



ROYAL MALTA YACHT CLUB

spinnaker

The official Royal Malta Yacht Club publication

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NEWSPAPER POST



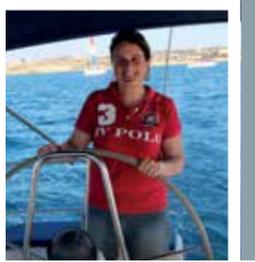
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Welcome to SPINNAKER



The Covid-19 pandemic made us change, overnight, the way we went about our daily lives. Adapting to new norms, being challenged from various facets. Have we grown more resilient? I sincerely hope so.

Amongst the many blows dealt by the pandemic, sport was one of the first activities to be negatively impacted. Sailing was no exception. The majority of our events were cancelled or had to be toned down. Gone were the social events tied around each sailing event. We all understood that it was for the greater good that the Rolex Middle Sea Race Crew Party did not take place.

But that was a small price to pay if it meant that the Rolex Middle Sea Race fleet could race. Which it did. We should consider ourselves very fortunate to have been able to successfully host, albeit in a watered down version, our beloved RMSR. Not only was it the only Rolex event to be held in 2020, the RMSR was held without any major hiccup and a Maltese boat won, for the second time. Simply brilliant.

The RMYC Sailing School continued to thrive. Although operations stopped for a short period of time, the School enjoyed, what was possibly, the busiest summer ever. Strict protocols were put in place to ensure safety of our young sailors, but that certainly did not detract from any of their fun. Our kids are also bringing in the results, with many of them gracing the various podiums on many of the dinghy races. Another testament to the good work of the school. The School was lucky to have some top notch sailors coaching our students – some of which are Olympic hopefuls. Not every day that a sailing school can boast having such a team!

What do Pavlos Kontides, Tonci Stipanovic and Vasilij Žbogar have in common? They are all lasers sailors, Olympic medallists and train regularly at the RMYC. In this edition we had the privilege of chatting

with Slovenian Vasilij Žbogar, who also has the honour of having been on RMSR Line Honours winner Esimit Europa 2 several times.

As the pandemic gave us a bit of respite throughout the summer months, the Club was able to host a number of sailing events. The 60th Edition of the Malta – Syracuse Race took place – again numbers were less than expected but quarantine conditions imposed on Italians did not help. Post RMSR the Club hosted the BOV Autumn Regatta, which saw the biggest fleet for the past few years, the Raymarine Double Handed Figure of Eight and the Medcomms Round Malta race.

As you might recall, last year we did not publish a summer edition of this magazine so this edition covers all the highlights of 2020 – we did have some great stuff happening nonetheless! Apart from interviewing some Club members and supporters who shared their RMSR experiences we had the pleasure of interviewing a number of interesting individuals who are leaving their mark in their respective fields - Lloyd Hamilton - Jarhead skipper and founder of Toe in the Water - a British charity that works on rehabilitating injured servicemen and women through sailing. Deea Buzdugan, a Romanian photographer who decided to make Malta her second home. Olympic Medallist Vasilij Žbogar who regularly trains in Malta and the larger than life philanthropist and environmental activist Greg Nasmyth.

We now start 2021 with positive, albeit cautious optimism. The Club aims to have an active and varied sailing calendar – thanks to the input of many of you and who knows, maybe a return to social events might not be a thing of a too distant future.

In the meantime, stay safe, better days will come along.

Maria Vella-Galea | Editor

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COMMODORE'S MESSAGE

2020 was not a normal year. The restrictions brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic were extremely disruptive on the Club's operations and plans for many Club activities at the Club had to be put on hold.

In the first half of the year, all racing and other activities were cancelled or postponed until the situation improved enough for racing to begin.

Once things got better, the Ragusa weekend as well as the Syracuse-Malta Race were held with a two-week delay and the Club managed to hold one summer dinner activity.

The Club also managed to host the Rolex Middle Sea Race even if this was a toned-down version with none of the social activities that usually go with it. Nevertheless, it was a successful event and one of the few major races that actually happened in 2020 worldwide.

For the Club this was a significant achievement which was made more notable by the second successive victory by Elusive 2.

The RMYC Sailing School too was active for most of the year except for the early shutdown in spring. Despite the

circumstances, the school has had a very successful year with significant increase in new young sailors while the older ones are now regularly competing in regattas as a Club team.

The end of the year saw some Club racing happen but none of the usual festive activities and regretfully, it was not possible for the Club to treat the members to the annual Christmas drinks.

While some racing can be held it is still not possible to hold any social activities. The Club bar remains closed while only the restaurant remains open for diners.

We eagerly hope that things will improve in 2021 and the Club can return to normal. With this in mind a new sailing calendar has just been prepared. Old favorites remain while new proposals include a regatta for the Ulysses Challenge Trophy starting in Catanzaro sailing to Taormina and Syracuse before joining the traditional Syracuse Malta Race.

Whilst thanking all our sponsors and helpers, we look forward to a better year.

Godwin

Godwin Zammit | Commodore



From the SECRETARIAT

Need to REGENERATE

We are on the eve of our Annual General Meeting and it is imperative that we actively participate in the running of our Club.

The first step of participation is that of attending the Annual General Meeting, voting for any motions put forward and most importantly to selecting your new Committee.

The fact that a number of new candidates have put forward their names for election to the Club Committee is very encouraging. It is always healthy to have an election and am pleased to see that some members are ready to take up the challenge.

I can vouch that being on Committee requires dedication and time however this gives great satisfaction as this Club does things which matter. Being part of that Committee, irrespective of the post occupied, gives one a great feeling of accomplishment. The Club needs new blood in its upper echelons, and we need to lower the average age of the Committee which currently stands at 61 years of age. The youngest member of the current committee was born in 1967.

Throughout the Club's history, General Meetings were held in person and during the last decades, attendance varied. There

were years where we did not manage to have a quorum and had to postpone to another day, and then there were those years where the Club could hardly house the number of members participating in the General Meeting. The latter normally occurred during election years where the number of members seeking election was higher than the number required.

This year has not been an easy one for everyone. This Covid-19 virus has affected our working and private lives, our families and loved ones. For most of us, it had an adverse effect on our livelihood and our social lives. The Club has also been adversely effected and although we managed to put in some activities, the social aspect was the worst hit.

In view of the current Covid-19 situation, the Club will be hosting a virtual AGM, with members having to book their attendance prior to the meeting. The relevant notices have been sent out so now the ball is in your court.

I hope that you will participate in great numbers.

Mark Napier | Hon Secretary RMYC





ELUSIVE 2 WINS the Yachting Malta Coastal Race

The Yachting Malta Coastal Race took place on Wednesday 14th October, the precursor to the 41st edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race. The Race was blessed with superb sailing conditions. PRO Peter Dimech chose a course of approximately 30nm. Starting from outside the Royal Malta Yacht Club, the fleet rounded the island of Comino before returning to Marsamxett Harbour.

“Champagne sailing,” commented Peter Dimech. *“12-15 knots from the southwest building to 18 knots later in the day. There was about a metre swell on the west coast of Comino, but flatter seas on the east coast.”*

In the first start, Timofey Zbankov’s Russian JPK 10.80 **Rossko** took the lead and went on to win their class and place second overall. In the second start, the Podesta family, racing Maltese First 45 **Elusive 2**, showed the way with great pace out of the harbour. **Elusive 2** went on to win the race overall after IRC time correction. **Rossko** was second and Jean-Pierre Dick’s French JP54 **The Kid** took line honours but placed third overall after IRC time correction.

Christoph Podesta, co-skipper of **Elusive 2**, commented after the race: *“Last year we showed our potential by winning the Rolex Middle Sea Race overall. We know it is a tough race to win and we are not getting big-headed. We hope we can be faster than in 2019 and win our class. Winning overall is dependent on things beyond our control but we can sail to our potential and enjoy the race.”*



Jean-Pierre Dick’s JP54 **The Kid** took line honours in an elapsed time of 2 hrs 47 mins 39 secs. This will be the second Rolex Middle Sea Race for **The Kid**. Jean-Pierre Dick has competed in three editions of the Vendee Globe and won the Barcelona Round the World Race.

“We are competing with the same Czech-based crew, this race is a lot of fun and I come from Nice, so I love the Mediterranean,” commented Jean-Pierre Dick. *“Today’s race was a good test for the boat in racing conditions and to practice manoeuvres and sail changes. Some of the boats did not make it for the Coastal Race because of a storm. However, for the Rolex Middle Sea Race there will be fierce competition. This is a different game to the Vendee Globe, but it is a challenge just the same, and this year the race is wide open.”*

Since its launch in 2015, Yachting Malta has been supporting the Rolex Middle Sea Race Coastal Race.

“The role of Yachting Malta is to give full support to yachting events, particularly those at international level. There is no doubt about the esteem that the Rolex Middle Sea Race enjoys within the yachting community around the world. Despite the difficulties brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, those who were able to travel came to Malta,” said Mr John Huber, Chairman of Yachting Malta.

ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE: INSPIRING PERFORMANCE



ROYAL MALTA YACHT CLUB



The Rolex Middle Sea Race always demands the highest standards in sailors of all generations, both professional and Corinthian. The 41st edition, demonstrated profoundly the human endeavour required to succeed. Great resilience was shown by all involved. The Royal Malta Yacht Club (RMYC) worked tirelessly to ensure a safe competition in the context of a global pandemic. The participants exhibited dedication and passion just to make the start line and then, on the water provided thrilling competition which ended with last year's overall race winner claiming a monumental back-to-back success.

For understandable reasons, the number of entrants for the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race fell short of the record-breaking entries of recent editions. The 50 teams from 14 countries, diligently and rigorously prepared for the 606-nautical mile race and illustrated admirably the values which underpin yachting through a display of fine seamanship in completing the complex challenge set by the course and prevailing weather.

At the prize giving all crews were honoured and the victors celebrated for their accomplishments. Godwin Zammit, Commodore of the RMYC, expressed his satisfaction that the race had gone ahead, commending the participants, the Club and its supporters, including longstanding sponsor Rolex, as well as Transport Malta, the Ministry of Tourism, Yachting Malta and the armed services of Malta and Italy. *"This has been a very unusual year; so much has been disrupted and so many racing events have been cancelled. Nevertheless, the Royal Malta Yacht Club was determined that if it was at all possible the Rolex Middle Sea Race would happen even if without the usual hospitality,"* he stated.

To ringing applause Commodore Zammit congratulated all winners, but particularly Elusive 2: *"Winning such an event two years in succession is an outstanding achievement. The RMYC is proud that such a momentous thing has been claimed by one of its own. Well done Elusive!"* He went on to express his thanks to the RMYC team of staff and volunteers that had put in such an effort, continuing: *"We are fortunate to have a Club with suitable facilities, both within the building and on the waterfront, that are so essential to organising an event of this calibre and international reputation. It would be difficult to maintain this level of organisation with anything less."*

Dr Ian Borg, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Capital Projects, attended the ceremony and gave a short address, acknowledging the event's importance and standing in Malta. *"I'd like to thank the RMYC and all its volunteers and those that have supported this event for holding the 41st edition notwithstanding the challenges,"* he said. *"A study released recently shows the importance of these events and how they bring in investment and finance. As Minister responsible for the Lands Authority, I pledge once again our commitment to continue to support the Club."*

OVERALL VICTORY: A RARE REPEAT

Winning a 606-nm offshore race once is a massive achievement. So many pieces need to fall into place for it to happen. Returning to conquer the same summit a second time is often even harder. After years of persistence and continual improvement, the crew of Maltese yacht Elusive 2 were emotional winners of last year's race. Siblings Maya, Aaron and Christoph Podesta had been inspired to take up sailing through the enthusiasm

and encouragement of their late father Arthur, a 35-time Rolex Middle Sea Race competitor.

This year's race posed renewed challenges. Preparation required the same methodical manner of previous years, but in complex circumstances. On the water, the conditions presented a contrasting examination to those of twelve months earlier. *"This race is about physical endurance and mental toughness,"* explained Aaron Podesta. *"Last year was a mixture of the two. This year the light weather conditions made it mentally challenging at every corner of the race."* Harnessing their expert knowledge of the racecourse and vast experience sailing together, the team kept moving in the face of a frustrating breeze that never really settled into a pattern. The reward for their unwavering commitment was to set a corrected time which their rivals could not beat.

Back to back success is a rare feat in yacht racing of this kind. It has not been achieved at the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race since 1965 and at the Rolex Fastnet Race only once since 1957. At the Rolex Middle Sea Race, the last crew to achieve this was Nello Mazzaferro's Nita IV from Italy in 1980.

For Maya Podesta, having been inspired by her father, she hopes the crew's success will motivate future generations: *"We hope it gives people a boost. In Malta we have the perfect weather conditions for sailing and potential to do so much more. We hope more younger people are enticed to take up a wonderful sport."* The Podestas will not rest on their laurels. Next year, the crew has Nita IV's record of three successive race victories in its sights.

LINE HONOURS: CLOSE FINISHES

During the past five editions of the Rolex Middle Sea Race, the crew of American Maxi Rambler had dominated monohull line honours in a relentless pursuit of the race record it had set in 2007. This year's race had no clear favourite, no obvious reference point for the frontrunners. With a few miles of the race remaining, the outcome remained in the balance. Two yachts had broken clear and, fascinatingly, both were from Poland and of similar size and design. I Love Poland, skippered by Grzegorz Baranowski, led for much of the race but on the entry to the South Comino Channel, at the north western end of Malta, her rival E1 edged ahead. Showing confidence in their ability and not losing faith in the dying embers of a gruelling race, the I Love Poland crew dug in and summoned the spirit to overhaul their determined opponent to claim line honours by a mere three minutes.

"We are very happy. It was a combination of perfect crew work, perfect navigation and a bit of luck," explained a delighted Baranowski. I Love Poland has inspiring youth at its core. *"Our boat is a special government programme for young sailors to learn offshore sailing,"* continued Baranowski. *"For them this has been a perfect experience. They now know you have to fight to the end. They will remember this forever."*

Nearly 48 hours outside the race record, I Love Poland's elapsed time of three days, 23 hours, 58 minutes and five seconds, demonstrates how this year's race was a real test of patience. She becomes the first Polish yacht to claim line honours at major 606-nm race and achieved this with the closest margin in Rolex Middle Sea Race history.

The memorable monohull line honours contest followed the dramatic spectacle for the multihull title. Two Italian yachts – Maserati Multi70 and Mana – effectively match raced around Sicily before the former established an advantage at Lampedusa, which was held until the finish. Maserati Multi70's margin of victory was 15 minutes.

The impact of the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race appears significant. From the conviction of the organizers to the commitment of the participants, the desire to uphold the tradition of this international sporting event will stand it in good stead for the future. The strength of purpose exhibited will undoubtedly inspire younger sailors to follow in the wake of their heroes and to continue the legacy.

ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE CLASS REVIEW

IRC 1

In third place it was the VO70, I Love Poland, entered by the Polish National Federation and featuring a team of primarily under-30s led by Grzegorz Baranowski. The Polish entry also took home the RLR Line Honours Trophy and a Rolex Chronometer for being first monohull to finish on the water. In second place, the Hungarian R/P60 Wild Joe of Marton Jozsa had taken the fight to I Love Poland throughout the race. In first place, though, it was the Dutch Marten 72, Aragon. The largest boat in the monohull fleet, Andries Verder and Arco van Nieuwland's crew were led by Wouter Roos. "This is our first Rolex Middle Sea Race and we were positively surprised," said Arco van Nieuwland, continuing: *"The scenery was beautiful, but also the Royal Malta Yacht Club's organisation and communication were very good. The Aragon team is a mixture of family, friends and world class sailors, such as Thierry Fouchier, who is a great tactician."* In turn, Andries Verder added: *"We had a fantastic start in amazing surroundings. All the way around the course you had to use your heads more than anything else."*

IRC 2

Third in IRC 2 was Eric de Turkheim's polished crew, featuring Laurent Pages, on the NMYD 54 Teasing Machine. The French entry has a good record at the Rolex Middle Sea Race having won its class previously. The Russian TP52 Freccia Rossa, a former winner at the Rolex Giraglia and owned by Vadim Yakimenko, came second. In first place, fourth overall, and winner of the Swan Mediterranean Challenge Trophy, was the ClubSwan 50 Balthasar, entered by ocean-racing sailor, Louis Balcaen from Belgium. *"Louis and all the team are very happy,"* commented Balthasar's Rogier van Overveld. *"To win the class, against top competition racing IRC designs, is a great result as Balthasar is a one design. It was Louis' birthday on the second day, and he would not let us bring a cake as he is super-conscious about weight. We sneaked some party hats on board and celebrated at Stromboli! Well done to the organisers for producing an excellent race in difficult circumstances."*

IRC 3

Ramon Sant Hill's Farr 45 Ben Estates Comanche Raider III from Malta put in a great effort to finish third in class. Carl Peter Forster's Aquila 45, Katsu (GER), was equally determined and finished second behind the outstanding French entry Tonnerre de Glen, skippered by Dominique Tian, which won in class for the third year in a row and came second overall in the IRC standings. Olivier Kraus, the navigator and a winner with Spirit of Ad Hoc in 2008 had this to say: *"This race was really hard for a navigator. The weather forecast was not very easy. It was really difficult to work out when to tack, when to gybe, when to go straight on, where is the wind, where is no wind. And, it was long!"*





IRC 6

Jean Luc Hamon's French entry, the JPK1010 Raging Bee, finished third with Leonardo Petti and the Italian J/109 Chestress in second, a good reward for returning to the race for a second assault on the famous course. Class winner was Timofey Zhbankov with the JPK1080 Rossko from Russia, again just reward, in this case for undertaking an epic adventure just to get to the start. *"This is our second race with this boat. We also raced as a crew on a Salona 41 in a very windy race in 2017,"* explained the navigator Alexandr Musikhin. *"This is the second time we have won our class, but we come back every year because we want to win overall! It is a hard race physically but, also, psychologically. To keep concentration and also the right balance between rest and work is really hard. The Rolex Middle Sea Race is probably one of the hardest races in the world in that respect, so we are happy to have done so well."*

The Double Handed Class prizes went to Zenhea Takesha (ITA) for finishing first on the water - Andrea Vattani Trophy, while Gerald Boess and Jonathan Bordas' J/109 Jubilee took home the John Illingworth Trophy for first on corrected time. Gerald from Austria & Jonathan from France met on the 2013-14 Clipper Round the World Race. Jonathan said: *"The leg from Messina to Stromboli went very well for us and was a key component in our performance, we went to the right and got the lift. Racing with other boats fully crewed was also an advantage, especially the great sailors on Hakuna Matata."* Gerald commented: *"Preparation is very important, especially sailing double handed. Everything from stowing the provisions on the boat to organising a watch system. You also need to be thinking ahead about what is coming. Trust in one another is also very important, as you can have proper sleep during the race."*



IRC 4

Competing his first ever race, Luigi Stoppani will have been thrilled to take back to Italy the prize for third in class with the Swan 48 Mia. Impressively, second in IRC 4 was the Italian double handed entry of Marco Paolucci and Andrea Fornaro with the Comet 45s Libertine. In first place and overall winner of the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race trophy, a Rolex Chronometer and a plethora of other prizes including the Transport Malta Trophy for being first Maltese boat home was Elusive 2, the Maltese Beneteau First 45, entered by Aaron, Christoph and Maya Podesta.

