

The Bucket hits its stride



This year's St. Barth's Bucket was the largest ever, enticing a happy crowd of owners and spectators to the island for some typical Caribbean racing and socialising.

Alessandro Vitelli was among them. Photography by Dana Jenkins

As regattas go, St. Barth's Bucket has always enjoyed an unfair advantage over similar events. No other venue can match the unique and undisputed attraction that St. Barth's offers to sailors, and there is little or nothing new to add to the usual descriptions of the near perfection of Caribbean sailing conditions. Furthermore, while the sailing superyachts tend to disband and head for either the Mediterranean or New England in the summer, in the winter they can almost invariably be found in the Caribbean, and thus are

easier to gather together in one place. The Tenth Annual St. Barth's Bucket took advantage of these fortuitous circumstances to successfully play host to a multinational crowd of happy sailors – estimated, when you include families and friends, at 600 people – on 28 of the world's most beautiful yachts. For the second year, the organisers had reserved the entire main dock in Gustavia harbour for the fleet, and the sight was impressive.

Unfortunately, the two most awe-inspiring yachts present were anchored in the outer harbour due to their size



'I think the most exciting part of the regatta, from my point of view, was being on the other side of the harbour and looking back in the evening at these majestic yachts with their huge rigs all lit up ... seeing 25 boats, all equally beautiful ... where else do you see that? It's a magnificent Corinthian event, something that owners and crews can truly relax and enjoy – a bunch of happy people having a great time.'

Peter de Savary, owner of Rogue

Athena, the 90 metre three-masted gaff schooner launched by Huisman last year, and the world's largest sloop *Mirabella V*, measuring 75.2 metres, had joined the Bucket as spectators but nonetheless added glamour and tonnage to the event. The docked fleet included the 35 metre *Avaton*, owned by one of the first Bucket supporters; Bucket perennials *Saryab* and *Zingaro* (40 metres and 34 metres respectively); the two *Gitanas* (28 and 36 metres), back again for more excitement; the lovely new *Scheberazade* (48 metres); the J-boat *Ranger* (42 metres); and a

competitive subfleet of fiercely sailed Perini Navi yachts.

After eight years of staging a two-day event, the committee had decided to revert to the original three-day format, giving owners, guests and crew a longer opportunity to enjoy the regatta.

It's the most impressive collection of these yachts in the world – it gives you the chance to sail on the boats and to see them sailing with each other. It's just a fantastic sight to see all these huge spinnakers converging on the finish line. Everyone has a smile on their face, and the boats are being used in a fun way.

Above: Rogue, Peter de Savary's yacht
Top left: spinnakers flying from Infatuation and (top right) Visione and Ranger
Left: Athena, as you have never seen her, anchored off St. Barth's



st. barth's bucket

It's also a constant party... seeing each other, catching up with old friends and contacts. It's no one thing, just the steady beat of the drum, of the event that goes on and on. Ted Hood Jr

Underlying the 'beat of the drum' was the impressive and widely praised organisation. All the competitors and their crews had to meet the often stringent requirements of the French Sailing Federation, and in some cases this resulted in creative yacht club memberships. Sailing instructions and scratch sheets were handed out with the customary military precision, with the suffix '-ish' frequently appended to the announced times, and the race committee was tireless in its efforts – and in its solicitations for chilled champagne to assist in the challenge of equitably rating such a disparate fleet.

Obviously the Bucket fleet presented handicapping problems not commonly encountered in more traditional regattas. The five-boat Perini Navi sub-fleet was another Bucket success, and although normally sedate, these heavy displacement cruising yachts were sailed aggressively, with some exciting close finishes.

The most impressive and significant achievement of the Bucket is the openness and camaraderie of the owners who participate in the event.

Right:
Andromeda la
Dea bearing
down on
Wild Horses
Below:
Hyperion's crew
enjoy the
fabulous sailing
conditions
Left:
Peter Harrison's
yacht Sajana



'The Bucket is great fun, such a fantastic venue. Everyone gets together, that's very important, all these boats coming together in one place. And the racing, I love bucket racing – obviously St. Barth's is unique – and the weather! The race is well organised, it's a great three or four days – sun, sailing, shopping!'

