller boats behind you. Over the number of times I have competed in the Rolex Middle Sea Race, the overall winner has been so different. You can only set out to sail well and win your class, after that you have get the right conditions for your type of boat. Any boat can win the Rolex Middle Sea Race, and it is never an easy win whatever the boat. Perhaps that's why more and more people come back and do the race."*

Andrea Recordati's Wally 93 Bullitt will be competing in the 2024 Rolex Middle Sea Race. Once again in the big boat class against boats that, on paper at least, are far quicker, such as Seng Huang Lee's canting keel 100ft Scallywag from Hong Kong. Bullitt's goal will be the same: win their class after IRC time correction, and if the weather collaborates, who knows? Bullitt might just retain the Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy. It has been done before by Nita IV in 1978 – 1980.



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## Line Honours List



Year	Entrant Name	Owner/ Skipper	Country
2023	Leopard 3	Chris Sherlock	Netherlands
2022	Leopard 3	Chris Sherlock	Netherlands
2021	Comanche	Mitch Booth	Cayman Islands
2020	I Love Poland	Grzegorz Baranowski	Poland
2019	Rambler 88	George David	United States
2018	Rambler 88	George David	United States
2017	Rambler 88	George David	United States
2016	Rambler 88	George David	United States
2015	Rambler 88	George David	United States
2014	Esimit Europa 2	Igor Simcic	Slovenia
2013	Morning Glory	Kristina Plattner	Germany
2012	Esimit Europa 2	Igor Simcic	Slovenia
2011	Esimit Europa 2	Igor Simcic	Slovenia
2010	Esimit Europa 2	Igor Simcic	Slovenia
2009	ICAP Leopard	Mike Slade	United Kingdom
2008	Alegre	Andres Soriano III	United Kingdom
2007	Rambler	George David	United States
2006	Alfa Romeo - Shockwave	Neville Crichton	New Zealand
2005	Atalanta II	Carlo Puri Negri	Italy
2004	Alfa Romeo - Shockwave	Neville Crichton	New Zealand
2003	Alfa Romeo - Shockwave	Neville Crichton	New Zealand
2002	Nautor Challenge	Stefano Spangaro	Italy
2001	Strait Dealer	Christian Ripard	Malta
2000	Zephyrus IV	Robert McNeil	United States
1999	Sagamore	Jim Dolan	United States
1998	Riviera di Rimini	Giorgio Benvenuti	Italy
1997	Sagamore	Jim Dolan	United States
1996	Alexia B	Alberto Roemmers	Argentina
1983	Saudade	Albert Buell	Germany
1982	Nirvana	Marvin Green	United States
1981	Antares	Pierre English	France
1980	Bumblebee IV	John Kahlbetzer	Australia
1979	Rumegal	Raul Gardini	Italy
1978	Mistress Quickly	Bob Whitehouse Vaux	Bermuda
1977	Benbow	Enrico Recchi	Italy
1976	Benbow	Enrico Recchi	Italy
1975	Benbow	Enrico Recchi	Italy
1974	Enteara II	Gian Marco Moratti	Italy
1973	War Baby	Warren Brown	Bermuda
1972	Mania	Peter Goulandris	Greece
1971	Penduik III	Eric Tabarly	France
1970	Stella Polare	Mario Di Giovanni	Italy
1969	Stormvogel	Cornelis "Kees" Bruynzeel	Netherlands
1968	Stormvogel	Cornelis "Kees" Bruynzeel	Netherlands

# Line Honours Winners

Part 4 2005 – 2008

## 2005, 26th Edition

Deep crowds lined the ramparts of Valletta's Marsamxett Harbour on Saturday, 21 October 2005 to witness the departure of the 58 yachts competing in the 26th Rolex Middle Sea Race. The forecast was for wind ranging from zero to 25 knots, and predominantly southeasterly, delivered as always with the caveat that conditions are notoriously changeable at this time of year.

The big boat class got underway last with Carlo Puri Negri's new Farr 70 Atalanta II, and the 82ft Maxi ketch Steinlager Thuraya (resplendent in her original race livery) the most potent contenders for line honours. The wind was too easterly to start under spinnaker. Once around Tigne Point, crews were able to crack off. Steinlager, sailing with 25 rather than the more normal 16, won the battle to the turning mark off St George's Shoals, rounding ahead of Atalanta with the two VO60s Amer Sports One and AAG Big One just behind.

Francesco de Angelis, skipper of the Luna Rossa Italian America's Cup challenge from 1997 to 2007, was onboard Atalanta. "I am looking forward to the race and the opportunity to sail with a group of friends," he said. "Offshore racing teaches you a lot. It is a good way to train your sailing senses especially when you are racing at night."

Initially progress was good. Steinlager passed through the Messina Strait just after 08:30 on Sunday morning, neck and neck with Atalanta, followed by Amer Sport One, Nick Lykiardopulo's Ker 55 Aera with Ben Ainslie on the helm, and Sir Peter Ogden's Swan 601 Spirit of Jethou. While the majority had hugged the coast of Sicily on the approach to the Strait, several boats headed offshore including Willem Mesdag's Swan 62RS Constanter. "We've just had a cup of tea and warm chocolate cake, and everything is very civilized on board. We blew the tack out of our light spinnaker yesterday afternoon. It is beyond repair, so I hope we aren't going to have any

light running conditions." Throughout the fleet, there were reports of breakages and damage, more from a difficult sea state than the strength of the wind.

By 16:00 Steinlager had pulled ahead and reached Strombolicchio. "At Messina, we went through with Atalanta, then Atalanta stopped just at the top and we took the only puff", reported Gaetano Granada. At that point, the wind was a completely unforecast southwesterly, but Granada anticipated that the wind would eventually die.

He was not wrong. Monday, 25 October was a slow day. There was wind to the west of Sicily and wind to the east, but not to the north. Eventually, it filled in from the west benefiting Steinlager first. By mid-afternoon she was approaching San Vito lo Capo with Atalanta some 30nm in arrears.

Progress remained slow overnight. Steinlager continued to lead on the water, passing to the west of Pantelleria at 08:45 followed by Atalanta at 12:30 on Tuesday. The gap narrowed marginally on the leg to Lampedusa, with Steinlager reaching the most southerly point of the course at 21:30. Atalanta was now less than two hours behind. What had looked like a straightforward line honours win for Steinlager turned on its head overnight. The leg to the Comino Channel was upwind and the newer Italian sloop proved to have better speed. Eventually, just before Comino, Atalanta pulled ahead, helped when Steinlager broke a genoa halyard. Leading from that point on, Atalanta crossed the Royal Malta Yacht Club finish line at 13:44:06 local time. Flying into Marsamxett Harbour under her giant red main spinnaker and mizzen spinnaker, Steinlager II crossed at 13:51:09.

"We fought all the race," explained Atalanta owner Carlo Puri Negri, who had competed in the race previously with his 60-footer, Grampus. "After a mistake at Stromboli, it was just trying to catch them, and this happened just one hour before the finish." Francesco de Angelis advised



that: "The leg between Pantelleria and Lampedusa was very good along with the beat last night. That put us back into the hunt and this morning we got the last shift. We crossed behind them a couple of times, sailing our own race and at one stage we came together, but by the next cross we were ahead."

Damiano Lipani and Filippo Molinari, two friends from Rome who had chartered Steinlager, were ecstatic about their race despite losing out at the death. Racing a piece of nautical history, Molinari said their thoughts had often turned to Sir Peter Blake and the crew that had won the Whitbread Round the World Race in 1989/90. Just nine boats finished from the 58 starters, and Puri Negri ended up securing seven major trophies including the RLR Trophy for line honours, the Malta Tourism Authority Trophy for the first foreign boat home, the FIV Trophy for the first Italian yacht on corrected time, IRC Class 1A, ORC Class A, the Boccale Del Mediterraneo Trophy for IMS Overall and, most importantly, the Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy for being the overall winner.

## 2006, 27th Edition

The 2006 Rolex Middle Sea Race drew a new record fleet of 68, with an equally impressive number of top names in the sport. The Maxi fleet was exceptional with a host of ocean-racing talent onboard, including five skippers from the recent Volvo Ocean Race - Mike Sanderson, Paul Cayard, Sébastien Josse, Bouwe Bekking and Matt Humphries. The boats were something else. Headliners included: Neville Crichton's 100 foot

Alfa Romeo (NZL) launched in 2005 and line honours winner at the Giraglia, Hasso Plattner's MaxZ86 and Transpac record holder, Morning Glory (GER), and the 100ft Thuraya-Maximus, the Rolex Transatlantic Challenge 2005 handicap winner, chartered by Filippo Molinari and Damiano Lipani and featuring Cayard in the crew. Add to this high octane blend the winner of the Volvo Ocean Race 05/06, the VO70 ABN Amro (NED), Carlo Puri Negri's Atalanta II and two more conventional keeled maxis, the 78ft Damiani Our Dream (ITA) and 82ft Steinlager II, along with the Swan 601s Spirit of Jethou (GBR) and Moneypenny (USA), which closed out the big boat category together with the VO60 AAG Big One (CRO). With any sort of breeze, it seemed inconceivable that Zephyrus IV's course record of 64 hours 49 minutes and 57 seconds set in 2000 would last.

The Maxi start on Saturday, 22 October was tense. Cayard steered Maximus into pole position, crossing the line less than two seconds after the 25-pound field guns, operated by the Armed Forces of Malta, signalled the start. Alfa Romeo, regarded as the most potent Maxi in the world, drew level just outside the harbour mouth. An hour later, Alfa had a half-mile lead having overhauled every other yacht in the fleet.

Heading away from Malta, the wind built to 20 knots and conditions were better than forecast. How long it would last was another matter. Sanderson had commented before the start: "It's not looking good. We need breeze. On this course Alfa Romeo is the undisputed favourite. The boat is very narrow, with a big rig. She's a rocket ship in light airs."

The pre-race favourite Alfa Romeo may well have seized the lead soon after the start, but she spent the first night locked in a close battle with the two other canting-keeled Maxis Morning Glory and Thuraya Maximus. After a day of good wind, which propelled the fleet at record-breaking pace, the breeze became more fitful. Throughout Sunday there were reports of park ups and puffs. That said, the leaders made their way through the Strait with little issue, and Alfa Romeo reached Stromboli just after 11:00, with Morning Glory around 15 miles astern and Maximus another 5 miles back. It was not until the late afternoon that any of them escaped the volcanic island.

While the big three were not going very fast, they were going a lot faster than the rest. When ABN Amro finally reached Stromboli it was just before midnight. Having been in sight of the leaders passing through Messina, the leg to Stromboli proved a disaster.

Monday, 23 October saw Alfa Romeo firmly at the head of the fleet and slowly winding in the miles, seemingly untroubled by the light wind or closest rivals Maximus and Morning Glory. It may have been stop-start, but the markers kept falling, Favignana, Pantelleria and Lampedusa in turn.

Any hope of a record, though, had fast disappeared as high-pressure continued to dominate.

On Tuesday, 24 October, the New Zealand Maxi fulfilled her status as line honours favourite ghosting across the finish at 14:42. After a searing start, when speeds peaked at 23 knots, the lack of wind across the top of Sicily proved fatal to the wider ambition. Crichton was pleased to have won on the water, but frustrated by the conditions and a third failure to break the course record: *"We seemed to find every parking spot on the track. We had a big lead at Stromboli and again at Palermo, but the other two - Maximus and Morning Glory - seemed to carry the wind better down the back of Sicily."*

### 2007, 28th Edition

In complete contrast to the previous two, the 2007 Rolex Middle Sea Race was marked out by two events, one triumphant the other near disaster, and both brought about by strong winds. Over 70 yachts registered initially, suggesting another record fleet. However, the long range forecast began to show a massive storm system moving into the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Strait of Sicily on the second day. In the end, 53 intrepid yachts crossed the line. Once again, the Maxi fleet looked powerful. George David's 90 foot Rambler (USA) (formerly Shockwave/Alfa Romeo of the 2003 and 2004 races) and Tom Hill's 76 foot Titan XII (USA) leading the way. Atalanta II was back with Damiani OurDream, Valkyrie, Rubino and Whisper adding their weight.

It was a sobering weather briefing on the Friday evening, forecasting a depression to form to the north of Sardinia before sliding into the race area overnight on Sunday. The timing and impact of this weather system was expected to determine not just whether a new record would be set, but also how many boats might finish. Peak winds of up to 45 knots were predicted for Sunday morning and the possibility of brutal rain squalls throughout much of the second and third day. Snow was forecast for Etna suggesting a drop in temperature that would also have an effect.

The start on Saturday, 20 October was disarmingly pleasant. As crews crossed between Malta and the southern tip of Sicily they sailed in a warm 15-knot northwesterly. Roll on 24 hours, and nearly half the fleet had retired. Race leader Rambler ate up the miles. Striding up the eastern seaboard of Sicily, she sprang out of the Strait at 01:00 on Sunday morning. Rounding Stromboli at 04:35, she made rapid progress across the top of Sicily and was just off Favignana at 16:00.

