



ST BARTHS BUCKET



Half a billion dollars on the hoof

David Glenn estimates that there was at least half a billion dollars' worth of hardware on the racecourse at this year's St Barths Bucket. With 39 starters and 2,000 crew, this was the biggest of these superyacht super-gatherings yet, though there were rumblings about the Bucket Rule



Above: *Rebecca* chases *Sojana* and *Liara* as they harden up for the finish. Far left: the crew of *Salute* were suitably uniformed for 2010. Left: *Hyperion* leads the pack at Ile Fourche. Right: close up of *Visione*





From far left: 'pirate' crew of *Axia* receive the Skulduggery Award for best Bucket humour; the race committee call it; party time on the dock in Gustavia. The 'yacht-hop' was a resounding success this year

Main photo: T Wright/photoaction.com. Inset: clairematches.com, O Kihlborg, D Glenn/ywpix



ST BARTHS BUCKET

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of St Barths Bucket 2010 were its statistics: 55 applications for 40 places and 39 eventual starters – astonishing given the tough economic times and unmatched as a shop window for superyachts.

There had to be half a billion dollars worth of hardware on the racecourse as more than 2,000 crew clung to this rocky outcrop of French Caribbean chic for three days of partying and close racing – the lasting impression was of Jim Clark’s new J Class *Hanuman* holding off *Ranger* by just 21s after the 27-mile course of race one.

Js are not typical Bucket competitors (if there is such a thing) and there was a time when this annual junket was not taken too seriously. Yet here were two Js in their racing suits, crawling with Kiwi and



Once no one took this event too seriously. Yet here were two Js in their racing suits, crawling with Kiwi and American racing talent, up against each other for the first time in earnest

American racing talent, up against each other for the first time in earnest, and in race one you could barely put a sheet of 3Di between them. *Ranger* had given *Hanuman* a 30-second advantage at the start, and for that to be reduced by just nine seconds in a race around the island of St Barths seemed extraordinary.

For the record, *Ranger* beat *Hanuman* 2-1 in the end and also won the Bucket, a result that might catch the eye of other J owners. It should also be pointed out that John Williams’s *Ranger*, steered by Erle Williams, won the last and deciding race by pulling off a tactical masterstroke at the north-east corner of the island.

Hanuman had *Ranger* comfortably tucked away on her leeward hip, but then the small off-lying island of Il Toc Vers came into play. That and a menacing-looking squall, which any strategist knew would deliver a hefty right-hand windshift.

Trouble was *Hanuman*, whose crew was being led by Allen Prior, would have to dive

to leeward to make it around the island and when *Ranger* bowman Jordy Shaver started to feign tacking action, *Hanuman* reckoned the only way around was to seaward. She tacked into oblivion. *Ranger* sailed on into the rain and a massive header, tacked and screeched round the top of the island a dozen boatlengths the better.

In those few minutes *Ranger* won the battle of the Js and the Bucket.

Williams and the *Ranger* crew were cock-a-hoop at their achievement, which not only rewarded Williams for persevering with a yacht that has needed considerable ‘adjustment’, but said something about the St Barths Bucket. Like it or not, the competition is ramping up.

There were rumblings about start times and how the Bucket Rule handicapped certain yachts (see page 71) but as event organiser Hank Halsted said: “When you look at the final standings, the first three yachts, all extremely well-sailed, could not have been more different.”

The Trades towards the end of March were irritatingly benign, but there was sufficient breeze to complete three races without major incident. Back on the dock in Gustavia, where the notorious surge can make the harbour wall untenable, conditions weren’t too bad, making evening parties of yacht-hopping a terrific success.

Last year there were serious concerns about racecourse safety, so an upgraded protocol came into play for 2010. Yachts raced within a 40m exclusion zone and marks were laid to keep yachts away from the corners of St Barths, which in the past have attracted dangerously heavy traffic.

The establishment of no-tack or gybe zones around marks also seemed to prevent close calls. Even the Wiggly Course on day two, which takes the fleet around many off-lying rocks, became The Not So Wiggly Course. Until a windshift, at least.

