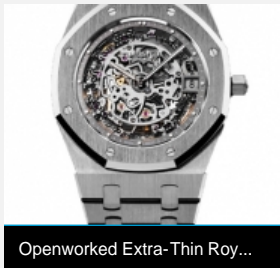


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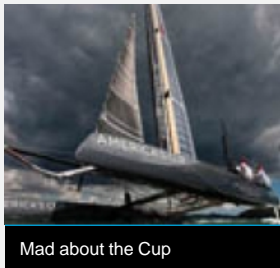
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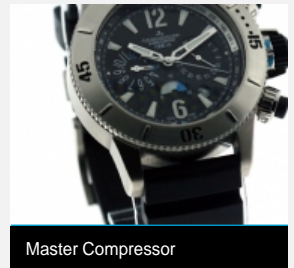
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By Jan Tegler

Bruno Trouble is an Olympic sailing champion from France and a two-time America's Cup skipper (sailing FRANCE 1 in 1977 and FRANCE III in 1980). He has also been an integral part of the modern history of sailing's most famed and historic competition. Indeed, the acclaimed yachtsman has been central to the three-decade association between French fashion house Louis Vuitton and the America's Cup.

"Louis Vuitton is mad about the America's Cup and its traditional values and the human element," he says.

Trouble is credited with the idea for the Louis Vuitton Cup (LVC), the series of races that over the past thirty years has determined a final challenger to the holder or "Defender" of the AC.

First held in 1983 off Newport, Rhode Island with Australia II prevailing, the LVC earned the Australian upstart the right to meet the New York Yacht Club's (NYYC) defending yacht Liberty in that year's AC.

Australia II went on to win the America's Cup in a historic defeat of the American Defender, displacing the Cup from American hands for the first time in 132 years. Meanwhile the LVC was regarded a great success and became a fixture of the America's Cup competition, helping transform the contest from an amateur competition to a professional sport.



Doubt

There was some doubt about the return of the LVC, however, after the 32nd edition of the AC in 2007. A falling out between Louis Vuitton and the AC management (organized by then-holder of the AC,

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the Swiss conglomerate, Alinghi) put the longest running title sponsorship in sport in peril.



The 33rd AC, sailed in 2010, departed from Cup history slightly when Larry Ellison's BMW Oracle Racing challenged Ernesto Bertarelli's Alinghi to a head-to-head or "Deed of Gift" match race. The contest was disputed in court in the U.S. but ultimately BMW Oracle (the "challenger of record") won the right to challenge Alinghi in a best-of-three series of races. With no opportunity for other challengers, the LVC was not held.

BMW Oracle Racing went on to win the match but Louis Vuitton was hardly absent from the top ranks of the sport. Trouble helped to organize the Louis Vuitton Pacific Series and Louis Vuitton Trophy in 2009/2010.

"Sailing and the LVC in particular, are very important for us because we came up with this idea in 1983, 30 years ago," Trouble explains. "It's really part of Louis Vuitton's DNA. Thirty years is a long time. There's no other comparison in any other sport for a title sponsor being in place that long."

The return of the LVC for the 34th edition of the America's Cup was much anticipated, and last fall the AC community's collective wish came true with the announcement that the Louis Vuitton Cup

would once again serve as the selection series for the challenger for the America's Cup.



A New Tradition

Proof of the Louis Vuitton Cup's importance in modern AC competition is illustrated by the fact that it took over a century for the American Defender of the Cup, the NYYC, to be unseated. Since the advent of the challenger series, the winner of the Louis Vuitton Cup has gone on to claim the America's Cup four out of seven times.

Today, Louis Vuitton is not only a title sponsor of the America's Cup, they are fully engaged the creation of a new tradition for the longest lived competition in sport.

"We thought that after so many years of involvement, the task for Louis Vuitton and for



the America's Cup organizers was to show the way to the future of sailing," Trouble says. "The America's Cup is by far the most important sailing event in the world. We have worked alongside the Americans (Golden Gate Yacht Club) to create new ideas to make the racing shorter and more exciting."

The difference begins with a new racing format, consisting of three main stages—the America's Cup World Series, the Louis Vuitton Cup and the America's Cup Finals. The AC World Series is already underway. In August 2011, the first of a regular circuit of regattas for AC competitors took



place in Cascais, Portugal, followed by a second round in Portsmouth, U.K. in September.