Ken Read, the experienced racing skipper on Rambler takes up the story:

*"The Rolex Middle Sea Race started in a beautiful breeze (as most nasty races do) and quickly fed us into the middle of Armageddon. A very fast passage to the Strait of Messina lived up exactly to the weather predictions. Unfortunately, because the weather predictions appeared to be so accurate, there was no reason not to believe that the second 24 hours of the 606 mile race was not going to be the predicted gale that the weather forecasters suggested."*

*"This gale came with a twist. Since the front edge of the system was not well defined, the system came with many different personalities. Squalls that is, about four hours worth, leading up to the actual front. Some with lots of rain and no wind, some with lots of wind and some rain. Then came the squall with lots of wind and lots of hail. It was the line we thought was the actual front. We were wrong, but prepared. As the jet black squall approached in broad daylight we had the storm jib and triple reef prepared. We were expecting 55 knots right on the other side of the line and on the beam. The large swells certainly were warning us what was in store."*

*"But we were wrong on that one. As soon as the hail stopped the wind went away and we embarrassingly were sitting stopped in five knots of wind with nearly no sail up. Up the main went and the jib top. The crew had been in a constant state of sail changing for about 12 hours. Not much sleep. Then came the front. And along with it five visible water spouts. The first two passed to windward by about two to three miles. Perfectly defined and rather large. A third appeared in front of us. There still was not much breeze, but we switched back to our small sail package anticipating the big blow. We were not going to be fooled. The third spout did start to track us, but we veered away and it missed us by about a half mile to windward."*

*"Finally, the black edge of the clouds began to engulf us again and with them came two amazing sights. The beginnings of two waterspouts. Forming within a couple hundred yards of the yacht. The water would start foaming and spinning in a 50 yard circle right in front of our eyes. I got as many of the crew below bracing for one of these to*



*form further and suck us in. Thank God they did not fully form, but we certainly did some evasive manoeuvres to not take any chances."*

*"Then came the breeze, and with it 25-57 knots of wind for the next 20 hours. Quite a variation in wind strength, but I can say that we were never in a state of not preparing for another squall. As soon as you thought you had a breather, another one hit. Right up to the finish, where we had 53 knots of wind, just before entering the harbour. The problem is that if you are set for 25-30 knots, you are out of control in 50 knots. That is when our new sail set up came in to play."*

*"During one very violent squall we were literally flying off the waves. The front hatch had blown off its hinges and we made a makeshift attachment for the hatch, which had miraculously been pinned against the mast when it flew off. About two hours of bailing followed and keeping the bow from digging in was the key. The sea had built thanks to a shelf changing a water depth in the thousands of feet into a water depth less than 100 feet. Pretty big waves. Breaking. We had to reduce sail, so down came the mainsail. In the lulls, the storm jib was not enough to keep us surfing either, so we put up our genoa staysail on the inner forestay. It lives on hanks, so it is easy to hoist and lower without much risk to the crew or the sail. The genoa staysail and storm jib became our versatile sail combination of choice."*

*"So off we went. Way ahead of the record and finding out that most of the fleet had dropped out, we needed to be smart. It is tempting to get the rags back on and push the boat to take every second off the record, but we risked not only breaking the boat, but breaking ourselves. Being smart was the right call. And when we were still surfing over 30 knots of boat speed in the squalls it became easy to rationalize. In the end we took 16 hours off the record. Finishing 5 minutes under exactly 48 hours. Amazing."*

Rambler (USA) took line honours in the 28th Rolex Middle Sea Race at 11.45.03 on Monday morning, in a time of: 47 hours 55 minutes and 3 seconds. Only 17 yachts completed the race, including one multihull. As well as the record and line honours, George David also collected the Rolex Middle Sea Race trophy for the Overall Winner under IRC. In accepting his trophies, David took the opportunity to acknowledge and express his appreciation of the event and the work of the Yacht Club, its Race Committee and the volunteers, *"It was an amazing race. We had big wind and waves, an amazing*

*wild ride with consistently over 45-knots. It is a good time for us to remember what happens on the shore - the committee, the sponsors, the yacht club. You are the ones that make it possible. You do the work that allows us to have the fun. Thank you very much for a wonderful event and we hope to come back very soon."*

The near disaster was the foundering of Australian entry Loki. Shortly before 17:30 on Sunday evening the yacht lost her rudder north of Golfo di Castellammare, just to the west of Palermo on the northern coast of Sicily. A coordinated rescue involving the RMYC and the Italian Coastguard Services resulted in the entire crew being lifted to safety by helicopter. It was a salutary reminder of what can go wrong.

#### **2008, 29th Edition & 40th Anniversary**

The 29th edition and 40th anniversary race in 2008 marked a new record in entries, continuing the trend since the partnership with Rolex began in 2002. 77 yachts, including the Farr 100 Rapture and Stormvogel (GBR) the line honours winner in 1968 and 1969, and returning for the first time in 38 years. The STP 65s Rosebud and Moneypenny, both from the USA and Alegre (GBR) were the pick of the Mini Maxis. In contrast to 2007, a light wind race was predicted. A mammoth high-pressure system centred on the Hungary and Black Sea, stretched from the Balearic Islands in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east and covered the racecourse. Localised thermal breezes would help, as well as a light wind flow from the east.

Come the fourth start, on Saturday, 18 October, the feeble northwesterly wind had picked up a little. Jim Swartz's Moneypenny featuring Gavin Brady and Francesco de Angelis, and Andre Soriano's Allegre, left Roger Sturgeon's 2007 Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race winner, Rosebud/Team DYT with Maltese talent Christian Ripard, in their wake. By 17:30, Rosebud/Team DYT had recovered to lie just behind Moneypenny and Alegre, some twenty-miles south of Capo Passero with the wind predicted to go very light. Overnight progress was painfully slow. Rosebud took the lead in the early hours, while Moneypenny and Alegre hit a hole. Matters improved during the course of Sunday, and by early evening the three frontrunners were delighted to be approaching Stromboli, and expecting to round by 19:00.



Rosebud had forged a 30 minute lead by the exit to the Messina Strait at 13:00, but the chasing pair brought pressure and closed the gap.

On Monday morning the leading pair were Rosebud and Alegre, locked together 30nm due north of Cefalu. Moneypenny was slightly further north and behind. By 18:00, the threesome was moving at 7 knots, approaching Capo Gallo after a long, slow, tiring day. Of no comfort was the realisation that they had yet to level Palermo and had ticked off no more than 100nm in the previous 24 hours. A photograph from Alegre showed the off-watch crew low and forward in the boat playing cards to keep their brains stimulated and boat in best trim.

Life changed in the early hours of Tuesday. During the hours of darkness, the three boats struggled to piece together the wind puzzle. Each had a different strategy and at times each strategy seemed to be paying off. At 04:00 Alegre and Moneypenny converged and went from just over one knot to pushing over 10. Arch-rival Rosebud had meanwhile got stuck in irons off San Vito lo Capo. The distance between the two leaders and the chasing pack, which included the 78-foot Whisper (IRL),

Rapture and the VO60 AA (CRO), was soon 30nm. Alegre and Moneypenny were quickly making tracks to Pantelleria. By the afternoon, the pair were still trucking along halfway to Lampedusa and looked to be in steady breeze. Rosebud was up and running too, but far behind.

When Moneypenny and Alegre had converged, Soriano's boat had the edge by 2-300 metres and was to windward effectively holding all the cards. The race was by no means over with over 250 nm left to run. While the winds were now 12-15 knots, the seas were typical for the region: short, sharp and steep. For Alegre, it was a matter of hanging on and avoiding mistakes which they managed with aplomb. At 07.20.16 on Wednesday, 22 October the Mills 68 Alegre crossed the Marsamxett Harbour finish line to take line honours in just over 3 days 19 hours, about 44 hours outside the course record set the previous year. Moneypenny finished 30 minutes later. *"We're thrilled, absolutely thrilled,"* said Soriano. *"It's a culmination of a lot of hard work, including a few people who are not with us who contributed greatly to the team effort. It is a cohesive group of both amateur and professional sailors. Beating some of the top sailors in the world is a credit to the boys who just kept fighting."*

# Overall Winners List

RMSR Trophy

Year	Entrant Name	Owner/ Skipper	Country
2023	Bullitt	Andrea Recordati	Italy
2022	Teasing Machine	Eric de Turkheim	France
2021	Comanche	Mitch Booth	Cayman Islands
2020	Elusive II	Aaron, Christoph & Maya Podesta	Malta
2019	Elusive II	Aaron, Christoph & Maya Podesta	Malta
2018	Courrier Recommandé	Géry Trenteseaux	France
2017	Bogatyr	Igor Rytov	Russia
2016	Mascalzone Latino	Vincenzo Onorato	Italy
2015	B2	Michele Galli	Italy
2014	Artie	Lee Satariano	Malta
2013	B2	Michele Galli	Italy
2012	Hi Fidelity	Eddie De Villiers	South Africa
2011	Artie	Lee Satariano - Christian Ripard	Malta
2010	Lucky	Bryon Ehrhart	United States
2009	Alegre	Andres Soriano	United Kingdom
2008	Spirit of Ad Hoc	Thierry Bouchard	France
2007	Rambler	George David	United States
2006	Morning Glory	Hasso Platner	Germany
2005	Atalanta II	Carlo Puri Negri	Italy
2004	Optimum 3	Nikos Lazos & Pericles Livas	Greece
2003	Nokia	Charles Dunstone	United Kingdom
2002	Market Wizard	John Ripard Jr & Andrew Calascione	Malta
2001	Strait Dealer	Christian Ripard	Malta
2000	Zephyrus IV	Robert McNeil	United States
1999	Asprin Astro 2K	Rainer Wilhelm	Austria
1998	Leo Pigier	Angelo Ursino	Italy
1997	Albablu	Renato Irrera	Italy
1996	Bigfoot	Christian Ripard	Malta
1983	Saudade	Albert Buell	Germany
1982	Levantades	Giuseppe Diano	Italy
1981	Antares	Pierre English	France
1980	Nita IV	Nello Mazzaferro	Italy
1979	Nita IV	Nello Mazzaferro	Italy
1978	Nita IV	Nello Mazzaferro	Italy
1977	Benbow	Enrico Recchi	Italy
1976	Sumbra IV	Max Boris	Italy
1975	Valentina	Enrico Masini	Italy
1974	Mandrake	Giorgio Carriero	Italy
1973	Aura	Wallace J. Stenhouse Jr	United States
1972	Genoeffa	M. Ruggero Bianchi	Italy
1971	Comet	Cino Ricci	Italy
1970	Tikka	John Ripard Sr	Malta
1969	Surprise	Mario Violati & Nicolo Puccinelli	Italy
1968	Josian	John Ripard Sr	Malta





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# CMA CGM Group

Editorial content

The CMA CGM Group, led by Rodolphe Saadé, is a global player in sea, land, air and logistics solutions. As the third largest maritime transport company globally in terms of capacity, CMA CGM serves over 400 ports worldwide across five continents, with a fleet of more than 620 vessels.

Present in 160 countries, the Group employs 160,000 people globally, with operations in more than 160 countries.

Our mission is to contribute to sustainable globalization through better balanced international trade that fosters economic and social development while respecting both people and the planet.

Our customers' needs are just as varied as the cargos we carry for them and so we provide a global intermodal network combining maritime, air and land transportation services, offering one-stop, more responsible solutions tailored to the most demanding supply chain management needs.

Decarbonization is at the heart of our strategy and we have committed to reaching Net Zero Carbon by 2050 across all our activities, by pursuing operational excellence to optimize efficiency and reduce energy consumption and by increasing the share of low-carbon energies in the Group's energy mix. We are also working hard to reduce

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CMA CGM is an industry leader in this area, being the first to order LNG ships in 2017 and the first to use biofuels in 2019. The CMA CGM Group has invested more than \$15 billion in decarbonizing its fleet and will have more than 120 vessels capable of using decarbonized fuels by 2028. We continue to optimise ship design and improve the design efficiency of our sea, land operations and infrastructure, and between 2008 and 2022 we reduced the CO2 emissions per container by 50%.



# Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy Winners

## Five More Years

### 16th Edition / 1983

1983 was a year of excitement in sailing. Across the Atlantic, Australia II had finally wrested the America's Cup from the New York Yacht Club, the first time in 132 years. In the Mediterranean, the Middle Sea Race was still the only offshore contest recognised by the Royal Ocean Racing Club. It was still the longest, and bore comparison to the Fastnet, Bermuda and Sydney Hobart. It had been sponsored by Martini International since 1972, and the Valetta Yacht Club (as it was the Royal Malta Yacht Club was known at the time) looked set once again to have attracted a competitive fleet representing the very best of offshore yachting.