IRC 5

In third came the German yacht Luffe 4004 Prettynama 2 entered by Dr Max Muller. Second place was secured by Alexey Moskvin's J/122 Buran, while Jonathan Gambin, skipper of the Dufour 44R Ton Ton Laferla, was delighted to have won the class and finished the race in third overall. *"This was a difficult race, but we managed to win our class,"* commented Jonathan Gambin. *"After a great start, we lost the breeze inside the Messina Strait and could do nothing but watch boats catch us up. We had a great battle with Elusive 2 on the water, but in the lull after Favignana, they got into clear air and our chance of winning overall really stopped there. We are thrilled to win our class and honoured to place third overall."*



MOCRA (Multihulls) Christian Duraant and Shockwave (AUS) finished third after time correction, with Giovanni Soldini's line honours winning Maserati Muti70 (ITA) in second. Riccardo Pavoncelli's MOD70 Mana, skippered by Brian Thompson, was first overall.

Entrants in the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race were also able to race under ORC. Elusive 2 won Class 4 and the Boccale Del Mediterraneo Trophy for first overall. Other class winners were: Freccia Rossa (ORC1), Katsu (ORC2), Maksim Nemchenko's Favorit Plus (RUS/ORC3), Rossko (ORC5) and Jarhead (MLT/ORC6) entered by Jarhead Foundation and skippered by Lloyd Hamilton.

The 42nd edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race will start on Saturday, 23 October 2021.



ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE



CLASS WINNERS

MARINA DI VALLETTA



Marina di Valletta has been a partner of the Rolex Middle Sea Race since it started operating in 2017. General Manager Niki Travers Tauss gave SPINNAKER magazine some insight on the ongoing operation, its challenges particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic and its plans for the coming year.

Marina di Valletta has been in operation since 2017. Apart from the Capitainerie, do you feel that the Marina is to be complete or is it an ongoing process. Are there any other plans for further embellishment or growth in the pipeline?

Marina di Valletta's embellishment process is ongoing as we always seek to improve facilities that make the overall customers' experience the best available on the local market.

In May, the Marina will see the opening of the Capitainerie. In addition to the Capitainerie, the Marina will also commission our new WC and laundry facilities. Whilst currently the fuel bunkering operations are delivered quayside by truck at our dedicated fuel berth, by 2022 the Marina will have a fully fledged bunkering station with quayside filling pumps and underground tanks. Works on underground fuel tanks are scheduled for winter 2021.

2021 also saw the arrival of a floating yacht lift operator - Yacht Lift Ltd has a long-term berthing agreement with Marina di Valletta to operate within its concession area and will be providing yachts with quick afloat maintenance, surveys and hull cleaning facilities.

Tell us more about the Capitainerie? Once complete, what will it offer? Will it be accessible to Marina patrons? When will it be completed?

The Capitainerie will be located at the water's edge with a view on the entrance to the harbour and marina. Within the

premises one will find a beautifully laid out Marina reception to welcome our clients, and a fully fledged Bistro, which will also be open to the public in time for the coming season and will enjoy beautiful views of the Marina and its surroundings and the majestic bastions afoot of the marina.

A brand standard sales and support office for Azimut Yachts and the Nautor Swan brands will also double up as a chandlery offering the kind of client support, those berthed at the Marina have become accustomed to together with marina staff now well known for the impeccable berthing assistance and delivery service with their scooters and trailers.

In the near future, a roof terrace will be opened and will be exclusively available to Marina patrons and for a select number of private events.

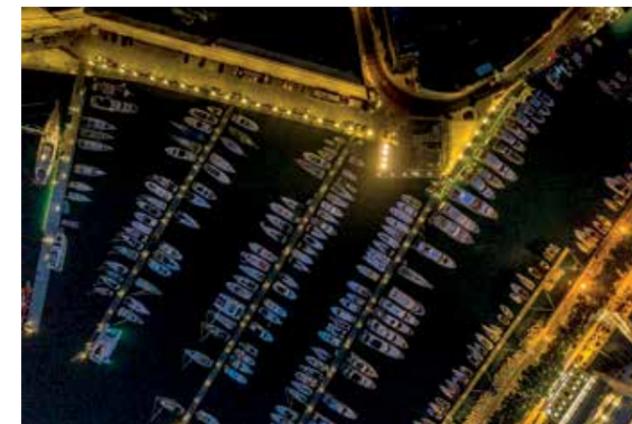


What attracts boats to the Marina? Is it a matter of lacking berthing space on the island so it was a matter of no choice or was it the investment, technology and overall experience? Can you elaborate more on this?

Marina di Valetta is a consortium formed with Marina di Varazze Srl, the marina development division of Azimut|Benetti Group which already operates marinas in various parts of Europe. This not only brings a wealth of experience in marina management but also heavy investment in technology to provide an even safer environment for the yacht berthed there. Case in point is the Revetment (Boulder Breakwater) along Pieta Quay to dampen strong swells which have had an excellent proven result in the last major storm event in February 2019.

Coupled with the technology is the luxurious environment that the Marina offers as well as the unparalleled concierge services that has a strong team of people on hand to assist Marina clients. The car park scooters are a very popular feature of the Marina, and you can see the berthers whizzing about picking up and delivering supplies to boat owners. The marina offers other services such as cleaning and guardiennage.

Of course, the imposing Valletta bastions provide a magnificent backdrop which completes the whole experience.



How did Covid-19 affect Marina operations? Has the Marina been able to weather the pandemic storm so far?

The adoption of strict safety procedures - particularly where transit arrivals were concerned were a logistical challenge, but these were imperative particularly for the safety of our staff and local clientele. Certainly, transit revenue is down on reduced transit arrivals, but this was made up for by a stronger demand from local clients. This was driven by a buoyant second-hand market with a realisation of the safety and enjoyment of being out at sea in one's private yacht berthing in the most secure and enjoyable way to endure the pandemic. Another interesting fact was that quite a few boat owners - who previously just owned a mooring buoy and were not going to be using their boat for overseas travel, upgraded to a marina berth for the summer season.

Did you have any people who isolated themselves on their boat during quarantine?

People isolating themselves on their boats was not an uncommon thing to see. Our team of berthers were on hand to support them by delivering supplies to their boat - of course in a Covid-19 protocol compliant way.

Would hosting boats racing in the Rolex Middle Sea Race be the usual normal day of operations or would you require special preparations.

The Rolex Middle Sea is a challenging logistical operation for the RMYC and equally for us at the Marina. Extensive preparations are required since the RMSR involves relocating yachts to other berths in order to be able to accommodate and keep RMSR boats together to give the best racing village experience to the participants.

The RMSR is one of the foremost events on the Marina calendar together with the Bailli de Suffren, Azimut Lifestyle Week, Private boat shows and some J70 training and racing. Whilst these events are seasonal, on day-to-day basis the Marina serves as a charter base for Strand Marine's NJ rib fleet as well as the Azimut Malta Charter Club fleet.

TON TON LAFERLA: Quietly Achieving Results

Ton Ton Laferla quietly raced into third place in the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race. A well deserved result based on boat owner Jonathan Gambin's years of experience and a well selected crew.

Jonathan Gambin can be considered one of Malta's Rolex Middle Sea Race veterans. Sailing on his Dufour 44R Ton Ton Laferla, the 2020 race edition was Jonathan's eleventh.

Extensive experience have taught Jonathan to aim high. He has been quoted as saying that the crew's aim would be for a top position, however he is unpretentious and grounded enough not to be over confident.

Jonathan explains that the investment put into the boat for the 2019 edition, with the backing of Laferla Insurance has paid off. However, the many changes that the boat underwent – particularly where sails and carbon masts are concerned meant that it was equal to sailing a new boat – so more training to get used to her was required, though he proudly admits that the boat and crew made large strides since then.

Racing in IRC Class 5, Ton Ton and her crew judged their approach to the start to perfection and found good breeze to win the exit from Grand Harbour, with the crew stacked high on the windward rail.

The initial days of racing provided real excitement, particularly among the Maltese boats who's desire to be the first boat home is always strong. Initially, despite being in different Classes, Ton Ton was fighting for this possibility competing against Lee Satariano's Artie III (IRC 3) and the Podesta siblings' Elusive 2 (IRC 4). From Salina, things became a bit of a lottery and by Alicudi, some 20nm on, Artie III, Elusive 2 and Ton Ton were virtually line abreast, though eventually Elusive 2, lying due north of Palermo, had managed to establish a clear lead over Artie, with Ton Ton only marginally behind Elusive 2.

Despite the possibility of being the first Maltese boat home eluding Ton Ton, their determination and experience saw them pull away from the rest of their Class to take the lead. By fifth day, Ton Ton was not just racing for a Class win but also the near possibility of a third overall placing.

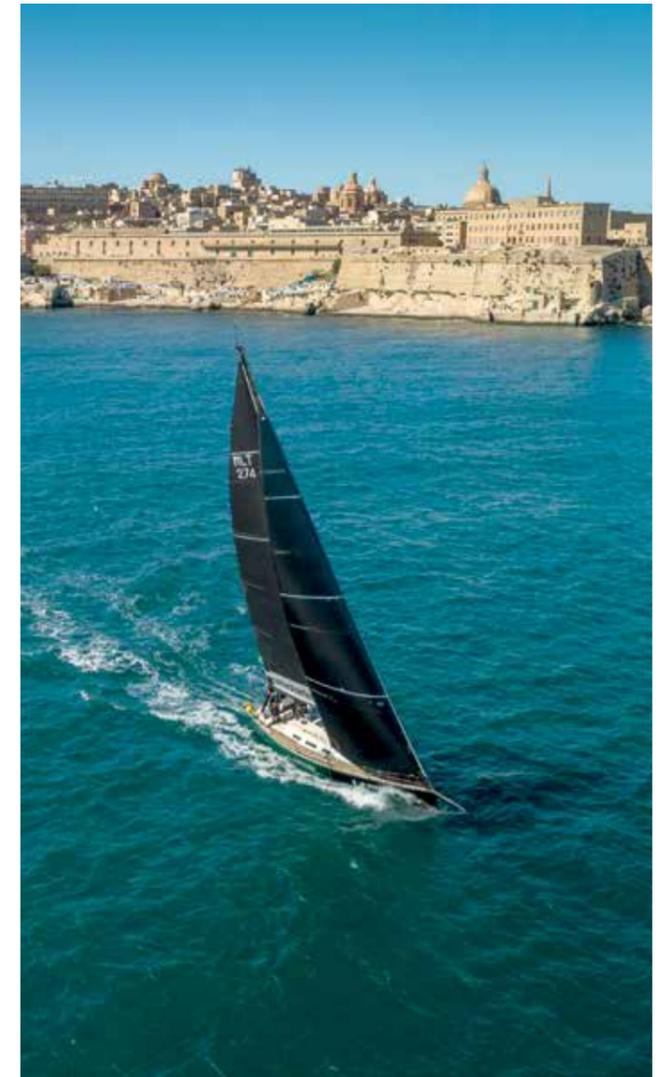
"This was a difficult race, but we managed to win our class. After a great start, we lost the breeze inside the Messina Strait and could do nothing but watch boats catch us up. We had a great battle with Elusive 2 on the water, but in the lull after Favignana, they got into clear air and our chance of winning overall really stopped there. We are thrilled to win our class and honoured to place third overall."

Jonathan enthused about the result and expressed his satisfaction. He admitted that the Covid-19 pandemic did not allow them for proper preparation and they set off on the race with little training under their belt.

"It's been a huge operation to get to this point and a real team effort, not to mention the great support of our sponsor Laferla Insurance."

The choice of Jonathan's crew however proved to be a good one. The crew was a mix of old and new faces but his years of experience enabled him to choose a good team - *"I chose seamen above all"* was a worthy description for his 2020 crew, adding that they were probably the best team he has had in years and most likely will stick to that combination in the future.

"We should stick together, this was the best result we had in a long time. With more training, better preparation and the backing of our kind sponsors, we could certainly aim for a better result in 2021"



Ton Ton Laferla Crew: Jonathan Gambin (Skipper), Nikolay Bogoev, Renato Camilleri, Ada Maria Cuciuc, Giovanni de Lazzari, Geoffrey Dixon, Alessandro Ercolani, Gerald Gambin, Gregory Mifsud, Harry Parnis England.

Comanche Raider III

The Farr45 Comanche Raider III cuts an distinctive figure on the water. Its red and black colour scheme singles it out from afar. Competing under the name Ben Estates Comanche Raider III, the crew produced a very satisfactory result in the 41st Edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race, when they claimed third place in IRC Class 3. Comanche's Skipper, Ramon Sant Hill shares his thoughts on this year's campaign.

Ramon Sant Hill has just completed his twentieth Rolex Middle Sea Race. The race has become an integral part of his life. No edition of this race is the same. The challenge is always different, so when one race is over one cannot say, it was the same as last year. For Ramon, that is the most alluring part of this offshore race.

With so many races under his belt, it might be difficult to pinpoint the most memorable or favourite edition. But, there is no hesitation for Ramon. 2007 remains most memorable. Toughest ever, but the crew finished the race unscathed despite the terrible conditions. One should be reminded that in 2007 massive storms bashed through the fleet on the northern side of Sicily. Tens of boats retired during the first night out and were forced to take shelter in various ports along the Eastern shore of Sicily. It was the year when Loki lost her rudder and had to be abandoned – sums up pretty much the conditions that year.

Ramon is known to select some unknown quantities when choosing his crew – this means that they might have little or no experience. Why should a sailor, with so many years of experience and a good boat, decide to take this route, considering he can surely take his pick from some of Malta's

best sailors? Ramon, doesn't falter – he believes that everyone deserves a chance. A good crew, doesn't always necessarily mean having a top-notch sailor – if the sailor doesn't gel with the rest of the crew, then it could be a recipe for disaster. For Ramon, his crew needs to have the commitment to race and be able to help with the boat's maintenance.

"Sure winning is amazing, who doesn't want to try and win – but to me, it is not everything. What I start off with is trying to find crew that apart from being committed is on the same wavelength - Sailing for three to five days on a small boat is already tough as it is, the last thing you want are petty and not so petty fights between crew members."



This year's Comanche crew was made up of Daniel Bartolo, Craig Farrugia Vella, Daniel Fenech, Paolo Giummara, Matthew Micallef, Zaack Micallef, Garry Pace, Isaac Saliba, and James Sciberras. Between them they have taken part in nearly 48 editions of the Rolex Middle Sea Race, countless of Rolex Giraglia races, a Rolex Sydney Hobart and Palma Vela experience under their belt. Most of them also have extensive dinghy racing experience and Paolo has experience on the F20 Nacra Class. **[Editor's Note: From the photos shared with the Media Team, for the RMSR Blog, they also have extensive experience in having fun!]**

Whilst some crews were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, for the Comanche team, this had little effect since the decision to race took place only twenty days prior to the start. Ramon explained that one of the main reasons that pushed them to race this year was the positive feedback of their new sponsor Ben Estates. The choice of crew also meant that most of the work and troubleshooting on board could be done 'in house'. Having said that prior to the race some of the instruments were not working and the necessary part which was not available on the island arrived on the Friday, a few hours before the race. How's that for cutting things fine?

In spite of the fact that this year's RMSR had a noticeably smaller fleet than usual, for Ramon and his crew, this did not require any alteration to their strategy. Ramon explained that they do not really follow other boats – All boats are different, some are fast on up wind and some are faster on down wind. Some keep inshore and some out. It is all about doing the best with what you have – boat, weather conditions and crew... and of course a bit of help from lady luck.

Comanche Raider III finished the 41st RMSR third in IRC Class 3 and second in ORC Class3. Not an easy feat, considering the stiff competition from a number of regular participants, most of whom race with the same crew each year. Are the Comanche crew happy with this result? There is no doubt that such a result

is satisfying, but Ramon is more enthused about the team spirit, its bonding and strengthened friendships that were a result of this race. From a technical standpoint, there were not many mistakes, though being parked in Messina for nine hours, losing favourable current in the process was possibly a hefty price to pay. Who knows, he muses, the result could have been potentially far better.

Seeing Ramon and Comanche's track record in terms of participation, we are left with little doubt that on Saturday 23rd October 2021, barring any force majeure, Comanche Raider III will once again be on the start line. Comanche generally races in practically all of the Club's racing programme and therefore the boat is generally ready. In normal circumstances – not during pandemics, the crew would generally be confirmed two or three months ahead, giving them ample time to be well prepared.





BAIT - TICKING OFF THE BUCKET LIST

In 2020, Paul Debono and his Elan 410 Bait made their debut in the Rolex Middle Sea Race. SPINNAKER had a chat with Paul to learn more about what made him take part, the overall experience and how hopefully the Rolex Middle Sea Race will become a staple date on Bait's diary.

The 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race was Bait's first appearance on the race as well as yours. What made you decide to take part?

Participating in the RMSR was on my bucket list for quite some time, however due to work commitments or some other reason participation always seemed to slip down my priority list and was always shelved for the following year. This time round I was determined to make the starting line at all costs. The only thing that would have kept us from not being in the Grand Harbour for the start was a positive Covid-19 result by one of the crew – we had all agreed to undergo a test a few days before the race.

Can you tell us more about your crew? What is their background? Did they have any RMSR experience? If they had no experience, was this something that added extra stress to the race experience?

In reality, the majority of us were Rolex Middle Sea Race virgins, but I wasn't really concerned about this, I reasoned that with

our previous experience in racing both on yachts and dinghies we would have sufficient knowledge to see the race through.

The only two who had done this race before were Matthew Wallis who was on his fifth run and Francesco Gozzini who had already clocked three events. The rest were Matthew Farrugia who was a keen dinghy sailor and he crewed with me when I used to race my former Elan333 "Ripple". Though lacking yacht racing experience, David Dalli was also a keen dinghy sailor and together we also did extensive cruising in the Aegean and the Caribbean. Nicola Agostiniani was also quite the novice in yacht racing but he did some racing in Italy and is very good at dingy sailing. Evgheni Bordeniuc is a cruising sailor and this was his first offshore experience, but I was impressed how fast he learned going through the ropes. Overall I was quite happy with the crew, they did their best and would gladly do this trip again with them.

How did you choose your crew? Can you elaborate a bit more?

