

Yachting World



SPECIAL REPORT

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Matthew Sheahan considers consequences of fatal capsizes

Slow down, you're going too fast – Editor comments

Tribute to British Olympic star

Body armour and breathing kit – the new-look America's Cup

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By the editorial team



AMERICA'S CUP IN CRISIS

Everyone knew another capsize was on the cards, yet no one could have predicted the force of the shockwave that passed through the America's Cup when it actually happened. The Artemis tragedy in May left a crewmember dead, a campaign in tatters and a Cup community reeling in shock. Matthew Sheahan assesses the reaction



ON THE WIND

By the editorial team

AMERICA'S CUP
SPECIAL REPORT



Crew tell it like it is

With their body armour, helmets and personal oxygen bottles, modern America's Cup crew aboard the AC72s are as radically different from standard race crew as the boats are from 12-metres. Matthew Sheahan spoke to seasoned campaigners before the accident in San Francisco

Standing on the dock the other day just before we went out for another training session I looked down at the kit I was wearing and wondered how things ever got to this," said one seasoned Cup campaigner in Naples at the last America's Cup World Series event before the teams headed for San Francisco.

With their wetsuits, body armour, knives, helmets and breathing apparatus, modern America's Cup crew have changed as radically as the new generation of boats that have almost quadrupled in speed since the last Louis Vuitton Cup in 2007.

"We used to sail in a rugby shirt, pants and a baseball cap, now the protective gear makes us look like we're going into battle," agreed another. "What happened to the time when you could spend a day at boat grinding and trimming and head out for a beer with your friends afterwards? Now, you come ashore utterly exhausted knowing that you're either going out again tomorrow, or you're back into the gym. I can't believe how far we've come in such a short space of time."

I was talking to Cup crews preparing for the Louis Vuitton Challenger series, which at the time of going to press was still planned to start on 4 July, and this was before the tragic events of 9 May. What was immediately obvious was that the 34th America's Cup hasn't so much launched onto another level, as helporled itself into another world – a world where the safety training alone has pushed even the hard-hats to their physical and mental limits, training that now looks to be all the more present.

Jumping off a 30m high platform into a pool, fully dressed, with a tether around an ankle to hold them down, while they gulp air from their personal oxygen bottle to give them enough time to cut

“ We used to sail in rugby shirts, pants and a baseball cap, now the protective gear makes us look like we're going into battle.”

ISLAND TRAIL THROUGH BISCAY

From the rugged outpost of Ile de Sein to the almost Mediterranean softness of Ile d'Yeu, Biscay's islands made a welcome change from the popular Brittany haunts for Peter Cumberlandidge on a cruise of western France

Star Vras, near Belle Ile's north-west point, is a spectacular inlet

Many yachts head for the French Biscay coast each summer, especially favourite Brittany haunts between Bénodet and the Morbihan. Some of the islands are popular ports of call, yet not all visitors realise there are actually 14 uninhabited islands off the west coast of France, from wild and rocky Ushant down to sandy Ile d'Olivron in the sunny Charente.

Last season we were hooked on these islands, each with its own special character, seascapes and history. Their sizes differ widely. Belle Ile is nine miles long with 5000 inhabitants, a chunky natural breakwater for Quiberon Bay. In the Glénan archipelago, tiny St Nicolas is barely 700m tip to tip, its handful of residents reduced to a couple of wardens in winter.

We started our island trail at the Raz de Sein, that rather eerie gateway into Biscay. Stormaloug reached the Raz at slack water on a warm still day, when memories of chaotic breaking seas seemed incredible. Even in such idyllic conditions, you tend to focus on slipping through this gap before the mood changes, hardly glancing at the low sliver of land and tall lighthouse three miles offshore. But this is exactly the time to go off-piste and visit Ile de Sein, when the tides are at rest and it's easy to follow the beacons to this remote retreat where 200 live all year.

ON TEST OCEANIS 55

TEST FACTS

Test Editor: Toby Hodges



- ▶ Where we tested: Palma, Mallorca
- ▶ Wind: 7-14 knots, slight sea
- ▶ Model: Three-cabin version with a standard 2.2m keel and upgraded Hydronet sails, including fully battened main and 100% genoa.
- ▶ Note: the test boat carried €180,000 of extras



Photos by Lester McCarthy

Space versus pace

A roomier, lighter design takes Bénéteau's traditional cruiser range a step closer to their radical Sense brand. Toby Hodges went to Palma to find out if Oceanis is still the boat for the serious sailor

Since they launched the radically different Sense range three years ago, French builders Bénéteau have marketed their other cruising brand, Oceanis, as more of a traditional sailor's boat.

This has obviously worked well as Oceanis continues to be the breadwinner for the company,

accounting for 65-70 per cent of sales. Sense, with which customers have a love/hate relationship, makes up 25-30 per cent and the performance First range a mere five per cent.

However, when testing the Oceanis 41, 45 and 48 last year, we noticed that the divisions between the two cruising boat ranges were beginning to

merge. Now as I approached the new Oceanis 55, with its pronounced chine, its mainsheet arch, those huge hull windows, even the gun metal colour, I did wonder if I was actually stepping aboard the Sense 55 I had tested the year before – indeed if he found them parked side by side, an owner of the Sense or Oceanis 55 could be forgiven for stepping aboard the wrong boat.

"The difference is it's still a more secure/sailor-oriented interior," said Bénéteau's Yves Mandin, "but customers now want the vision from inside." That explains the hull windows.

It was going to take a couple of test sails in Palma Bay to decide for myself if this 55 still carried the true Oceanis bloodline. ▶



▶ Far left the Sense 55 shares the very similar-looking Oceanis 55. Left: Inboard primaries are easy to work