Some 20 yachts were initially registered, but storms over Italy disrupted the passage of boats to Malta and only 13 were on the start line. The largest entry was the Albert Buell's German Maxi Saudade designed by Rolf Vrolijk and launched in June, with Arthur Podesta in the crew. The Baltic 51 Verinna from Greece and launched in April was in competition with Manfredo, a German Frers designed Swan 51, and Fantasque (France), designed by André Mauric and launched in 1977 by Royal Huisman. Gemini, a brand new Vallicelli raced by the Italian navy, Pisaurum (Italy), Seminole III, and Greater Kudu (Italy) were in the 40 foot bracket. Lilli was the sole Maltese entry helmed by Ray Demicoli and a Van de Stadt design. Shamal Coalto and Mizar were also in the running. Rusty Pelican, the trimaran, was back even though ineligible to race. Moana Bip Bip (Italy) completed the line up.

Starting at 11:00, on Saturday 1 October, Saudade was soon into the lead. The reduced fleet separated into three starts. The first two racing under IOR for the trophy and the third start for three non-IOR rated entries. Racing the course clockwise, Saudade made great progress in generally light winds reaching Pantelleria just before midnight on Saturday, while Lilli was rounding Lampedusa early on Sunday morning. The race was then considerably slowed by conditions, with the fleet not reaching north west Sicily until Monday. Feeble winds persisted throughout Tuesday, Saudade struggled

passed Trapani in the morning, Verinna, Manfredo and Lilli sometime in the afternoon and evening. Wednesday came and went with no reports from the boats stranded off the north of Sicily. Slowly the boats reached Stromboli and began to pass through the Messina Strait on Thursday, 6 October. Finally, on Friday, Saudade crossed the line at 07:13, followed 10 hours later by Fantasque at 17:11. The trimaran Rusty Pelican also crossed the line at 15:36. Gemini was the only boat on the course capable of beating Saudade on handicap, but had to finish by 19:00, which it failed to do, giving Saudade the double of Line Honours and overall victory. Class winners included Mizar in Class 3 & 4, Pisaurum in Class 2.

Despite a low fleet number, enthusiasm was high for the continuation of the race in 1984, but it was not to be. What followed was a 12 year hiatus and the race and its magnificent trophy almost disappeared completely.

### 17th Edition / 1996

According to The Times of Malta article from Thursday, 17 October, the revival of the race in 1996 was an *'Historic moment for Malta'*. The start date of Saturday, 26 October, was coincidentally Election Day in the island state. Interestingly, the fleet was berthed on O Pontoon at Ta'Xbiex Marina close to the Black Pearl restaurant and the new Maritime Yachting Directorate building (now, of course, home to the RMYC). According to Dr Michael Refalo, Minister for Justice and the Arts with special responsibility for Sports: *"Although some merit is due to my ministry, the major players in this initiative have been the Royal Malta Yacht Club and its members. Nothing would have been possible without their efforts, expertise and contacts."*

Commodore George Cachia was thrilled with entries: Bigfoot (Christian Ripard, J/105), Charlie the Bird (Tony Cassar 14.67m Chebec ketch), First Ever (Anton Valentino, 9.48m Beneteau First 32s5 smallest in fleet) Lazy Duck (John Ripard Jr Swan 47) Lady G (Albert Attard, wooden yawl) Primavera II (Alfred Manduca, 13.7m Beneteau First 45f5) Spirit of Malta

(Arthur Podesta, catamaran, latest multihull to participate even if not eligible for trophies ) Wet Blue II (Gerald Gauci, 12.7m Beneteau First 42.5) from Malta, one from Argentina, 22.6m Reichel-Pugh designed Alexa B Alberto Roemmers, Astro (Wilhelm Rainer, 12.39m Judel/Vrolijk ILC40 from Austria, 43ft J130 Karnak launched in 1995 from San Marino and nine (Albablu, Renato Irrera, 12.39m Beneteau 40.7), Aria di Burrasca (Andrea Fantini, 10.7m X-362), Capricia (built in Sweden in 1962 S&S 22.5m ketch rigged Italian Naval academy, line honours winner of 1963 Fastnet Race beating Stormvogel by an hour) Cini Cini (Salvatore Vaccaro, Santarelli design), Furibonda (Nini Sanna, Sintesi 45) Genesi (Giuseppe Giuffre) Joli Coeur (Giuseppe Midiri, Beneteau First 40s), Leo Pigier (Angelo Ursini, Beneteau First 42s7), Swing Cot (Nicola Russo, Beneteau First 45) from Italy.

Conditions for the start were positive, with good northerly breeze and a beat to the harbour mouth. As expected, Alexia B led off the line and was first to the St Julians Bay. She would go on to finish first at 00:20 on Thursday, 31 October. Of the smaller yachts, a threesome, Astro, Albablu and Karnak rounded Stromboli at 09:00 on Monday, 28 October in light north-westerlies, with Lazy Duck and Bigfoot some 25nm in arrears. First Ever one of the slowest, passed through the Messina Strait on Monday afternoon. Light winds dogged progress for all crews, and the three 40-footers all finished within a 15 minute period between 08:05 and 08:20 on Thursday, after the freshest leg of the race, a spinnaker run from Lampedusa to Malta. At times there had been only a handful of metres separating the three. The first Maltese yacht to finish was Lazy Duck, followed by Bigfoot, late on Thursday morning. Not all yachts completed the course: Genesi was dismasted on the first day off Capo Passero, while Capricia was dismasted after five days of racing. Lady G, Charlie the Bird and Spirit of Malta were forced to retire due to the conditions. That all said, most crews were in good spirits vowing to return the following year and come the final prize giving it was Christian Ripard's Bigfoot declared the overall winner on corrected time (under CHS). This Maltese victory was a huge boost for the RMYC, who's bravery had reawakened a sleeping giant.

### 18th Edition / 1997

The race was set for October once again. Ahead of the start, an exhibition of images and newspaper cuttings going back to 1968 was unveiled at the Auberge d'Aragon in Valletta. The organiser was the irrepressible Teddy Borg, the then RMYC Public Relations Officer. Teddy was also responsible for encouraging the local TV channels to cover the race, something they still do today. Back then the TV crew comprised five cameramen filming from land, sea and two helicopters. Another innovation was the Middle Sea Race Matching Racing Challenge Cup ahead of the main event and held in H-Boats. Victory went to the local crew of Lazy Duck, narrowly beating an RMYC women's crew.



27 yachts made the start, including three Maxi yachts – Sagamore (Jim Dolan, USA), Longobarda (Mike Slade, GBR), and Alexia B (Alberto Roemmers, ARG) – as well as War Baby, Warren Brown’s converted 12 Metre and former race record holder from Bermuda. International entries included Nicholas Lykiardopulo’s Swan 46 Aera from Greece, Arish Mell (G. Viggiani, GBR), Commotion (Ch. R. Moore’s Swan 47 USA), Tenareze (R. Lewis’s Swan 57 GBR), as well as some 13 Italian entries.

Conditions were strong on the Saturday of the start, with a brisk Force 4 north westerly and building sea outside Marsamxett Harbour. The first mark was located off Dragonara, with a second mark off Qawra where the yachts turned north. Early leaders on the water were unsurprisingly Alexia B, Sagamore and Longobarda, who reached Syracuse the first night. The rest were stuck either side of Capo Passero, with Lazy Duck (John Ripard Jr, MLT), Aera, Sagittario (Italy), War Baby, Leo Pigier (ITA), Galeassa (ITA) and Jolie Coeur (ITA) doing well. By Sunday morning, the leaders were through the Messina Strait with the next group strung out between Acireala and Riposto. This group continued to make good progress throughout Monday. Leo Pigier and Albablu were forcing the pace as best they could, with Aera and Lazy Duck close behind. Going was slow, with some yachts becalmed for eight hours off Stromboli. Four yachts retired early: Juna Plana (ITA), taking on water the first night, and Halloween (ITA), with sick crewmembers. Acacia and Gemini, both Italian, soon followed.

Sagamore was first to cross the line on Wednesday afternoon, at 13:24, ahead of Alexia B. Thursday morning saw the first of the smaller yachts finish, with Albablu and then Leo Pigier. Both said it had been a tough race, largely due to the number of sail changes. Angelo Ursini, skipper of Leo Pigier, confessed it was one of the most tiring races he had ever competed in. The first Maltese yacht to cross the finish was Primavera II at 23:00, with Lazy Duck a few minutes behind. Three more retirements were announced: War Baby, Ippogrifo and Jolie Coeur. After the light start, the weather conditions had worsened considerably with squalls and strong gusts.

The wind direction was SSE, but expected to change to the north west and remain around force 5 in strength. After finishing on Thursday, the crew of Leo Pigier declared they had accidentally sailed the wrong course, leaving Filicudi and Alicudi to port. The infringement was costly in terms of penalty, putting them out of the running for the overall win. Five more yachts retired: Arish Mell, Cini Cini, Commotion and Tenareze as well as Anton Valentino on First Ever, who advised that they were hit by a violent storm, and with weather warnings frequently being upgraded, he decided to retire to safeguard the crew. On Thursday night the provisional results were released with only one boat, Bordeaux II (MLT) left on the course and still racing. In the end it was Renato Irrera’s ILC40 Albablu announced as the winner on under both CHS and IMS.

#### 19th Edition / 1998

The 1998 race was celebrated before it had even happened, with Maltapost releasing a special ‘postage cancellation stamp’ honouring the Middle Sea Race and for use during the period of the competition. Interest from foreign media, particularly Italian, was heightened following the previous two successful runnings. International entries included 16 yachts from Italy, with Riviera di Rimini the hottest and yachts such as Leo Pigier, Cini Cini, Swing Cot, and Albablu, the 1997 winner, returning, as well as Philip Wood’s Simply the Best (IMX38, GBR), Raymond Tanghe’s Atalate (Swan 46, BEL), Renata Testa’s Ins. of St Helier (SUI). Four Maltese yachts completed the fleet with Lazy Duck (John Ripard Jr, Swan 47), Bordeaux II (Willie Carbonaro, Sun Odessey 36), Wet Blue (Gerald Gauci, Beneteau First 42.5) and Primavera (Alfred Manduca, Beneteau First 45). RMYC Commodore Arthur Podesta planned to participate on Wiva, an Italian Farr 50. Benny Grech was the Principal Race Officer and yachts were installed with GPS tracking beacons for the first time.

Conditions were ideal for the start on Saturday, 24 October. Leo Pigier (Beneteau 42s7) led off the line, but Riviera di Rimini, Juno Plana and Wiva were soon into the lead, passing Syracuse that evening. The chasing group comprising Leo

Pigier, Primavera, J-Back (Italy), Lazy Duck and Wet Blue were about an hour behind on the water. The weather forecast suggested moderate to rough conditions, increasing to rough as the race progressed. Early retirements included S. Nardone’s Cini Cini following a collision with a spectator boat, and A. Quadrella’s Dada (Italy) with equipment failure.

Sunday saw Riviera extending her lead, while the slower yachts battled the Messina Strait in little or no wind. Some yachts were forced to anchor to hold position in the fierce counter current. In the middle, Primavera and Leo Pigier had made better progress through the Strait and were at Stromboli by early evening. By lunchtime on Monday, Riviera was two-thirds of the way home, on record pace, and passed Pantelleria the same evening. Strong winds to the north of Sicily were also propelling the rest of the fleet. Juno Plana, Wiva and Lazy Duck were past or close to San Vito lo Capo. Further back, Bordeaux II was off Filicudi. The wind was also taking its toll. Wet Blue reported sail damage, Scorpione (Italy) sought shelter in Lipari with Tanikely (Italy) after gusts of 55 knots. The same gusts led to Primavera’s retirement.

Riviera duly crossed the finish line at 10:50 on Tuesday morning to set a new race record of 72 hours, 50 minutes, and 42 seconds. Wiva finished some six hours later, also within the previous record time. Out on the course, weather related difficulties continued. Wet Blue II retired after irreparable damage to a second headsail. Meanwhile, Lazy Duck was at Lampedusa, and Bordeaux II had reached Favignana, having survived Force 7 winds and mountainous seas between Stromboli and San Vito lo Capo.

Lazy Duck continued to push round the course, eventually finishing at 06:44 on Wednesday morning. Excited crew all mentioned the top boat speed of 18.1 knots, achieved in the strong conditions. They also mentioned that it had been so rough that preparing proper meals had been impossible for around three days. The Maltese yacht was in constant company with Leo Pigier until the wind finally subsided on the run in to Malta. The much lighter Italian yacht was able

to escape and finished some two hours ahead on the water. Elsewhere, the Italian Navy’s Domino 38 Scorpione reported in its retirement, just as Bordeaux II and the smallest boat in the fleet, Nicola Russo’s Swing Cot, were approaching Malta in light winds before finishing on Thursday morning. Tanikely (Beneteau 45s7) and Limelight (Philip 43), with a crew of Swiss students, had still to reach Lampedusa on Wednesday afternoon, and would finally complete the course on Friday. On Saturday, 31 October, Renato Irrera’s Leo Pigier, skippered by Giacomo dell’Aria, was announced as the winner of the CHS Division and recipient of the Middle Sea Race Trophy at the final prize giving.