With the current Covid-19 pandemic situation it was difficult to find enough local crew to come along. Francesco Gozzini was found via the registered in the crew lists on the RMSR website, whilst Nicola Agostiniani joined us on the last week when one of my local crew dropped out. The others I've known for quite some time through my involvement in the local sailing community.

How long did your preparations take? Since it was your first time, did you seek any external advice? If yes who was your point of reference?

The preparations were quite extensive, particularly because this was also the first time for the boat too. It was like an endless list to go through. I cannot say I had not been warned. Most of the crew had been assigned with various chores, and real preparation kicked off a bit less than a month before the start. I was quite confident that the boat was well geared up for any condition. Apart from my crew I have a lot of friends who are active in the racing scene, so I had many points of references to the questions I had. Without mentioning any names, I would like to thank them for their help.

Weather conditions were not as rough as previous editions but that doesn't mean you did not have your fair share of frustrating moments. Can you tell us more about them?

The weather was quite fair throughout the race. The only two days that we had some proper wind was on the first day - Saturday - where we had a pleasant start and a close-hauled dash all the way to Capo Passero with some 20 knots on our port bow. But from then on it varied between 5 and 10 knots, true windspeed.

In Messina we made a mistake when tacking early in the middle of the channel, we lost a good two hours, it was here that we lost our connection with the front runners.

We also found some decent wind that backed to SSE after rounding Favignana sailing south to Pantelleria where it blew a constant 20 knots. This fresh breeze stayed with us all day halfway through the night when sailing to Lampedusa and gradually dwindled to about 10 knots by the following morning after rounding the island. Ironically the wind backed again from the East when we managed to turn round this southernmost island on our course and again constrained to sail close hauled all the way to Gozo.

As for frustrating moments we had more than our fair share. At 0100hrs on Monday as soon as we were about to round Stromboli the wind died out completely and we spent all night stuck on the northern side of the island volcano. We tried our luck by taking a tack to the North a couple of miles trying to find some more pressure. At first it looked like we were about to reap rewards from this choice, but luck was not our side this time because when we tacked back towards the West we were completely becalmed and lost headway completely. The boat was turning around in circles when the current took over our helm. The next two days were more of the same. We were barely doing one to two knots and its awkward to say that it took us till Tuesday morning to pass Alicudi Island - nearly two days just for this 45-mile stretch.

Any anecdotes that you would like to share?

Two weekends before the race we trained all day long. For four days we made extensive use of the spinnakers, trained ourselves in hoisting and retrieving these sails. We even trained this at night! Ironically the only time we hoisted one was for merely ten hours from the south of Ustica and had to put it down soon after passing Capo San Vito.

Were you satisfied with your participation, should you take part in 2021, what would you do differently?

Our goal was to complete the race, without anybody getting hurt and with minimal damage to the boat. We achieved this. As a bonus we managed to put Bait on the scoring sheet and finished the race in second place in ORC Class 5. So yes, we are very satisfied with our participation and we are eagerly looking forward to participate again in 2021. I don't think there is much that we could have done differently, but certainly this year's experience will definitely be put to good use for the next race.

As we finish the interview, the enthusiasm and passion with which Paul has described his first Rolex Middle Sea Race experience makes for the safe assumption that the Rolex Middle Sea Race will become a fixed event on Paul's diary.





Everyone Loves Poland

No one following the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race could have foreseen that two 70-foot ocean-racing maxis would match race the final 10 nautical miles to the finish line to decide the monohull line honours title.

For the two yachts concerned, both from Poland, it was a fairy tale ending with the winner only decided in the final miles.

In the end, it was I Love Poland, owned by the Polish National Foundation and skippered by Grzegorz Baranowski, that outmuscled their compatriots, the largely Corinthian crew from the Yacht Club Sopot near Gdansk, on E1, to secure the prize.

I Love Poland had held the race lead virtually all the way from the very start, but when the two VO70s entered the South Comino Channel, at the north western end of Malta, the unfancied E1 had the temerity to take the lead. It was a short-lived moment of glory, as I Love Poland took the gun by a mere 3 minutes after four days of racing.

A quick look back at the records suggested that this was the first ever line honours success for a Polish boat at any of the classic 600 mile races, which include the Rolex Sydney Hobart, Rolex Fastnet and Newport to Bermuda.



I LOVE POLAND PROJECT

I Love Poland was a project launched in 2018 by the Polish National Foundation. The initiative was to promote Poland on an international level by means of a Polish yacht competing in some of the most important and prestigious regattas in the world. On board was a young generation of European, World and Olympic level crews of Polish nationality. For this purpose, the Polish National Foundation financed the purchase of the 2011 VO70 Puma Mar Mostro, designed by Juan K.

In 2019, the new Board of the Polish National Foundation decided to change the formula of the project and the yacht became a teaching unit, on which new generations of young Polish ocean regatta sailors are trained. In November 2019, the first edition of the Training Programme was launched. Out of 430 submitted applications, a jury composed of famous sailing personalities representing the most important institutions selected 40 finalists for the competition. The lucky forty took part in a specialized, free training camp in Olympic centers, which was also the second stage of the programme.

"Our goal is to train as many young people as we can to give them a chance to be ocean racers, to develop their talents, to reach as high as they can" - said Grzegorz Baranowski, skipper and team leader. "There is no other chance to become a good sailor than to train on a demanding boat" - he added.

The **ART** of **MOVING ON**

Artie, in the local yachting circles and the history of the Rolex Middle Sea Race needs no introduction.

Artie's name has been etched twice on the Rolex Middle Sea Race Trophy – in 2011 and 2014.

In 2019, Lee Satariano, after a short hiatus from racing, introduced the new Artie – an HH42 to the sailing community and to the RMSR of that year.

The 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race was the second year that Lee raced the 606 nautical mile course on the new boat. Expressing his satisfaction at being able to race once again, Lee is completely honest about the fact that the crew still need to exploit the boat's full potential. In his usual frank manner, Lee admits that there are still a number of improvements and changes that need to be done to the boat for it to be at its best. This is not a quick process, it is a challenge which takes patience and time but - in true positive nature, he sees this as also being the fun part of it.

The conditions that the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race fleet encountered were not the ideal conditions for Artie III but that is racing, Lee explains. Artie III performs well on reaching and running in moderate and strong winds. This year's race was approximately 80% of upwind sailing in light conditions for most of the race.

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic did not do any favours to the preparation of the boat. Things had to be shuffled around, especially towards the end when three

key crew members could not make it to the race. Mathieu Almekinders and Eric Jan van de Zande could not travel due to travel restrictions, whilst veteran Artie co-skipper Christian Ripard could not join this year. Their absence was felt as all three had already gained substantial experience and knowledge of how to handle the HH42.

Putting the 2020 edition behind him, Lee reveals that preparations for the forty second RMSR has already started. The crew have already started some more preparation of the boat by replacing a new optimised mainsail, fine tuning the rig, installing a water maker and discussing other improvements and a never ending list. Eventually, focus will be turned towards rig tuning and optimising the boat with some more needed races.

Although 2020 did not provide Artie with their best result so far, Lee does see this result being more frustrating than disappointing. He quickly adds that for the team it is always great to be back out on the water in another Rolex Middle Sea Race.

"In the past we had one or two results which were disappointing but we always came back stronger and that's the challenge. We reflect on what went wrong - whether better tactical decisions could have been taken, did we have a balanced crew as well as other factors that we cannot change - like wind conditions. In all fairness we did expect to be faster. But Artie seems to prefer tougher conditions. We learn and move on to the drawing board and look forward to the future" – Lee Satariano



Hope Springs Eternal

After an impressive start, Xpresso's hopes for a good result in the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race were dashed when just 100 miles into the race they were forced to retire.

Xpresso was one of the last boats to register for the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race. Sean Borg, owner and skipper of the Xp44 explained that the intention to race was always there however the Covid-19 situation made things difficult particularly for the foreign crew members who could not travel. And, despite visible enthusiastic interest from a number of local crews, it was only till the last minute that their participation was confirmed.

Xpresso's performance in the previous edition of the Rolex Middle Sea Race was one of the best ever sorties when they finished in fifth overall - out of a fleet of ninety nine entries. Their performance saw them take home, a Third in Class trophy. This result was certainly a motivating factor for the young crew and they were certainly eager to race.

Right from the gun, Xpresso locked horns with Elusive 2. Both had a great start and Xpresso was the first boat in their Class to leave the Grand Harbour.

ALL AUGURED WELL

Misfortune struck as Xpresso was nearing the infamous Messina Strait. Around 100 miles into the race, their Tuff Luff broke. This meant that they could not hold a jib inside it. The only way to keep going was to use a J4 on hanks, but this would have slowed the crew down considerably. Sean went on to explain that the J4 is a very heavy small Dacron sail and the conditions at the time were too light to make use of such a type of sail.

That situation left them with no option but to call in their retirement to the Race Committee.

So was it a matter of having little time to prepare or was it just bad luck? Their participation in the Yachting Malta Coastal Race saw them race well in relatively challenging conditions but all worked accordingly to plan. Although one cannot entirely blame their last minute registration, in hindsight Sean thinks that if they had more time to train it could have possibly broken before and not during the race.

"It was a bitter pill to swallow. We love to race. In general, we only miss a race when we lack crew. This time, unfortunately we were missing our regular crew as well, so all in all the odds were against us" – Sean Borg.

Although one might think it is a tad early to start thinking about the 2021 campaign, Sean's passion to race remains ignited. His hopes lie on having his usual team back and with ample time to prepare Xpresso and make up for 2020.



Middle Sea Race 1972 on TIKKA III

Royal Malta Yacht Club Hon. President and Co-Founder of the Rolex Middle Sea Race John Ripard gives his own personal account of his well fought race on Tikka III in 1972. The race was a battle of wits between Olympic Gold Medallist Admiral Agostino Straulino's crew on Kerkyra and the crew of Tikka III.



The records will show that Tikka III finished fifth in this, the fifth edition of the Middle Sea Race. One had hoped for better results, and we had indeed expected a better placing after having won both the 1968 and the 1970 MSR's - nevertheless we are happy with our performance as an analysis of the regatta will show.

From previous experience we knew that our stiffest adversary would be the Sparkman & Stephens sloop Kerkyra sailed by Olympic Gold Medallist Admiral Agostino Straulino, against whom we, my brother and I, had competed in the 1960 Olympics in Naples, and later in 1971 and 1972, in the International Winter Championship in Genova. Kerkyra also represented Italy in the 1971 World Championship of the One Ton Cup in New Zealand. On top of which Kerkyra was a specially built racing machine while Tikka was a standard cruiser/racer Swan built in Finland.

Now that we know who we were up against we can comment on the race itself.

After a fairly good start in Marsamxett we were neck and neck with our opponent, both boats enjoying the brisk conditions up to and round Gozo. On most of the next leg of 100 miles to Lampedusa the wind blew into gale Force 7 producing big breaking seas. This required several sail changes but which Tikka and her crew handled with little trouble. We found ourselves among the leading bunch of boats. Both the wind and the seas abated and in fine weather all the way North West to Pantelleria and the west coast of Sicily we made excellent progress to learn on VHF that the Class I front runners Mania, Nita III and Ondine were only a few miles ahead of us; but we had no news of Kerkyra! On the leg from Capo San Vito to Stromboli we overtook the Class II Red Lancer and later crossed tacks ahead of the French Class I Coriolan.

Still no news of Kerkyra and Raoul Gardini's Orca - both yachts posed serious threats to us, all the way till we rounded the active volcano Stromboli. It was only after we received the 'Daily Performance Sheet' via radio that we learned that we were leading the race on corrected time. With some 200 miles to the finish, it was no time

to celebrate but rather to infuse us with a renewed determination to maintain concentration and maximise our efforts to repeat our overall wins of 1968 and 1970.

After rounding the tiny islet of Strombolicchio at sunset we faced a light South East wind on course to the Straits of Messina meaning a never ending series of tacks. We had hoped to arrive at dawn but as luck would have it the wind died as we approached the 'narrows', and we were left bobbing in a sloppy sea from the South East but aided by the dying 'scendente'. With the sun rising and in company with Orca, we were both becalmed in shallow water close to the shore under Capo Peloro Lighthouse. After a short while we noticed that gradually we were getting caught in the new 'montante', the current going North. After several failed attempts to make progress south, we decided to drop anchor and wait rather than be carried North by the 4 knot current. This setback put paid to all our efforts when some boats that we had overtaken started to appear in the northern horizon. When Cino Ricci, the previous year's MSR winner finally caught up, he told us that Kerkyra was some miles behind us. This was good news indeed though it was galling to realise that after so much effort to complete 450 out of 606 miles, boats were bunching up to almost restart the race for the final 160 miles.

Finally sufficient breeze allowed us to weigh anchor and set sail towards Messina but our joy was shortlived as both Kerkyra and Genoeffa were catching up with us with a new wind! The race was on again! All the way to Capo Passero with a rising South East wind we tacked and tacked all the while managing to stay ahead of Kerkyra. By the time we reached Passero, Genoeffa was no longer to be seen astern of us, but Kerkyra had managed to cut our lead to a worrying 100 metres. For the remaining 60 miles this MSR turned into a match race between just two boats Tikka and Kerkyra. It turned out to be the most thrilling and satisfying experience of my sailing career. We knew we were battling against one of the world's top sailors in an equally top yacht. Straulino tried every trick in the book to overtake us but the wind was now South South West and on the nose we knew these were the conditions Tikka excelled in. With her in February, I won the Class III Winter Championship in Genova!

Past Capo Passero, close hauled on a port tack we were obliged to tack on to starboard owing to the reef that stretches south of Correnti Island, always keeping a close watch on our adversary. It was now quite dark and thanks to Kerkyra's navigation lights we were able to monitor her progress and to know which tack she was on, essential so we could cover all her moves as she gradually fell further back. We already knew as we approached the finish line that since our rating was marginally higher than hers, we would have to cross the finish line 40 minutes before Kerkyra if we were to beat her on corrected time. It was not to be. We dropped sails after finishing and waited anxiously, stop watch in hand to check her finish time which turned out to be 25 minutes after our time. As they finished the two boats that had battled for the lead for the entire 600 miles approached each other. Straulino and I complimented each other on a fine race and together with our crews exchanged handshakes, congratulations and a few tots.

My disappointment at not winning my third Middle Sea Race with my third Tikka was a bitter pill to swallow, notwithstanding the drinks!

VIRTUAL SAILING

With sailing races out of the question due to social distancing measures implemented in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Royal Malta Yacht Club and the RMYC Sailing School took the initiative to host the first Virtual Regatta for members and friends.



Sailing School Instructor Alex Denisiuc took the initiative and set up two practice sessions in order for potential participants to get the feel of virtual sailing. The Virtual Regatta attracted thirty-six participants and saw a mix of dinghy and keelboat racers, representing local and foreign clubs.

Racing kicked off with the fleet split into two - blue and yellow. Each fleet had four qualification races. The top eighteen sailors went on to proceed to race in the final two races.

The race was won by Peter Fagan (RMYC), followed by Vishnu Saravanan (RMYC) and Matthew Micallef (BSC).

"Virtual Regatta is an exclusive partner of World Sailing and of the "eSailing World Championship" the most renowned sailing eSport competition through the world" explained Alex Denisiuc, Instructor at the RMYC Sailing School. *"Although racing virtually, there was no competition lacking and the fleet kept the officials on their toes throughout the whole race".*

A number of other Virtual Regattas took place in the weeks that followed and were a welcomed distraction from the stress and uncertainty the pandemic was causing.

SUZUKI UNVEILS new DF115BG/DF140BG 4-cylinder outboards First In Category to Offer Drive-by-Wire, New Features For Superior Performance and Efficiency

Suzuki is recognized worldwide for making advanced technology and features available to boaters of all types — not just those who run the largest, highest-horsepower outboards. This tradition continues with today's global unveiling of Suzuki's new-for-2021 DF115BG and DF140BG 4-stroke outboards, the first in their class to offer all the advantages of drive-by-wire technology.

By bringing its proven drive-by-wire technology to its 115HP and 140HP in-line four-cylinder models, Suzuki is providing simplified rigging for a wide range of boat builders, along with silky smooth shifting, instant throttle response, enhanced performance and superior fuel efficiency. The reliability and precision control of Suzuki's drive-by-wire technology has been proven for years on Suzuki's popular 150HP through 350HP models.

Enhancements to Suzuki's new DF115BG/DF140BG go far beyond the integration of drive-by-wire technology. An upgraded compression ratio of 10.6:1 helps these new 2.0 liter displacement outboards achieve better top speed and acceleration by improving thermal efficiency. Fuel efficiency has also been increased as compared to Suzuki's existing DF115/DF140A models. Tests have demonstrated as much as 5% to 7% better fuel efficiency for the DF140BG across mid-range to high-end cruising speeds. The new DF115BG has demonstrated up to 5% - 6% better fuel efficiency at cruising speed.

Other improvements include a 40 amp alternator on both models that delivers improved output and battery charging performance



at low idle speeds — ideal for today's power-hungry fishing boats that spend a lot of time trolling.

While much has changed under the cowl, some enhancements to the new DF115BG/DF140BG are obvious to the eye. The engine itself features a sporty, streamlined exterior design that looks great on any kind of boats. With 20-inch (L) and 25-inch (X) shaft lengths available, the new DF115BG/DF140BG outboards are an ideal power choice for a wide range of fresh and saltwater boats. Both new outboards boast new graphics and are available in Suzuki's Pearl Nebular Black and new-for-2021 Super Cool White color schemes.

The redesigned cowl also incorporates a new air intake structure with improved water separation and a silencer - resonator system to attenuate engine sounds and provide a pleasant boating experience at all engine speeds/RPM.

To make routine maintenance easier, Suzuki made it possible to replace the oil filter simply by removing the upper engine cover. A new Oil Spill Catcher surrounding the oil filter mount allows for changing the filter without making a mess. Suzuki also added an easy access Water Detection Fuel Filter to help protect the engine against contaminated fuel.

The Suzuki DF115BG/DF140BG models will be available exclusively from Strand Marine & AutoSystems Ltd. Valdor Buildings, Triq Is-Sebh, Qormi. For more information email on suzuki@strandmarinemalta.com.

COVID-19 SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

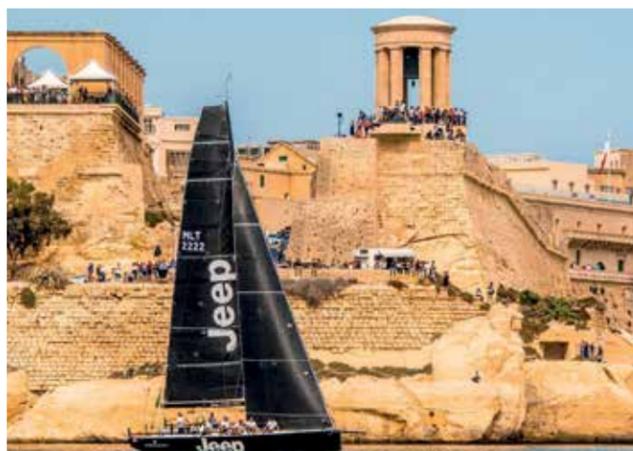
With the Corona Virus disrupting familiar rhythms of life, those looking for ways to pass the time got creative. In the absence of jam-packed calendars, people who rarely posted anything on their social media pages, became active. During the initial stages of the pandemic, when sailing was not possible, one could sense the nostalgia our sailors were experiencing.

