

The Crew

ISSUE 69
LATE SUMMER 2014

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REPORT

ST BARTHS BUCKET

On board *Clas VIII*, *Lady B* and *Twizzle* during the regatta, *TCR* reports from the middle of the action.

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Twizzle riding the waves at the St Barths Bucket. Credit: Carlo Borlenghi

TICKING OFF THE BUCKET LIST

The St Barths Bucket 2014, held from 27 to 30 March, saw three days of competitive and exhilarating racing with yachts and their crew being pushed to their limits. Welcomed on board *Clan VIII*, *Lady B* and *Twizzle* to experience the action first-hand, assistant editor Bryony McCabe reports from the event, where captains and crew worked tirelessly to deliver an organised, fun and safe regatta to their owners.



Sailing on board Twizzle. Credit: Bryony McCabe

The superyacht regatta scene has changed phenomenally over the past decade as more and more owners of sailing yachts have raced against each other. Historically, the principal reasons for participating in regattas were to have fun, build a reputation for the yacht and seek a new experience; but more recently the regattas have reached new heights as owners have developed a passion for racing, spending time, effort and resources preparing a yacht and her crew for competition with ever-increasing enthusiasm.

The St Barths Bucket is a prime example of this evolution. Since its origins in 1995, when a total of four yachts took part and fishing was a main priority during the racing, the Bucket has increased in size and competition, with professional race crews being flown in especially for the regatta now the norm. This year's St Barths Bucket was no exception, with an impressive fleet of 38 yachts between 27.4m and 66.7m, divided into four classes based on a rating provided by the Superyacht Racing Association (SYRA), participating in three highly competitive races around the island.

With winds up to 27 knots, big swells and race crews that were out to win, boats were being pushed near to their limits and the racing was eventful to say the least. A huge number of breakages and repairs saw crew put to the test and working around the clock to get the boats back in action for the racing to continue. During day two of the regatta, for example, I counted six kites that ripped around the course and was sailing past *Seahawk* as she grounded on one of the many rocks dotted around the precarious 'Not So Wiggley Course'. This eventful Bucket was a reflection not only of the strong winds and sea state, but also of the enormous pressure superyacht

racing puts on these boats that are primarily designed for luxury cruising.

Finishes on the final and deciding day of the regatta were extremely close and class wins were decided by seconds. Perhaps most dramatically, 45m *Clan VIII* finished a mere five seconds ahead of 58.6m *Seahawk* in the Grande Dames class and consequently prevented her from an overall victory, allowing 29.2m *Altair* to take the spot at the top of the scoreboard. Culminating in a prize-giving held for the owners and crew of the participating yachts, the regatta saw 54.6m *Marie* presented as overall winner, with organisers acknowledging that she stormed towards her win, somewhat leaving behind the rest of the fleet.

Speaking to Wes Cooper, captain of *Marie*, it was evident that he was thrilled with the win and he especially alluded to the incredible pressure and hard work that crew endure during events like these. "The

“Never before have I heard the same phrase uttered so many times by so many different people: ‘The boss is happy, which is all that counts.’”

”

St Barths Bucket is the most prestigious of all the superyacht events by a long shot; there is twice the number of competing boats than in any other regatta we have done,” he tells me. “*Marie* has competed in 13 regattas in the past three-and-a-half years and the top podium finish has always eluded us. The teamwork on the yacht during the regatta was exceptional and I can’t thank my crew enough for the tireless effort they have put in.”

In addition to the immense pressure on the permanent crew to sail well in order to give their competitive owners the best shot at winning is the difficulty of continuing to deliver the high level of superyacht service throughout. This can prove extremely hard, and did so particularly on one of the yachts I joined during the regatta; 44.7m *Lady B* had as many as 60 owners, guests and crew on board during a single race. “It’s a new challenge,” admits Nikki Macalister Hall, chief stewardess on 57.5m *Twizzle*, “to have to continue to deliver service while racing at a very steep angle.”