#### 20th Edition / 1999

The anniversary edition was a long time coming after the 12 year hiatus between 1983 and 1996. However, the race was finally beginning to receive the attention it deserved. RMYC Commodore Arthur Podesta was reported as saying: “The race which started in 1968 has now turned into an international success.” More than 30 yachts made enquiries about the race including Riviera di Rimini. A brand new Sagamore, along with Aspirin Astro 2K an Austrian IMS 47, was another headliner. The Italian Navy entry Scorpione was back determined to complete the course for a first time.

The start was a colourful downwind affair, with spinnakers aloft. Frustratingly, only 14 yachts started the race. Bullwinkle (Paul Whitely, GBR), Obelix (Paul Ellul, Malta) and Wet Blue II (Gerald Gauci, Malta) all had good starts. They were soon overhauled by the fastest in the fleet, Sagamore, Riviera and Gaia Legend (Mitja Kosmina, SLO), another Andrea Vallicelli light displacement racer.

Despite the light to moderate southerlies, progress was reasonable over the first day. Reports came in from the leading yachts on Sunday confirming they had reached Stromboli. Giorgio Saviotti’s Wiva, with Arthur Podesta onboard again, Astro 2K and Mattia (X-99), were in a group close behind. Even the slowest in the fleet were safely through the Messina Strait.

Monday was a good day for those at the front. At daybreak, the faster yachts were all past San Vito lo Capo with Sagamore reaching Pantelleria around 15:30, and expecting to make good mileage overnight. The slower yachts still faced an arduous journey. Bullwinkle, Elusive (John Sisk, IRL), Scorpione and Sergio Poli's Dream Away (ITA) were still abeam the Aeolian Islands.

True to form, Sagamore crossed the finish first at 14:28 on Tuesday afternoon, but just over two hours outside the record set by Riviera the previous year, robbed by a dying breeze that beset the leg from Lampedusa. With winds over the course looking weak, the American crew had high hopes of adding an unexpected handicap win to line honours. Even Riviera was only making three knots at nightfall; Wiva and Astro 2K were not doing much better. Malta's two representatives were back at Pantelleria.

The lack of wind continued through Wednesday, with the weather unusually warm and the crews still at sea baking in the hot sun. Riviera had finally crept in at 03:02 in the morning, taking nearly five hours to sail from the Comino Channel to Marsamxett Harbour. Gaia Legend crossed an hour later, followed painfully slowly by Wiva at 05:11. On Astro 2K, the situation was dire. At 09:50, the Austrian yacht was a mile off Gozo. Four hours later and having run out of water, she reached the Comino Channel. Once through, there was finally some relief in the form of fresher breeze. Picking up speed, Wilhelm's crew crossed the finish at 15:02, and remarkably moved into the lead on CHS time correction. With others still on the course and as far back as Pantelleria, it was too early to call the win. However, by Saturday, it was soon clear that Aspirin Astro 2K could not be beaten and the Judel/Vrolijk carbon flyer was awarded the Middle Sea Race Trophy.



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## Small Actions, Big Waves: The RMYC is setting sail for Sustainability

By Melanie Vella

### A New Era of Responsible Sailing at the Royal Malta Yacht Club

The Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC) unveiled its Sustainability Compass earlier on this year, launching an initiative that set a new course for sustainable sailing. This comprehensive blueprint outlined the Club's commitment to minimising environmental impact, fostering social responsibility, and ensuring transparency and accountability in all operations.

*"Sailors play an important role in protecting our ocean and our society at large. Our actions must lead to more positive impact to protect the longevity of sailing as a sport," remarked David Cremona, Commodore of the Royal Malta Yacht Club. "Our actions today must forge a future where sailing endures as a beloved sport, thriving on a healthy planet."*

### A Culture of Sustainability

At the heart of the Sustainability Compass lies a vision of nurturing generations of responsible sailors. The Club aims to embed sustainability into the fabric of its activities, from daily operations to major events guided by the appointment of a Sustainability

Officer. *"This ensures that our decisions balance environmental, sailing and financial considerations,"* explained Mark Vella, Sustainability Officer and Honorary Treasurer.

The Club's strategy is closely aligned with World Sailing's Sustainability Agenda 2030 and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting a holistic commitment and global approach to both environmental and community well-being.

The RMYC's commitment goes beyond protecting the natural environment to education and training, community engagement, events and governance.

### Preserving the Natural Environment

As sailors, our bond with the sea runs deep. The RMYC is taking decisive steps to minimise its environmental impact. By 2023, all single use plastic had already been banned from all Club events and facilities. In collaboration with Yachting Malta, the RMYC installed two water dispensers at the RMYC Sailing School, saving approximately 3,200 single use plastic water bottles from landfill.

Future plans include assessing the viability of energy-efficient air conditioning systems, renewable energy solutions, and reverse osmosis technology. Waste management is also being enhanced with new four-stream skips and improved signage to streamline waste separation.

### Education and Training

Education is the cornerstone of the RMYC sustainability efforts. Regular training sessions are held for cadets, members and the wider community, including cleanup events co-hosted with Žibel NGO. The RMYC Sailing School hosted a training session for all instructors on how to separate ocean waste and plastic from other waste.

*"The RMYC Sailing School goes beyond teaching sailing, to shaping young sailors into environmentally responsible leaders on and off the water," says Ruya Cakmakli, the RMYC Sailing School's Chief Instructor. "The School also supports sustainability by offering used equipment and second-hand gear for cadet use."*

## 5 Sustainable Actions for Sailors campaign

The RMYC has launched the '5 Sustainable Actions for Sailors' campaign, which offers sailors five tangible steps they can take to contribute to cleaner seas. This initiative is part of the club's broader effort to go beyond traditional clean-ups and address pollution at its source. The goal is to shift behaviours and tackle the root causes of marine pollution, promoting lasting change for a healthier marine environment.

The '5 Sustainable Actions for Sailors' campaign promotes daily steps for a cleaner sea. Sailors are encouraged to avoid single-use plastics, use eco-friendly products, and choose sustainable transport options. Additional actions include becoming an 'Ocean Guardian' by properly disposing of trash collected at sea and avoiding throwing anything, including food waste, overboard.

All Rolex Middle Sea Race participants are also being encouraged to take part in this campaign and can benefit from several incentives like eco-friendly detergents and sunscreen from Holland & Barrett and free mesh bags from Žibel to gather the trash collected.

### Community Engagement

Sailing should be accessible to everyone. The RMYC is partnering with the Ta' Xbiex Local Council and other sailing clubs to promote a passion for sailing and build a connected community. The Msida

Sea Scouts are already benefiting from this initiative by participating in free sailing lessons provided by the Sailing School. Additionally, the RMYC is providing its facilities for members and the wider community to use as meeting spaces, reinforcing its role as a community hub.

### Events

In setting a visionary course for greener sailing events, the RMYC has adopted several of World Sailing's sustainability standards and promotes inclusion. Since 2023, the Club has made strides in this area, with 50% of volunteer team members and 44% of volunteers being women during the Rolex Middle Sea Race.

**DURING THE 2023 RACE, THE RMYC COLLABORATED WITH ŽIBEL TO ORGANISE A CLEAN-UP ACTIVITY IN THE CREEK MARINA COLLECTING OVER 803.6KG OF WASTE.**

*"Recognising the environmental impact of such events, we've implemented a series of sustainability initiatives," explained Georges Bonello Dupuis, RMYC Rear Commodore, Special Events, "We've seen an uptake from event organisers around the globe as well as participants who increasingly want to be involved and see these initiatives taken seriously."*

This year Žibel will conduct a pre-race clean up in Marina di Valletta and a harbour sweep before the race starts. Skippers will receive clear instructions on waste

collection and separation. Special Zibel Tribe bins designed to collect ocean plastic will be used to monitor waste disposal, providing essential data on the type and amount of waste. This waste will be upcycled into furniture and other products, closing the sustainability loop.

### A Call to Action

The Club is steadfast in its commitment to advancing sustainability and enhancing its reporting systems to track progress. This is overseen by the Sustainability Sub-Committee led by Sustainability Consultant Melanie Vella and involving Mark Vella, David Cremona, Georges Bonello DuPuis, Ruya Cakmakli, Edgar Warrington, Charles Cronin and Andrew Schembri.

*"Sailing has the potential to be one of the world's most sustainable sports and we are taking this call to responsibility seriously. We need partners, we all need to do something. The Club is lighting the spark and we hope the members and community keep the wind in our sails,"* concluded Melanie Vella.

*Melanie Vella is a Sustainability Solutionist and has been working with RMYC to help it develop a Sustainability Compass and to set goals that are ambitious and achievable.*



# 2023 Race Review

The 2023 edition of the Mediterranean's most demanding and renowned 600 mile offshore race will be remembered for the mix of conditions and emotions experienced by the international fleet. Unusually, the weather favoured both mammoth and minnow, turtle and hare. A powerful maxi achieved unexpected offshore success, while one of the smallest boats put in a breath-taking performance that kept everyone on the edge of their seats. The overall winner, the 28.5 metre/93 foot Bullitt, and the second-placed, 10m/33ft double-hander Red Ruby, were separated by only 24 seconds on corrected time, but they will forever be joined in legend.

## The principal success stories of the 2023 Rolex Middle Sea Race:

<b>Bullitt</b>	Overall Winner under IRC
<b>Limosa</b>	Multihull Line Honours Winner
<b>Leopard 3</b>	Monohull Line Honours Winner
<b>Red Ruby</b>	Double-Handed Class Winner under IRC and ORC Category Winner

During final prize giving, David Cremona, Commodore of the Royal Malta Yacht Club, acknowledged the diversity of the fleet, the range of sizes of yachts, the different talent and experience within the crews, and the global representation. He paid tribute to everyone that had taken part: *"The Rolex Middle Sea Race is more than just a competition; it is a testament to the human spirit's unyielding quest for adventure, an enduring love of the sea and the opportunity to test one's mettle against the elements. I stand here in awe of the sailors who have embraced these challenges, demonstrating remarkable skill and determination."*

The start of a 606 nautical mile adventure around Sicily and back to the finish in Malta took place on Saturday, 21 October. Some 110 yachts representing 26 nations crossed the start line, their 1000 plus crew from close to 50 countries fired up and ready for whatever lay ahead.

## MULTIHULL EXHIBITION

In contrast to recent years, only one MOD70 participated in the 44th edition. Limosa, led by The Famous Project founder Alexia Barrier, rocketed out of Grand Harbour and made great strides north. Passing the transit point at Capo Passero early on Saturday afternoon, the French trimaran was trucking along nicely. The two other multihulls were both performance cruisers, but unsurprisingly were no match for the raw power of Limosa. Jacopo Bracco's American Banuls 53 Finn and Aldo Fumagalli's Italian Rapido 40 Adamas were soon in arrears and never recovered. Hitting

speeds of 30 knots or more at times, Barrier and her crew made the best of from some unexpected pressure.

By Sunday afternoon Limosa was just past Palermo, towards the northwest of Sicily. By contrast the leading monohulls, Leopard 3 from Monaco and Italian entry Bullitt, were just north of Alicudi. Continuing with pace, at 13:10 on Monday afternoon, it was all over in the Multihull class with Limosa taking Multihull Line Honours for the second year in a row. This was an important achievement for Barrier. She and her Famous Project team have their eyes set on an all-woman round the world record attempt in 2025. The 2023 Rolex Middle Sea Race was regarded as an important rung on the ladder to that goal.

Limosa's elapsed time of 50 hours, 10 minutes and 42 seconds was well off the record pace of 33 hours, 29 minutes, 28 seconds set by Argo in 2021. However, most of the course was upwind, so it stacked up well against previous MOD70 ventures by more experienced teams. On the dock in Marsamxett Harbour, Barrier

was thrilled to have successfully completed the course without mishap. Her nine person multi-national crew, including co-skipper Dee Caffari (GBR), Elodie-Jane Mettraux (FRA), Marie Riou (FRA), Sara Hastreiter (USA), Jonny Malbon (FRA), Jeff Mearing (GBR), Tom Dawson (GBR), and Robin Christol (FRA), had performed admirably given it was the first time for some on a MOD70 in race mode. *"Even though we were alone we always pushed hard. We did know from the beginning that it would not be the weather to challenge for the record, but we did try our best and I think it was one of our best experiences this year,"* said Barrier. Most of the major landmarks had been passed in darkness, but Barrier is constantly impressed by what the course offers. *"The Rolex Middle Sea Race is a mighty race in the Mediterranean. It is unique, it is super technical because you can have no wind and really strong wind, so we have everything we need, and I understand why everyone wants to come."*

The passage was not without issue. *"We had strong winds and lightning entering Messina Strait,"* explained Barrier. It was a point picked up by Caffari, the first woman to sail single-handed around the world in both directions. *"The course has a little bit of everything and especially at night when you are on a beast like this that just doesn't know anything other than to go fast you have to hang on for the ride and trust the boat,"* said Caffari. *"Right from the start, we had the gusts coming down the harbour. One moment there's 25 knots of boat speed and then five knots,"* explained Caffari. *"In Messina in the dark, we had some big accelerations with 30 knots of true wind and, at one point I think, 54 knots of apparent wind which made us all work quite*

*hard."* Reaching Stromboli just before dawn, the crew did get to see one spurt of lava. A powerful salute from the lighthouse of the Mediterranean to the race's most powerful entry.