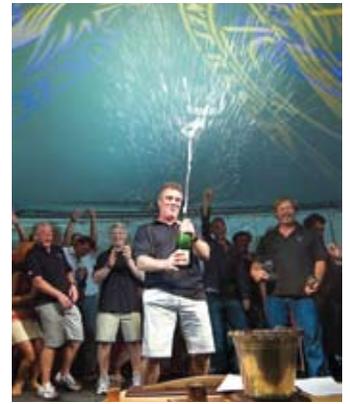
The yachts I sailed aboard (see overleaf) all used their safety officers to good effect and there were no real issues apart from one port-tack yacht which dipped *Salperton IV*’s stern and seemed to take its time to get the helm down. Every competitor had to confess to any infringements and close calls in a report form.

It was also good to see the committee standing firm over these arrangements, with yachts such as Charles Dunstone’s *Hamilton II* and *Hyperion* being docked five-minute penalties for infringements. ▶▶



John Williams’s *Ranger* beat *Hanuman* 2-1, but it was a close-run thing. Above left to right: crew weight does make a difference; two Js neck and neck – look at the extra roach in *Ranger*’s main; Williams, a happy man after winning the Bucket; Erle Williams celebrates *Ranger*’s win





Main photo: clarematches.com. Inset: O Kihlberg, clarematches.com



ST BARTHS BUCKET

Day one: Around The Island Race

Yacht *Salute*

Type Perini Navi 183ft sloop, mast height 242ft, 530-ton displacement

Owner: Dutch (anonymity requested)



clairemarches.com



Racing round St Barths on day one – shortly after this picture was taken we hit the bottom with our 31ft centreboard. Below: perfect 10. The bridge crew concentrates on getting a 2nd place

D Glenn/ywpix



Perini's Maurizio Costa and Burak Akgul greet me as I climb aboard the vast sloop *Salute*. They want to convince me I should regard *Salute* as a 'super-sloop' in the style of the new breed of yachts such as *Kokomo* and the new 216ft Dubois hot-rod.

I change into the obligatory crew shirt. We all look good in the uniform, but the owner, who takes the wheel just before the starting sequence and drives all day, is clad just in a pair of bright orange shorts. His relaxed dress reflects a light touch on the bridge that sees orders given with a smile.

"Forty-six minutes twenty seconds to the

start," calls navigator Marc Del Giudice – big yachts need plenty of time to prepare.

Skipper Richard Humphreys exudes experience. He seems to have his eye on everything from the foredeck, joystick sail controls and the racecourse to the cold drinks and the designated safety officer.

"Are you trafficking?" he asks, ensuring boats around us know our intentions.

A gentle reminder to the owner/driver: "John, there's a 40m zone."

"What's the distance of separation?" That's an easy one these days thanks to AIS.

This constant Q&A session produces an excellent start. Our tack onto a course north of St Barths is spot on and we come barreling in for the kite-hoist. Foredeck boss Dave asks me to assist in the hoist of the sock bucket, a manoeuvre which requires ten crew and involves running a circuit around the yacht with lines, like a circular 100m hurdles race. My lungs are bursting by the time the bucket's up, but it's a cracking hoist and we've taken chunks out of the opposition.

Just when we are enjoying a grandstand view of the fleet, there's a nasty rumble beneath our feet and a slight deceleration. Everyone looks at each other in disbelief: "Did we just go aground?"

It takes a bit to stop the 530-ton *Salute* at 11 knots, but with her lead-filled swing-keel fully down at 31ft, we are vulnerable. Sure enough we've hit the bricks, but Perini's Burak reassures me the hydraulically operated keel is designed to kick back in the event of a grounding. Checks are made, but all seems well and the keel still moves up and down as it should – not a bad demonstration, really, though divers later discover some damage.

We have a great run down the north side of the island and, being in the Grand Dames class, complete the short course and come home 2nd. The man in orange is beaming!

"Well, David, is she a super-sloop?" Burak asks. Looking at the yacht's 1,500ft² mainsail being furled into the boom, I concede she is indeed and a slippery super-sloop at that, far faster than her ketch counterparts.