Whilst it could not really be considered a challenge – though getting some input from our members might be considered to be at times, the Club invited its members to answer three questions – what they were missing the most (could also not have been related to sailing), a favourite moment whilst sailing and what they are looking forward to the most when lockdown and restrictions were eased.

Lockdown does strange things and the response from our members was remarkable and very entertaining for us to read.

The responses varied – from that of missing confidence due to being outside of their comfort zone, to isolation from missing elderly parents and hugging grandchildren. All those who responded to our call, were looking forward to going back sailing, racing and enjoying simple pleasures such as nice long lunches with friends. Extra points for originality go to the answer – what are you looking forward to the most – to ensure that the sun's UV definitely wears out any left-over Corona.

Whilst no prizes were awarded to the participants, bragging rights went to Lee Satariano, Ramon Sant Hill and Peter Dimech who garnered close to 1.3k likes with only a few likes to separate them.



TRIPLE HANDED NIGHT RACE marks return to Racing for RMYC Fleets

The lifting of Covid-19 restrictions relating to sporting activities was welcomed by members of the Royal Malta Yacht Club who were anxiously waiting for racing activities to resume.

The first race of the revised Club calendar took place in June and consisted of a Triple Handed Race round Comino. Initial plans to have the race round Gozo were thwarted by weather conditions when wind barely reached five knots.

Not to be discouraged, Race Officer Peter Dimech suggested a shortened course to make the cut-off time more doable for the racers.

It was a slow start for the ten strong fleet as they left Marsamxett Harbour. Jonathan Gambin's TonTon Laferla took a good lead, which was maintained until the entrance to the South Comino Channel. It was there that the race had a second start when the yachts were stuck for nearly forty five minutes waiting for pockets of wind to continue the race.

"It was a good race, we had a good lead at the entrance to South Comino channel and got stuck there for around 45 minutes with zero wind. All other racers managed to bypass us on noticing that we were becalmed. Anyway that is sailing and we still managed a good result." - Jonathan Gambin (Ton Ton Laferla)

At the Channel, the fleet split into two – with some opting for the centre of the channel whilst others chose to get closer to the islet. Otra Vez, skippered by Edward Gatt Floridia chose the latter and secured a welcome breeze as they made their way around the island of Comino and led the fleet home. Second to cross the finish line was Sean Borg's Xpresso, however it was Gambin's TonTon who secured second place on corrected time.

"It was great to be back on the water, post Covid. The race took off to slow start, with the fleet making steady progress along the coast. As we ran out of wind in the south Comino channel, the race completely re-set. The fleet split, with some boats opting for the centre of the channel and other choosing to go closer to Comino. We secured the breeze

near Comino, made our way round the island and led the fleet home" Tom Sammut Alessi (Otra Vez)

In the IRC2 Category it was Mario Sant's Time Out who took first place. The RMYC Cruisers division, finishing quite some time behind the rest of the fleet, saw Fernando Grech's Kontiki take the honours, after an enjoyable ding-dong battle all afternoon.

"Although weather conditions did not favour us Cruisers, I must admit that it was one of the most satisfying and challenging races. Start was very slow and having a maximum of 7 knots of wind heading us up to Comino was slow but moving, changing tacks with "Janissah" and avoiding making any mistakes kept us moving on a satisfactory pace. But to our disappointment as we reached the north part and could see all the racers flying their kites just off Salina, the wind dropped to zero and stayed still for about 40 minutes. The boat was on a standstill but we kept her towards the right direction and waited for the wind to pick up. Unfortunately, by the time the wind started picking up, it came from the opposite direction, so we ended up with heading wind back to finish. It took us 9 hrs to complete the race but teamwork and determination rewarded us" - Joe B. Muscat, Kontiki

TRIPLE HANDED RACE RESULTS

IRC Class 1		
1 st	Otra Vez	Edward Gatt Floridia
2 nd	TonTon Laferla Insurance	Jonathan Gambin
3 rd	Xpresso	Sean Borg
IRC Class 2		
1 st	Time Out	Mario Sant
2 nd	J Lance	Martin Borg Nicolas
3 rd	Pep	Mark Camilleri
RMYC Cruisers		
1 st	Kontiki	Fernando Grech

BUCCANEERING SPIRIT

Toulon to Malta in a J92s

Sailing 630 nautical miles in what is not an offshore boat brought out the buccaneering spirit in Club's Honorary Treasurer Charles Cronin as he, together with his crew of buccaneers transported his 30 foot, J92 Alecto to Malta from Toulon. Here's the story in his own words.



When I last wrote I mentioned that I was looking forward to enjoying last year's Christmas present. You may recall that I treated myself to buying a J92s located in Marseille, but because of Covid-19, its refit and transit to Malta had to be postponed. With the easing of restrictions in both France and Malta, I was able to assemble a crew of buccaneers (Louis Attard, Mark Camilleri, and Davide Breviglieri) to take possession of the boat (Alecto) and sail her to Malta.

'Buccaneers' you may ask yourself - what does he mean? Well, a J92s is only 30feet in length, to consider a crossing of some 630 nautical miles in what is definitely not an offshore boat, does require a buccaneering spirit. Our route took us from Toulon to Bonifacio (Corsica), to Arbatax (Sardinia), Trapani (Sicily) to Marina di Valletta in Marsamxett. Our victuals were simple, most commonly: water, salami, cheese, tomatoes, bread rolls, and canned pineapple chunks. But we ate very well wherever we stopped.

Our first leg to Bonifacio was taken with trepidation. The Toulon boat yard charged with supplying the boat's AIS and EPIRB had failed to deliver. Both devices (despite written instructions) were coded with the boat's former French MMSI number, which no longer existed. As the boat was now under the British flag these devices were about as useful as chocolate teapots. I rejected the EPIRB and pressed on hoping that our radar reflector, and sharp watch would keep us out of trouble.

Entering Bonifacio for the first time takes a leap of faith, as from the West there is no obvious entrance to the harbour. With a fresh onshore breeze, we steered hesitantly towards a wall of limestone cliffs. Eventually we spotted the port channel light perched halfway up a cliff that guided us to this ideal pirate's harbour. That night we dined in style at the 'Da Passano' restaurant, which has an inventive French menu, with some particularly excellent sauces.

The following day we began our next leg to Arbatax. With a fresh Westerly expected through the Bonifacio Straits we put one reef in the main and headed South. In gusts of 24knots the boat took on a life of its own as we surfed down the waves, to touch a highly exhilarating 12knots.

After some tense pilotage to avoid the Zone A marine reserves around the islands of North Eastern Sardinia, and the sudden nocturnal appearance of a fishing fleet off Capo Comino, we arrived in Arbatax, guided by the splendid Capo Bellavista Lighthouse. That evening we enjoyed a sumptuous mixed grill at the 'Star 2' restaurant, adjacent to the port.

Our third leg to Trapani, was largely unremarkable because we saw nothing, it was a complete maritime desert. However, our spirits were lifted as we approached Trapani, where we were joined by a pod of dolphins who spent several minutes playing dare on the bow of the boat. To celebrate our last foreign port, we treated ourselves to some exceptional Sicilian piscatorial cuisine at the 'Trattoria Poseidone's Frutti d'Amare', which was rounded off with almond biscuits dipped in Marsala.

The last leg to Malta was full of expectation and fatigue, we were in home waters, but the last several days at sea in a small boat were taking their toll. We were dead short of sleep, and we had to cross the busy shipping lane of the Malta Channel at night. Eventually we arrived at our berth at Marina di Valletta just after lunch on Tuesday 21 July.

The journey was done: a success; an experience; and an achievement.



RMYC TWILIGHT SERIES

In previous years, some crews admitted to the après sail beers on the Club Terrace were the main attraction of the Twilight Series. It was good to see that this year mid-week afternoon racing did not lose its appeal despite not having the customary beers on the Club Terrace afterwards.

September, saw the Club host five races in the Series which attracted a good, competitive fleet each time.

Racing started from Marsamxett Harbour at the traditional St Elmo line, and finished at a line from Tigne special Mark to Tigne beach. Race Officer Peter Dimech varied the courses for each race depending on the weather conditions of that afternoon.

"We always look forward to the Twilight Series. A mid-week sail breaks up the week in a most enjoyable manner and it brings together other cruising boats to make a nice fleet. We hope that in the next edition more cruisers will join the fun. And who knows we might be allowed a beer or two afterwards. - Fernando Grech, Kontki"

Charles' Cronin's Alecto and Mark Camilleri's Pep, the two most consistent participants in the Series were vying for the overall win. In the end it was Alecto who emerged winner of the IRC Class with two second places and a win compared to Pep's two third places and a win. Sean Borg's Xpresso took third place with two wins in two races.

Kontiki's consistency throughout paid off when she was declared overall Cruisers' Class Winner. Fernando Grech's Dufour 455 registered two wins and a second place.

RMYC Twilight Series Overall Results

	IRC Racers	Cruisers
1 st	Alecto (Charles Cronin)	Kontiki (Fernando Grech)
2 nd	Pep (Mark Camilleri)	Dimm (Kevin Pisani Zammit)
3 rd	Xpresso (Sean Borg)	Christine (Paul Masters)



Camaraderie, Heated Debates and Competitive One Design Racing - the SB20 Class Defined

SB20 Malta Association President Catherine Halpin pens an honest yet entertaining account of life in the local Class.

As I type, the blisters on my fingers are cracking. A reminder that if you're going to show up on the start line of an SB20 race in Malta these days, you'd best be on your top form. We're just finished participating in the BOV Autumn Regatta hosted by RMYC, where we had absolute neck-in-neck racing in a fleet that continues to improve at every meeting. The gentle skittish wind unfortunately had an impact every now and then, but overall, the distribution of bad luck was pretty even, and the battles once the breeze was on made everything worthwhile.



This was the second of ten regattas of the 2020/2021 league which will run until June. We aim for around six races per regatta, with short windward leeward courses keeping the tempo on board high. Because the boats are one design, the competition comes down to sailing performance on the day. It also rewards those who practise ongoing 'tlc' on the boats. Dare I say it's lovely to be on a WhatsApp group where men are sharing photos of themselves very competently polishing away! Even I have now learned what a fid is but have not made sufficient progress for any of my splices to be accepted onboard.

Whilst the mission of every team is to improve and get more competitive at each regatta, the SB20 Malta Association's values are to encourage participation in this fabulous sport, opening up the world of sailing to newcomers and to promote fair, challenging racing to sailors of all levels. We also used to have a beer afterwards. Hopefully someday we will again!

We always aim to get our races done in a reasonable amount of time over the weekend. Sailing can be a very time-hungry sport, so having a successful formula which doesn't demand the whole day is a real benefit. Our standard location is outside of the Marsamxett Harbour / Tigne Point area, but we also participate in regattas further afield, about three times a year. This allows us the opportunity to meet and sail with other clubs. We have also held additional races where young sailors join us onboard for a fun race. The Association hopes in this manner to maintain youths in the sport who traditionally fall out of it when they decide to stop laser sailing.



In 2021 our target is to incorporate more training to ensure the standard continues to improve across the board. We also look to achieve full compliance of the boats and equipment with international standards - something we have allowed some derogations on while the class matured.

Usually in our regattas we aim to have all eight boats of the current Maltese fleet racing. By 2021, who knows how many

other boats may join? We are definitely seeing a lot of interest out there and the Association is ready to assist any potential new boat owners and crew in whatever way we can. What is for sure, is that if you are looking for close competitive one-design racing, with regular events, good comradery, the occasional heated debate about certain sailing rules, and top-notch fashion sense, (well maybe not that last bit), then SB20 racing is the answer!

ABOUT SB20 RACING

The SB20 is all about simplicity and ease of use so that you spend more time on the water and make the most of your boat. Trail it, launch it, rig it and you're sailing in about 40 minutes. Sailing an SB20 is accessible and fun for sailors of all levels and skills. It's also highly tactical upwind, and fast and furious downwind, which appeals to dinghy and keelboat sailors alike. The class ethos means that boat speeds are virtually identical and it's your skills on the racecourse that make the difference. The SB20 is a strict one-design keelboat that makes close racing and performance sailing accessible to everyone. The bottom-line of the Class Rule is that everyone races the same boat; fair and square. The racing is not between boats but between teams: helmsman against helmsman; crew against crew. So, winning does not depend on your budget, the latest gadgets or your physical fitness; it's everyone's combined ability that wins the day. Skills over frills!

Email: sb20malta@gmail.com | Facebook: [@sb20maltasailing](https://www.facebook.com/sb20maltasailing) | Mobile: +356 9942 3740

2021 Calendar of Events

January - 9 th , 10 th ,	RMYC Regatta	Ta'Xbiex
February - 13 th , 14 th	BSC Regatta	Birzebbuga
March - 20 th , 21 st	SB20 Regatta	Ta'Xbiex
April - 10 th , 11 th	GHM Regatta	Birgu
May - 27 th - 30 th	Malta Race Week / SB20 Gran Slam	To Be Confirmed
June - 5 th , 6 th	SB20 National Championships	St. Paul's Bay
July - 24 th , 25 th	St. Peter's Regatta*	Birzebbugia

*Event is not part of the League

**Crews are invited to check for any changes on the Class Facebook Page





No TIME OUT for Mario Sant in Ragusa

The first offshore event for the Royal Malta Yacht Club, after the resumption of racing was a weekend regatta to Marina di Ragusa. The event was put together soon after it became possible to sail to Sicily again and in spite of the short notice managed to attract a good-sized fleet. Mario Sant, race winner shared his thoughts with SPINNAKER immediately after the race.

We have a massive grin on our faces.

But let's go back to the beginning, a bright sunny Sunday morning at Marina di Ragusa.

For a change we managed to convince our much better halves to join us for a race, although I must admit that there was some bribery in the form of fine dining.

Having been cooped up, like every one else, for most of the winter the crew of Time Out were chomping at the bit to get going. This was clear from the start where we showed a clean pair of heels to the rest of the fleet before slowly being overhauled by the larger and faster boats, namely Xpresso and Comanche Raider III. We did hold our own until the first transition where an hour of light winds made progress agonizingly slow for all but Xpresso who managed to slip away and extend.

The next transition brought a welcome change with a fresh North Westerly fluctuating between 8 to 14 knots. What a challenge - we knew we were in touch with the leaders and worked relentlessly to squeeze the last 0.10 of a knot out of the old girl and she responded magnificently to every little tweak.

As we got to the last couple of miles we were faced with a big lift which meant that to keep up speed we had to over stand as far as Torri/ Exiles and then gybe along the coast down to the finish line - tense moments as we knew that we were eating up precious minutes.

You can imagine our delight when the official results were published showing us leading by less than a minute.

Great time Ragusa, great race RMYC, super Time Out crew ladies first and foremost!



malta sailing federation

NEWS

This time last year when penning the MSF article for Spinnaker magazine, I was planning that the next article would be devoted to the various Class Associations that are members of the MSF. But following what was an extraordinary year, we cannot forget what the Covid-19 scenario has brought to the sailing community, to our events and activities.



MALTA OPTIMIST DINGHY ASSOCIATION (MODA)

One of the last events held last year before the onset of Covid-19 was the MODA Regatta at Malta Young Sailors Club. The regatta was held under what were normal conditions for the time, though the pandemic was looming over the horizon. The MODA Regatta is the annual regatta of the local Association of one of the most successful sailing dinghies for children. There are with over 150,000 registered with the International Association. This has proven to be a popular boat in Malta for young children up to the age of 15. Most of this success is attributed to the MODA. Suffice to say that in the last Rolex Middle Sea Race more than 20 local sailors hailed from the Optimist Class. In the local ranking regattas, the Optimist sometimes exceeds 50 sailors between Novices, Cadets and Seniors. All local clubs now sail the Optimist dinghy, with Vikings Sailing Club being the latest to join the fold. The foremost Maltese result obtained in the Optimist Class is that of Richard Schultheis who became runner up World Champion in 2019.

Following the MODA regatta, the onset of Covid-19 and its restrictions meant that no Regattas were organized until the lifting of some measures in July.

MALTA LASER CLASS ASSOCIATION (MLCA)

Another very successful Association is the Malta Laser Class Association, led by RMYC's Peter Dimech. This Association has been instrumental in re-activating the Laser Class in Malta after some years of decline. Through the efforts of the Association the Class is now sailed in all four local Clubs and offers a healthy possibility for ex-Optimist sailors to continue sailing competitively in local regattas.

The Class has grown from a handful of sailors around five years ago to close to 30 active sailors. The Association also organizes its own Ranking Regatta and supports its sailors by offering training clinics and other support programmes.

TOPPER ASSOCIATION

The Topper Association is a young Association but actively promotes the Topper Sailing Dinghy, a step up from the Optimist dinghy. It aims to popularise this dinghy which is a very popular club racing dinghy in countries like England. Topper sailors from Malta have even represented Malta in Topper World Championships.

RS FEVA

The RS Feva Association is the only association for a double handed sailing dinghy in Malta. Introduced in 2011, this is a reasonably popular boat with three Clubs having programmes to cater for this Class. Maltese members of this Class have also participated in World Championships, producing very good results in the Juniors Class.

SB20

The latest Class association to join the Federation is the SB20 Class Association. Spearheaded by Robert Ciantar and Adrian Gauci Borda, this boat was an instant success, due to its exhilarating performance and manageable costs. With a local fleet of 8 boats, this boat offers ex-dinghy sailors an exciting alternative to keelboat sailing with perfectly matched one-design Class boats.

MALTA MODEL BOAT ASSOCIATION

The Malta Model Boat Association is one of the most active associations with a full season of regattas for both the International One Metre and for the Dragon Force RG65 boats.

In the 1999, the association successfully hosted the World Championships. Like any other organisation, its events were affected by the Covid-19 restrictions but is now back to organizing training sessions in strict compliance with health regulations for its members.

Whilst looking towards 2021 with cautious optimism, the MSF augurs all sailors a year full of sailing.

Michael Mifsud
President, Malta Sailing Federation

CLEAN SWEEP for ARTIE III



SATARIANO'S HH42 EMERGES CLEAR WINNER OF THE 60th MALTA - SYRACUSE RACE

The 60th edition of the Malta - Syracuse Race, hosted by the Royal Malta Yacht Club and the Lega Navale Italiana (Sezione Siracusa) on held on the 1st August. This was postponed from its usual date in mid-July due to health restrictions and was under the circumstances, a watered-down edition when compared to previous years.

