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From 19 to 24 September 2023

Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération : The promise of an epic festival

35 boats is a record line-up for what has become an unmissable event, which has continued to go from strength to strength since its creation. Now sold out, the Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération is the guarantee of an epic IMOCA festival in Lorient, Brittany from 19 to 24 September 2023. With less than three weeks until the challenge commences, we get the low-down on what we can expect and the organisation.

To note in this Press Release :

- The first clash of 2023 with almost the full IMOCA line-up
- A chance to discover the new duos and the stellar female and international contingent

- A professional organisation that has stepped things up another gear
- A modern, dynamic poster created by Isabelle Keller to reflect the values championed by the Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération



Près de 35 bateaux sont engagés pour cette édition record. Photo : Arnaud Masson

How will David Raison's new foil-free design Stand as one fare against the flying IMOCAs? How much room for improvement is there between the well-honed Koch/Finot-Conq designs and the Verdier, VPLP and Manuard armada? What standard will the boats that competed in The Ocean Race bring to the competition? Will Corum's transformation and new foils finally reflect the talent of her skipper Nicolas Troussel? What potential does Damien Seguin's 2015 foiler Groupe Apicil have after being completely revamped this year? How will the youngster of the fleet, Violette Orange, tackle her debut challenge in IMOCA...?

To answer all these questions (and many more besides!), we must head over to Lorient La Base from 19 to 24 September 2023. The Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération will be another dream opportunity to draw up a hierarchy of the duos formed in 2023 for this double-handed racing season, as well as gauge how much each of them has improved. Indeed, with such a high standard

throughout the fleet, every victory counts in IMOCA. “This is where the 2023 battle commences confirms Antoine Mermod, class president. Most of the protagonists are in attendance, the new boats, those who competed in The Ocean Race, as well as those who have participated in the pre-season action. The Défi Azimut will provide a thrilling platform.”



Photo : Y. Zedda

New boats, new pairings, new poster!

The event will also provide an opportunity to discover the new pairings, who will colour play in November's Transat Jacques Vabre and then the Retour à la Base. Of the 35 competing duos, 30 have formed this year and around half of those are new IMOCA skippers (including Violette Dorange, Niels Palmieri, Sophie Faguet and Félix de Navacelle). “When registration opened on 30 May, the server went into overdrive, enthuses Jean Marie Corteville, organiser of the Défi and CEO of Azimut computer solutions. We can sense that there's real enthusiasm on the part of the sailors to get together again for our multi-format race. There are loads of new faces and we're really looking forward to welcoming them.”

The list of entries reveals a strong international contingent (19 overseas

entries) and no fewer than seven mixed doubles, some of whom may well be able to secure a podium position (Clarisse Crémer-Alan Roberts, Paul Meilhat-Mariana Lobato, Samantha Davies-Nicolas Lunven as well as Justine Mettraux and Julien Villion, to name but a few). This gender diversity has not escaped Lorient-based artist Isabelle Keller, who's created an event poster whose colours she describes as “eyepopping, bold and flashy”, which reflect the approach adopted by the Défi.



L'affiche de cette nouvelle édition est signée de la Lorientaise Isabelle Keller.

An exceptional line-up bolstered by exceptional resources

Accompanying the two skippers aboard each IMOCA will be an on-board reporter and the teams will be fleshed out by additional crew for the Speed Runs and the Tour de Groix round island race, which equates to some 200 sailors in all grouped together in Lorient la Base for the week-long event. “We’ve factored in this change of dimension, continues Jean-Marie Corteville. At every stage, we’ve reinforced the organisation team by incorporating new skill sets amongst our entourage. The Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération comprises 100 people working on the front line to meet the demands of a sociable top-level competition.”

Tasked with the overall coordination of the event Mathilde de Corberon will certainly have her work cut out with some 500 children from the Lorient Agglomération invited to the Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly, a packed programme of meetings and conferences about the Sailing Valley ecosystem, an increasing number of media requests and the inclusion of a few special guests like the exploration schooner Tara, which will be in attendance throughout the weekend.

Race Manager Hubert Lemonnier will be supported by Jean Coadou and Guillaume Evrard, with a special focus on safety during Wednesday's Speed Runs, which will rely on the expertise of Gwen Chapalain from Sea to See. "The timings for each pool will be set out beforehand to marshal the line-up and the top four from each group will compete in the final," explains Hubert.