*"We had to tack across the top of Sicily," continued Caffari. "We reached the Egadi islands in darkness, then had a one-sided beat to Pantelleria. A couple of tacks there, before Lampedusa at daybreak [on Monday]. The end was golden because it felt like we had tacked our whole way round to that point. We had a 70 true wind angle blast to Malta doing between 20 and 30 knots of boat speed. It was exhilarating and that's why we are all caked in salt but have huge grins on our faces."*

Along with the Multihull Line Honours trophy, Limosa also secured the Malta Tourism Trophy as first foreign boat to finish, and the Captain Morgan Trophy as overall winner of the multihull class under MOCRA.

## MAXI MATTERS

Reserved for the largest and fastest monohulls, the last start is always an impressive affair. The breeze filled in just in time and the Maxi fleet fair leapt off the line. The 27m/88ft Lucky (USA), the former five-time line honours winner Rambler 88 now owned by Bryan Ehrhart, made a conservative departure, but was soon benefitting from its powerful sail plan, including a massive masthead O, and its canting keel to launch up the harbour, bow lifting and overhauling anyone who had been ahead on the line. It was a dramatic and spine tingling conclusion to the hour long start procedures.

On the first afternoon, Lucky continued to lead on the water just ahead of Pyewacket 70 (USA). Roy P. Disney's modified Volvo 70 made a bold move just over



an hour into the race to separate from the other Maxis and go north of the rhumb line. Pyewacket 70 was soon heading direct at Capo Passero matching Lucky for speed, but with less ground to cover. The 30.5m/100ft Leopard 3 was just behind Lucky, with Bullitt and the 32.55m/107ft Paprec Sailing Team (Spirit of Malouen X), the largest entrant, just off to starboard.

During the hours of darkness positions and fortunes changed dramatically, particularly on the approach to Messina. Paprec Sailing Team and Django were forced to retire with equipment issues, the latter reporting damage to mainsail cars while sailing in 27 knots and confused seas. Meanwhile, Bullitt had moved up the standings, as navigator Marc Lagesse explained: *"Before the race, our early strategy was to get north as quickly as possible. When the breeze built to over 20 knots with a big sea state, we looked for flat water and less wind to preserve the boat."* This critical decision proved inspired as Bullitt entered the 20nm strait ahead of Leopard, and just behind Lucky. *"We hugged the mainland coast of Italy to keep out of the current,"* continued Lagesse. *"Half way up, we hitched back into the beach, while Lucky tacked into the current and lost out. Both us and Leopard stayed all the way in to the shore, you could have thrown a tennis ball to the beach."*

*"At the ferry terminal we swapped over to the Sicilian side, as the current was weaker, and popped out in first place, which was super-surprising. Lucky was still stuck in the current and we put four miles*

*on them. Leopard got through about a mile and a half behind."*

En route to Stromboli, the lead passed back and forth as Leopard and Bullitt enjoyed some exceptional racing conditions. Leopard squeezed ahead finally as the pair rounded the islet of Strombolicchio. With a favourable wind angle and the ability to cover, Leopard's superior sail plan started to pay dividends. Having struggled to make up the ground lost in the Messina Strait, Lucky's involvement was dramatically curtailed after passing through the Egadi Islands when she lost her rig. No injuries were reported, and the American Maxi limped back to Malta under auxiliary power. At Lampedusa on Monday afternoon, Leopard 3 had carved out a 20nm lead and at 01:52 on Tuesday morning, the Chris Sherlock skippered Maxi glided into Marsamxett Harbour. The waterline length of the recently revitalised yacht eventually had proved decisive. Just under two hours later, Bullitt crossed the line in second place on the water, but leading IRC 1 on time correction. For Mitch Booth, one of two watch leaders on Leopard 3, finishing first marked line honours three years in a row. *"This year the field was really strong, and we are not rated as fast as Lucky, so we had expected it to be a real battle with them for line honours,"* explained Booth. *"The first part of the race was very tricky with a lot of wind changes. We did not manage that so well and when we got in the strong northerly breeze, we had some issues, but had reduced sail in anticipation so were able to stay*

*in touch even if not in good shape. Bullitt really put up a huge battle, I have to give them so much credit for the way they sailed. We thought we would eventually stretch away from them quite easily, but we could never get more than an hour and half in front."*

In terms of the race as a whole Sherlock, who first took on the course in the IOR Maxi-racer Longobarda in 1997 and was on his sixth assault this year, was full of praise: *"I think the Rolex Middle Sea Race is one of the most special races. The reason being is that it is a circle and usually every dog has its day. Everybody should get a bit of their good stuff."*

#### GREATEST FINISH EVER?

The main monohull fleet racing for the coveted overall win was one of the very best assembled. It faced a shifting weather picture, with conditions set to run the complete gamut of full on to full off. The circular nature of the course meant the yachts would experience a variety of wind directions and strengths. As always, the eventual winner of the Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy, determined under IRC Time Correction, would be the crew that best pieced together the puzzle.

The largest yacht was Paprec Sailing Team (Spirit of Malouen X) skippered by Stephane Névé. Among the 20-strong crew was Laurent Pagès, tactician on the 2022 overall winner Teasing Machine. *"This is the first 600 mile offshore race with this boat,"* advised Pagès, ahead of the race.



*"We have a lot of things to learn with the boat and the Rolex Middle Sea Race is always challenging, so it is going to be very interesting. You can expect everything from very light to 'hell' which is why we love it."*

At one third of the Super Maxi's length, the Dehler 30 OD Aether was being sailed double-handed by Evi Delidou and Jerry Petratos from Greece. In a twist worthy of a Hollywood romcom, the pair had met during a boat delivery to the 2014 Rolex Middle Sea Race. They had been an item in sailing and life ever since. *"We met in the middle of the Mediterranean on the way from Greece to Malta,"* explained Delidou. *"We both have a love for long offshores, and it is time for us to do this magnificent race together."*

Favourites, on paper, were the 52 footers, such as Max Klink's Caro from Switzerland, winner of the 2023 Rolex Fastnet Race, and Chris Sheehan's Warrior Won from the United States (third at the Fastnet and fourth at the 2022 Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race,

also just behind Caro). Warrior Won's navigator Will Oxley on his fourth race, with a best performance in 2021 with Comanche, felt it was a race of opportunity: *"This race looks like being different to the previous three. It looks windier than average and probably a lot more upwind than average. This is a race where it is easy to come unstuck blindly following the routing. Being on deck and watching what is going on is a key component."* Red Bandit from Germany and the Swiss Chocolate 3 (former Optimum 3, winner of the race in 2004) were others to watch.

Slightly smaller, the NMD 43 Albator of Philippe Frantz (third overall in 2018) and the Carkeek 45 Ino Noir of RORC Commodore James Neville were both fast finishers at the 2023 Rolex Fastnet. A pair of Cookson 50s – Franco Niggeler's Kuka 3 (Switzerland) and Robert Pethick's Testacoure Race from United States were looking to replicate the exploits of Mascalzone Latino, the winner in 2016. Six of the past ten races had been won by yachts between

12m (40ft) and 15m (50ft), and there were some likely looking candidates. Two Carkeek 47s also stood out. Optimum S – Samos Steamship, led by Periklis Livas and Nikos Lazos, were celebrating 30 years of the Optimum Yacht Racing Team. Winners of the Rolex Middle Sea Race 2004, this was their eighth race. Stortebekker was one of eight female skippered teams, and featured a young German crew from the Hamburger Verein Seefahrt.

Malta has been one of the two most successful nations in the past 10 years, along with Italy, winning overall on three occasions since 2013. The Podesta siblings – Aaron, Christoph, and Maya – were racing the First 45 Elusive 2, which won the ultimate prize in 2019 and 2020. Meanwhile, Lee Satariano, another former two-time winner, had entered his all-carbon HH42 Artie III enjoying the added bonus of multiple race winner Christian Ripard, taking on his 33rd trip around the course. Jonathan Gambin, Dufour 44 Ton

Ton Laferla, had competed in every race since 2008 and was third overall in 2020.

The weather for the start was unsettled. The air was warm, but the sky overcast and laden with moisture. The promising conditions enjoyed by the multihull start were turned on their head 10 minutes later. Two opposing gradient winds fought it out for supremacy and left the start line virtually windless for the two biggest departures of the day. The Croatian Sun Fast 3300 Munjek RS skippered by Dusko Tomic made the best of the first monohull start. The wind then really dropped off and the next start was delayed for 10 minutes. Worse still it started to rain. Not enough to dampen spirits on the crowded bastions, but enough raise concerns about where things were heading. Once underway, the Italian Comet 45S Timeriesci was

first to exit the harbour. A pair of Swan 42s, Valentin Oeru's Lions Story from Romania and Renzo Grottesi's Bewild from Italy, were able to separate from the pack in the next start as the rain began to clear. The wind was still light, but kept yachts moving. The French Ker 46 Daguet 3 did well at the Fort St. Angelo end of the line, and hung on to exit ahead of another Ker 46, Lisa R from Italy. The penultimate start was in fresher breeze and the Italian Neo 570 Carbonita skippered by Monolis Kondylis made an impressive jump from the line at the Valletta side, matching the slightly bigger and more experienced Marton Josza's Wild Joe from Hungary. Testacuore Race also made an impressive debutante start.

The first night proved exceptionally tough for all crews with a big sea state reported and periods of strong

wind. The predicted transition to a northerly wind developed a bruising sea during the hours of darkness. Sunday was not a day of rest, but at least conditions were calmer. Swee's co-skipper, Birgitta Elfversson called in from the Swedish Ker 40 in IRC 3: *"We had quite an eventful first night; there was a lot of wind and waves. We are now leaving the Messina Strait behind and heading straight for Stromboli. Looking ahead, we believe that the next night will not be as eventful as the last. Probably with not a lot of wind, so we will have to find it. On the morning of day three (Monday), we can hopefully look forward to a long reach."*

Racing double-handed in IRC 6, Red Ruby from the United States, also found time to make a sitrep. Christina Wolfe, co-skipper of the Sun Fast 3300 said: *"A long first night with 11 sail changes. The wave*

*height was pretty massive from many different directions and that was a real challenge. Currently we are short tacking the Italian mainland shoreline to stay out of adverse current. We are really looking forward to getting through the Strait of Messina and come off the wind."*

By the end of Sunday, half of the fleet was through the Messina Strait and on its way to the next turning mark at Strombolicchio. Ahead, a different type of weather battle was on the cards. Sunday evening through to the early hours of Monday morning looked particularly difficult between Ustica to the west and Alicudi, the last of the Aeolian Islands, in the east. So it proved, with the bulk of the fleet struggling across the top of Sicily for much of Monday. At 16:00, 13 boats had passed Favignana with 71 boats still to reach the northwest extremity, roughly 280 nautical miles from the finish. According to the tracker, Lisa R was leading after IRC time correction, with Warrior Won in second with and Daguet 3 in third.

Some 24 hours later the picture was a little clearer. 79 boats were still racing under IRC for the overall win and some 45 boats had passed Pantelleria. Of those, Bewild now looked to be the overall race leader, ahead of Per Roman's JPK 1180 Garm (SWE) and Albatore. At one point, Caro and Warrior Won looked to have made a decisive break on the leg to Lampedusa. However, arriving at the western end of the isolated landmass at around 05:00 on Wednesday morning, it was as though the crews deployed their anchors. Italy's southernmost outpost is only seven miles (11km) in length. It took Caro and Warrior

Won three hours to turn northeast towards the finish. This sizeable delay was enough to put them out of the running for the overall win.

In the slower classes, the fleet stretched back to Palermo. The wind was all over the place, with westerlies above Sicily and huge holes to the south. Staying in phase with the bands of pressure was the secret to doing well. One minute a boat could be in breeze, the next in nothing. For Elusive 2 things could not have been worse having lost their wind instrumentation. Red Ruby enjoyed a fantastic leg across the top of Sicily to open up a lead of over four hours by Favignana over Seb Ripard's J/99 Calypso (MLT).

Moving on another 24 hours to Thursday afternoon, the battle for overall honours continued to rage out on the course with 64 boats still racing under the IRC time correction. With a new north-westerly breeze enveloping the racecourse between Lampedusa and the finish, the class standings had been changing, as those that could took advantage of the fresh winds.

