

An aerial photograph of a sailboat on the ocean. The sail is white with a large red logo that resembles a stylized 'R' or a similar symbol. The boat is small and positioned in the lower center of the frame. The water is a deep blue with whitecaps. The overall composition is dynamic, with the sail taking up a significant portion of the left side of the image.

BOUTIQUE

RACING

THE 2017 SUPERYACHT CUP
WAS DOWN IN NUMBERS BUT
THE RACING STILL GETS MORE
COMPETITIVE EACH YEAR.
DANIELLE BERCOUW REPORTS

PHOTOS BY CLAIRE MATCHES



The striking lime-green team aboard Briand designed Inouï

It may have been a smaller than usual fleet this year in Palma, but the dock at the Superyacht Cup in June was alive with contrasting images. Classic-style yachts with gleaming brightwork and deckhouses lay among carbon-built competitors with clean decks and high-tech features. For some entrants, such as the traditional-style Windrose of Amsterdam and the newly launched 32m/105ft Malcolm McKeon design *Ribelle*, a carbon composite build with an aggressive reverse bow, it seemed the only thing they shared in common was this regatta.

Although the annual Superyacht Cup attracts a wide range of yachts, the ten-strong 2017 entry list was particularly varied. Event director Kate Branagh says: "The competition this year was as fierce as ever. Two really well grouped classes means everyone has close rivals and plenty of excitement on the race course."

The reason behind this year's smaller numbers was a simple calendar clash. The America's Cup Superyacht Regatta in Bermuda took place a week before the racing in Palma and attract a large number of yachts, including such Superyacht Cup regulars as Sojana and Visono.

But Palma's line-up nevertheless saw several return competitors, including the lime-green 33m/108ft Briand designed carbon-composite *Inouï*, with her posse of elite sailors, and the 45m/148ft Wally Saudade, both of which were intent on winning the event for the fourth time.

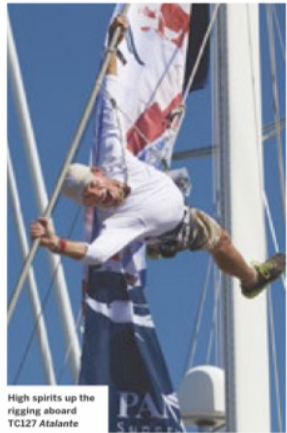
The 45m *Saudade*, racing with Volvo Ocean Race veteran and Team Brunel skipper Bouwe Bekking on tactics, had recently pulled off a hat-trick by winning the Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta three times in a row. Her winter refit included a new keel, rudder, bowsprit and rigging – all performance-enhancing modifications, which clearly paid off, giving the nine-year-old Wally a new turn of speed.

Pitted against these experienced racing crews with their well tested set-ups was *Ribelle*. This 32m/105ft yacht, designed by Malcolm McKeon for an experienced owner, was built at Vitters and launched earlier this year. Conceived with



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The newly launched Malcolm McKeon design, *Ribelle*



High spirits up the rigging aboard *TC127 Atalante*

racing performance in mind, she sports a high-tech set of racing sails and, for a superyacht, is ultralight at only 84 tonnes. She impressed in her debut at the Loro Piano Regatta in Porto Cervo, claiming 2nd in the superyacht class and her performance in Palma did not disappoint.

On board was *Luna Rossa America's Cup* skipper Francesco de Angelis as helmsman, with Olympic 470 Gold medalist Luis Doreste as tactician. They scored 2nd in their class. Captain Federico Biatturi admitted that the crew had had limited time to practice before the regattas this year and were still working on improving manoeuvres in Palma. "It's been a great pleasure to see *Ribelle* perform so well," said Biatturi. "We used our [heavy air] spinnaker in the light breezes, which made a huge difference compared to the first day of racing, when we used our light winds spinnaker and weren't going."

Coastal courses ranged from 20 to 30 miles in length and saw the fleet fighting for lanes. A staggered start sequence at two-minute intervals saw the slowest boats start first and the fastest last. Starting times were determined by each yacht's ORCsy rating.

Event director Kate Branagh said: "The wind was lighter than usual for June in Palma [in part due to warmer than normal sea temperatures] and that meant tactical sailing. Crews were searching for the best breeze and avoiding the lightest patches.