Mr and Mrs Dunn, Victoria of Strathearn

Visione. On the second day a rapid recount of the aggregate wine stocks caused a revision of the ratings, and the 31 metre sloop *Rogue* finished first, with the Perini Navi *Porsuus* in second place and the 28 metre *Gitana* by Sparkman & Stephens third.

The third day brought a surprise when the 36 metre Perini Navi *Gitana* – a faithful Bucket competitor and a frequent challenger for the coveted Escargot Trophy – was given an enhanced rating and told to just go out after breakfast and start herself. This minor rating change wrought wonders and she crossed the line in first place,

Below: Victoria of Strathearn, looks sensational under full sail, with her owners Mr and Mrs Dunn at the wheel (inset)



The "open house" attitude of the yacht is very special. There is so much to see, so much to experience, so many people to meet, so many pina colodas that at times it gets exhausting ... that's why I need a day or two at the end just to relax! (Also impressive is the amount of subliminal sales activity that takes place in such a relaxed and friendly venue. The owners, future owners, and important people in the sailing yacht industry are all here, and the event is unique in the way it brings everyone together in a friendly yet competitive environment.)'

Teó Fontaine, nava architect

Lest we give our readers the impression that it was all 'crum beat' and no substance, three races were indeed held, all in perfect weather with each day providing slightly stronger breezes. The lovely 43 metre Frers ketch *Rebecca* won line honours on the first day, followed by *Singer* and





'They should take the size of your spa pool, multiply it by four and subtract those minutes, and then they ought to take off at least one minute for each bottle of wine you have on board – and if it's older than 1986 vintage you ought to get two minutes for each bottle, because we carry a whole bunch of lifestyle organisation systems and the racing boats don't!'

The captain of the 47 metre Perini Navi Andromeda la Dea, suggesting rating revisions

31 minutes ahead of the second boat *Victoria of Strathearn*. The 38 metre *Freedom* was third, and became the overall winner.

'This was our first foray into events of this nature. We decided to try the Bucket, and the owner had so much fun. And we won – although I'm not sure whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, because we suspect it's going to make it much more difficult to do it again. But we'll be back!' The Captain of *Freedom*, manifesting a clear understanding of the Bucket variable rating system.

The Escargot Cup was awarded to *Lady Lauren*, who won it convincingly. Her owners, when asked how they felt

about receiving this popular trophy, commented: 'We're happy to have contributed to this wonderful tradition. The racing sailboats looked very beautiful from our perspective as they



THE BUCKET SPONSORS

Racing and partying require a great deal of organisation, but they also require the ability to make the necessary commitments. St. Barth's Bucket was fortunate indeed to have received the unstinting and enthusiastic support of a few select sponsors:

The Abaco Club, Alloy Yachts, Churchill Yacht Partners, Northrop & Johnson, Penni Nari, Royal Huisman Shipyard, Segeco/Moët, Hennessy St. Martin Marine Trades Association, UBS



all zoomed by. We had a great time, everything was terrific!

Starting with the skippers' meeting held aboard *Mirabella V*, the traditional open boat evening saw owners, crew and friends enjoy the moveable feast, while many of the local population were welcomed aboard the yachts. On Saturday, owners, skippers and local dignitaries were invited for a reception aboard the magnificent *Athena*, while the Sunday awards ceremony was held on the main dock, followed by a deluge of champagne. Among the prizes awarded was the Wolter Huisman Memorial Trophy.

'St. Barth's Bucket represents a fantastic opportunity to gather a diverse set of yachts, owners and crews together in a relaxed social atmosphere for a few days of fun and safely competitive racing. The decision of my family and me to donate this trophy – given to the yacht that has participated in the spirit of the event – marks the first time our shipyard has offered such support.'

Alice Huisman

The final expression of the spirit of the Bucket belongs to the owner of the 50 metre Perini Navi *Perses*, who had her sail across the Atlantic from the Mediterranean just to participate in the event, before turning around and sailing back two weeks later. Was it worth it? 'More than worth it, just for the Saturday race alone!'

Above right: Jim Clark with Alice Huisman
Below: *Freedom* and (right) her owners celebrate