Plenty of boats were in the clubhouse, but none had been able to improve upon Bullitt's time. In IRC 2, Caro saved the best until last winning her class with a spectacular leg to the finish. Chocolate 3 was second with Kuka 3 completing an all Swiss podium. Three boats finished strongly in IRC 3 to make up that class's podium. Daguet 3 eventually winning by just two minutes after three days and 16 hours of close combat with Lisa R. Chenapan IV was third. In IRC 4, Bewild was waiting to see if Elusive II, just ten miles from the finish, could score a better corrected time. Jackknife looked secure in third. Meanwhile, a blanket finish was expected in

IRC 5, with the top three boats all less than 30 miles from the finish: Jamie Sammut's Solaris 42 Unica (MLT), Maks Vreko's Elan 450 Karpo (SLO) and Frans Van Cappelle's J/122 Moana (NED). Also in contention were the two JPK 1180s: Garm and Richard Fromentin's Cocody (FRA).

However, attention was starting to focus on Red Ruby. The Little Engine That Could is an American folktale used to teach children the value of optimism and hard work. If ever there was a yacht that matched the tenet of that story, it would be Red Ruby. At first light on Thursday morning, Red Ruby appeared stuck in orbit of Lampedusa, 110 nautical miles from the finish. From what looked, onshore at least, a wholly unpromising position, determination, belief and skill drove the double-handed American boat to the finish.

While the weather models between Lampedusa and Malta suggested Red Ruby had no hope to beat Bullitt, the Wolfes were untroubled. They had wind. They had belief. They saw opportunity.

It was not until they were approaching Malta that the Red Ruby team properly appreciated that they were within touching distance of overall victory. There was nothing more to be done, except push on the finish. In the end, Red Ruby fell agonisingly short by 24 seconds. Impressively, the pair were able to see the result with some perspective. *"Over the course of a 600 mile race how many places did you leave 24 seconds. All over the place. One better tack, one better call on the current in the Messina Strait. We don't even know what happened on the west coast of Stromboli. Even the start did not go so well. How many thousands*



of seconds did it take us to cross the line?" they commented, once finished. "The Rolex Middle Sea Race was on our bucket list. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity to be here. It is like nothing we have ever done before and has certainly lived up to the hype and surpassed our hope. The challenge of the race and the beauty of the race is definitely unique. It is not like just going out and sailing a race, it has its own aspects that are appealing, and it has to be one of the best in the world."

Despite the size difference, Bullitt was a deserving and respected victor. The crew had set themselves to win class, which they did. It was then in the lap of the wind gods and the ability of their competitors

to unseat them. Recordati could hardly believe it. "When I came into the Rolex Middle Sea Race my dream was to win class," he said. "That would have been a fantastic result against boats more adapted to this type of offshore race. Coming first overall in corrected time, honestly ... I am super happy for the boat, she deserves it."

Bullitt's tactician, Joca Signorini, added: "We worked really hard. We took all our opportunities, and we looked after our boat. The crew did a fantastic job keeping everything together."

Bullitt's 20 person crew was a who's who from the America's Cup, round the world racing and Maxi yacht scene: Andrea Recordati, Bozidar Matkovic,

Guillermo Altadill, Joca Signorini, Luigi Filippo Orsi Magngelli Alvera, Luke Molloy, Maciej Malag, Marc Lagesse, Martin Strömberg, Mate Ivic, Matthew Joubert, Michael Pammenter, Miguel Jauregui, Peter Van Niekierk, Phil Jameson, Richard Bouzaid, Richard Fryer, Tai Vinnie, and Vinicio Vanossi.

In turn, Red Ruby's effort has earned a firm place in the pantheon of legends surrounding the Rolex Middle Sea Race. And, if the Wolfes need encouragement to repeat the journey, there is a lesson from history that might help. In the 2015 race, Mascalzone Latino lost out by nine seconds in the contest for the Rolex Middle Sea Race trophy. The following year, 2016, the Italian yacht returned and won.



# GAUCI BORDA

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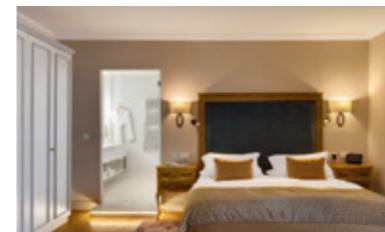


# ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE 2024 RACE FACTS & STATS

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- The 45th Rolex Middle Sea Race starts from Grand Harbour, Valletta, Malta on Saturday, 19 October 2024
- The race stands comparison with the 625nm Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race (Australia), 695nm Rolex Fastnet Race (UK/France), 600nm RORC Caribbean 600 (Caribbean) and the 635nm Newport Bermuda Race (USA/Bermuda)
- The race is organised by the Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC), which traces its roots back to 1835
- The non-stop racecourse is 606nm (1125km)
- Course: starting from Grand Harbour, Valletta, Malta, boats will sail a course leaving to port the island of Sicily, observing the TSS in the Strait of Messina, the Aeolian Islands (including Strombolicchio), the Egadi Islands (except Marettimo), Pantelleria and Lampedusa, through the South Comino Channel, keeping Malta to starboard, to the finish at Marsamxett Harbour, Malta. Ustica, Linosa and Lampione are not marks of the course
- Eight boats took part in the first race in 1968, which was won overall by the smallest entry, the Maltese Swan 36 Josian, skippered by John Ripard Sr
- The race was not held between 1983 and 1996 due to dwindling entry numbers
- Rolex has been the title sponsor of the race and partner of the RMYC since 2002
- The largest ever fleet was in 2018 when 130 yachts started. Prior to 2002, the largest fleet was 37 yachts in 1972. Fleets are now regularly over 100
- The largest yacht ever to enter is the ClubSwan 125 Skorpis (140 foot/43metres).
- The 2024 fleet ranges in size from 32ft/9.75m to 100ft/30.48m and comprises both monohulls and multihulls\*
- Around 1000 crew are expected to participate\*
- 29 countries will be represented\*
- Greatest number of entries in 2024: France: 21; Italy:21; Malta: 15
- Race record: 2021: Argo (USA), MOD70 Maxi trimaran, Jason Carroll - 33 hours 29 minutes 28 seconds
- Monohull Race Record: 2021: Comanche (CAY), 100ft/30.5m Farr design, Mitch Booth - 40 hours 17 minutes 50 seconds
- Most Overall Wins: 3 - Nello Mazzaferro's Nita IV (ITA) 1978/79/80
- Most Monohull Line Honours: 5 - George David's Rambler (88) (USA) 2015/16/17/18/19
- Treble Winners (Overall, Line Honours, Race Record): 2000 Robert McNeil & Zephyrus IV (USA) 2007 George David & Rambler (90) (USA) 2021 Mitch Booth & Comanche (CAY)
- Most races: Arthur Podesta, 35 (1968-2014)
- Largest Overall Winner: 2034 Andrea Recordati's Bullitt (ITA) 93ft/28.3m
- Smallest Overall Winner: 1983 Cino Ricci's Comet (ITA) 30ft/9.1m
- Overall Winning Countries: Italy 18; Malta 9; France 4; United States 4; Germany, United Kingdom 2; Austria, Cayman Islands, Greece, South Africa, Russia 1
- Fewest ever finishers: 2005 9 out of 58 (light winds) 2007 17 out of 53 (strong winds)



\*Correct at 22 September 2024

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# Race Management Team

At the heart of the Rolex Middle Sea Race are the dedicated and experienced members of the race management team who play a pivotal role in orchestrating the entire event. Serving as guardians of safety, the arbiters of fair competition, there are also the navigators of complex logistical challenges.

Two Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC) stalwarts - Martin Azzopardi and Luca Lacitignola – will be assisting Principal Race Officer Steve Cole throughout the race. The dynamic duo represent two of the club's most seasoned race officers, each bringing an impressive track record of expertise to the event.

## Martin Azzopardi

With a remarkable 20 years of volunteering experience at the Rolex Middle Sea Race under his belt, Martin has seen countless boats complete the course while undertaking finish line duties. In 2022, Martin moved to the main Race Management Team, having garnered substantial experience from his duties with the SB20 Class and the club's keelboat races.

Martin describes race management duties as presenting a unique set of challenges that demand precision, expertise, and adaptability. Weather, of course, remains the major concern for all involved. The race provides its fair share of anxious moments as Martin recalls the loss of Loki in 2007, when its crew was forced to abandon ship during a severe gale off the north coast of Sicily. With such a varied course, the Strait of Messina, Stromboli and the leg down to Lampedusa, it is no wonder that crews are faced with serious challenges.

As Martin delves into the subject, he is quick to point out that: "Any offshore race carries with it an element of danger and the Rolex Middle Sea Race is no exception, with

its combination of the Mediterranean's unpredictability and volatile nature, shipping lanes and night time sailing"

Safety is of course a priority. Official protocols are in place, constantly reviewed and updated thanks to the long standing cooperation that the club has with the Armed Forces of Malta, Transport Malta Authorities as well as Italian Coast Guard and Maritime Authorities. Moreover, participants are required to be fully conversant with all World Sailing regulations and scrutineering of boats ensures that they are seaworthy and carry the necessary safety equipment.

The advancement in navigation systems, weather forecasting, and communication tools have revolutionised the way the race is managed, undeniably playing a pivotal role in the race's evolution, particularly the tracking system that enables each yacht's progress to be followed.

While the Rolex Middle Sea Race relies heavily on the dedication of volunteers, it is essential to recognize that their volunteer status in no way diminishes their responsibility and their efforts to be as knowledgeable as possible. Although Martin has many hours of race management experience, his passion for the subject sees him working towards achieving his International Race Officer accreditation status.

## Luca Lacitignola

Another seasoned race volunteer, Luca has 11 years of experience working on the Rolex Middle Sea Race, being part of the club's Race Management Team, and managing countless of keelboat races.

Luca has been involved in the complex organisation of several club races, including the historic, annual Malta – Syracuse Race. Events like this have been instrumental in his ability to acquire the organisational experience necessary to work in both Maltese and Italian waters, as well as the technical knowledge of the International Rules



Luca Lacitignola



Martin Azzopardi

to Prevent Collisions at Sea (IRPCAS) and World Sailing's Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS). Luca is currently undergoing accredited Race Management Training, which is necessary to ensure a well organised and fair event. He highlights the importance of having a team well versed with the latest developments in the RRS.

*"Nothing else locally compares to the Rolex Middle Sea Race in terms of responsibility and duty,"* says Luca. *"This is particularly so during the start, when any emotion driven by the occasion must be tempered by the need to scrutinize every single boat's passage across the line and guide the Principal Race Officer on the correctness of the start. All this, while under the watchful gaze of thousands of spectators, cameras, and media from all over the world."*

With sustainability in sailing a paramount concern, there has been a growing emphasis on eco-friendly practices. The launch of the new website and its administration back end, was not just a marketing matter. It resulted from identified opportunities to improve and simplify the registration process and access to competitor information, helping to save time and, significantly, to reduce the printing of documentation and the resulting waste.

As one of the many volunteers involved in Rolex Middle Sea Race, Luca concludes that: *"The success of the Rolex Middle Sea Race is attributed to the hundreds of RMYC members that have contributed their expertise over the years. The benefit is two-way. The race has great added value for the club in terms of knowledge and sharing best practice, which we use weekly in the local racing scene."*

# Live Streaming

## The History

The start of the Rolex Middle Sea Race has been broadcast live for many years. The earliest broadcasts were courtesy of former RMYC member Teddy Borg (sadly now passed away), whose irrepressible enthusiasm for the race encouraged various local stations to cover the start period, including the current incumbent TVM (Television Malta), which now broadcasts every year in the Maltese language.

