

Time to work

It is no surprise that the two most active ORC designers are both based in Italy at the heart of ORC activity: Maurizio Cossutti and Matteo Polli. The pair have enjoyed success both with original designs and optimisations, and their clients are regulars on championship podiums. With further success at the ORC Worlds in Sibenik it felt only right to interrupt their traditional August holidays...

Seahorse: What were your main observations of the racing in Sibenik this year?

Matteo Polli: I have probably taken part in 10 ORC championships and this year's event was potentially one of the best... with a more balanced offshore-inshore format and superb mixed wind conditions throughout. So it was disappointing that with such perfect weather the race committee still did not manage to complete the programme and introduce a discard. Also, as the level of the top teams gets higher, so time margins get smaller. Taken together these factors meant that one bad race destroyed your chances.

Maurizio Cossutti: The format is now not so bad, but it would still be better to run two proper offshore races and not split one race into two parts – that is fairer and correctly gives more weight to the offshore stages. I was always against the trend of more and more



All good fun... until it's not. The Lithuanian Neo 350 (left) Dia gets on the wrong end of some old-school Greek decibels at the ORC Worlds after a coming-together with the optimised ex-Mumm 30 Tammum from Thessaloniki. This particular Neo 350 ended the regatta deep – 32nd in Class C and six places behind her Greek friends. But there is always a wide spread of sailing ability seen at ORC events and a similar Italian Neo 350 finished in 5th overall

inshore races – navigation, meteorology and seamanship must be present in a proper 'big boat' championship. This is nothing new, the old Ton Cups were all raced using the same format. We can discuss the discard options but for me definitely the trend [to more offshore races] is OK.

What is not acceptable is that on the only day of strong breeze on one of the two course areas the race committee in Sibenik could not keep the end of the startline in place and we had only one race – so classes A and C ended up with no discard. But this was the only major problem in an otherwise healthy event.

SH: Did any other boats (than your own) stand out?

MP: Looking at Class A, TP52s still dominate, probably due to the lack of new designs of comparable size but surely also because of all the professional crews. It was also nice to see a Melges 40 competing for the first time – and encouraging that despite being so radical compared to the rest of the fleet this system could rate it quite fairly. I was involved in the ORC optimisation of this boat but there was never enough time to do anything significant. I think that with a bit more preparation what is quite an extreme design for ORC racing could regularly get into the top five.

In Class B the Swan 42 remains dominant, but these boats also had all-professional crews and benefited from a long history of one-design development. Even so, the 18pt gap between the third Swan

42 and the fourth boat (X-41) is a lot... this is something the rule-makers need to look at.

Class C had the most crowded fleet as usual and also the most new designs. The new Italia 11.98, Neo 350 and J/99 were all racing for the first time at this level and all three designs showed good potential. Moreover, many older designs have undergone very comprehensive changes to improve their performance vs rating ratios. Both M37s proved competitive following a complete review of appendages and sail plans; but also older designs like the Dufour 34 *Northern Light*, for which I redesigned the keel and the sail plan – she finished third in the Corinthian division.

MC: It was interesting to see how crew work is fortunately still a big part of the picture. For example, in Class B the best Swan 42s were the most professionally prepared and clearly had the best crews. In Class C new boats like the Italia 11.98 and Neo 350, both interesting designs with different, very contrasting characteristics, didn't show as well as in earlier spring regattas, but they definitely improved as their crews got better. In Class A the TP52 *Xio* was the best boat with the best crew as well...

SH: What might this say about the designs currently favoured by the rule?

MP: No rule is perfect so there will always be 'better' design spaces. Designers try to squeeze their boats into these spaces as rule-makers try to eliminate them or at least close the gap. All that said, I personally do not think there are now many such spaces still left.

MC: I don't think that there are any excessively favoured boats. For example, the Swan 42 is often highlighted: the boat is definitely a good all-round performer but, as I mentioned, the top boats had the best crews. The Czech Swan 42, with a good but amateur crew, was often deep in the pack and usually finished after boats like the X-41.

On the other hand, if we want to attract new boats and owners, we must carefully consider why boats like the Melges IC37, Bolt 37, MAT 1120 and so on, the more racy, sexy, lighter boats, are still uncompetitive in ORC. The rule is still too conservative: the fleet in Sibenik was old... I heard many comments that walking the dock felt like a boatshow of 10 years ago. From a marketing point of view this is not so good.

Relaxing the limits a bit (for example, measured volume at the ends, BTR ratio and the IMS length calculation) could allow some more interesting designs to be more competitive – especially in the B and C classes where the CDL limit really drives the design.

Measurement is no longer such a big issue, hull scanning can now be fast and accurate. But it is time we considered two choices to measure displacement: the current method using freeboards plus calculation, but then a second option with freeboards used only for trim determination coupled with physical weighing... I believe that in 2019 weighing should be used as much as possible.

As far as the scoring goes, personally I like things to be simpler, for owners and crews especially. I much prefer the Triple Number or other simplified single number possibilities already present in the rule. I understand that Performance Curve Scoring (PCS) theoretically is better... theoretically. But calculation of implied wind is always an argument. The ORC rule is now stable and working well so a simpler scoring system would be welcomed by the owners. And the owners are the clients.

SH: The 2020 combined ORC/IRC Worlds are in Newport... have you heard of much interest from Europe?

MP: It seems there is actually quite a bit of interest from European crews to get to Newport, much more than I expected! Surely the shipping expenses will dampen much of the early enthusiasm, but I hope solutions will be found to encourage a good bunch of European boats to make the trip.

MC: I know there is some interest from my Estonian friends on *Katariina* and the Czech Swan 42 too. For sure it's a complicated and expensive trip and it will also take out much of your summer racing in Europe... so let's wait and see. But it is important for both systems that we put on a good show in the US.

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