"It was not easy setting courses in the lighter breeze for fear of it dying out early, but the race committee made great



Bolero's victory came as a result of near flawless crew work and smart tactical decisions on race day one and two



BOLERO – A UNIQUE PERSONALITY

In Class B the enchanting *Atalante I* sailed a solid race, but overall class victory was taken by *Bolero* (above), a yacht that was last seen on the Superyacht Cup circuit in 2010. Although built in 1991 (in fact, she was designed in the transition period between pencil and computer) she is far from past her prime.


Her victory came as a result of near flawless crew work and smart tactical decisions on race days one and two.

Mani Frers, son of her designer, German Frers, was on board and recalls: "When the call came to sail on *Bolero* it took nothing to convince me. My father was really fond of this design and her story; she's a unique yacht with her own personality.

"Having sailed on other designs of the same period it struck me how you know what will make her tick as soon as you step on board. She flew around the course during the first two days, which helped build a lead which we maintained until the last race."

And the high point of the Superyacht Cup prizegiving this year was *Bolero's* owner and crew charging the stage to a soundtrack of Queen's *We Are the Champions*. The crowd roared and started chanting "Bolero-O! Bolero-O!"

The cheers, whistles and woos continued for a long time until a grinning team *Bolero* swapped their spotlight moment for a livestream on the big screen of *Emirates Team New Zealand* winning the *America's Cup*.



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Classen TC127
Atalante, in the
foreground, takes
on Windrose of
Amsterdam



The social programme and its casual post-racing happy hour is part of the atmosphere that distinguishes the event

Above: super-size yachts need plenty of crew. Below: the all-star Penderinis Paddleboard Cup



effort to get in three races and finish all yachts. However, with so many talented sailors throughout the fleet, the standard was set very high."

The battles between *Ribelle* and the 33m Baltic *WinWin* made for a compelling spectacle. *WinWin* has been described by designer Javier Jaudenes as "a boat that wants to go fast all the time." She not only took home the 2016 trophy but also won her class in Palma and St Barths Bucket this year.

Ribelle's captain, Federico Biatturi, remarked: "WinWin, *Saudade*, *Inoui* and *Farfall* were all very close together." *Saudade's* captain, Ryan Taylor, added: "They have always been in close competition with *Saudade* and always will be."

At the other end of the superyacht sailing spectrum were the traditional-looking Truly Classic designs *Atalante* and *Atalante J*, both elegant and distinct Andre Hoek designs that enjoyed sibling rivalry from start to finish. Andre Hoek, who took part in the racing, commented: "I joined TC127



Above: Preparing a headsail hoist. Below: the new 32m *Ribelle*



Atalante on the last race day and she sailed really well. We were very far ahead on line honours and came 2nd on handicap, and very close to winning that race on handicap as well. The boat is sailed by a relatively small crew and helmed by her owner. She sails well upwind and downwind, is very well balanced and light on the helm."

The biggest yacht in the fleet this year was the 46m/151ft schooner *Windrose of Amsterdam*. This record-breaking yacht, designed by Dykstra and built by Holland Jachtbouw, was being helmed by Barcelona World Race skipper Javier (Bubi) Samsó. She finished 4th in Class B.

Windrose certainly has what it takes to excel in reaching and downwind conditions, but sailing upwind is not her forte, which handicaps her somewhat on short course regattas.

The 42m/138ft *This is Us*, serial competitor and winner of the 2012 St Barths Bucket, lost out to her competitors this time, but she made her mark every day by firing her cannon as she came into her berth.

The Superyacht Cup's social programme and its casual post-racing happy hour is part of the atmosphere that distinguishes the event. "Everyone is in by 1700 or 1800 and the atmosphere ashore is really relaxed," says Bouwe Bekking. If anything the smaller fleet and crew numbers this year made for a more close-knit affair than usual – it felt like a truly boutique event.

Next year, the Superyacht Cup will have a full fleet again as many of the usual yachts are planning to return. "It already looks like next year will be a big year," says Kate Branagh. "The J Class have nominated The Superyacht Cup Palma as their premiere regatta in the Med. We could be looking at as many as seven Js taking part."



EIGHT FEET WIDE

Every little helps when you're racing! Four crew, weight to leeward, obscured by the huge asymmetric spinnaker on *Ribelle*. This newly launched 32m carbon yacht by Malcolm McKeon did her second regatta at the Superyacht Cup in June, finishing 2nd in class behind well-drilled Baltic 108 *WinWin*. Photo by Claire Matches