Nevertheless, eighteen boats made it to the starting line – including Italian veterans Ottovolante and Malafemmena.

Malta was done proud with nine boats. The Maltese fleet included Alecto (Charles Cronin), Artie III (Lee Satariano), Comanche Raider III (Ramon Sant Hill), Elusive 2 (Aaron, Christoph & Maya Podesta), Inspiration (Godwin Zammit), Janissah (Mario Debono), Lartista (Anthony Camilleri), Maltese Falcon 2 (Jonathan Camilleri Bowman) and Otra Vez (Aaron Gatt Florida).

Lee Satariano's Artie III – made up of mostly Rolex Middle Sea Race seasoned sailors, made a clean sweep by winning, line honours, the race Overall in the ORC Category as well as in the IRC Category which consisted of the Maltese fleet.

Commenting after the race, Satariano was very pleased with the overall result. He expressed his satisfaction at how the boat's performance – a result of frequent training and race participation. Satariano explained that the crew is doing their utmost to compete in more of the offshore races in preparation for the Rolex Middle Sea Race.

The fleet had a generally good breeze for most of the race, though winds became lighter as they approached Sicily. Despite their excellent performance and having finished well before

second placed Ottovolante. The course record established in 2014 by Massimo Savoca's Dreamer Tech - a time of 08:37:22, still eluded Artie III.

The second and third placed Maltese boats were Aaron Gatt Florida's Otra Vez, followed by the Podesta siblings' Elusive 2. In the Cruiser Category, Godwin Zammit's Inspiration was the first Maltese boat in this category, finishing in fourth place.

The youngest crew member of the Malta - Syracuse Fleet was Kristian Borg Nicolas, who formed part of the Maltese Falcon II crew. He was presented with a token of his participation by Lega Navale Italiana President, Antonino Amato.

Unfortunately, the scheduled Syracuse - Taormina Race was cancelled due to poor turnout.

"Despite the lower than usual numbers, due to Covid-19 and the cancellation of the Syracuse - Taormina Race, we are still extremely satisfied with the outcome and the results of the 60th edition of this classic race. Those who took part enjoyed the race and the enthusiasm could be felt." explained Godwin Zammit, Commodore Royal Malta Yacht Club.

The Club extends its gratitude to all the volunteers undertaking Race Management duties as well as the Lega Navale Italiana and Yachting Malta for their support.



Nurturing the OLYMPIC DREAM

The SailCoach logo is recognisable and is an established part of the Royal Malta Yacht Club's Sailing School Operations. Founded by Trevor Millar, SailCoach has been instrumental in the provision of high level coaching, attracting Olympic medallists and hopefuls to our Club and Maltese waters.



Sail Coach has been operating from the Royal Malta Yacht Club for just over eight years, arriving for the first time in November 2012. The RMYC Sailing School in its present form was set up in February 2015. Both these moves have been highly successful for both the RMYC and SailCoach, demonstrating what cooperation between two successful organisations can achieve. This cooperation has brought all-year-round life to the boat area of the Club and will provide the RMYC with the generations of active sailors.



Enough of the local history lesson, as a lot of you don't know what SailCoach does and has accomplished in its 25 years of existence. We bring Laser sailors from all over the world, mainly from small nations like Malta and try to get them qualified for the Olympic Games. In total SailCoach has consistently enabled a total of 42 sailing athletes to participate in the Olympic Games, winning four Olympic Sailing Medals in the process.

Almost all of the athletes that SailCoach has coached would not have achieved Olympic participation, because of the lack of resources of both coaching and financial. We try to be the guys that levels the playing field for athletes coming from small sailing nations and although these days it has become much harder with the amount of resources some of the larger countries can invest in their sailors.

We are not just about winning medals, SailCoach prides itself on not only nurturing and developing sailing ability, but doing so in a manner that sets itself apart from other coaching organisations, by developing the whole individual, by taking a holistic approach to personal development as well as sporting success.

Many of SailCoach's success stories have involved Olympic, World and European medals; however, we are extremely proud of the number of individuals that tell us how the life skills they learnt at SailCoach helped them reach their own personal potential in not only sport, but also in their professional lives. Many have gone onto careers in business, law, healthcare, finance and education, and describe the time spent learning to be the best sailor they could be, equipped them with vital skills to be successful in a broader life sense.

Why Malta? Well believe it or not Malta has become recognised in Olympic training circles as an exceptionally good dinghy training venue with its variety of sailing conditions, consistent winds, and a venue where very few days are lost because of the impact of the weather. You probably have noticed in the last few years that we have had several Olympic medalists coming to Malta to train and this year sees the British Olympic Standard Laser Team use Malta as their winter training venue.

So where are we now in this Olympic cycle, well we have two sailors in contention to compete in Tokyo 2020 (as it's still known), an Egyptian Aly Badawy and an Indian Vishnu Saravanan. Aly, a student at the American University of Malta (AUM), qualified this time last year in Algeria and has his place confirmed for Tokyo. Aly combines his studies at AUM and his sail training with SailCoach, spending an average of 15 hours a week on the water. An excellent example to young Maltese athletes in how to balance study and training.

On the other hand, Vishnu, a young army officer in the Indian Army, has been in Malta training for over two years now and has his Olympic qualification regatta in Abu Dhabi this coming February. He and his coach Alexandr Denisiuc (another familiar face around the club) were out in Abu Dhabi last March, with days to go to the start of Vishnu's Olympic qualification regatta the pandemic started, and the event ended up cancelled.

The RMYC Sailing School young sailors are fortunate to be able to rub shoulders with such a great number of famous sailors, and hopefully, in time some of their knowledge will rub off and make Maltese sailing stronger in the process.



From the Sailing School



If there were any doubts that our Summer and Autumn Sailing programmes would not have a good take up, these were dispelled as soon as we announced them to the public.

The Summer Sailing Term was the busiest and most successful summer the Sailing School has ever had, with over



450 children registering and ending up with a 'fully booked' message in no short a time. Mindful of the Covid-19 situation and the importance of safety, the school adopted a list of protocols that were strictly adhered to.

Once Summer was over, it was encouraging to see that the majority of children from the Summer programme continued with their lessons and were joined by a number of new sailors who joined the Sailing School's morning Beginners' Classes.

Whilst the school has always welcomed a steady number of adults, for the first time the School was overwhelmed with the number of requests from Adults wanting to learn to sail.

A few extra Sunday afternoon lessons but still that did not cater for the full demand. For the first time ever, the School had to draw up a waiting list!

Things being so busy at the school, Charlie Linsell has joined the team as the School's Senior Instructor and also assists with bookings and helps out on some basic Administration work.

The Sailing School was well represented in all local dinghy regattas and for which our students proudly took their place on many podiums.

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

The RMYC Sailing School, following consultation with the relevant authorities implemented a series of protocols to ensure everyone's safety.

- Only 5 sailors plus the coach can take part at anyone time.
- All Sailors are to prebook their lessons as per appropriate schedule. Bookings are to be done via Whatsapp on +356 9930 7037, with the name of the sailor and date and time of the lesson This needs to be done up to 3 days in advance. This is to ensure fairness in attendance. We will not accept any sailors showing up to a lesson if no booking has been made. A confirmation of booking will be sent. If you can not attend, please inform us as soon as possible, so another Sailor may attend.
- Only single handed boats are permitted to sail. Unfortunately at the moment we can't allow the RS Feva team or the RS Visions to sail, due to the social distancing rules. Sailors are to follow the Schools Social Media and Club Website for the latest updates.
- Pick up and Drop off point, in front of the Club. Sailors are to be dropped off at the front of the RMYC and collected from the same point. Parents are not to enter

the Club or the slipway area. Sailors will then go straight to the slipway area to begin rigging.

- Sailors to wear masks, on shore AT ALL TIMES.
- When on shore, ALL sailors must maintain a social distance of 2 metres.
- Changing rooms and showers will be closed. Sailors are to arrive ready changed and leave in the clothes which they arrived in.
- Sailors temperature will be taken when arriving at the drop off point. Any sailor with a temperature of over 37.2c will be sent home.
- Sailors who miss lessons due to sickness, will be asked to provide a doctors note before returning to lessons.
- Sailors will be asked to bring enough drinking water, in their own reusable bottles, to last for the duration of the lesson. There will be no access to the drinking fountain in the office.
- Sailors will not be allowed to enter the Sailing School office.
- No sharing of equipment. Sailors should ensure they have all the equipment they need for the lesson.
- The RMYC will have hand sanitiser dispensers situated around the Club. All sailors should use these on arrival at the lesson and regularly while on shore time.

RMYC Sailors' good results at MODA REGATTA

Royal Malta Yacht Club Sailing School students Poyraz Fidanboy and Luca Schembri Meli took part in the Malta Optimist Dinghy Association Ranking Regatta hosted by Malta Young Sailors' Club in St. Paul's Bay in January 2020.

The young RMYC sailors took part in the Novice Category, racing a total of six races spread over Saturday and Sunday.

Whilst twelve year old Poyraz Fidanboy has been taking part in Optimist Class Races, this was the first racing experience for nine year old Luca Schembri Meli. In spite of this, both secured

places on the winners' podium. Poyraz finished in first place and Luca in third.

Ruya Cakmakli, Head Coach at the Royal Malta Yacht Club Sailing School, who was present for the whole weekend, explained that conditions over the weekend were varying from light to medium, with some swell experienced on Sunday. Nevertheless the two boys coped well and gave good performances.

The MODA Regatta was the first Ranking Race for the 2020 Season.



Promising Talent DIMITRIS VERTSONIS

Fifteen year old Dimitris Vertsonis has been living in Malta for the past seven years and has been sailing for the past five years, two of which have been spent under the tutelage of RMYC Sailing School Head Coach Ruya Cakmakli.



Being surrounded by the sea and having exposure to sailing boats on the water made Dimitris take up sailing and now trains for roughly fourteen hours a week. A typical training session consists of speed tests, getting ready for race starts, rounding the marks and racing. Fortunately, Malta has good sailing conditions so Dimitris can train regularly in shifty and strong winds.

"The sea is full of surprises, and that is one of the hardest parts of sailing - it can surprise you with anything - the important way is how you react to these conditions. Nothing is easy but with practice you gain experience and you can tackle what is thrown at you"

Despite loving double handed classes - Dimitris competed successfully in the RS Feva class, he switched to the Laser Radial class in the summer of 2020. His choice for this change was the highly competitive nature of this class as well as the opportunities to train with foreign teams for the entire month of July, spending all his mornings with summer school instructors.

Since then he has managed to lift his game and dominated the Class in the last three Ranking Regattas. Dimitris was leading the 2020 Nationals Championships. Unluckily a broken mast during the penultimate race meant he could not compete in the following race. Despite having five points to spare, he narrowly missed out on the podium claiming a fourth place.

Dimitris made up for this disappointment in the Mapfre Middlesea Yachting Malta Christmas Regatta where he claimed a third place in the Laser Radial Category. During this two-day competition he had to contend with two highly experience Latvian sailors - Agija Ēlerte and Elza Cibule - who were in Malta for a high level training camp and who both represented the RMYC.

Dimitris has set his sights firmly on international regattas, especially once travelling will be less of a hassle and races start to take place regularly without the fear of cancellation. Being surrounded by a number of Olympic medallists and hopefuls **[Editor's Note: The RMYC Sailing School regularly hosts this level of sailors for training and coaching]** makes the Olympics are not far from his thoughts.

Who knows what the future will hold for Dimitris, but if his consistent training and booming performances are anything to go by, then we should be hearing more of this young man.



RMYC SAILING SCHOOL

at the National Dinghy Championships

RMYC Sailing School Head Coach, Ruya Cakmakli explains the School's Performance at the 2020 National Dinghy Championships and shares plans for the sailors' future with the Club.

The Royal Malta Yacht Club had a significant presence at the National Dinghy Championships, hosted by Birzebbugia Sailing Club, under the auspices of the Malta Sailing Federation. A total of seventeen boats represented the Club during the three day event held between the 31st October and 2nd November.

The RMYC Fleet was made up of four Novice Optimist sailors, three Senior Optimist sailors, four-team RS Feva XL, two Laser 4.7, one Laser Radial with three Laser Standard sailors bringing a total of twenty one sailors.

Our Club sailors' National Championship experience kicked off on the Friday after school, where they prepared their boats for transportation by the SailCoach road trailer who would take the boats to Birzebbugia. Once the Opis were loaded, the RS Feva and Laser Sailors prepared their boats which were to be towed to Birzebbugia the following morning.

"The preparation was an unexpectedly fantastic team building exercise - the buzz that the juniors experienced was immense and it was really special to see the seniors helping out the young ones" - Ruya Cakmakli



RACING CONDITIONS

Weather conditions varied throughout the whole event. On the first day, wind was slight ranging from 5 - 7 knots. All fleets managed two races. Meanwhile on the second day the wind was varying between 12 - 17 knots. Race Committee drafted a schedule which saw the Laser Fleet starting the day's events. They were followed, one minute later by the RS Feva XL. A mass start was given to the Optimist Novice and Senior groups, with all Classes managing to enjoy three races. It was an early start on the third and final day. Wind picked reaching up to 18 knots allowing the fleet to compete in three races.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS

Optimist Novice

Matthew Camilleri - 4th place, just 3 points behind 3rd place
 Katrina Micallef - 10th place
 Lisa Aquilina - 11th place
 Ava Calafiore - 15th place. Ava just joined our Optimist team but has shown huge dedication and generous spirit.

Optimist Seniors

Poyraz Fidanboy - 16th place
 Molly Ross - 19th place, Medal for 3rd Place in the Girls' Fleet
 Aras Memis - 20th place

RS Feva XL

Faye Portanier\Sabrina Pace - Bronze Medal, 1st in U16 Both showed very consistent results enabling them to get to the podium
 Kyran Busutti\Michael Verstonis - 4th Place Youngest team with an average age of 11. Both produced perfect results in the second and third day of racing. Unfortunately issues with their spinnaker on the first day prevented them from making it to the podium.

Bo Zhang\Max Obelensky - 5th Place
 Luke Ransley\Michael Church - 6th Place

In this Class we saw the presentation of our new fleet of sailors, who's ages vary from 10 to 14. This was their first National Championships experience but they showed excellent skills and ability to compete well in the races and in many varying conditions.

LASER CLASS PROGRAMME

The RMYC Sailing School, earlier on this year, kickstarted a Laser Class programme for the young sailors who showed commitment and promise to the sport. The presence of strong foreign teams, who come to the Club specifically to train all year round, has been a source of inspiration. These international sailors have proven to be strong role models who motivated our young ones to learn as much as they can. The new Laser sailors were ex RS Feva sailors who outgrew the boat and moved on to the next level.

Laser Radial

Dimitris Verstonis - 4th Place

Dimitris started on the Laser Radial in Summer of 2020 and had opportunities to train with foreign teams for the entire month of July, combining all his mornings with summer school instructing. He has managed to lift his game and dominated the Class in the last three Ranking Regattas. Dimitris was leading the 2020 Nationals. After six races he had five points to spare but a broken mast during the seventh race meant that he couldn't not compete in the following race resulting in narrowly missing out on the podium.

Laser 4.7

Lara Merten - 9th Place, 3rd Place in Girls' Division
 Fien Vlasblom - 13th Place, 4th Place in Girls' Division



Both sailors started their Laser training and summer with minimal racing experience on the helm. However, they showed a considerable improvement in a short period of time. Hopefully they will continue with their winter training and see them produce improved results next year.

Laser Standard

Vishnu Saravanan - 1st Place and 1st Overall in handicap system against Radial and 4.7
 Jake Farren-Price - 2nd Place
 James Juhasz - 3rd Place

The RMYC was represented by the School's Instructors and full time Laser sailors who train at the Club. These sailors had just returned from the Senior European Championship in Poland and Italian Nationals in Follonica, Italy but snatched the opportunity for more racing. The trio had a battle on the water for every point and every inch finishing the 50 minute races within seconds of each other and leaving a substantially large gap between the rest of the fleet. It was only until the last race that the winner was announced, since two of them had a tie.

All in all, the National Championships were a positive experience. Despite the size of the team, the varying levels of experience and ages, it was one united front where everyone was happy to assist one another.

"We are really pleased with the outcome of these Championships. The results motivate us to continue our work with these promising sailors. We have a fantastic base at the Club which enables us to provide the right kind of training. We look forward to growing our optimist fleet as well as keep improving on the RS Feva Class and Youth Laser Programme" concluded Ruya Cakmakli.



Jarhead seal the honours at the **BOV** Autumn Regatta

Bank of Valletta

In spite of the difficulties that Covid-19 has placed around most sporting events, the Royal Malta Yacht Club hosted a successful BOV Autumn Regatta over the weekend of the 13th November. The annual event, which usually takes place in Gozo, was based around the eastern coast of Malta, without the social gatherings usually associated with this event.

In a weekend marked with very little wind, the Club, under the direction of Race Officer Peter Dimech, still managed to hold six races for the SB20 and J92 Classes, five races for the Racing Classes and four for the Club Cruiser Class.

Jarhead, the J109 owned by the Jarhead Young Sailors' Foundation and skippered by Zach Zammit went on an unbeaten run, winning all five races in their Class, throughout the weekend. Their performance saw them win the overall BOV Regatta Trophy for the first time.

"Wind was very light and tactical throughout the entire weekend. The courses consisted of medium distance round the cans outside the Sliema area and therefore it required a number of sail changes to get around the course even due to the big wind shifts. The team did really well to tackle some complicated sail changes; but the boat never stopped moving which shows from the consistency of the results." Zach Zammit, skipper, Jarhead.

On Friday, races started from the mouth of Marsamxett harbour at Tigne Point. The fleet set sail towards the Fairway buoy and heading up north towards St. Julian's mark and back to the RMYC. The finish line saw a mix of IRC and Club rated boats finishing together just inside the stipulated time limit. Winners for the day were Aaron Gatt Florida's Otra Vez (IRC Class 1), Zach Zammit/ Jarhead Foundation's Jarhead (IRC Class 2) and Simon Camilleri's XL for the Club rated Class.

Saturday was once again marked with little wind. The Club rated boats set off for their first and only coastal race of the day at 1105hrs. The course was set to the Ghallis North Cardinal mark and back. This time it was Georges Bonello Du Puis' Escape to take the honours on corrected time.

Meanwhile for the IRC Rated boats, a shorter course was set to allow for two races to take place. The course took them from the start line around the fixed marks of Fairway Buoy and St Julian's mark, before finishing back on the water start finish line. Honours for the day went once again to Otra Vez and Jarhead.

Joining the fleet on Saturday and Sunday were the SB20 and J92 Classes, who had separate starts on a short windward - leeward course. Unfortunately, the J92 Pep, skippered by Mark Camilleri, had to retire after one race with technical problems, leaving J Lance (Tom Ripard) and Alecto (Charles Cronin) to fight it out between them. The SB20 fleet enjoyed some keen racing, with many close encounters at the marks, and finishing close to each other.



