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Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta

Fickle winds did nothing to dampen the spirit of the 28 superyacht owners and their crews at this year's Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta in Porto Cervo.

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IT'S ONE OF LIFE'S IDIOSYNCRASIES you just can't plan for: weather! Despite winds gusting to 37 knots one day and frustratingly hitting only five to seven knots another, for the fleet of 28 superyachts with their owners, guests, and crew attending the Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta in Porto Cervo—hosted by the magnificent Yacht Club Costa Smeralda—the event will still go down as one of the most spectacular sights ever seen on the water.

The plan called for four days of racing June 8th to 12th, but the weather gods decided differently, although not before allowing for one day of superb conditions and a cracking course around the neighboring islands and outcrops.

It was in Bomb Alley that the fun really started—35, 36, 37

knots of breeze hit the fleet with unrelenting force. It took some boats out of their comfort zone, and also led to an injury on *Salperton*, whose crew handled a serious situation exceptionally well. Throw in some discontent with the rating system, shredded spinners, and gear failure, and you have a typical regatta.

The last day the unbelievable happened. The cruising class had been watching the race boys fight it out on a parallel leg while *Y3K*, *Hamilton II*, and *White Lie*—which seemed to be jet propelled—tried to catch the leading yacht, *Saudade*. Onboard *Dark Shadow*, we watched a duel between the two Southern Winds *Farewell* and *Farandwide*. The breeze picked up to 15 knots, but what happened next was simply surreal. I had just had a comment from a very enthusiastic race follower onboard

WINNERS

1st Place
Perf. Division
INDIO

2nd Place
Performance Division
HIGHLAND FLING

3rd Place
Performance Division
MAGIC CARPET 2

International Maxi
Association Trophy
UNFURLED

1st Place
Cruising Division
GANESHA

2nd Place
Cruising Division
MOONBIRD



above
Four days of racing and social events made for a jovial atmosphere.

below
Changing wind conditions kept the boats and the crew in suspense.

who said the winner would be a foregone conclusion. "It's not over till it's over," I commented, knowing full well how things can go awry. And sure enough, as if on cue, the leaders of the fleet came to a grinding halt, as if they had hit an invisible wall. The sea breeze and the gradient wind were fighting a battle. A monster of a hole had appeared, and that was it.

The finish line was right there, nestled in the middle of the transition zone, but nobody could get to it. Wind was everywhere on the course except at the finish! Soon everyone caught up, and 24 superyachts sat upwind and downwind of the line, with everyone scratching their heads. Unbelievably, *Gliss* then powered through the bottom half of the fleet, proudly flying a filled spinnaker, but then as fast as she passed, she too stopped, along with three other yachts. It played well for *Ganesha*, *Scorpione dei Mari*, and *Jazz Jr.*, who had carried the remaining breeze with them from the final run, but the small area around the finish now resembled a superyacht goldfish bowl. No one could move, and boats pointed like arrows in all directions. On *Dark Shadow*, we spotted a puff of wind from the land and quickly hoisted our kite. It filled for a nanosecond, pushing us further into the fleet before we came to another frustrating halt. Finally, *Hamilton II* caught a whiff of breeze and was carried over the line—only three painful boat lengths away from us.

An owner onboard *Dark Shadow* commented, "It was thrilling and exciting, not just for the boats, but for the racing teams. It's the spirit of the event that is so good, where 'we' push the boats out of their comfort zone. Brilliantly organized, it was an absolutely fabulous week that cements this regatta's place at the center of the superyacht circuit."

The social program is a highlight of this regatta, and as the sun set each evening, the action turned from fierce racing to racy fun with informal boat hops and post-race drinks in the Piazza Azzurra, cocktails on the YCCS terrace, and dancing on the beach at the Hotel Romazzino.

Hotel Romazzino hosted a magnificent party. The addition of a chilled-out mojito bar on the beach only served to fuel the



3rd Place
Cruising Division
UNFURLED

Wally Trophy
INDIO

Southern Wind Trophy
SOUTHERN STAR

YCCS Trophy
UNFURLED

Fitzroy Special
Trophy
SALPERTON

Spirit of the
Regatta Prize
JAZZ JR.

events: LP SUPERYACHT REGATTA

action on the waterside dance floor. A more formal owners' dinner on the Yacht Club terrace delivered fine food and finer company against the spectacular backdrop of Porto Cervo harbor and the 28 racing superyachts lining the quay.

The crews were not left out—Sardinia Yacht Service's Renato Azara got his entire home village to turn out and celebrate for a real fiesta, which attracted as many owners and guests as crew.

After another successful regatta in collaboration with Boat International Media and the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda, luxury brand Loro Piana intends to continue its title sponsorship of The Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta in 2011, June 7-11. Fitzroy Yachts will also be continuing its support of the event as a gold sponsor. ■

STOP THE PRESS

As we went to press, we learned that following the regatta, IRC Rating Authority had reviewed the IRC rating calculations, in particular a factor that was added in 2009 to allow for the slow acceleration of large, heavy yachts with relatively small sail plans. As a result, the Authority has agreed to reduce the cap of this factor, and has changed *Gonesha's* rating to 1.313 as of June 18th. The new rating will not be applied retrospectively.



A Ride on Highland Fling

"The journalist doesn't have any shoes?" I'm not sure if I'm meant to hear it, but I do, and the combination of incredulity and disdain in pro navigator Matt Wachowicz's voice is unmistakable. Immediately, I realize the stupidity of going racing on *Highland Fling* with no foot protection. It's been 10 years since I've sailed on a Wally. Clearly I've been sucked in by the Wally image of beautiful people in shorts and bikinis, sailing barefoot. Good for the glossy brochure, not good for going racing with some hardened America's Cup and Volvo Ocean Race veterans. But we've already put out to sea and we're throwing the boat through a few tacks and gybes in the pre-start. Wachowicz raced with the Spanish team in the last "proper" America's Cup in 2007. He is one of many hired guns on *Highland Fling* from the Cup—along with Andy Hemmings, Chris Mason, George Skuodas, Geordie Shaver, and the softly spoken hard man of the Volvo Ocean Race, Neal MacDonald, calling tactics. With owner Irvine Laidlaw out due to a broken leg, Mr. Wally himself, Luca Bassani, is driving. I can't expect much sympathy for a stubbed toe from this lot.

The day is quintessential Porto Cervo—18 to 20 knots—a perfect opportunity for *Highland Fling* to show what she is made of, which, by the way, is carbon and not much else. "Not a proper Wally," is a muttering in the marina, and going below, you can see what "they" might be moaning about. "Stripped out" barely does justice to the yawning, cavernous, dark interior—a picture I'm unlikely to see in the next Wally brochure.

The real luxury, however, is the thrill of tearing past our rivals on the long run down to the Monaci lighthouse. While upwind speed among the Wallys is much of a muchness, no one can hold a candle to *Highland Fling* off the breeze—22 knots' boatspeed in 22 knots of wind. Performance-wise, she has more in common with a Volvo monster than her sisters in the Wally fleet. "Not a proper Wally." Not yet. In 2010, she may be the black sheep of the family. But that's unlikely to last for long, because I've seen the future, and it works.



above
My Song, owned by Pier-Luigi Loro Piana, raced along, providing her owner and crew a roller-coaster ride through Bomb Alley.

left
The Philippe Briand-designed *Hamilton II* racing in the Cruising Division.