

## A place in the sun

Based on access and geography alone the new Med Series for boats of '40ft-ish' being introduced this year in Palma promises to be another useful reference for lightweight modern racing yachts. The goal of the series is two-fold: provide better competition for existing lighter-displacement, planing hull forms such as the GP42s, Fast40s, Soto 40s, Ker 40s, Carkeek 40s, Melges 40s and HH42s while establishing stable and attractive conditions for future new builds.

We have witnessed numerous rating classes and 40ft one-designs come and go over the years, yet the many challenges of growing a one-design class can quickly limit success. The goal of the Med Series is simply to bring people together at relaxed events that promote fast, fun boats (and boost the secondhand market).

A big driver of the format is that similar-style/concept boats deliver closer racing than is possible in disparate fleets racing on handicap under ORCi or IRC. Emphasis will also be placed on encouraging new teams to build experience with these faster boats before a possible step up to building new.

Although the aim is to deliver closer racing with boats of a similar type, as in the Fast40 class, some degree of handicapping is necessary to broaden appeal. Where the Fast40 class has successfully evolved using a (progressively tightening) IRC rating band, for the Mediterranean series ORCi is being employed since organisers in the region already have good experience of its use. The ORCi VPP-based tools should allow us to rate and monitor inherent design differences as well potential optimisations in an efficient manner, hopefully offering owners a platform to begin competing without necessarily having to optimise their boats upfront.

Overriding everything is the fact that this series is being created for the modern, lighter and faster type of yacht and everything is tilted in this direction in terms of promoting go-fast features vs low stability-type slow features. This is the biggest priority – especially looking ahead to potential new build interest.

Although the Med Series will be scored under ORCi we're hoping the fleet will in due course enjoy dual-scoring with IRC at other events as we saw in The Hague at the 2018 Offshore World Championship. This platform could even one day be utilised to launch a 40ft and 50ft World Championship and potentially incorporate some of the major historical trophies such as the One Ton Cup and even, possibly... a team event like the Admiral's or Sardinia Cup.

Our approach is inclusive rather than exclusive and we support a unified approach to boost fleet numbers as quickly as possible.

Another aspiration is to forge links with the UK Fast40 class to support international growth of these exciting designs – it is important therefore that the Med Series complements what is already happening successfully in the UK.

In fact, the Med 40 rules will be based on the Fast40 rules with added guidelines to help typeform the boats as quickly as possible. The 40ft size is very 'cost sensitive' and it's important we find the right balance quickly between performance, development and cost.

As always one of the major concerns for owners looking to join the party is depreciation. In the past this wasn't such an issue for raceboat owners, but these days longevity and resale are much stronger concerns. Based on this we'll need to focus on providing a stable framework that will keep boats competitive for several years. The new rules will also include cost control measures for new boats for construction and specification, with differences in hull stability and VCG being assessed by the ORCi VPP. The Med 40 fleet will initially have a performance ceiling of 475 GPH.

There is already thought of creating a 50ft division to give a second home to the numerous used TP52s out there and this will be announced in due course. This would also help create the conditions for a new international two-boat team event which we hope to host in 2020. The good news here is that the fastest modern 40-footers are now achieving similar performance to the 2008-generation TP52s so performance vs cost is assured.

I think it's fair to say there is no perfect rating system. Our goal is to carefully structure the new series with rules to extract the best out of the rating system used while deliberately avoiding negative performance trends. This aspect will be closely monitored in the set-up phase but will certainly require ongoing management.

Some may ask, will the additional measurements needed for an ORCi rating be a hindrance, such as accurate offset files, rig weights, inclinations etc? My answer is not really – the Med region has plenty of good measurers plus an existing measurement culture that has only become easier with recent technological developments.

And what about scoring? ORCi offers a variety of ratings depending on course geometries, such as windward/leeward vs coastal races, that should help bridge gaps in performance between boats of different ages across various course formats. In any event by grouping similar boats we de-stress the requirements on the rating rules and ensure a closer fleet on the water to everyone's benefit.

Shaun Carkeek, Palma



JESUS RENEDO

Designed by Javier Soto Acebal, the Soto 40 sits in the middle of the target market for the new Med Series for 40-footers. Incredibly this affordable and popular design is already 10 years old but the boats are lighter and a lot faster than most of the 'newer' 40-footers making up today's handicap fleets. This photo was snapped at the 2014 Soto Worlds in Valencia, won by Tony Buckingham's *Ngoni*. Sharp-eyed readers will remember a tidy 58m yacht of that name on the front of our September issue. So do your homework, kids