The goal of the AC World Series is twofold: to bring Cup racing to fans at top venues around the world and to allow teams and their sailors to prepare for the Louis Vuitton Cup and the America's Cup Finals. Both fleet and match racing will be a part of each event, testing the skill of the crews as never before. In addition, it is expected that the AC World Series will continue beyond the 34th AC as a permanent venue for AC competition between editions of the Cup.

Next July

Scheduled for July 2013 on San Francisco Bay, the Louis Vuitton Cup will bring together challengers



from around the world to race against each other in a bid to win the opportunity to race against the Defender in the America's Cup finals. The 2013 LVC marks the event's 30th anniversary.

Finally, the America's Cup Finals will also be held on San Francisco Bay in September 2013. The final matches will be covered via the Internet and TV (reportedly NBC) as never before with more onboard footage, onboard microphones, illustrative graphics and informed commentary than for any previous Cup.

New Craft

In addition to a new racing format, the 34th AC will feature a completely new class of sailboats, incorporating technology, techniques and speed that will make Cup competition the pinnacle of sailing once again.

"The racing will be much shorter in duration, twenty to thirty minutes," Trouble says. "We are making a new sport which will be much better on television, very spectacular. We will hopefully reach a wider, younger audience."

And San Francisco is a perfect venue because for the first time since 1992 an American Defender holds the Cup. With consistent prevailing winds (a

problem during the 32nd AC in Valencia, Spain) San Francisco Bay should provide dependable racing conditions with no delays. The Bay's topography also allows for a great, up-close view of the racing and a very TV-friendly backdrop.

instituted in the early 1990s. Sailed through the 32nd AC with some variation, the ACC boats were 82-foot traditional single or "mono-hull" sailboats with a crew of seventeen. The new class features two new "multi-hull" designs, including the 72-foot-long catamarans that will be used in the LVC and AC Finals.

Racing will begin, however, with smaller versions of the new catamarans, measuring 45 feet in length. Sailed by crews of five, the AC45s will allow teams entered to compete in the LVC to prepare via racing in the AC World Series, learning a very new way of sailing.



Advanced materials

Technology is a key element in the new AC45/72 class with advanced materials used in the construction of the yachts and one very notable difference. This new class, described as "grand-prix race boats" employs a wing rather than a mainsail. Standing more than seventy feet tall, the rigid wings endow the new yachts with great power, enabling them to attain speeds in excess of thirty knots.

"The 45-foot catamarans are already very impressive," Trouble notes. "The sails are not even sails. They are wings. It's space-age really because the boats look like airplanes. However, this is not completely new because in 1998 Dennis

Connor was already sailing with a wing (a hard-wing catamaran). But the new technology makes this even more spectacular because the wing itself is enormous but its weight is only 100 kilos (220 pounds)."

Given the speed and maneuverability of the new yachts, Trouble says spectators will see some very different racing.

"At the moment we have five crew members on the AC 45 boats," he explains. "Having eleven for the AC 72 boats will be a real challenge for the competitors because these boats are very demanding. The mono-hulls used for 160 years of the America's Cup had some dull moments for the crew—especially when going to windward you could see some crewmembers having a little nap onboard."

Many previous Cup competitors have had to adapt their talents to sailing multi-hull boats, which require a different technique than traditional mono-hulls. But the new AC45s and 72s provide an even greater challenge.

"The young guys from the last mono-hull America's Cup (the thirty-second) moved to multi-hulls," Trouble says. "They trained every day for three months and I can tell you that they are already better than the experienced multi-hull sailors."

Because the new yachts incorporate wings, there is even a new sailing position aboard—a camber man who adjusts the camber of the wing rather than a trimmer who trims a sail. The new craft are so fast and so physical that there will be no moments of downtime for the crew during races averaging thirty minutes in length



Official Timer

With so much new for the 34th AC, time remains key to the competition—especially the time to the start line and the time to the mark. Louis Vuitton is the official timer of all events for the 34th America's Cup. But in the modern era watches no longer play a direct timing role says Trouble.

"In the first race in 1917 in New York, the way to get the timing was to send some pigeons from the committee boat out on the water to the New York Yacht Club on 44th Street. Then at a later point there were people pushing chronometers to time the racing. Now there is no more watch technology involved. It is done purely by GPS and computer. They take the GPS position of the boat and the GPS position of the mark."

Louis Vuitton will mark its 30th anniversary with the LVC via new debuts in its Regatta and Tambour collections (see sidebars in this story).

As ever, the brand remains mad about the Cup!

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