Sunday's course was laid further offshore, with a windward leg of almost 2 miles out to the Fairway Buoy, round an inflatable mark at Dragonara with a finish at the water laid line. The Club rated Class managed to fit in two races on the day, with XL and Kevin Pisani Zammit's Dimm sharing the day's spoils.

The IRC fleet had a slightly longer course with the inclusion of St Julian's mark and a laid mark about half a mile to windward. Racing took around an hour and a half to two hours. In IRC 1, the day's winners were Otra Vez (Race 4) and Jonathan Gambin's TonTon (Race 5), whilst in IRC 2 Jarhead continued to maintain its winning streak having remained unbeaten throughout the whole weekend.

The SB20 Fleet were again quite well matched with all seven teams taking part. Outlaw and the current leaders on the circuit Careful Now were being pressed by the two Sailcoach teams. Eventually, it was Careful Now, Outlaw and Seriously Bonkers - skippered by Sailcoach crew who took the top three places. The J92 Class was won by J Lance. With both contenders finishing in a tie, it was J Lance who broke the tie having won the last race. Worth mentioning was J Lance's sporting gesture when they asked for a restart of the fifth race when they noticed that Alecto had suffered slight damage to a headsail.

"We can consider ourselves fortunate to have been able to host the BOV Autumn weekend particularly at a time when most sports are holding back from hosting competitions. Of course strict protocols had to come into play for the safety of all, but there were no objections from the crews who seek every opportunity to race" explained Peter Dimech, Rear Commodore (Sailing) and Race Officer. "Our gratitude goes of course to Bank of Valletta for supporting this event once again and of course all the volunteers - Martin Azzopardi, Simon P. Grech, Mark Napier, Alana Meadows, Anna Rossi and Adrian Gauci Borda, who gave their time to assist with race management duties".

"It is indeed a pleasure to witness the skills of such a young crew, who went on to win the race against one of the largest fleets ever to participate in this race" said Charles Azzopardi, Executive PR and Marketing at Bank of Valletta. "We take this opportunity to thank the Royal Malta Yacht Club whose impeccable organisation, despite

the current situation, made the race possible, and to all the participating crews who followed health authority regulations while enjoying the weekend of sailing."

BOV AUTUMN REGATTA RESULTS

Overall

1 st	JYS Jarhead	Zach Zammit / Jarhead Young Sailors' Foundation
2 nd	Otra Vez	Aaron Gatt Florida
3 rd	Ton Ton Laferla	Jonathan Gambin

IRC Class 1

1 st	Otra Vez	Aaron Gatt Florida
2 nd	Ton Ton Laferla	Jonathan Gambin
3 rd	Xpresso	Sean Borg

IRC Class 2

1 st	JYS Jarhead	Zach Zammit / Jarhead Young Sailors' Foundation
2 nd	Time Out	Mario Sant
3 rd	Vivace	Andrew Agius Delicata

Club Cruiser Class

1 st	XL	Simon Camilleri
2 nd	Dimm	Kevin Pisani Zammit
3 rd	Manana	Peter Ellul Vincenti

SB20

1 st	Careful Now	Barry Hurley
2 nd	Outlaw	Brian Flahive
3 rd	Seriously Bonkers	Jake Farren-Price

J92

1 st	J Lance	Tom Ripard
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TON TON LAFERLA etches name on Raymarine Double Handed Figure of Eight Trophy

Xpresso claims line honours and comes in close second on corrected time

Ton Ton Laferla, skippered by father and son duo – Jonathan and Gerald Gambin took the honours at the Raymarine Double Handed Figure of Eight Race which took place on Saturday 5th December.

With a forecast of strong winds of approximately 20-25 knots from the South and veering to West during the day, the thirteen-boat fleet set off in one start at 0805hrs, under the guidance of Rear Commodore Sailing Peter Dimech and Luca Lacitignola who took the responsibility to oversee the start.

The chosen courses, the longest provided for in the sailing instructions were a full figure of eight around Malta and Gozo for the IRC Rated Racing boats. A shorter course of 56 nautical miles was given to the Club Cruiser Class.



Heading south to the Munxar Cardinal buoy as the first mark, it was tight start for Elusive 2 (Aaron Podesta/ David Anastasi), Ton Ton Laferla (Jonathan Gambin / Gerald Gambin) and Xpresso (Sean Borg / Paul Borg Cardona) - the latter left the line in third place but in short time gained the lead, with both Ton Ton and Elusive 2, hot in pursuit.

As the fleet rounded Munxar Cardinal Mark, the XP44 Xpresso to the lead, battling winds reaching approximately 24 knots. The swell and wind conditions forced them to take conservative decisions in order to be safe. Shortly after passing Filfla, Elusive 2 was forced to retire due to technical problems, leaving Xpresso and Ton Ton to lead the way. A good tactical decision by Ton Ton saw them take the lead upon reaching Gozo, where flat calm waters gave the fleet a bit of respite from the battering



they had been encountering. The respite was short lived as the fleet once again was faced with strong swells as they passed the Gozo channel. It was here that Xpresso overtook Ton Ton once again. With winds reaching levels of 29 knots, it was full survival mode until the fleet reached Marsamxett Harbour.

Xpresso maintained their lead till the very end to win Line Honours.

"We took the decision to go at full power from the word go. Although we did take some conservative decisions, our strategy paid off. All in all, both Paul and I were satisfied with our race and taking Line Honours certainly ended a tough day on a good note" – Sean Borg, Xpresso

Second to finish was Gambin's Ton Ton Laferla, who after corrected time took the top spot, beating the Xp44 by just four minutes.

Race winner Jonathan Gambin expressed his satisfaction at the race's outcome. *"It was great to race with my son. Ton Ton Laferla is a powerful, fast boat however she needs to be trimmed well to perform at top level. We are now working on this to improve our results."* Gambin explained after the race.

In IRC2, Andrew Agius Delicata and Matthew Gabriele racing on Vivace were first in Class, and third overall. Second in this Class was Jarhead, skippered by the youngest competitors in the fleet – Emilie Gregory and Saul Vassallo.

Meanwhile, the Club Cruiser fleet whittled down to a two-boat race between Peter Ellul Vincenti's Manana and Fernando Grech's KonTiki. The former emerged winner of the Class. Despite the shorter course, the fleet still had to contend with strong gusts of wind and high waves in places.

"Double Handed Racing is always considered to be one of the toughest kind of races. This particular race is a long day out at sea. The forecasted blustery conditions materialised, making it even more challenging than it has been in the past few years", explained Race Officer Peter Dimech.

Thanks go to Club officials and volunteers Alana Meadows, Luca Lactignola, Vika Lacitignola, Winnie Grech Sammut and Wolfgang Scheifinger for assisting with Race Management duties.

The race which has been supported by Raymarine agents in Malta RLR Yachting for nearly a decade, is the penultimate race of the Royal Malta Yacht Club racing calendar for the year.

A Prize Giving ceremony will take place at a later date.

"The Royal Malta Yacht Club is thankful that racing has been able to continue. Although the pandemic has put paid to social events – like the Prize Giving evening, at least we can take satisfaction from the fact that racing was still possible. The Club thanks RLR Yachting and Raymarine for supporting this race, which is highly appreciated given these challenging times" explained Royal Malta Yacht Club Commodore, Godwin Zammit.

RAYMARINE DOUBLE HANDED FIGURE OF EIGHT RESULTS

IRC Overall		
1 st	Ton Ton Laferla	Jonathan Gambin / Gerald Gambin
2 nd	Xpresso	Sean Borg / Paul Borg Cardona
3 rd	Vivace	Andrew Agius Delicata / Matthew Gabriele

IRC 1		
1 st	Ton Ton Laferla	Jonathan Gambin / Gerald Gambin

IRC 2		
1 st	Vivace	Andrew Agius Delicata / Matthew Gabriele
2 nd	Jarhead	Emilie Gregory / Saul Vassallo
3 rd	J Lance	Martin Borg Nicolas / Kristian Borg Nicolas

Club Cruiser Class		
1 st	Manana	Peter Ellul Vincenti / Peter Delia





TOE in the WATER

The beauty of the Rolex Middle Sea Race is that it attracts a wide spectrum of individuals who have such wonderful and inspiring stories to tell. One of the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race participants - Lloyd Hamilton, has been sharing his passion for sailing to the inspire injured British Armed Forces personnel to move beyond their injuries and become re-inspired by life. He achieves this through the charity TOE IN THE WATER.



Who is Lloyd Hamilton?

I have been sailing all my life and was introduced to it by going to my local marina, in Pembrokeshire, Wales. At the age of 11, a local council leader offered me the opportunity to race with him in the local weekly race. I fell overboard on my very first tack! Once they had spun round and picked me up, I was ushered below to get into everyone's bags and grab out

their dry clothes. Once I had put these on, I could hear a lot of shouting. I poked my head out of the companionway to see nearly 20 boats all within touching distance from each other, on starboard tack, jostling for the best position on the start line. I was in awe and was instantly hooked!

I have been serving with the Royal Engineers for thirty years and am currently working in the Army Headquarters as a Staff Officer. I joined the army as a 16-year-old as a Junior Leader learning not just about the Army but also life skills.

Be it teaching or competing in World Championships, I see the competitiveness in everyone on the water during the racing. Then I see the shared friendship and the social aspect when we all return to the bar after a good brawl, (sailing is second only to rugby in this respect). I love the feeling of being a part of someone's development, to have made a difference to them, no matter how insignificant.

I am a sailing, powerboat and skiing instructor and love passing on my sporting passion to others.

Tell us more about Toe in the Water. How did it come about? What inspired you to set it up?

Founded in 2008, Toe in the Water works hand in hand with the clinical teams at Headley Court [Editor's Note: Headley Court is the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC)] who identify servicemen and women who would benefit from competing in a race with Toe in the Water. The servicemen and women join us for a few days before the race to get to know one another and learn about the yacht and their role. They are then sent straight into the competition.

The idea for the charity was first discussed in 2008 between me, physiotherapist Holly King and sailing marketer Tanya Brookfield. We decided to trial it at the 2008 Cowes Week. It was a great success, and it grew from there.



Having been involved with Toe in the Water since the beginning, I continue to be amazed at the tenacity of the guys and girls and their ability to overcome the most complex of challenges facing them. Seeing the difference, it makes to the injured servicemen and women, many of whom I have served with, all of whom I consider comrades in arms. Seeing how what we do motivates them to see beyond their injuries, as they compete alongside and against able-bodied contemporaries, never fails to move me and it is this which drives me to continue to carry out the work we do. Sailing remains one of the few sports where the injured servicemen and women can compete with and against able-bodied contemporaries and not be immediately pigeon-holed into "disabled" sport.

My fellow sailors often say to me at the end of a race event "well done, you've achieved great results!" and I often think to myself yes, we have, but what else we have achieved is so much more than many of you could possibly imagine. Thanks to our Core Crew (most of whom are selected from some of the best sailors in the UK) we are able to be competitive and regularly fight for top ten places in regattas. But actually what people don't see is the real results that we've achieved - the difference we've made to the injured servicemen, enabling them to realise their own capabilities and allowing them to be part of a team again, often for the first time since their injury; to aim for that shared goal of winning, and allowing them to share that feeling of being needed and not needy. The re-inspiring them to go and do other stuff, integrating them into society again, allowing them to talk about their injuries (or not) over a beer with fellow competitors, with ordinary people who want to know about it, who empathise with it or maybe even have lived through it themselves, is all part of what we do. Making it possible for injured servicemen to get back into a competitive team and compete at the highest level is something they all respond to. There are a few fundamental requirements to being in the services, one of which is camaraderie, and from the initial crew dinner we have prior to the training days, everyone is enveloped into the team ethos and their natural competitiveness comes out.

Many of the servicemen may never have sailed before. It offers a challenge and gives them an opportunity to see what can be achieved. To sum it up; Toe in the Water re-inspires, re-

engages and re-integrates. It gives servicemen and women the opportunity to test themselves; it helps to give them back their motivation when they see what they can achieve. We work as a team, there are no passengers, everyone has a job to do.

There is no preferential treatment on board the yacht, nor is there any special treatment during the race. The crew are treated the same as their competitors. The charity enters around eight competitions a year during the racing season which runs from April - October.

Some of the guys have really enjoyed their time at sea and got the sailing bug, some are now training in the hope of becoming a member of the GB Paralympics team. For others it has made them realise what they are capable of doing, its helped them to regain their confidence and motivation and some have gone on to run marathons or climb Mount Everest.

The unfamiliarity of sailing and the return to a team environment means that the guys have little time to think what they are actually achieving; goals that perhaps prior to the event they didn't think they would be able to do.

We are simply helping the injured servicemen to realise their own capabilities and be part of a team, often for the first time since their injury.

Sailing remains one of the few sports where the injured servicemen and women can compete against their contemporaries on a level playing field. Seeing the difference the charity makes to the men and women, many of whom I have served with, never fails to move me and it is this which drives me and the team of volunteers to continue to carry out the work we do.



The objective of Toe in the Water is to re-inspire injured servicemen and women to see beyond their injuries. How do you achieve that? What is the largest challenge you face when approaching/reaching out to newcomers to the fold?

Using competitive sailing as a rehabilitation tool, tri service initiative TOE IN THE WATER, aims to re-inspire the men and women of the British Armed Forces who have sustained profound and traumatic injuries often including the loss of limbs, to move beyond their injury and become re-inspired by life.

For injured service personnel, many of whom have been wounded in active service in Afghanistan and Iraq, participation in a TOE IN THE WATER programme acts as an extension to their rehabilitation process, giving them the chance to compete in sailing at a high level and improve their self-confidence and outlook on life. With medical support on hand both on and off the water, the patients race with and against able bodied crew and are able to push themselves out of their comfort zones enabling them to recognise their own capabilities.

How does Toe in The Water aid these servicemen and women in their rehabilitation process? Can you explain how the programme works? Is there some selection criteria?

TOE IN THE WATER works closely with the specialist clinicians at Headley Court and the other military Regional Rehabilitation Units who identify the patients who will most benefit from being referred. Its able-bodied volunteer race crew are drawn from highly-experienced sailors primarily from within the military, but also include a number of top level civilian sailors from a full range of disciplines including record breaking round the world sailors Dee Caffari MBE and Brian Thompson. The success of the project is reflected in a number of ways and the performance on the water continues to demonstrate the team's ability to compete seriously and safely - not just to participate.

HEADLEY COURT is the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) and premiere facility for the rehabilitation of injured Service Personnel and is located between Epsom and Leatherhead on an 84-acre site with accommodation and rehabilitation facilities for up to 180 patients. There is a 66-bed ward for patients requiring more complex rehabilitation. DMRC offers access to all aspects of rehabilitation with on-site consultants, physiotherapists, remedial instructors, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, social workers, a psychologist and a cognitive therapist. It has four gymnasiums, a hydrotherapy pool and a workshop for the production of prosthetic limbs, to support the clinical departments. DMRC has become the Services' rehabilitation provider for patients requiring complex rehabilitation, amputee management and prosthetic limb fitting, and the coordination of patients with musculo-skeletal injuries returning from operational theatres.

Back, to the Rolex Middle Sea Race, how did you get involved with Jarhead?

I was requested to support the charity quite late in the day for the Middle Sea Race. The original skipper was still busy delivering a yacht and was not likely to be able to get back in time. He recommended me to Richard Nicolson, and I arrived just four days before the event. I had looked at the Charity's [Editor's Note: Jarhead Young Sailors Foundation] aims and felt an empathy with what their goals were. I recognised that I could use my strengths to support these young children to achieve their sailing ambitions.

What do you think were the Jarhead's crew strengths in the 2020 Rolex Middle Sea Race?

The first thing that I wanted to do when I arrived in Malta was to get out sailing with the crew, to meet and check out how they were on the boat. I was pleasantly surprised to see that, although very different characters, they were all looking forward to racing in the iconic Middle Sea Race.

Once we were together on the boat during the race, each individual's strengths, and weaknesses, could be seen and opportunities to develop these were seized. It was interesting to watch the team ethos build between the crew, and it didn't take long into the race before they began to support each other. This pleased me, particularly, when further into the race I could see the camaraderie between all of them develop into a strong bond. They, as individuals achieved this, down to their very own values and morals - all I had to do was guide them in the right direction.

Anything you could have done better in this year's campaign?

The only opportunity that I would have liked was to have had the chance to study the weather routing better, and to spend more time with the crew to allow me to learn about them more.

Offshore races are about having strong endurance and determination levels. Do you feel that this complements the attributes needed to do your job in the army and vice versa?

The value of offshore racing through leadership and personal development is recognised by the British military. It adds an extra dimension to the life of servicemen and women. Offshore racing provides a challenge, a sense of achievement, excitement, variety, enjoyment, interest, contact with nature and the broadening experience of travel. It introduces personnel to new activities and provides opportunities to improve the skills and knowledge of those with previous experience. It enhances the quality of military life and is an aid to recruiting and retention.

Personnel in the Armed Forces require self-discipline, physical and mental courage, physical strength and endurance. They need to become accustomed to challenge and hardship, situations that are not easily fostered in peacetime. Additionally, they need to develop the innate personal qualities of initiative, unselfishness, compassion and comradeship. Offshore racing provides a medium for the development of all these characteristics by pitting personnel against the elements. Moreover, it helps to identify and develop leadership qualities, builds character and improves physical fitness. These are transferable skills that can be readily identified with the military operational environment.



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The Need for Change - PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Greg Nasmyth, founder of the Jarhead Young Sailors' Foundation, first became concerned about the environment and the challenges it was facing whilst reading for the topic at St David's University College. A few years later, in the early noughties, he cut his teeth in journalism covering the Fastnet Race. There was no turning back, the passion for sailing and concern for the environment had been ignited. SPINNAKER sat down with this larger than life, down to earth, no nonsense philanthropist to get an insight of what drives him.

You spent years working as a journalist. Was there any particular topic, from the many you covered, that struck a chord or was closer to your heart - maybe more than others? Can you tell us more about it? Any particular story that you would like to share? Did this have any impact on the philanthropic direction you eventually took?

My first job was in the early noughties with Financial Times. They wanted to cover the Fastnet Race and essentially I was the only journalist willing to go on board. That really set me up. Sailing, at that time was expanding and professional sailors preferred to have someone they knew on board, someone who knew what was going on as generally they end up being part of the crew. That first foray into sailing journalism led to a meeting with Alex Thomson just as he secured the Hugo Boss sponsorship. **[Editor's Note: Alex Thomson was the youngest skipper ever to win a round-the-world-race and also raced in the 2017 RMSR on his IMOCA 60 Hugo Boss.]** In 2004 GQ Magazine I was asked to write about Alex and his first attempt at the Vendée Globe, helping to crew the boat from Cherbourg to Les Sables-d'Olonne. During the trip, the boat was hit by a force ten on the nose - we crashed jived and were pinned by the canting keel, at which point I got swept overboard. It was moments of pure adrenaline as I scrambled back up on

the boat. The next morning when we rounded Ushant and came off the wind, hammering it south in big seas, the iconic photo of Hugo Boss' surfacing from a wave it had just torpedoed made the front cover of Yachting World. The rest is history, Alex hasn't looked back, I haven't gone sailing with him since!