Sailing a 7,200nm round trip from Palma to the Caribbean to enter the yacht into the Bucket, Captain Dave Evans of *Clan VIII* expresses a similar sentiment when I ask him how the Bucket went from the crew’s point of view. “Is it months of planning and maintenance for an event that is all over after a long weekend, or is it the most fun you can have on a superyacht?” he ponders as he shows me an endless pile of paperwork dedicated solely to the organisation for the regatta. “I guess it is a bit of both for the crew. As you saw, our team relished the challenge and the racing, and managed to suck the bones dry from the fun that can be had at the Bucket.”

But hard work and organisation is not the only burden facing crew during the Bucket, »

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with the safety surrounding racing these giant boats becoming a bigger issue as the regatta has gained a more competitive stance. "It is controlled chaos," a safety officer of one of the larger yachts in the fleet admitted to me, explaining that when superyacht racing involves 500-tonne yachts in strong winds, sailing around buoys with up to 40 tonnes of weight on sheets and winches with hired testosterone-driven race crews, it holds the potential of a disaster waiting to happen.

The pursuit format of the racing, which means that each yacht starts at its own designated time to theoretically finish at a similar time to the rest of the fleet, equally holds its own risks. While this makes for a visually spectacular finish line, it increases close encounters towards the end of the race. "The dangerous part is at the finish line because of the pursuit style of the racing," says Justin 'Juggy' Clougher, one of the professional race crew on *Clan VIII*. "When all the boats catch up with each other you get a lot of close calls, but this is necessary for the atmosphere around the course. It's not the same for the owners and crew if you don't see another boat for the duration of the race."

“These boats aren’t designed to be pushed 100 per cent the way they are here. You have to treat them with kid gloves, but the race crew get excited and things break.”

These safety considerations are something the SYRA Racing Rules Committee has tried to address in recent years. These uniform racing rules, tailored to the unique manoeuvring characteristics of superyachts, have been instrumental in enhancing safe racing and collision avoidance. One of these rules has been the enforcement of a safety officer – who has the final word and the authority to overrule anyone else – on board all participating boats. They also ensure that contenders keep to the strict '40m rule', which keeps boats at a distance greater than 40m from each other in all directions at any given time. "The safety officers make certain the teams are not pushing bad positions and that competitive advantage takes a back seat to safety," explains

Peter Craig, chairman of SYRA. "That's paramount with these yachts and for the event to continue but, having said that, it doesn't sacrifice the competitiveness of the sailing."

This decision to have someone solely devoted to judging the safety of manoeuvres is something Rob Doyle, safety officer on board 34m *Blue Too* during the Bucket, believes is essential. "It takes four-and-a-half minutes for a Perini to tack, so crews have to be very sure of their tactical decisions well in advance," he says. But having been involved with the Bucket in previous years, Doyle admits he is confident in the fleet's ability to engage in competitive racing under safe circumstances.

With safety at the forefront of everyone's mind, it meant that on the second day of



Captain Bill Bailey at the helm of Lady B.
Credit: Anne Vandromme-Hood

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racing when the *Seahawk* grounding occurred, while fortunately no one was hurt and no damage was done, everyone was reminded of the seriousness behind superyacht racing. Speaking to Captain Bill Bailey of *Lady B*, this was an important consideration going into the final day of the regatta; “The *Seahawk* incident is a pointed reminder about what we are doing here and the importance of the safety aspect and that we should be sailing a little bit more conservatively.”

Another outcome of the Bucket’s evolved format is the influx of attending professional race crew. These crew have to be accommodated on board by the yacht’s permanent crew and this seemed to be a point of anxiety for some of the crew I spoke to during the regatta, due to the fact that the race crew tended not to uphold the same level of care and consideration for the boats. “These boats aren’t designed to be pushed 100 per cent the way they are here,” explains Peter Metcalfe, rotational captain on *Lady B*. “You have to treat them with kid gloves, but the race crew get excited and things break.”

