



Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez 2023 – from Friday 29 September to Sunday 8 October

Sunday 1 October

Les Voiles Maxi version!

- 40 Maxis in the gulf
- Wallys out in force
- 123 Modern Yachts to race in IRC tomorrow

Les Voiles 2023 hits the racetrack! 40 gleaming Maxi Yachts kicked off today's action in a gulf bathed in sunshine reminiscent of the height of the summer in southern France. With it came close-contact racing, tactics and strategy too. The racers from every corner of the globe really put on a show for the huge crowds hugging the seawalls and the hills of Saint Tropez. Carrying huge amounts of light, floaty sail area, the Maxis coped splendidly with a fickle breeze, which required expert trimming from the teams. Meantime, with the bulk of the Classic yachts making for Saint Tropez today from Cannes, this year's fleet for Les Voiles de Saint Tropez is just about complete and the gulf is once again bursting at the seams as it launches into an epic week of racing.

The Maxis take centre stage

For the 40 Maxis tasked with kicking off a wonderful week of competition at Les Voiles, today's programme comprised a 19-mile course skirting the edge of the gulf, with a start and a finish at Le Portalet. Quite the honour for all the crews of these rapid racing monohulls, which will temporarily give up their place on the racecourse tomorrow to the Modern yachts and then the Classic yachts on Tuesday. At 13:00 hours local time, flat seas and a light E'ly wind enabled Race Management to release 4 groups of Maxis onto the racetrack, starting with the pacier boats. The light Maxi 72s *Jethou* and *North Star* were soon being challenged by the Botin 85 *Deep Blue* favouring the middle of the race zone, which was being stirred up by scores of spectator boats relishing this Sunday's spectacle. Close contact, technical legs, careful trimming and light airs called for all the sailors to perform at their best. Significant wind shifts added a little more spice to the finish line, forcing the sailors to throw in some furious changes of tack and headsail. *Cannonball* took the win in elapsed time ahead of the Botin 85 *Deep Blue*, the two yachts respectively topping tonight's leader board for the Maxi A1 and Maxi A2 groups. Another excellent performance was posted by the Wally *Lyra*, a 77-foot sloop that heads the Maxi B group in corrected time following a nice mano a mano with *Open Season*, the quick Cafe Racer. President de Froidmont's *Wallyno* also enjoyed a great start at the top of the Maxi C Group thanks to being very at ease in the fickle gulf airs.

The Wallys grace Saint Tropez

Saint Tropez is the only place in France where you can witness the sleek, futuristic lines of the magnificent Luca Bassani-designed Wallys racing. Nine of them will do battle all week long with the latest crop of high-performance prototypes offshore of Pampelonne. Three formidable Wally Centos (100 feet) are competing, *V*, *Magic Carpet 3* and *Galateia*, which has just taken victory in Porto Cervo in the Maxi Rolex Cup. 29 metres of pure elegance, *Bullitt* will be equally keen to excel amidst the big boats that make up this stunning fleet of 40 Maxis at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez. Also worth watching is the new Wally 101 Y3K, an ultra-light Italian sloop, plus the French Wally 107 *Spirit of Malouen X*, which won here in Maxi A last year.

Andrew McIrvine, IMA Secretary General

"What is tricky is getting boats out sailing which sometimes perform very differently. We've tried various formulas over recent years to define the cruisers and racer-cruisers, but nothing has proven conclusive. Therefore, we're adhering to the more universal IRC rule. Length is no longer a factor, as we have 72-foot boats, which are faster than the 100-footers. As a result, we've created a second trophy within the Maxi As, with a group dedicated to 72 footers. We're delighted to be racing in the Gulf of Saint Tropez and in the bay of Pampelonne. With the use of geostationary mark positioning here, we have great flexibility with our course setting."

The Yacht Club de France's Autumn Cup

The Autumn Cup typically rounds off the Regates Royales in Cannes by enabling its fleet of Classic yachts to race to Saint Tropez and compete at Les Voiles. Alas, the weather gods had other plans, but tonight Saint Tropez is brimming with these sublime race boats from the golden age of yachting, which have gradually made it into port at their own pace throughout the day. Sébastien David, Director of Development for the Yacht Club de France: "It's only the second time that the organisation has been forced to cancel the event. In 2021, due to significant squalls along the course, with gusts of over 40 knots recorded, and this year due to lack of breeze. This evening we're providing all the racers with a warm welcome as they continue with their late season racing in Saint Tropez."

Modern yachts to race tomorrow, Monday

Some 123 Modern yachts are racing in IRC in Saint Tropez, with 4 groups split into B, C, D and E, which is one less than last year. They'll set sail from Le Portalet tomorrow at 12:30 hours for a coastal course.

Like last year, the North Sails Trophy will crown the best yacht in IRC B. Laurent Corbin's crew on the First 53 *Yaziga* is hoping to triumph again, but will have to outpace their main rival of 2022, the Solaris 50 *Nergy*, as well as some 25 souped up cruiser-racers.

The BMW Trophy will reward the best of 25 increasingly prestigious IRC C entries. *Nanoq*, the Prince of Denmark's TP52, bagged another win in 2022, but will have to keep an eye on the line-up's other 52 footers this year, as well as a number of racing thoroughbreds built by the likes of Swan, Cookson and Grand Soleil.

35 boats will compete in IRC D for the Suzuki Trophy, all of them fantastic 9 to 12-metre racer-cruisers. Three Tofinou 12s will vie against designs by Mills, Farr, Joubert and Judel-Vrolijk, all determined to shine in this their last race meet of the year. Finally, IRC E will comprise 37 craft measuring 8 to 12 metres including First 31.7s, Farr 30s, Tofinou 9.5s and JPKs. Keep your eyes peeled for some very evenly matched fleets!

Programme 2023 *(all results and race information online on Les Voiles website)*

Monday 2 October: regattas for the Maxis and the Modern yachts

Tuesday 3 October: regattas for the whole fleet

Wednesday 4 October: regattas for the Modern and Classic yachts

Day Off for the Maxis and Club 55 Maxi Cup

Thursday 5 October: Challenge Day and Club 55 Cup for the Modern and Classic yachts, regattas for the Maxis

Friday 6 October: regattas for the whole fleet,

Prize-giving for the Maxis

Saturday 7 October: regattas for the Modern and Classic yachts,

Sunday 8 October: Prize-giving for the Modern and Classic yachts

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Photo credit: SNST / Gilles Martin-Raget

Video: SNST/Guilain Grenier, 6G

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