Fast forward some months, I found myself in New Zealand covering the America's Cup for Esquire magazine. Reporting about the amazing boats and chatting to owners about their accomplishments was not the height of excitement. Wandering off in between interviews, I stumbled across an old rusting trawler complete with a skull and cross bone and bunch of hippy looking sailors. This rusty trawler, I discovered, was the Sea Shepherd - renowned for being a direct action ocean conservation organisation. They were on their way to Antarctica in search of the Japanese whaling fleet. On impulse I joined them, returned home and wrote an article on the experience. That led to Greenpeace contacting me to join them for a month's trip in the Amazon. The topic was the illegal logging in



Para State, among the many miles of the Amazonian tributaries. Needless to say Samantha's **[Editor's Note: Samantha Rowe-Beddoe, Greg's wife, a philanthropist in her own right]** protestations fell on deaf ears and I set off on another long haul trip. The full realisation that environmentally the world was in deep trouble really hit home there.

"With so much happening in the world, sometimes it can be difficult to know who to help and who will ensure that the money you have donated gets to the very heart of the issue" - what would be the main contributing factor when deciding on a charity or initiative that will garner your support?

For a time I was working as an editor of a luxury lifestyle magazine - driving around in Ferraris, sipping fine wines and reviewing five star hotels - let's face it - driving a Ferrari is thrilling and the rest, but there is so much greater beauty in the natural world - you cannot beat sailing, accompanied by a pod of dolphins, being at one with nature. The older I have become, the greater the sense of loss, diving last year on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia with my children was amazing - although acutely aware that when I first dived in 1991 the reef was pristine, today it is mostly gone, faded like an episode of Jacques Cousteau. All this spurred me to work towards doing my bit - and inspiring others to protect the natural environment.

Back in the UK I started getting involved in big issues - like fighting fracking, the new runway at Heathrow Airport, stopping mining up in the north etc. The alliance with Greenpeace continued with an oceans campaign wherein scientists were being brought on board in an attempt to create marine sanctuaries. Maybe not many are aware that the wild salmon has been decimated in my lifetime and if we are not careful tuna will be next.

As a rule, one has to understand that environmental activism efforts are not a short term project, there are no easy wins. Once involved in such activism one has to go for it for the long haul - be it the fight against single use plastics or attempts to grow as many indigenous trees as possible.

What is your level of involvement once a charity or initiative is selected? Is it a case of supporting financially, or is it through your personal expertise? Is there a close relationship with each of these organisations that enables you to be kept in the loop of their progress?

There is obviously ongoing contact with the likes of Friends of the Earth, Nature Trust and Greenpeace - who still invite me out on sorties - nowadays these have become limited because I make sure to give my family quality time.

When you are giving money to an initiative it is not just about writing a cheque - one needs to keep the interest going. In Malta I keep frequent contact with Neil Agius (Wave of Change) and Steve Mercieca (Saggar), both great guys who keep me regularly updated with their progress. A project needs to be embraced, - indirectly I am also an ambassador and so I keep fighting the little battles in a war to change people's mindset.

The Maltese connection. How did that come about? How long have you been 'involved' with Malta? Has Malta become your permanent home?

The connection goes indirectly back to the Second World War, which my father fought in but something he never really spoke of. He drilled two things into me - Catholicism - as a young boy saw me being forced to attend Sunday School taught by him, followed by Mass in Latin. His other love was sailing - I only discovered how he got into sailing after he passed - through his obituary. Evacuated at Dunkirk, he joined the Small Scale Raiding Force and in preparation for their greatest coup - Operation Postmaster, **[Editor's Note: Their raid eventually convinced Britain's conservative military leadership, of the time, the value of commando raiding.]** Despite being totally bored when sailing with my old man in my teens, sailing subconsciously created a bond with my father and the love of the outdoors. During this time he also handed me a copy of Ernle Bradford's book The Great Siege of Malta - the book was so exhilarating, it was like an early blockbuster movie. To further add my connections to Malta, my father-in-law- completed his National Service on a destroyer in Malta.

As a Lifestyle editor I reviewed the first class experience on the MSC Cruises - we arrived in the Grand Harbour early one morning and my cabin was practically at the same street level as Valletta - I was awed by the city - stunning - comparable to historic cities like Florence and Dubrovnik.



I did the Rolex Middle Sea Race a few times but only finished once. Terrifying doesn't do justice to it! In 2014 we encountered a big storm and were the first boat to retire. The journey back home after a three day wait was hell. We had micro storms and winds reaching around 45 knots - and then there was the lightning. It deafened our eardrums and you could feel the electricity all around you. That was the most terrifying, exhausting thing I ever did. We left the boat in Malta with the aim of racing again the following year. Although I didn't manage to join the boys the following year, they raced. In the process incurred substantial damage to the mast, which took about a year to fix. In the meantime I was flying back and forth and bringing the family out with me each time.



We are very pro-EU, so knowing that the Brexit Referendum would eventually result in Britain exiting the EU we decided to come to Malta and give it a try. We have been here ever since and plan on staying here. Malta is the perfect gateway to Europe - simply easy to hop on a flight to Rome and go visit the Coliseum, for example.

Jarhead Young Sailors' Foundation needs little introduction amongst the sailing community in Malta. It has also extended its reach to schools by means of its Schools' Programme and has recently teamed up with Nature Trust for Marine Wildlife Rescue. Can you shed some more light on these two marine related projects. How will this collaboration work?

It was Samantha's idea not to sell the J-109 and set up the programme, which has taken a two pronged approach - the Schools' Programme and the Middle Sea Race Academy. The former provides kids from less privileged backgrounds the opportunity to learn how to sail, whilst the latter is a more advanced programme for more experienced sailors. The Schools' Programme is still in its early stages but it is opening horizons to these kids - they are still getting a feel of sailing and trying to figure out if they love it and can make a career from it. On the other hand the Academy crews have been giving us a lot of satisfaction with the results they have been producing - Emilie Gregory and Saul Vassallo have, indirectly, with their results, inspired quite a few kids from the Schools' Programme. It gives us so much pride and satisfaction.

Like all programmes, there are a number of hurdles but we are seeing kids returning - the opportunity for self empowerment being key. We are immensely lucky to have people like Richard 'Trix' Nicholson, an old sea dog from a renowned sailing family, who has done wonders with these kids and Wilfrid Buttigieg who has put his heart and soul in the school's programme. My role is just to harass them and keep them on their toes.

Both the Foundation's boats are J-109s and it's traditional to name them with word beginning with the letter J - there are not many words with the letter J in the dictionary. Jarhead the first boat was all about being stubborn and battling on despite the odds - typically me - I am not a great sailor but I love it. Jarhead is not a fast boat but has accumulated so many miles. The other boat Jan was named after my father.

To conclude, is there any message you would like to pass on to SPINNAKER readers?

Malta is an amazing country full of potential. However we must learn to respect the general environment more. Post Covid-19 there are many opportunities for niche tourism in various areas - bird watching, diving etc.

We need to be aware of the damage we wreaking on the things we take for granted, to change and adapt to protect the things we hold dear, become custodians for future generations so that they may also know and enjoy the wonder that is the natural world.



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Making MALTA a second HOME

Deea Buzdugan's love affair with Malta started in 2017, when she got her first taste of the Rolex Middle Sea Race on board the yacht Sail Racing Academy. The team did not finish but that race proved to be a turning point in Deea's life, so much so that she has become a familiar face at the Royal Malta Yacht Club. When she is not on the Club rib at the start of one of the many races you might find her racing on one of the boats. Now spending most of her time in Malta she cannot stop waxing lyrical about this gem of an island.

Deea grew up in Communist Romania. As a child she enjoyed alpine skiing in a resort she grew up in, some 400 kilometres away from the Black Sea. Her summers were spent at the seaside, where her love for the sea – partly inherited from her father and partly nurtured from her time spent there, grew. Ironically, she had no idea that sailing and yacht racing existed. The Communist Government prohibited people from sailing or owning a sailing boat. It was seen as a possible means of running away from the country.

In 1989, the fall of President Nicolae Ceaușescu saw the end of Communism. Romania started to come out of its shell. However, it wouldn't be until 2006 that the sport of Sailing started to gain popularity. It was then that Deea enjoyed her first taste of sailing and the seed was irrevocably sown.

IGNITING THE PASSION FOR SAILING

Watching a Rolex sailing race on television aroused Deea's interest further and wanted to understand what was going on. Despite that interest, it took around twelve years for her to actually experience a race – that happened when a friend of hers, who happened to own a sailing school invited her to be part of his crew.

The race was an 80 nm coastal race that lasted 24 hours, during which they had almost all possible sailing conditions: wind, no wind, hot temperature, rain, storm and closer to finish line they were stuck in the same position for hours due to the having the current set against them. Throughout the race, Deea managed to sleep for just about an hour, sustaining herself on some small snacks. Yet the exhilaration of the whole experience made her fall irrevocably in love with the sport. Her enthusiasm and desire to race more saw her and her friends find a boat and set up a sailing team – Happy Sailing Team. Her keenness to race stopped abruptly later on the year, when her father passed away suddenly. Having inherited the love for the sea from him, being close to the sea was too painful for her.

"The sea was part of my life from a young age and my love for it become stronger and stronger. Now I know that my home is where the sea is. And one of the reasons that I'm feeling like home here in Malta is the sea, the beautiful sea of Malta."

ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE

In 2017, Deea was probably the first Romanian sailor to take part in this race. She crewed on the Alcazar of Sail Racing Academy.

Her interest was stirred after seeing the footage of the previous year's edition. So much so, that she put her name on the crew listing page of the race. As luck would have it, she was contacted.

For her, despite retiring due to bad weather [Editor's Note: 35 boats, from an initial fleet of 104, finished the race that year], that race was a turning point in her life – not just from a sailing perspective but life in general.

In 2018, she raced on the TP52 Anafesto. This time it was a wholly different experience and type of boat. In order to race, she undertook the Offshore Survival Course in Malta. All in all, it was a good race but before Lampedusa damages to the jib and mast resulted in retirement. In steady they took the opportunity to visit Lampedusa.

2019 saw Deea take part in the race though her photographic rather than crewing expertise was put into action. In 2020, Deea and her fiancé Cornel, joined Jonathan Camilleri Bowman's Maltese Falcon –

"This was a great experience. The crew became our friends. For me in a race like this is very important. You need sail with people who are on the same page with you. You spend 4-6 days, nonstop, on the sea and in a very small area. So, this nailing this aspect is essential!"

PHOTOGRAPHY

Prior to 2017, Deea discovered Kurt Arrigo's yacht photography. As luck would have it, she met Kurt on her flight back to Malta. They spent the flight discussing photography. When Deea pointed out that Kurt had the best job in the world, his reply was – "You can do it if you want. Anything is possible!"



At that point wasn't possible. Back home Deea was struggling to make her fashion business profitable, putting all her resources and energy in it. Whilst she was directing photoshoots for her brand, never had she imagined being behind the camera – despite encouragement from the creative director of Romania biggest brand of shoes and bags.

In December 2017 she closed her business. Took up a photography course, started taking photos for her friend's fashion brand. This role fit her like a glove. She was "eating, breathing, dreaming fashion."

Sailing photography came very natural to her, mainly due to her love and understanding of sailing. A complex sport, it is imperative that one knows what is happening on the water. In a short period of time, Deea covered started to cover a variety of races: from small boats races to Rolex Middle Sea Race and Volvo Ocean Race, in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, UK - Cardiff, Malta.

MALTA

Deea's first taste of Malta was setting foot on the RMYC Marina pontoon, late at night, upon her arrival for the 2017 RMSR. A warm welcome by one of the staff made her feel immediately at home – she emphasizes that the RMYC is part of this home and one of the reasons that the Club is close to her heart. Waking up the next morning, she found herself awed by the sight that greeted her – the city of Valletta wrapped in

the soft pink and blue hues that are generally associated with sunrise. The first thing that she did was capture that moment on her camera.

At school, Malta was just another chapter on her history books, a rock in the middle of the sea. She continued to discover Malta after the race and discovered the beauty of this rock which so many facets.

Returning in 2018 for yet another whistle-stop tour of Malta a day after the RMSR saw Deea and Cornel return to the island for the Christmas period. Eventually they settled down here in Marsasclaf, having moved there at the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdown.

"Thinking that the possibility of a total lockdown, like in other European countries, we decided to find a place with a balcony and a sea view. We felt at home from day one"

They soon discovered that their new home was in the proximity of some beautiful swimming spots. Just a five-minute distance from their home would see them spend lockdown swimming and snorkeling.

"I always dreamed to live by the sea, seeing it when I wake up, hearing it when I go to sleep, and feeling its smell all the time. And here in Malta my dream come true."

In her own words, "Malta's biggest strength is its sea. Beautiful beaches, diverse forms of shoreline, stunning shades of blue and turquoise, with a vast array of marine life, shipwrecks and caves and one of the cleanest waters in Europe. One can sail practically all the year round – something unheard of in Romania"

Deea feels that Malta's biggest weakness is that people don't realize how lucky they are to be living on this rock and the sea around. They don't make the best of it – case in point is the number of boats and people involved in sailing and sailing competitions is smaller than in Romania where the conditions are much more difficult.

"I think Malta should be the European Capital of sailing and yacht racing!"

Malta is so accessible, that one doesn't need hours to get from one end to another.

"I guess that this is something that usually applies to all of us: we tend to not appreciate what we have, we take it for granted. Human Nature"

Of course, the second biggest attraction for Deea was the friendly, outgoing nature the Maltese have with foreigners – "This is way, at least until now, we never had the feeling that we don't belong here."

Deea ends the chat by affirming her wish to stay in Malta as long as possible, to be involved in the sailing life here, by sailing and doing photography and to look at investing in new professional projects here. Lastly, she hopes that the current pandemic will ease off which will enable her to bring international clients to Malta for their advertising campaigns.

"Oh, and to enjoy the sea and make the best of it" she concludes.



PUNCHING above its WEIGHT

Yachting Malta has become a force to be reckoned with. It has, in a relatively short period of time, fostered stronger relationship with its stakeholders. Despite the challenges that the pandemic has thrown, Yachting Malta has punched above its weight, as Chairman John Huber explains.



At the start of your tenure as Chairman of Yachting Malta you were quoted as saying - "When I was asked whether I could assist with the yachting industry in Malta, it was going through a period when it didn't have a unified voice and it was simply a number of individuals each acting on their own personal initiative." Are you satisfied with how this has evolved since?

There has been an improvement, but I believe that we are still far from where we should be. Yachting Malta has played its part in discussions with and assisting the Super Yacht Industry Network Malta to retain its stand at the Monaco Boat Show through its financial assistance. We were also part of the ongoing discussions with Transport Malta and the Health authorities to alleviate the burdens on the industry caused by the pandemic and have assisted the industry whenever we could.

The unified voice should not only be during a crisis but ongoing so as to contribute towards the evolvement of Malta as a major yachting hub that would be primarily industry driven.

What has been your biggest satisfaction since taking over the helm at Yachting Malta?

First of all, I believe that Yachting Malta consolidated its mission by assisting with yachting events. The greatest satisfaction has however been in the direct assistance we are giving to the Clubs and the Malta Sailing Federation. Consequently, and also because of the Clubs' hard work, we have witnessed an increase in participation in sailing especially amongst children. We have just donated fourteen dinghies and all clubs are benefitting. This is where our investment lies.

Covid-19 put paid to a number of planned events and initiatives for 2020. Do you feel that the pandemic has caused irreparable damage to the sector? If not, when would you see it start its recovery process?

Not at all - albeit the fact that the planned events could not happen, a number of activities were still organised, and this is all thanks to the four sailing clubs. The sector shall come out stronger when the pandemic is over and all our work which has been ongoing shall come to fruition.

Has the cancellation of major Boat Shows affected Yachting Malta's operations or its initiatives?

A lot of work went into the preparation of the Yachting Malta Boat Show that was scheduled for November 2020. Nothing is lost - all the work done shall serve us in this year's event.

Travel restrictions meant that the local Yacht Charter industry suffered a blow. Local hotels were promoting staycations in an attempt to target the local market. Were there any initiatives by Yachting Malta to support this industry at a local level?

I am proud to state that Yachting Malta was the first entity to start promoting 'local' tourism and we had a campaign on national television promoting local charters. This initiative went down well with charterers and the feedback that we received was very positive. The promotion of discovering Maltese shores by sea also led to an increase in small boat sales locally.

The Economic Impact Assessment published in 2020 on the 2019 Rolex Middle Sea Race proved the importance of such events to the local economy. Do you feel that events like these will get back to normal sooner rather than later?

The published EIA was a first for yachting in Malta and although the figures are conservative, the result was that there is a need for other yachting events. The major issue is,

Covid-19 apart, that we are bidding with a number of other countries - all much larger than ours - to hold events. One also has to keep in mind that most events are rather costly to host so the importance of the results of the EIA shall give us an indication of what we can and should go for.

Sustainability has become a very popular word and quoted by many. How has Yachting Malta approached the topic?

In 2020 we also launched our sustainability guidelines which we worked on with 11th Hour Racing. We have had a very good and encouraging response and followed up with the installation of a Reverse Osmosis plant in each Club and the donation of a substantial number of reusable bottles. This is an essential part of our mission and our efforts are also recognised by international sailing bodies. I also believe that we made a fantastic choice of three persons to champion our campaign and we are privileged to have them - Skipper, doctor and RMSR twice winner Maya Podesta, Olympian and Birzebbugia Commodore Mario Aquilina and Olympic swimmer and environmental activist Neil Agius.

Not all is negative and although many events were postponed, Yachting Malta was still able to show its support to a number of events in Malta - RMSR Coastal Race, revival of windsurfing as well as supporting a number of local sailing clubs. Can you tell us more about these initiatives?

I am a firm believer that one of the major roles of Yachting Malta is that it should be the 'enabler' rather than the organiser. This means that we have to, and are, work closely with the four Clubs to see what more can be done. The Yachting Malta Coastal Race, which precedes the RMSR is now a yearly event. RMYC managed to organise the 2020

edition of the RMSR with a sizeable number of participants and without a hitch and this is truly laudable. We also had the revival of windsurfing and I truly hope that this picks up the momentum in order that we can grow it to some international competition. A sized-down version of Euromed was also organised by the Malta Young Sailors Club and again was a successful event. The first female Commodore of a sailing Club in Malta, Sandra Agius Darmanin, is doing a terrific job at Vikings and we are working closely with the Club and assisted them by donating a number of Optimist boats for them to have more participants in Euromed and other competitions. Birzebbugia are organising a regatta in February which shall hopefully become an annual event apart from constantly improving their premises.