Day two: The Not So Wiggly Course

Yacht: *Adela*
Type: 180ft schooner built in steel in 1995
by Pendennis. 1903 design by
W Storey, reconfigured by Dykstra
Owner: George Lindemann



T Wright/photoaction.com



D Glenn/ywpx

Superb sailing aboard *Adela* on day two as we head for the weather turning mark. Below: hard graft. With hanked-on headsails, it takes about a dozen crew to get the jib and staysail set

I didn't get near the foredeck aboard *Salute*. The first thing I do aboard *Adela* is shift the headsails that are being hanked on somewhere near the end of the schooner's long bowsprit. No furling gear on this yacht and that means, boy, it's tough up front.

New skipper Greg Perkins has attracted a veritable hall of fame for this event. Veteran Whitbread sailor 'Shag' Morton is on the wheel. He looks like an animated deck-fitter, his deep-tanned mahogany arms like an extension of the wheel and his grey hair sprouting like baggywrinkle beneath his cap. His calm manner affects the entire afterguard and we sail the course faultlessly.

The big schooner's up for a new suit of sails, so we have Jim Allsopp and Neil 'Strapper' Mackley from North on board, not to mention Hugh Agnew crunching nav numbers, Chris Sherlock (*Leopard's* skipper), Terry Gould, Jon Barrett, Spike Thomson and Duane MacPhail among the cast of dozens.

With true wind speed barely in the teens, owner George Lindemann gripes that there



D Glenn/ywpx

isn't enough wind. Yet on the close-hauled second leg we have the satisfaction of sailing higher and faster than the other big schooner, *Meteor*, and soon put her away. Then there's a fast leg to the weather mark. We overstand a little, but are still in the hunt and getting the leeward rail under is fun.

Otto Happel's extremely well-sailed Bruce King-designed *Hetairos* – since she was built in timber in 1993, she has sailed 120,000 miles – climbs above the 184ft Perini ketches and sails serenely past. So we use our vast press of canvas to glide down the run. At the turning mark before the fetch to the finish there's a split-second when Shag thinks there might be an inside lane at the mark. No! Go low, please! It is close as we swing outside *White Wings* and *Hetairos*, which we have closed dramatically.

It's a pretty straightforward fetch to the finish and we stay high to negate the headers off Gustavia. We are 19th, a place down on yesterday, but beaming from a brilliant day nonetheless. Bring on those new sails! ▶▶



ST BARTHS BUCKET

Day three: The Other Way Round

Yacht *Salperton IV*
Type 148ft Dubois Naval Architects sloop,
 built by Fitzroy, 2009
Owner Barry Houghton



T Wright/photoaction.com



Cameron Appleton (left), Andy Green and navigator Tom Whicher keep *Salperton IV* ahead of *Hanuman*. Below: no snuffers or socks on this boat – kites have to be laboriously woolled for each set

Photos: D Glenn/jyppix

She may be monochrome – from the crew’s uniform to the yacht herself – but stern-to in Gustavia dock, Barry Houghton’s *Salperton IV* looks the business. And who needs colour for attention with this sort of crew: one-time British America’s Cup helmsman Andy Green steering, top helmsman and strategist Cameron Appleton and budding Solent navigator Tom Whicher? Also on board are Mr and Mrs Ed Dubois and Malcolm McKeown, Dubois’s business partner. The atmosphere is pleasant and the afterguard in total control.

Owing to a snag with the captive winch that controls the mainsheet, we end up a fair distance from the start line. But we scurry back to start, with *Artemis* ahead and Peter Harrison’s *Sojana* astern – this is significant.

For the last two days, *Salperton* and *Artemis* have languished at the back of the fleet. On day one, they were last to start bar *Saudade* and *Visione*, and once those rocket-ships had gone, they went around virtually alone.

Things didn’t improve much the next day. Cue a complaint to Jim Teeters, who manages



the Bucket Rule. “I don’t expect to come and win, but I do expect to be amongst the pack, having fun,” a disgruntled Houghton said.

It turned out an administrative error was to blame. Apologies were offered. An offer to rescore was not. Teeters told us afterwards: “If you want to say: ‘Teeters screwed up transcribing rating data’, go for it. That is exactly what happened; no more, no less. That sort of error is the nightmare of all race authorities and handicappers.”

This prompted debate and complaint that the Bucket Rule could not possibly fairly

handicap so diverse a fleet, that IRC would be a better bet. So the journo ends up on the boat with the raw deal and puts this to Teeters; his response (opposite) is interesting.