As for the 48-H Azimut race, the organisation team is already working on a solution to ensure that the fastest boats have plenty to get their teeth into, whilst preserving the cohesion of a fleet with elastic performances. "The average range in The Ocean Race was 400 miles a day in established conditions. To ensure that everyone finishes the race on Saturday, a triangular course of around 700 miles seems like a likely scenario," explains the Race Director.

Naturally, that will all depend on the weather forecast, but in general mid-September in Brittany guarantees a range of conditions over the five days, which bodes well for a fantastic regatta.

THE ENTRIES

- Apicil (Damien Seguin / Laurent Bourgues)
- Biotherm (Paul Meilhat / Mariana Lobato)
- Bureau Vallée (Louis Burton / Davy Beaudart)
- Charal (Jérémy Beyou / Franck Cammas)
- Corum L'Epargne (Nicolas Troussel / Benjamin Schwartz)
- Coup de Pouce - Giffard Manutention (Manu Cousin / Clément Giraud)
- DeVenir (Violette Dorange / Damien Guillou)
- D'ieten Group (Denis Van Weybergh / Erwann Le Mene)

- DMG Mori (Kojiro Shiraishi / Benoit Mariette)
- Fives group - Lantana environnement (Louis Duc / Remi Aubrun)
- For the Planet (Sam Goodchild / Antoine Koch)
- Fortinet - Best Western (Romain Attanasio / NC)
- Foussier - Mon courtier Energie (Sébastien Marsset / Sophie Faguet)
- Freelance.com (Guirec Soudée / Roland Jourdain)
- Gentoo Sailing Team (James Harayda / Stéphane Le Diraison)
- Hublot (Alan Roura / Simon Koster)
- Human (Antoine Cornic / Jean-Charles Luro)
- Imagine (Conrad Colman / NC)
- Initiatives Coeur (Sam Davies / Nicolas Lunven)
- La Mie Câline (Arnaud Boissières / Gérald Véniard)
- Lazare (Tanguy Le Turquais / Felix de Nacelle)
- L'Occitane en Provence (Clarisse Cremer / Alan Roberts)
- MACIF (Charlie Dalin / Pascal Bidégorry)
- MACSF (Isabelle Joschke / Pierre Brasseur)
- Maître Coq V (Yannick Bestaven / Julien Pulvé)
- Malizia - Seaexplorer (Boris Herrmann / Will Harris)
- Monnoyeur - Duo for a job (Benjamin Ferré / Pierre Le Roy)
- Nexans - Arts & Fenêtres (Fabrice Amedeo / Andréas Baden)
- Oliver Heer Ocean Racing (Oliver Heer / Nils Palmieri)
- Paprec Arkéa (Yoann Richomme / Yann Elies)
- Prysmian Group (Giancarlo Pedote / NC)
- STAND AS ONE (Eric Bellion / Martin Le Pape)
- Szabi Ocean Racing (Weöres Szabolcs / NC)
- Teamwork (Justine Mettraux / Julien Villion)
- V AND B - MONBANA – MAYENNE (Maxime Sorel / Christopher Pratt)

THE PROGRAM

• **Tuesday 19 September 2023**

OPENING

14:00 - 17:00 hrs: 'Societal engagement' workshops

19:00 hrs: Invitation only opening ceremony

- **Wednesday 20 September 2023**

RUNS AZIMUT – BRETAGNE

10:45 hrs: IMOCA dock out

12:00 hrs: Launch of speed runs

19:00 hrs: Line closes

20:00 hrs: Speed run prize-giving (Baleine Déshydratée)

- **Thursday 21 September 2023**

48 H DOUBLE-HANDED AZIMUT

14:00 hrs: IMOCA dock out

15:30 hrs: Start of the 48H Azimut

- **Friday 22 September 2023**

(invitation only)

WORKSHOPS - AUDELOR BDI - EUROLARGE

From 09:30 to 16:30 hrs: "Artificial intelligence, on-board energy, foils in competitive sailing"

20:00 hrs: Tara conference

"We all have something from the ocean within us"

- **Saturday 23 September 2023**

RETURN OF THE 48H

12:00 - 18:00 hrs: Arrival of the boats

10:00 – 17:30 hrs: Tour of Tara and the workshops

19:00 hrs: Prize-giving

- **Sunday 24 September 2023**

TOUR DE GROIX AZIMUT round island

11:00 hrs: IMOCA dock out

12:00 hrs: Start of the Tour de l'Île de Groix round island race

17:00 hrs: Prize-giving for the Tour de l'Île de Groix round island race

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