This difference in attitude between the race crew and the permanent crew was something I witnessed first-hand. During the final leg of one of the races I overheard one of the temporary race crew say to another, “We are going to push this boat 100 per cent from now on – I don’t care what breaks.” This is something the permanent crew would have been shocked to hear, let alone the owners, and it made me question the responsibility of some of the hired crew. Speaking to another race crewmember about this, he admits that it was an issue for the permanent crew of these yachts. “These regattas are more work for the crew,” he says. “It is hard for them because the professional teams come on, trash the boats and then leave the permanent crew to sort out the mess and repairs.”»



Marie, winner of the Bucket. Credit: Bryony McCabe

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Comparing my experiences from each day of racing, one thing was clear: my time on board each of the yachts was completely different. Every day the owners, crew and I had varying levels of involvement and the atmosphere on board was always dependent on the position of the boat in the fleet. The one consistent factor for every yacht, however, was an amazing crew; the effort and enthusiasm they put into the event was overwhelming. By the end of the three days, all crew were physically and mentally drained from their high-tempo and intense racing and hospitality schedule. But regardless of this, I was blown away by the crews' fulfilment at seeing their owners happy and enjoying their boats in the most fantastic way possible. Never before have I heard the same phrase uttered so many times by so many different people: "The boss is happy, which is all that counts." ■

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SUBJECT: TCR 69 TICKING OFF THE BUCKET LIST



Lady B played host to 60 guests and crew during the Bucket.
Credit: Anne Vandromme-Hood

2014 ST BARTHS BUCKET RESULTS

Grand Dames class

	RACE 1 POINTS	RACE 2 POINTS	RACE 3 POINTS	TOTAL POINTS	RANK
ALTAIR	3	3	2	8	1
SEAHAWK	1	4	4	9	2
SILENCIO	7	2	1	10	3
STATE OF GRACE	2	5	5	12	4
METEOR	6	1	7	14	5
CLAN VIII	5	8	3	16	6
PARSIFAL III	4	7	6	17	7
ZENJI	8	6	9	23	8
ANDROMEDA LA DEA	9	9	8	26	9

Elegantes class

	RACE 1 POINTS	RACE 2 POINTS	RACE 3 POINTS	TOTAL POINTS	RANK
MARIE	1	3	2	6	1
UNFURLED	3	3	3	9	2
ADELE	4	2	7	13	3
VARSOVIE	2	11	1	14	4
OHANA	5	5	8	18	5
ADELA	6	4	9	19	6
TWIZZLE	7	7	6	20	7
LADY B	11	6	4	21	8
GANESHA	8	11	5	24	9
HYPERION	11	8	10	29	10

Mademoiselles class

	RACE 1 POINTS	RACE 2 POINTS	RACE 3 POINTS	TOTAL POINTS	RANK
BEQUIA	1	4	2	7	1
MOONBIRD	2	2	3	7	2
BLUE TOO	8	3	1	12	3
SARAFIN	3	6	4	13	4
MARAMA	9	1	5	15	5
AXIA	4	7	10	21	6
WAVELENGTH	10	5	6	21	7
WHITEHAWK	6	8	7	21	8
GENEVIEVE	5	12	8	25	9
LUSH	7	9	9	25	10
PUMULA	11	10	11	32	11

Gazelles class

	RACE 1 POINTS	RACE 2 POINTS	RACE 3 POINTS	TOTAL POINTS	RANK
NILAYA	2	2	4	8	1
VISIONE	1	6	2	9	2
CAPE ARROW	4	1	6	11	3
INOUI	3	3	5	11	4
HETAIROS	9	4	1	14	5
RAINBOW	5	5	7	17	6
SAUDADE	9	9	3	21	7
KAMAXITHA	6	7	8	21	8