Back to the racing. Houghton prowls around checking the opposition as Green, Appleton and Whicher do their bit, and we find ourselves more than ‘in amongst it’ despite a flat spot en route to Il Toc Vers.

Then one of those glorious moments – we are deliciously positioned to profit from the *Ranger* windshift mentioned earlier. We slam the door on at least half a dozen boats and by the time we set the kite – “There’s less of a decision about which one to set today,” Appleton says. “We blew out the other yesterday” – the smiles are back.

We are quick on this port gybe then flip over faultlessly for the finish. Back on the dock, Houghton himself delivers the champagne on a tray to the cockpit and Andy Green delivers a stirring summing up. He doesn’t quite say we could have been nearer the podium but for the error, but you can hear what everyone is thinking.



Our race-day ratings distil broad knowledge of each boat's potential into the simplest of all systems: pass the boats in front of you, let no one pass, be first to the finish

Jim Teeters (left, wearing his Kevlar flak jacket) explains the Bucket Rule to skippers at the pre-regatta briefing. There's an argument that this meeting should be more formal

Pursuit of a fair handicap

Some sailors may moan that they were unfairly handicapped this year, but event rule manager Jim Teeters believes the Bucket Rule is best for St Barths

First boat across the line wins. What could be simpler or more exciting? This is the essence of pursuit racing, whereby differences between faster and slower boats are embedded in a staggered start sequence. Bucket Rule pursuit races are now used for four superyacht regattas: St Barths, Newport, Palma and Antigua. More are interested.

So what exactly is the rule? In my opinion, we use the ultimate set of tools for handicapping our events: technology and observation. We build a set of polars, a table of boat speed versus wind angle and wind speed. The initial table is generated using a VPP (Velocity Prediction Program) based on declared measurements supplemented with designer input. For those yachts whose designers are generous with data, our initial table proves highly accurate.

We then modify our table for boats with compromised features; no mainsail roach or battens, for example, or boats which must furl headsails to tack, or have low sail area: displacement ratios, large superstructures with extra windage and diminished stability, etc. Further adjustments come after observing races.

But a key point is that we never adjust ratings to match the performance in a previous day's race. First, that could penalise an outstanding performance by the sailors or reward a poor one. Second, it would open the door to sandbagging.

Instead, ratings are modified more slowly, converging to create a table that should allow a boat to be in the hunt in all conditions. On race



Andy Green, *Salperton's* skipper, sums up while owner Barry Houghton dispenses the bubbly

day, we estimate each boat's leg times from the polar tables and wind forecast, add them up for an elapsed time, then use the differences to generate a start-time sequence. This distils broad knowledge of each boat's potential into the simplest of all systems: pass all the boats in front of you, let no one pass, be first to the finish line.

I am a strong advocate of matching the scoring method to the event. So, to deal with variable wind strength I recommend time on time (TOT) scoring for a number of offshore races; it does this better than the alternative time on distance (TOD) system. The fundamental assumption of time on time is that the ratio of one boat's speed to another is constant in all wind speeds.

This may be acceptable in a fleet of similar boats, but it breaks down in a diverse fleet. Many of the boats in our events suffer greatly in lower wind speeds and would be disenfranchised by

the use of any single system, whether it uses time on time or time on distance.

A pursuit race is, by definition, a time on distance race. The time allowances are applied at the start rather than at the finish. To apply TOT to a pursuit race, you must make a prediction on how long it will take the scratch boat to complete the course. Then the TOT ratings are converted to TOD to generate the start sequence. Therefore, the benefits of TOT are discarded. In addition, without a variable ratio of performance in different wind speeds and angles, there is much to lose. Quite simply, time on time is not the solution for this diverse fleet.

Our pursuit race regattas typically involve different courses each day of different lengths and different wind conditions. We have also implemented slightly different courses for faster and slower boats; giving the former a longer course means they are compensated with an earlier start and enjoy equal time on the water.

Separate courses also reduce congestion at marks and the occurrence of faster boats converging on slower ones at least until the shared finish line. And with multiple overlapping boats, that is a rush of excitement for all.



40m exclusion zone wasn't always possible to adhere to, but it made helmsmen think ahead

C.Scholey