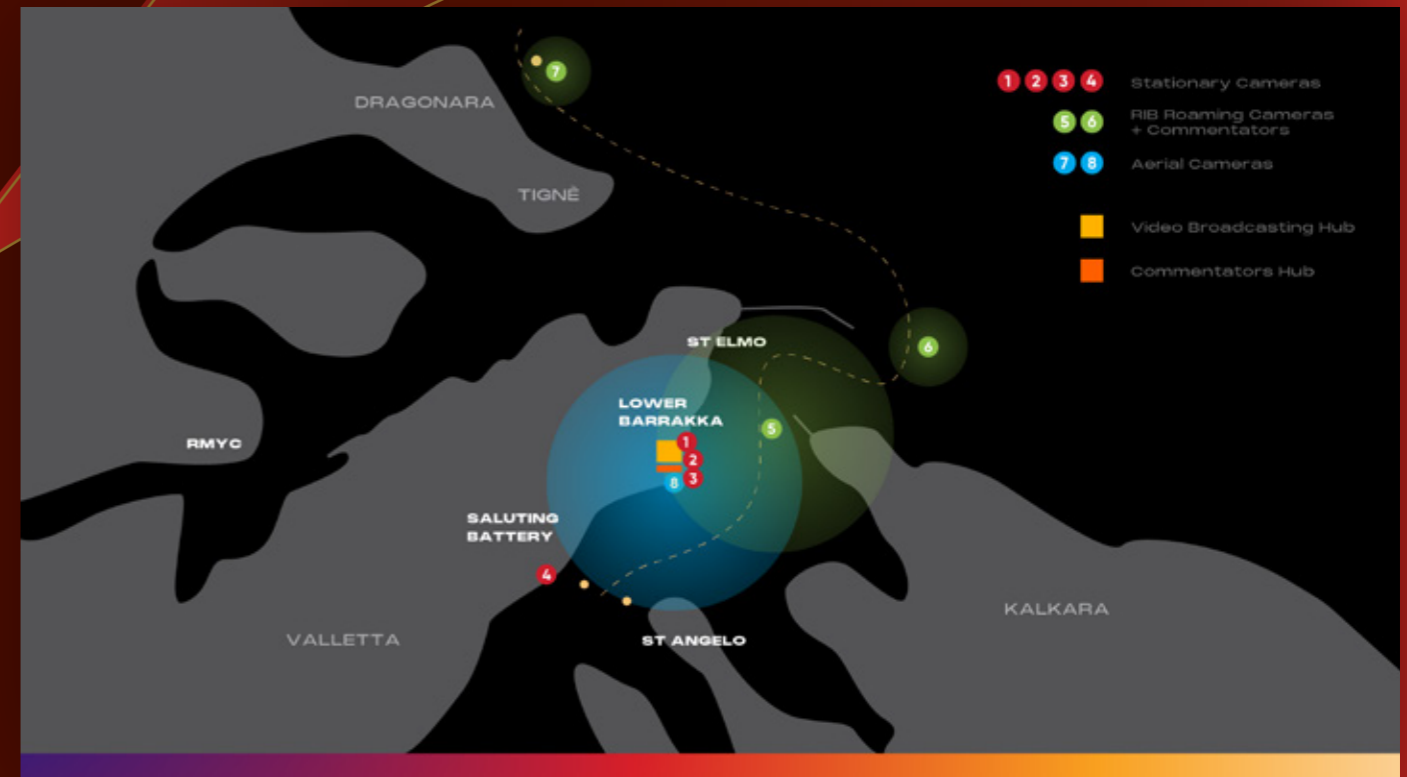
In 2018 the RMYC recognized the benefits of a live, free to view, Internet-based broadcast with English commentary. Armed with a fixed camera, one mic, a data card and a laptop, the first ever English language commentary was put together somewhat by the seat of their pants by the media office, driven by Louay Habib and available on Facebook. The following year, a camera operator was added plus another mic (along with a table and two chairs for the commentary team). Again, the show was on Facebook alone. In 2020, YouTube was added to the mix, but the essential presentation was still a one camera shoot.

## Yachting Malta raises the bar

In 2021 the race start coverage received a seismic boost when the RMYC agreed funding with Yachting Malta to bring in a larger, more professional production. On the water and aerial cameras in Grand Harbour and at Dragonara, along with three land-based, manned, stationery cameras, were coordinated by a professional OB unit. The commentary team was boosted by on the water reporters and a marquee to keep the sun off their heads.

Yachting Malta has generously continued its support enabling the addition of on screen graphics and improved camera technology to enhance the experience. In 2024, the broadcast will take place again thanks to the ongoing support. Camera positions have been reviewed and feedback from viewers considered in preparing this year's show, which kicks off at 10:30 CEST, on Saturday, 19 October.

Over the year, the viewing figures have steadily grown, with the audience now in the tens of thousands across YouTube and Facebook. Not quite the English Premier League, but definitely a worthwhile and important service for the Rolex Middle Sea Race's passionate international audience. We hope you enjoy it.



## Rolex Middle Sea Race PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 16 October	<b>Yachting Malta Coastal Race</b>
Wednesday, 16 October	<b>Yachting Malta Coastal Race Prize giving</b> <i>(invitation only)</i>
Thursday, 17 October	<b>Crew Party</b> <i>(invitation only)</i>
Friday, 18 October	<b>Skippers' Race &amp; Weather Briefing</b> <i>(two representatives per boat)</i>
Saturday, 19 October	<b>Start from Grand Harbour</b> <i>(first warning signal 10:50 CEST)</i>
Saturday, 26 October	<b>Final Prize giving</b> <i>(invitation only)</i>

# Dynamic Duos

**Taking on the challenge of the Rolex Middle Sea Race double-handed adds an exponential level of difficulty to an already demanding race. While double-handed teams have taken on the Rolex Middle Sea Race for many years, it was not until 2007 that the Two-Handed Class was formally recognised and it was a baptism of fire.**

The 2007 Rolex Middle Sea Race took place in a severe gale, 69 boats registered but only 17 boats finished the course. George David's professional team on the 90ft Rambler established a race record of 47 hours, 55 minutes and 3 seconds, which would not be bettered for 14 years. One of the other remarkable teams that made the finish line in a harrowing race was the Corinthian entry of Shaun 'Spud' Murphy, racing his J/105 Slingshot double-handed with Ric Searle.

While Rambler's record is rightfully etched in the history of the Rolex Middle Sea Race, Slingshot's corrected IRC time also remained unbeaten for 14 years. Since 2007, more modern designs, specifically for double-handed racing, have been faster and faster, making the longevity of the record even more impressive.

"Back then communications were not what they are today," commented Shaun Murphy. "We had simple mobile phones and getting access to real time weather was challenging to say the least. I remember my phone going crazy as we came into Comino with messages saying, 'Come on Spud! We were unaware of how we were doing. It was a magic race; I still have the photos up at home."

*We had to repair the main sail in the Messina Strait but that didn't really slow us down because we knew what we were heading into. We had 55 knots of wind at one stage, I remember a black curtain of weather coming towards us, we had a bit on! We had the confidence in the boat, we had prepared well, so we were not worried about breakages. The strategy was simple; push through and keep going. We were oblivious, just trying to keep the hammer down to finish the race. When we crossed the finish line outside the Royal Malta Yacht Club, there was a huge crowd cheering us.*

*The previous year (2006), we had also raced doublehanded and we came within 17 minutes of beating Lee (Satariano's) Artie, the overall winner, so the race is still unfinished business for me; I want that trophy!"*

Since the Double-Handed Class was established in 2007, 127 teams have attempted the challenge. Winners have come from France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Malta and Spain. With three victories, Malta stands as the top country alongside Italy. Malta's Anthony Camilleri is the only skipper to have won the IRC Double-Handed Class twice with Bavaria Flyer (2008)

and BOV Plain Sailing (2010). Malta's third victory came in 2016 with Jamie Sammut's Unica, racing with John Cachia.

With at least eight races in the class, Beppe Bisotto is an artisan of short-handed racing in the Rolex Middle Sea Race. The Italian skipper's victory in 2011 with Atame was one that Beppe will cherish. Following Atame, two more Italian boats have won the division: Massimo Juris with Blucolombre (2013) in a record entry of thirteen teams. Blucolombre's victory was followed a year later by Pierpaolo Ballerini's Azuree in a nail-biting finish. Azuree took glory in 2014 by just under six minutes after time correction from Isidoro Santececca's Cuor di Leone.

Perhaps one of the most inspiring stories was the victory in the super-light 2012 race. After seven days and nights of racing, the Irish duo of Barry Hurley and Andrew Boyle on Dinah won the class, finishing with just 25 minutes to spare before the time limit. Barry and Andrew barely had time for a hot shower before receiving the admiration of everyone at the final prize giving. Ireland won again in 2015 with father and son duo

Dermot and Paddy Cronin racing Encore, taking the win by less than two hours from Paolo Semeraro's Neo Double.

In 2017, Alex Thomson's British IMOCA Hugo Boss flew round the course in 61 hours, 36 minutes and 26 seconds to finally beat Slingshot's elapsed time for the race. However, Slingshot's IRC corrected time was not bettered until 2021.

Richard Palmer racing Jangada with Jeremy Waitt won a tough edition in the 2021 race. This was unfinished business for the British duo after a disastrous race in 2018. "That year, we only had to finish that race to be the overall RORC Season's Points Champion, but we broke a spreader and had to retire," explained Richard Palmer.

In 2021, a low pressure system centred over Sicily produced a titanic tussle for the 11 double-handed boats. At the exit of the Messina Strait, the big breeze kicked in as the leaders raced towards the volcanic island of Stromboli.

*"I remember going downwind in forty knots, it was very windy and lively!" continued Palmer. "We had been in those conditions before but with a wind-swept sea and the volcano towering over us, it was pretty amazing!"*

*After Stromboli, except for a bit of a park-up at Favignana, it was pretty much dead downwind all the way to Lampedusa. We had a reefed main and a few issues with the J4 jib wrapping around the forestay. At that angle and in those conditions, it was hand steering all the way. After Lampedusa, the wind swung around, and we were beating all the way to the finish. We were still surrounded by competitors, it was very competitive, all the way around the course."*

Ludovic Gerard's Solenne for Pure Ocean took 2021 line honours in the double-handed class in an elapsed time of 83 hours 30 minutes and 57 seconds. Only the IMOCA Hugo Boss has gone faster. Richard Palmer's Jangada took the class win after IRC correction, breaking Slingshot's corrected-time record set in 2007.

*"It was an amazing feeling when we crossed the line," continued Richard Palmer. "Not just to have won double-handed in a tough race with no damage at all, but importantly that had kicked off our 2022 season, we were firing on all cylinders."*

Jangada went on to win the RORC Transatlantic Race, the Sevenstar Round Britain and Ireland Race and ultimately the 2022 RORC Season's Points Championship and RORC Yacht of the Year.

In 2023, possibly the most extraordinary chapter in the history of the Rolex Middle Sea Race was written by Christina and Justin Wolfe. The husband and wife duo from the Pacific North West of the United States, raced Red Ruby to within 24 seconds of becoming the first two-handed team to win the race overall. The David versus Goliath match between the 33ft Red Ruby and the 93ft Bullitt was dramatic in the extreme, coming close to one of the biggest ever upsets in offshore yachting. After Bullitt's win was confirmed, the



Maxi's owner Andrea Recordati lifted the Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy, then showed great humility and sportsmanship, asking Christina and Justin Wolfe onto the main stage to lift the prestigious trophy with him.

*"We had never been to Malta before, let alone competed in the race but we expected it to be challenging and diverse,"* commented Justin Wolfe. *"The Rolex Middle Sea Race is known for a variety of conditions and wind angles and that played into how we set the boat up. We knew we had a chance of a good outcome, off the back of a good Rolex Fastnet Race, we had confidence. We were super-excited about the whole experience, we had high expectations and both the welcome we got in Malta and the course lived up to that."*

A moment in the race that Christina and Justin will always remember was rounding Stromboli in the dark. *"Stromboli was erupting, but not just trickling down the mountain, it was shooting lava straight up into the air like fireworks. We were so close we could hear the eruptions. Top that in any other race, come on!"*

*"Our goal is always to sail a really good race, we want to make good decisions, sail fast, manage our energy and get around the course to our capability. How that plays out against other boats is something that we have little control over. If we feel we have done a god job and don't win, then we feel we have done our best. If we sail sloppy and win that is not very satisfying. The goal is to get our boat to the finish line as quickly as possible. We do use*

*boats around us for information, a 'power-gauge' to what is ahead."*

After Red Ruby rounded Favignana, the team had a good lead in the double-handed class, and there was a glimmer of hope of winning the race overall.

*"We looked at the forecast after Favignana and it was very promising, so we were racing to win overall from that point. We knew we had a chance. We did not talk about it too much, because we are a little superstitious, but we acknowledged the possibility and thought about what we could do to go faster. Christina especially will not celebrate until we are over the line, nothing will distract her."*

Red Ruby finished the Rolex Middle Sea Race to win the double-handed class, but their corrected time was an excruciating 24 seconds slower than Bullitt. Christina and Justin were unsurprisingly disappointed to come second overall by such a narrow margin, but were soon able to reflect positively on their Rolex Middle Sea Race.

*"It was probably the best sailing experience we have ever had. The combination of Malta, the race course, the conditions and the close competition. It was very satisfying, because we felt we had done a great job, and it was an enjoyable experience from before the race and for many days afterwards. We will probably never top that experience. As double-handers we race for adventure, not for trophies, and the Rolex Middle Sea Race was a fantastic adventure."*



Rolex Middle Sea Race Director Georges Bonello DuPuis, who raced double-handed with Shaun Murphy in 2012 on his own boat Escape reflects on the success of the division:

*"The 45th edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race is shaping up to be an exciting event. As the big boats cross the finish line with impressive speeds, it is important to recognise the dedication and grit of the double-handed teams still battling it out on the course. Their commitment, resilience, and courage are truly inspiring, and their efforts are deeply appreciated by the Royal Malta Yacht Club and all the other participants. These teams face real challenges, and their perseverance is a testament to the spirit of offshore racing. Here's to celebrating all the sailors out there, whether they're finishing first or continuing their relentless pursuit on the water."*

# WHY SUZUKI?



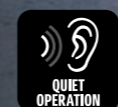
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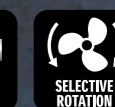
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## Jury Operations 2024: New format aligns with sustainability goals

In July 2024, the Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC) introduced its Sustainability Compass, a comprehensive framework guiding the club's efforts to reduce its environmental impact. This initiative aligns with wider, global sustainability goals and demonstrates the RMYC's commitment to fostering eco-friendly practices across all its activities. From reducing waste to lowering carbon emissions, the Sustainability Compass is an essential part of RMYC's long-term vision to ensure that its sailing events remain not only competitive, but also environmentally responsible. In line with this commitment, the Royal Malta Yacht Club has introduced a new format for Jury Operations at the 45th Rolex Middle Sea Race.

