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Crew of *Timoneer* after the last race.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. JOHN CAMPBELL

St. Barth's Bucket offering smaller field, bigger yachts

By Capt. John Campbell

This year the St Barth's Bucket regatta for superyachts was held on the last weekend in March. The number of entrants has been limited by the French authorities to just 35 yachts. It attracts some of the largest yachts currently sailing.

The regatta has its origins in the old St Barth's regatta of the early 1980s, organized by Loulou Magras. We were fortunate enough to sail what turned out to be the penultimate regatta in 1982 on board Bob Dylan's schooner *Water Pearl*. That year, there were some 136 boats entered, and these ranged from a rather unlikely Hobie 16 to the schooner *Lindo*. She seemed massive back then, since she was just about a hundred feet on deck.

It is a sign of the times that this year there were just two boats smaller than 100 feet. S/Y *Timoneer* is 147 feet and there were 12 boats bigger than her. The largest was S/Y *Maltese Falcon* at 289 feet.

The races for these large yachts are always pursuit races; that is, the handicap is applied at the start of the race and the yachts start at intervals according to the handicap. First boat home wins.

Because of the value and relative lack of maneuverability of these boats, special rules apply. There are no recalls for boats over the line as it would be just too dangerous to have such a large boat suddenly turning back to restart. Instead, a five-minute penalty is imposed for any boat over the line early. This was to hurt us badly in the second race.

Each day, the first boat away was the 154-foot Perini, *Andromeda La Dea*. The first race was anti-clockwise around the island, and we started 28 minutes after *Andromeda*, in company

with the 180-foot schooner *Adela*. *Maltese Falcon* started 3 minutes before us and on the beat she was clearly struggling to get to windward.

Timoneer goes very well to windward and soon we found ourselves in fifth place. We might have finished there had not *Maltese Falcon* caught us on the reach to the finish. As she passed us, we were becalmed in her lee, and half a dozen boats sailed past us. We finished 11th and the first race went to the stunning new 171-foot Huisman schooner *Meteor*.

The second race was on the so-called Wiggley Course, which took us in and out among the rocks on the north side of the island before reaching off to Isle Fourche and back to the finish. Handicaps were adjusted overnight and for this race we had the same start time as the 184-foot Perini sloop *Salute*. Unfortunately we both elected to start at the windward end of the line. We were a few seconds early, but with the monstrous bows of *Salute* bearing down on our port quarter, we had nowhere to go except over the line a few seconds early.

Our race went well, and it was close between many of the boats. On the north side of the island it was amazing to see the tightly packed fleet close-tacking in among the rocks, being pursued by three helicopters and a couple of kite-surfers, which I felt sure were destined to get tangled in somebody's rigging.

We worked our way steadily up to the front of the fleet and we were first boat home. It is a testament to the closeness of the racing that when our five minute penalty was applied, we dropped to a disappointing seventh. The win went to *Paraiso*, the 108-foot sloop from Alloy Yachts.

See BUCKET, page A9



Meteor, the winner, about to pass Maltese Falcon.
PHOTO/
CAPT. JOHN CAMPBELL

All three races closely contested

BUCKET, from page A8

For the third race, the wind was a little lighter, which did not suit *Timoneer*. Once again the handicaps had been tweaked and thanks to our first place finish the previous day, we found ourselves starting even nearer the back of the fleet.

This race was round the island in a clockwise direction, and unfortunately we found a few calm spots and remained near the back of the fleet until the finish.

The race was won by *Windcrest*, a 98-foot ketch built by Hodgdon Yachts

in Maine.

The racing for all three races was close and exciting. Often just a couple of minutes separated half a dozen yachts or more. The overall winner was the beautiful schooner *Meteor*, ahead of *Windcrest* and *Adela*.

Full results can be seen at www.bucketregattas.com.

Capt. John Campbell is the non-racing skipper of the 45m S/Y Timoneer. He has been a yacht captain for more than 20 years and a sailor all his life. Comments on this story are welcome at editorial@the-triton.com.

Meteor, Virago honored for spirit and seamanship

S/Y *Meteor*, a 51m Royal Huisman modern classic schooner, won first place overall in the 14th annual St. Barths Bucket with the 30m modern classic ketch S/Y *Windcrest* in second place and the 54m classic schooner S/Y *Adela* in third place.

The Wolter Huisman Spirit of the Bucket was presented to *Meteor*, according to the official report of the bucket, "by having the most fun while displaying the best Corinthian values, sailing their yacht perfectly

The All-Star Crew Award went to those aboard S/Y *Maltese Falcon*.

with a non-professional group of great sailors while sharing their joie de vivre and generosity with the fleet."

Vitter's Shipyard Seamanship

Trophy was awarded to S/Y *Virago* for the best seamanship and sportsmanship in the interest of promoting safety on the race course.

"On several occasions, *Virago* chose to give way to other yachts in order to decompress potentially dangerous situations," according to a news release about the bucket. "She was run and raced like a proper yacht in all respects while setting a safety example that we would all do well to follow."

The All-Star Crew Award, presented by Holland Jachtbouw and *The Yacht Report*, went to those aboard S/Y *Maltese Falcon*. It is selected by peer ballot, with each yacht putting forward a vote for the crew that has the best-run yacht with the tightest crew family.

A complete recap is available at www.bucketregattas.com.

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