

TESTING CONDITIONS

Our exclusive trans-Mediterranean adventure on *Sarissa*



ALL FIRED UP

Built to beat the Js, *Firefly* heralds the birth of a new class of racer



FREE RANGE

Exploring *Liberty*, the first of ISA's new 50m superyacht series



BOAT

INTERNATIONAL

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

SERENE

On board a 134m masterpiece

Counting the cost of crew

1,500 crew reveal their salaries – turn to page 51



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Les Voiles de SAINT-TROPEZ

words: Nigel Sharp
photography: Nigel Sharp: Kos Pictures
Gilles Foucras; Carlo Borlenghi/Rolex



LIGHT AIRS MAY HAVE HAMPERED RACING AT THIS YEAR'S EVENT, BUT THE CREWS STILL MANAGED TO FIND WAYS TO PASS THE TIME...

It is Tuesday of Les Voiles de St-Tropez. The crowds gathering at the quayside are taking endless photos of their companions with extraordinary yachts as a backdrop. Some choose the ultra-modern Wallys and others the contrasting classics nearby. The crews are busy loading stores for the day, drying the brightwork, polishing bronze, and loading and discarding sails as dictated by the expected breeze. All are hoping for more than yesterday, when none of the 'modern' classes finished their race.

But it is to be no better today. On board the new F Class yacht *Firefly*, we sail for 10 minutes when an encouraging light breeze appears during the four hours of drifting and motoring between the scheduled start time and official cancellation. The crew entertain themselves with

an activity that should probably be called 'schwinging'. It was started by Freddie 'the Eagle' Bloemsmas (as christened by *Firefly's* owner) and continued by others, who launch themselves from the stern at the end of a halyard in an attempt to land gently at the bow without injury. Some of the crew need more practice.

Wednesday brings more disappointment for the modern boats, but aboard the Turkish motor sailer *Infinity*, we are able to follow some sedate racing in the classic fleets. More importantly, I can enjoy the delights of this Turkish-built yacht – but more on that in the next issue...

Thursday is officially a lay day, but there is the chance for match race challenges. I am on board *Elena* – the replica of the magnificent 1911 Herreshoff schooner – due to match race *Shamrock V*, the 1930 Nicholson J. The





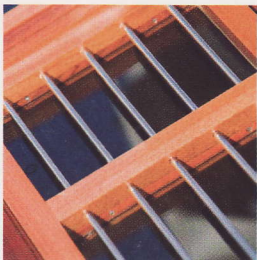
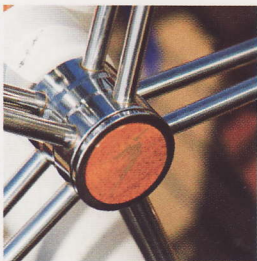
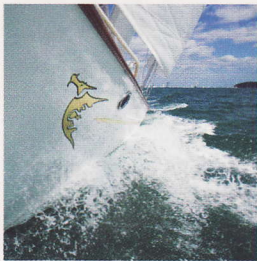
The crew launch themselves from the stern at the end of a halyard in an attempt to land gently at the bow without injury



reason is that the two are chartered for the week by associate companies, rather than any expectation they would be evenly matched. *Shamrock's* Bermudan rig should triumph unless there is a lot of windy reaching. My sense of history takes me back to a previous contest between these two great designers – the 1920 America's Cup, which marked the last of Herreshoff's six successful defences and the first of Nicholson's four failed challenges.

But again the wind lets us down and we motor to Club 55 so the charter guests can have lunch. This gives *Elena's* crew the opportunity to try their own form of schwinging: launching themselves from the bowsprit while relying on a fellow crewmember's fast action on the hydraulic halyard winch to keep them out of the water as they pass midships. There is some satisfaction when a very light breeze does at least put shape in the vast mainsail.

Friday, and I am aboard the new Fairlie 55 and, at last, there is just enough breeze to start a race... ▶



AT THE END OF A WINDLESS VOILES DE SAINT-TROPEZ, NIGEL SHARP JOINS THE BEAUTIFULLY BUILT FAIRLIE 55

On my last day in Saint-Tropez I'm on board *Fairlie*, the 16.5 metre 'modern classic', and the first of a range of new boats from Fairlie Yachts, which has long been known for its restoration work.

Once again we spend several hours waiting for wind, but this gives me an opportunity to talk to Paul Spooner, Fairlie's in-house naval architect. Above the waterline *Fairlie* has a traditional look with her long overhangs and graceful sheer, but this hides a thoroughly modern hull – she has a canoe under-body with a fin and bulb keel. Moreover, she has carbon spars, while her hull construction is timber and epoxy.

The interior layout includes two double cabins and two heads with traditional style dark-stained mahogany joinery. She is less spacious than many boats of a similar length but as Spooner points out, 'I designed her with a priority towards performance and styling.' The quality of finish is excellent throughout.

Spooner tells me about one of *Fairlie's* early Solent sailing trials in an enviable 22 knots of breeze. 'We were doing 10 knots off the wind and eight knots up-wind and she was perfectly balanced,' he says.

At last prayers are answered and there is just enough wind for racing. As we sail up the beat, *Fairlie* seems to have a fast, lively performance, although it's difficult to assess in the short chop and regular wind shadow of other boats. In fact, as we approach the windward mark, it is impossible to safely round it, as we are overwhelmed by the bigger boats that started after us, so we retire.

'It's so frustrating that we haven't really been able to sail this week, because I don't think people will believe how quick a boat she is,' Spooner says, as we motor home. 'People look at her and see the traditional style

and probably think it's a traditional performance, but it absolutely is not.'

We also talk about the other boats in the new Fairlie range, which includes one of 20 metres that is another new design; one of 23 and another of 33.5 metres, both of which are existing Fife designs above the waterline, with modern underwater lines. We look forward to seeing them sailing one day at a (windier) Voiles de Saint-Tropez...



words: Nigel Sharp
photography:
Courtesy of Fairlie