So, it is not only not negative but very positive.

What is in store Yachting Malta for 2021? What do you think will be the biggest challenge in the coming months?

We are bidding, negotiating and working hard to see if and how we can attract more international events to Malta. We also have to consolidate on what we have. We shall be going ahead with the preparations for the Malta Race Week and the Yachting Malta Boat Show - two major new events. We shall continue to dialogue with the Clubs and the Federation to strengthen the entry at child and youth level. We shall also continue with ongoing discussions and meetings with the regulator, Transport Malta, with which we have a very good working relationship to help improve the infrastructure.

Challenges shall remain; pandemic, our size, infrastructure, finances etc. But this is a country that has always punched above its weight and Yachting Malta shall do so too!



ROUND MALTA RACE

a definition of true grit

Xpresso wins IRC honours



Sean Borg's Xpresso emerged winner of the last race hosted by the Royal Malta Yacht Club for 2020, the Medcomms Round Malta Race.

Weather conditions, which were far worse than forecasted saw only four boats finish the race. The fleet left Marsamxett Harbour in winds reaching around 27 knots, however that changed once they reached the western coast of Malta, where they had to contend with winds reaching approximately 45 knots and three-metre-high waves.

As Race Officer Peter Dimech started the race, it was a highly competitive start with Jonathan Gambin's TonTon, Sean Borg's Xpresso and Andrew Agius Delicata's Vivace trying to come out on top and lead the fleet. The trio was followed closely by Jean Forcione's Middle C. Thirty minutes into the race, despite having a good start, TonTon's progress was thwarted when damage to the boat resulted in them having to retire.

Once the fleet rounded the Gozo Ferry Terminal, the strong north-westerly started to show its full force, reaching constant speeds of around 32 – 35 knots.

Xpresso maintained their lead, even when weather conditions saw a number of boats retire along the way. They were followed by Vivace, Jarhead – skippered by Emilie Gregory and Saul Vassallo, whilst in the cruiser class Mario Debono's Janissah and Peter Ellul Vincenti's Manana kept fighting on.

Vivace's good run was put to rest when a squall near Filfla resulted in a rip on the mainsail. Weather conditions being what they were, the crew took a decision to retire and limit the possibility of further damage and ensure safety to the crew. With almost all boats having retired by then, it was a two-horse race between Xpresso and the young crew of Jarhead. Jarhead skippered by Emilie Gregory and Saul Vassallo enjoyed a good stretch. With three relatively inexperienced sailors on board, the skippers took a cautious approach which saw them not

only get through the race without any breakages but also one of the two boats in their Class to finish the race.

In the end it was Xpresso's race. The crew's experience showed as was their determination to finish the last race of the year with a good result. The Xp44 led the way for most of the course until the very end when Xpresso not only finished first but also took overall honours.

"Overall, it was a tough, crazy race. At times we saw 49 knots of wind speed, so one can imagine what hard work it was to keep the boat on course without any mishaps, but the crew worked exceptionally well, and it showed in the result" – Sean Borg, Skipper – Xpresso

In the Cruiser Class, Peter Ellul Vincenti's Manana was first to finish, however, Mario Debono's Janissah – a regular participant in Club events, won her first event placing on corrected time. Commenting after the race, Debono explained that this was one of the most difficult races they took part in. The wind was worse than forecast with gusts exceeding 40 knots and three metre waves, especially on the west coast of Malta. It was a test of endurance and seamanship for all who took part. Debono and his crew took a beating, but the teamwork experienced was nothing short of great. Incidentally Debono's son, Nicky Debono Drury was also racing but on Jarhead.

"This race proved to be a perfect example of true grit and determination. A series of unfortunate damages put paid to some of the fleet's effort to complete this gruelling race however, one really has to congratulate all finishers for enduring the tough conditions until the very end" said Peter Dimech, Race Officer.

Royal Malta Yacht Club Commodore Godwin Zammit expressed his gratitude towards Medcomms Ltd, for supporting this race once again. A Prize Giving event will be scheduled at a later date.

MEDCOMMS ROUND MALTA RACE RESULTS

IRC Class

1 st	Xpresso	Sean Borg
2 nd	Jarhead	Emilie Gregory/Saul Vassallo

Cruise Class

1 st	Janissah	Mario Debono
2 nd	Manana	Peter Ellul Vincenti

COMMENTS FROM THE CREWS

Sean Borg - Xpresso

Xpresso Crew: Sean Borg (Skipper), Pierre Aquilina, Andrea Azzopardi, Sean Bonavia, Paul Borg Cardona, Simon Briffa, Andrew Cachia, Nicky Fenech, Megan Ferry, Nicky Sammut,



We knew it was going to be a hard race so we decided to start with a strong small jib and a reef in the main. After a competitive start between Vivace, TonTon and ourselves, we came out on top and started the windy upwind in a leading position. Ton Ton seemed to fall behind and after a few minutes damages caused them to retire. Once we rounded the Gozo ferry terminal we started reaching seeing wind speeds at 32-35 knots constantly. We gybed inland to try and get away from a black cloud we saw behind us. It was not to be avoided. That's when we saw 49 knots of wind. We quickly tried to drop the main but it was a really hard job. Then we sailed with a J4 and no main for 1 hour, until we were able to fix everything and were able to hoist the main back up. From then, it was a steady upwind all the way to the finish.

Mario Debono (Janissah)

Janissah Crew: Mario Debono (Skipper), Tommaso Barocca, Claudio Bugeja, Joe Cross, Raktich Dusan, Victoria Spinelli



It was one of the most difficult races we did. The wind was worse than forecast with gusts exceeding 40 knots especially on the west side and waves that reached heights of three metres. It was a rough ride that saw us wet all the time, allowing for no time to eat or drink. During the race we recorded a top spee of 13.11 knots – my boat loved it and too care of us well. It was a test of endurance and seamanship for all who took part. I was supported by magnificent crew and we literally took a beating but we are happy to have finished and certainly helped us to finish the year on a very good note. The Club and the Race Officer as usual organised a good race in a professional way.

Andrew Agius Delicata (Vivace)

Vivace Crew: Andrew Agius Delicata (Co-Skipper), Matthew Gabriele (Co-Skipper), Kevin Anastasi, Chris Fenech, Jack Gabriele, Joe Gabriele, Owen Lombardi, Sean Zahra,



We had an amazing start and we kept get a good position upwind having good boat speed, with Tonton just to our starboard and Xpresso to our port. We had 20 knots which was perfect for the boat as we had one reef in the main and full jib. Tonton tore their jib while being right above our wind. Xpresso and us were very close all through the race, having only a couple of minutes separating us. Rounding the Comino Channel we were met with a lot of current against us. Once out of the channel we shook off the reef as we wanted to get as much power as possible on the downwind. But it was challenging as the wind picked up to a constant 35 knots constant. There were a lot of big waves coming from everywhere. We were surfing downwind but with the rebound waves we couldnt get a constant surf.

At this point we were reaching a maximum speed of 18.2 knots. We then made the mistake of underestimating the weather as at a point rain and dark weather was coming towards us – we just assumed it would be rain when it fact it was a squall. Wents went on from 35 knots to 45 and 50's and we broached. We could not get the boat upright, sails were flapping and we could not reef the Genoa, even with 3 people pulling at the rope. We decided to get the mainsail down to reef but with us being on our side, all we could do is hold on and wait for it to pass. Eventually, we managed to get the boat to go downwind again and with the reduced power on the Genoa we managed to furl it but the boat was still out of control. That was when we realised we had a rip in the mainsail. Under the circumstances, a unanimous decision was taken to abort the race as we could not risk the rip developing into a massive tear thus ruining the sail permanently. It was the first time we retired from a race, but I guess there is always a first time for everything.

Source of Inspiration: Olympic Medallist VASILIJ ŽBOGAR

Vasilij Žbogar is an Olympic Sailor who competed in five Olympic campaigns. He won a Bronze Medal (2004 Athens) and a Silver Medal (2008 Beijing) in the Laser Class before moving to the Finn. He placed sixth in London 2012 and picked up his third Olympic Medal - Silver in the Finn Class in Rio in 2016. Now turning his attention to coaching, Vasilij is a familiar face at the Club where he coaches Olympic hopefuls in their quest to become Olympians. In this interview, Vasilij gives a frank and honest view of himself, Malta and its potential for future.

Vasilij is one of the most famous sportsmen in his home country of Slovenia. Slovenia does not have a strong sailing tradition, in fact until a few years ago was a little-known sport. This makes his Olympic achievements even more extraordinary.

A chance encounter, in 1995 with SailCoach's Trevor Millar at the early stages of his career would prove to be life changing. Initially it started with a few short training camps but then it progressed into a full-time training relationship. Trevor was there at the very beginning of his career and would be behind him throughout all his five Olympic campaigns. Vasilij credits Trevor as the man behind his Olympic medals. It comes as no surprise that he sees Trevor as his second father.

"Trevor and his company SailCoach were always kind of looking for talented and promising sailors from around the world, particularly hailing from nations which did not have traditional sailing environments. I remember training with others from countries like the Seychelles and South Africa - he helped us achieve results."



Nowadays, Vasilij has quit competitive racing and has focused his attention on coaching. Although he still has the passion for sailing, competing and performing at a high level no longer triggers the enthusiasm it did - twenty years is a long time and now he feels it is time to impart the knowledge and experience acquired to a younger generation of sailors.

Since taking up coaching, I am still a young coach he acknowledges - he has yet to experience the frustration at

watching his athletes not competing to their best of their abilities at international competitions. But he has experienced the major frustration that Covid-19 has brought with it - specifically the uncertainty about what the next step will be. In order to build a good programme, long term plans need to be drafted. The current pandemic situation means that plans change from a day-to-day basis - at time of writing, the plan was to go to Gran Canaria for further training but the likelihood of the airports there closing was high.

"All sailors - and indeed athletes, are in this situation together, so the uncertainty is there for everyone - we are not alone, so we need to adapt and adjust as best we can to meet the challenges put to us."

Vasilij tries to look at hurdles put in front of him as challenges rather than problems - he has a lot to give to his athletes and whilst one wants to see them learn as quickly as possible, it takes time, patience and routine - this is crucial for any athlete to succeed in sport.

THE MALTESE CONNECTION

Vasilij's connection to Malta goes back to his participation in the Rolex Middle Sea Race - but more about that later. As a sailor, one is always on the lookout for locations offering the best wind conditions - "I remember discussing with Trevor as to which part of Europe would be ideal to set up a base - having great wind and weather conditions, a good climate, easy to reach by etc." - After having gone to many places we decided that Malta made the grade.

Nowadays, Vasilij regularly visits Malta as a coach to a number of Irish sailors. Malta in winter makes a nice change as wind comes in good supply, the weather is warm - especially when compared to Irish weather and the setup in Malta is optimal.

"I am really glad to see that the sailing area at the Club is getting smaller day by day. There is not enough place to put more boats and it is so nice to see so many young sailors out on the water every day in the afternoons - we counted around 45 sailors last time"

Olympic athletes are quickly discovering Malta as the perfect training ground and more and more are joining the training here - the feeling is very positive as they are able to put in a lot of good work both on the water and the land. Whilst SailCoach provides the technical and logistical infrastructure - dropping the marks for daily training, coaching and preparing video analysis, the Club provides excellent facilities - whether it is the boat launch area, the gym and conference room facilities to watch video analysis - it is a complete package.

Even though Vasilij's days are full, with little time for anything else except coaching his athletes, he has seen sufficient amount of the local environment to see that Malta can nurture future Olympic Sailors. He recalls in his Laser days the likes of Mario Aquilina, Adrian Gauci Borda and Maya Podesta - all are still active on the local scene in some form of another and can genuinely provide expertise and motivation to budding sailors.

"Mario, Adrian and Maya were breaking the ice and cutting their teeth on an international level in their time, producing good results in the process. It is good to see that in their own way they are trying to give something back to young sailors and have shown to be good role models."

Sailing is a complex sport, and when sailors are at an age of fifteen to twenty years of age - the biggest challenge is to keep them in sport. But the environment is there and so is the hard work from the coaches. So, there is a strong possibility that Malta can produce some good Olympic material.

THE OLYMPIC DREAM - SHATTERED OR RENEWED?

The postponement of Tokyo 2020 affected two groups of athletes.

There were those athletes who were training to perform at the highest of levels and working at bringing medals home. Vasilij predicts that there were about ten sailors who had that potential. For these sailors, medals have been postponed and the result of this postponement meant that they had to continue their gruelling training regime for another year - which at that level is very testing - both from a physical and psychological level.

On the other hand, the younger sailors - most of which aspiring to be Olympians for the first time, this postponement could act in their favour, in that it gave them the extra time to push for a better result in 2021. - The motivation amongst Vasilij's athletes is high and this, in his own words is good for us!

ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE

Being at the home of the Rolex Middle Sea Race, it would be amiss not to ask whether he would be motivated to race in this offshore classic once again. Vasilij is a Rolex Middle Sea Race veteran. He won line honours a few times with the 100-foot long Slovenian Supermaxi Esimit Europa 2, owned by Igor Simcic.

[Editor's Note: Esimit Europa wone RMSR Line Honours in 2010, whilst Esimit Europa 2 won RMSR Line Honours in 2011, 2012 and 2014]. This was Vasilij's first encounter with Malta and which incidentally eventually served as a trigger for SailCoach to set up a base here.

Although Esimit Europa 2 hasn't competed in the RMSR since 2014, Igor Simcic has big plans for a return to the race. Their target to break the current course record. Vasilij shares with us that a new one-off design boat, quietly adding that Igor will be investing in foiling technology as this is the way forward. Covid-19 has delayed plans slightly, but he is confident that plans will go ahead, and we will most likely see them compete by 2024.

"This is such a spectacular and romantic event - you experience some magnificent sunsets; you circle around Sicily and arrive in Malta during the night. You can expect everything from light winds to heavy storms. This is an extraordinary event, I cannot wait to return."

From the looks of it, the Royal Malta Yacht Club will be seeing more and more of Vasilij in the near future. With people like him being a regular presence on our shores, Malta stands to gain in not only developing itself further as an ideal all year-round training venue for sailors to reach their potential but also providing the necessary firsthand inspiration to local sailors working hard to achieve their dreams.



2020 A TOUCH AND GO ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE

Former Flag Officer Mark Vella, was entrusted with leading a specifically setup RMSR Covid-19 Task Force. Its role to ensure as much as a safe environment possible for all Rolex Middle Sea Race stakeholders. With the Rolex Middle Sea Race well and truly over, Mark explains what went behind the scenes.

In all the years I have been involved in the Rolex Middle Sea Race I have never lived the anxiety, which started months before, about whether the race would actually have to be cancelled outright due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

When I was approached by the Committee to head a Task Force in order to do our outmost for the race to be successfully organised, even I myself could not be too sure that we would have been successful. Immediately the Task Force was set up and included Peter Dimech, RMY Rear Commodore (Sailing) and RMSR Principal Race Officer, Dr. Maya Podesta – Consultant at the Office of the Superintendence of Public Health, Georges Bonello Du Puis, Rear Commodore Special Events & PR at RMYC and Mark Napier, Honorary Secretary RMYC.

It was evident from the start that any social activities would have had to be cancelled after the bitter experience in Porto Cervo. This was a blow indeed but we had no option if we wanted the Race to take place. Registrations kept flowing in, as were the different regulations and protocols from the Health Authorities. We were not too sure whether the Italian Authorities would still offer their services in support of the race as happens year in year out. Considering most of the racing is held in Italian waters this would have been detrimental. Thankfully, they were as usual, very co-operative and ready to do all possible to assist.

Our discussions with Transport Malta and the Armed Forces of Malta were also very positive in that they shared our views - in that if we could make the race happen no stone would have been left unturned to do so. Maya kept us posted with the developments of the Health Authorities - not only the local ones but even the ones from where the boats and their crew were originating from. It was always going to be very dicey but we kept working and took things day by day.

We knew that the Club could not have operated as usual in the circumstances and had to separate the operation of the restaurant from that of the Club secretariat. A physical separation had to be installed. We had talks with our security contractor and addressed all the possible situations we could foresee at the time. Detailed plans and standard operating procedures prepared – all of which had to be strictly followed by all concerned.

In order to ensure that the latest information was made available to all, a specifically created web page on the Rolex Middle Sea Race website was created. Updates were emailed to the crews as soon as they were published.

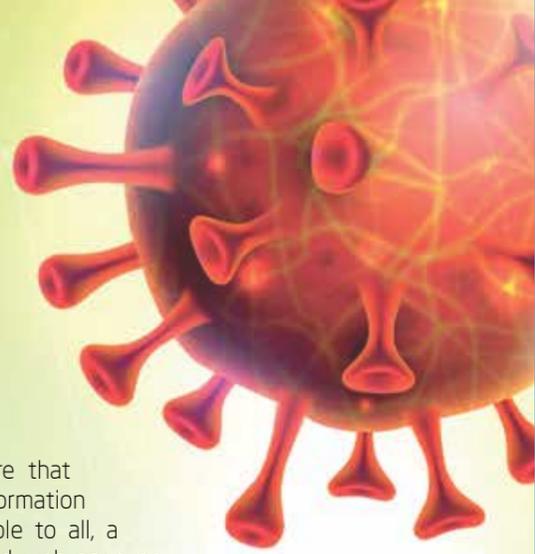
As time drew closer, unfortunately, we had a number of entrants dropping out mainly due to the fact that crews coming from certain countries would have had to undergo quarantine either in Malta or on the return back to their country of origin. Notwithstanding, we had a good number of participants who actually made it. One of which did not even berth in Malta. The boat actually arrived on the day of the start and left immediately on completing the course.

Although not all the protocols put in place resulted in some unpopular decisions taking place, the feedback the Club received was highly positive. The general sentiment of the crews was echoed by Louis Balcaen, skipper of yacht Balthasar, who expressed his satisfaction at the high level of detail the Club went into to ensure the safest possible environment as well as his gratitude in a short interview on the RMSR Spirit of Yachting episode.

The prize giving ceremony was held in a totally different manner than what we are accustomed to. It was a sit down meal with a very limited guest list as per the directives issued by the Health Authorities. Yet it was still a highly pleasant and enjoyable affair.

In spite of all the challenges and the uncertainty surrounding the event, two big positives in this year's edition of the RMSR were, first that the Race was actually successfully held and secondly, the top honours were won again by the Maltese entry – Elusive 2.

"The stress, sleepless nights and the constant worry that something might have been overlooked were kind of worth it, as we wrapped up the 41st Edition of the RMSR. Deep gratitude goes not only to the Task Force but also to the Race Committee, with whom we worked very closely." – Mark Vella





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