Under the new system, the Jury Chairman will be based in Malta, supported by two locally based International Judges (IJs). Two more IJs will be on standby, working remotely from their home locations. On-site, the three IJs physically present will act as the Protest Committee. If a full panel is required, the two remote IJs will join the session via Microsoft Teams, creating a fully constituted International Jury. This streamlined process enables the jury to function effectively without the need for all its members to travel to Malta, thereby significantly lowering CO2 emissions.

This hybrid format is particularly applicable at an offshore race since jury members are not required to be on the water to fulfill their duties. In addition, the decisions made by this International Jury remain final, as before, with no right to appeal, ensuring both fairness and efficiency.

Integrating this innovative system demonstrates the RMYC's dedication to sustainability, showing how world-class sailing events can reduce their environmental impact while maintaining the highest standards of competition and governance.

### 2024 Rolex Middle Sea Race Jury

#### On Site:

Herman 'Mufti' Kling (GER) IJ Chair  
David Dalli (MLT) NJ  
Godwin Zammit (MLT) NJ

#### Remote:

Josje Hofland (NED) IJ  
Gordon Stredwick(GBR) IJ

# The Saluting Battery:

## A Chronicle of Valletta's Ceremonial and Military Heritage

**The Saluting Battery, perched on one of the most strategic vantage points overlooking Malta's Grand Harbour, serves a ceremonial role at the start of the Rolex Middle Sea Race. As the fleet readies for the 606-nautical-mile challenge, the battery's cannons fire in a precise sequence. Originally constructed in 1566 by the Order of St. John and designed by military engineer Francesco Laparelli, the Battery was built in response to the Great Siege of 1565, enhancing Valletta's defenses against future threats.**

### Origins

During the Great Siege, the Ottomans had set up powerful siege batteries on the Valletta promontory, including the site where the Saluting Battery now stands. These batteries bombarded Fort St. Angelo across the water. After the siege was lifted on 8th September 1565, the Order of St. John sought to build a new fortified city on Sciberras Hill. The design included a powerful multi-tiered artillery platform to command the Grand Harbour and its surrounding high grounds. Heavy calibre guns were mounted for this purpose, and the St. Peter and St. Paul Bastion, where the Saluting Battery is located, was assigned to the Italian langue, responsible for the Order's fleet and artillery.

### Design

The St. Peter and St. Paul Bastion forms the left shoulder of Valletta's landward defenses. It is quadrilateral, with its front and

left flanks facing the harbour and the right flank overlooking Marsa and Floriana. A sunken flanking battery (piazza bassa) at the back defended the base of the curtain wall, accessible via an underground tunnel. A counter-guard across the Grand Ditch strengthened the right face of the bastion. The upper platform accommodated a large number of heavy cannons, offering a 270° field of fire over the harbour and the headland. Access was through a grand ceremonial gate from Castille Place. The strategic location made it a popular social spot for Italian knights, leading to the construction of a roofed arcaded loggia in the early 17th century, later dismantled by Grandmaster Ximenez in 1775.

### Ceremonial Platform

The Saluting Battery's grand location ensured its use for ceremonial artillery firings alongside its defensive role. Gun salutes greeted dignitaries, marked national and religious occasions, and announced

naval victories or the succession of sovereigns. Minute guns were fired during state funerals.

### Time Service

Following the introduction of a time ball service by the Royal Navy in Portsmouth in 1824, a similar service began in Malta. It provided a mid-day signal for shipmasters to calibrate their chronographs, essential for maritime navigation. The Saluting Battery's guns were used for this service until November 1923, when telegraphic signals from the Greenwich Observatory replaced it. The use of artillery to announce public time was not new to Malta; since Valletta's inception, three daily signals were fired from St. James Cavalier, later moved to the Saluting Battery under British rule.

### Armament Evolution

The Saluting Battery's armament evolved with advancements in artillery. Initially, it housed heavy bronze guns firing stone shot. By

the late 18th century, it had 16 x 12-pounder bronze guns. During the brief French occupation (1798-1800), these remained unchanged, but the British, upon their arrival, deemed the armament outdated. In 1803, captured French guns were added, and by 1852, the Battery was equipped with 24-pdr, 32-pdr, and 56-pdr guns, as well as howitzers and mortars.

By 1886, the armament included 11 x 24-pdr saluting guns and 64-pdr Rifle Muzzle Loaders, which were replaced with 32-pdr Muzzle Loading saluting guns in the late 1890s. Early in the 20th century, these were replaced by 32-pdr Smooth-Bore Breech Loading guns. These guns remained in use until World War I, when they were temporarily silenced to conserve gunpowder. They resumed firing on November 11, 1918, to announce the Armistice.

### Decline and Civil Disputes

Malta's loyalty during World War I earned it Self-Government in 1921, and one of the first acts of the new government was to reclaim military properties for public use.

The Saluting Battery was among them, as the civil government sought to extend the Upper Barrakka Gardens. In 1924, the Battery's armament was reduced to four 18-pdr Quick Firing field guns, with one 32-pdr gun retained as a signal gun. The military resisted the civil government's claims, resulting in a compromise where the Battery was partitioned between the military and civilian authorities. The military retained the main gun platform, while the civil authorities landscaped the remaining area for public use.

### World War II and Final Closure

During World War II, the Battery's saluting guns were removed for coastal defense, replaced by a 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun. The Battery was damaged by bombs on December 24, 1942, but continued its anti-aircraft role. After the war, it briefly resumed its ceremonial function with four 25-pdr Q.F. Mk I guns before being shut down in 1954, ending 398 years of service. The remaining military-controlled sections were surrendered to the civil government in 1965, converting the entire Battery into a garden.

### Restoration and Legacy

The Battery's historical significance faded after its closure, but this changed in 2004 when Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna – the Malta Heritage Trust, supported by the Malta Tourism Authority and Bank of Valletta, restored the Saluting Battery. In 2011, eight working replicas of 32-pdr Smooth-bore Breech Loading cannons were installed, replacing original 19th-century museum pieces. These replicas, funded by a European Regional Development Fund grant, allow the Battery to continue its tradition of daily Noon-day gun firings and other ceremonial salutes throughout the year.

Today, the Saluting Battery stands as a living monument, preserving Malta's rich military and ceremonial history for future generations through regular reenactments and public engagements.





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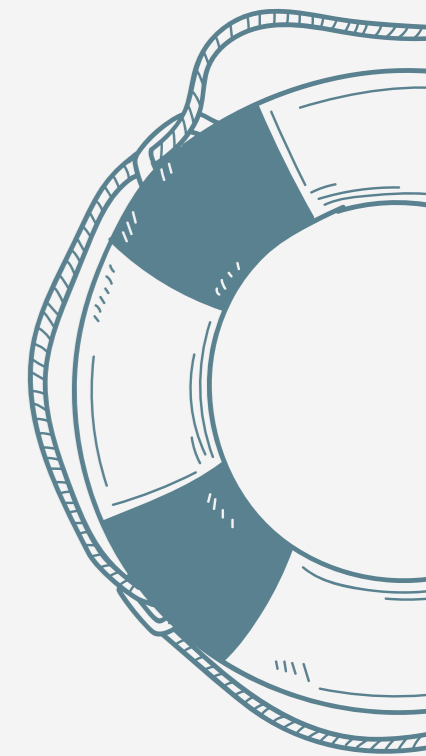
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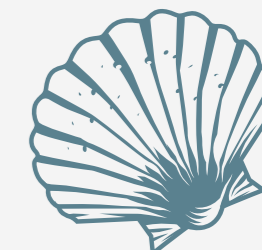
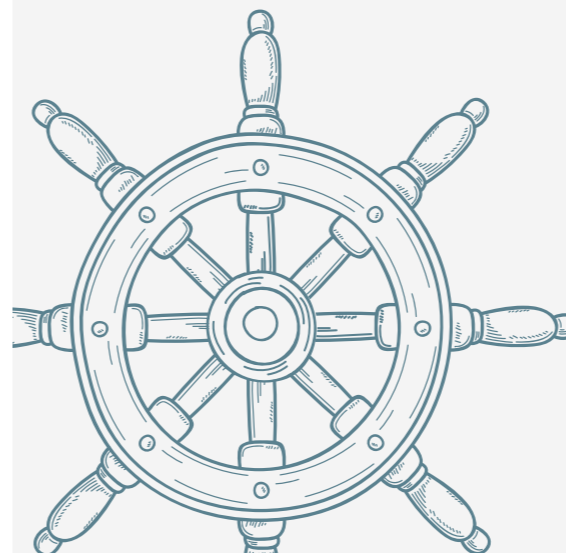


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# A Lasting Partnership with the Italian Maritime Authorities

The Rolex Middle Sea Race has earned its place as one of the most iconic offshore races, not just in the Mediterranean, but also on the global sailing stage.

The Rolex Middle Sea Race's 606nm course in the Mediterranean Sea has proven to be an outstanding and memorable experience for the crews of the more than 2000 yachts that have participated since its inception in 1968.

In addition to the breathtaking spectacle of erupting volcanoes and the stunning passage through the Aeolian Islands, the Rolex Middle Sea Race is made all the more challenging by the unpredictable nature of the Mediterranean Sea. Over the years, numerous challenges have been presented, particularly due to volatile weather conditions. One vivid example is the 2014 edition, where turbulent seas and rapidly shifting wind conditions severely impacted the fleet. Over 25 boats were forced to retire and seek refuge in the safety of nearby Sicilian ports.

Safety has always been a top priority for the Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC), which consistently emphasizes the benefits of close collaboration with all relevant

authorities. A prime example of this is the essential support and cooperation provided by the Italian Maritime Authorities, which play a key role in the event's success.

The longstanding participation of and collaboration with the late Admiral Giovanni Iannucci as a past competitor and more latterly an International Judge at the race has proven pivotal. Notably, in 2007, his extensive knowledge and connections within the Italian Military Authorities facilitated the successful rescue from their stricken yacht of the Australian crew of Loki. Loki had lost its steering off northern Sicily and was in danger of founder on a lee shore amid near-gale force winds.

The significance of this collaboration is so great that ensuring it remains effective is enshrined as one of the first steps before each edition. The RMYC formally notifies the Italian Maritime Authorities about the dates of each edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race through diplomatic channels, facilitated by the Italian Embassy in Malta.

In recent years, the Italian Coast Guard's role in monitoring and assisting racers has been crucial in preventing incidents

escalating. In 2023, the support was strengthened by the Italian Maritime Authorities, which among other details appointed of an official liaison officer to ensure closer collaboration. This improvement to the management of guidance from the Coast Guard has enabled the RMYC to enhance its planning, to review potential challenges before the race begins, and to ensure all participants are well-informed.

The RMYC is truly grateful to all the Italian Maritime Authorities for their help over the past 55 years and looks forward to this cooperation being extended well into the future.





# Close Collaboration:

## the relationship between the Royal Ocean Racing Club and the Royal Malta Yacht Club

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The Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) and the Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC) share a long-standing partnership that has played an important role in shaping the world of offshore racing. Both clubs are renowned for their commitment to excellence in sailing, with a shared mission to promote competitive offshore racing and foster a sense of camaraderie and sportsmanship among sailors.

At the heart of their collaboration is the iconic Rolex Middle Sea Race, organised by the RMYC since its inception in 1968 and, over the years, supported by the RORC. This prestigious event has grown to become one of the most celebrated offshore races in the world, drawing top sailors and yachts from around the globe. The 606-nautical-mile race starts and finishes in Malta, taking competitors on a challenging and scenic course around Sicily, testing their endurance, strategy, and seamanship.

The Rolex Middle Sea Race is without doubt the RMYC's flagship event, and RORC's expertise in organising high-calibre offshore races, such as the Rolex Fastnet Race, adds significant value to it. By sharing resources, race management strategies, and technical support, close collaboration has enhanced the quality and

professionalism of the event. The partnership also strengthens the global visibility of the race, helping to position it as a premier event on the international offshore racing calendar.

The new race entry and results program introduced for the 2023 edition has a number of significant benefits. Two of the most important are: the ease of transfer of information for competitors from one event to the next; and, familiarity since the same system is used by the RORC for its races.

The partnership between the RMYC and the RORC is a testament to the power of collaboration in advancing the sport of offshore racing. Not only are protocols across their races similar, but by leveraging each other's strengths, these two prestigious clubs continue to elevate the discipline's global profile while promoting the values of teamwork, excellence, and inclusivity. This ongoing collaboration will ensure that iconic races like the Rolex Middle Sea Race remain at the forefront of international sailing for years to come.

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