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2015 Panerai Transat Classique

2015 Panerai Transat Classique – Day 3

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'2015 Panerai Transat Classique' James Mitchell

2015 Panerai Transat Classique - The competitors in the Panerai Transat Classique 2015 wasted no time in getting stuck into the business of racing. With plenty of wind and a lively sea, it all got going very quickly... and the crews are loving every minute!

We're only 48 hours into the race and already the Panerai Transat Classique 2015 is living up to its reputation. For this, its third edition, this unique event has assembled a fleet that is both well-prepared and incredibly ambitious. All the yachts are in with a chance to take the top spot on the podium and they are determined not to yield an inch right up to the finishing line. Average speeds have clocked in at a minimum of eight knots and a maximum of nearly 11 knots for Altair, the latter well on her way to achieving the goal of her captain Stephane Benfield to cover 1,000 nautical miles in the first four days.

Two other sailboats have broken the barrier of 200 miles in 24 hours—Adventuress and Argyll—while Corto, one of the 'small fry', recorded a fine run of 193 miles. The crews are clearly giving it their all. Judging by the spread, 170 miles from north to south but only 100 miles from east to west, the fleet is going to remain compact for the foreseeable future. Positions at 12:00 GMT saw Altair leading in real time, which comes as no great surprise given her status as the biggest beast in the fleet. And the great schooner, built 1931, is also running the show in corrected time but that could soon change because Argyll and Gweneven are hot on her heels.

South: a poor option?

In terms of strategy, we're seeing Amazon and Faïaoahé sticking to the northern route, which is

the shortest, and they are holding second and fourth place respectively despite the heavy conditions. In one of her messages, Faïaoahé mentions a steady 35 knot wind gusting 40 knots! Snapping at the leader's transom, Desiderata and Vagabundo II, the latter suffering the misfortune of being the first to tear a kite, are hugging an intermediate route that consists of deviating slightly from the shortest track to improve their angle to the wind and, thus, increase their speed. All the other competitors have chosen a more southerly route, Adventuress being the most extreme, and then The Blue Peter, Argyll, Gweneven and finally Corto.

The forecast for the coming hours is not looking very comfortable with winds of 25 to 30 knots from the northeast, including squalls peaking at 35 to 40 knots, waves of 3.5 metres, and thunderstorms. But this delicate situation should improve from 09:00 GMT tomorrow despite a slight risk of thunderstorms. Thereafter and for the next five or six days, the trades are expected to blow a steady 20 to 25 knots. It might be the longest option, but the southern route might just keep its disciples out of the way of a calm zone which, if it were to appear, would move in from the north.

Meditating and beef bourguignon

Life aboard seems to be pretty lively but bearable, according to the few messages received (such lack of communication is often the sign of intense activity on deck and tough conditions). On Argyll, the crew enjoyed a delicious evening meal consisting of beef bourguignon and chocolate cake which Michèle, their biggest fan, prepared before they cast off.

Over on The Blue Peter the atmosphere is excellent and has given rise to some imaginative messages: 'First night at sea... First real discoveries. Back to a floating sensation similar, one imagines, to that experienced in mother's womb. Scale and beauty of the elements confronted with the infinite smallness of the self.' But the practical is never far away: 'Wind strength has risen to 30 knots... We've reduced sail, but The Blue Peter is maintaining an excellent course and speed. Thanks to a fine swell we clocked 13.2 knots this morning...'

Little by little the crews are finding their feet, getting used to the pressures of the race, learning how to work together and, above all, claiming some quality time for personal reflection and meditation. In a nutshell, they're discovering the magic of a transoceanic race.

Oren Nataf, Gweneven

'Hello. First 24 hours at sea and we're getting stuck in. We're leaving the land in our wake and seeing only sea ahead. Yesterday it was a hard-fought run and we could see in the distance Vagabundo's spinnaker splitting down the middle when she got taken aback between two islands. We got caught out too and nearly ended up on the beach. The Blue Peter was on our tail and she too had a brush with the breakers. It was a close thing! And for the moment we've got 25-28 knots of wind pushing towards Martinique, now that we're out of the islands' lee... Christian has been cooking up some fine food. Gildas is pushing her hard even if we're counting on our consistency to make the difference. Love to all. Oren'

Argyll

'Evening, we got the info, however the Posreport* file extension is CTV and not TXT, which means my Adrena** can't see it! Other than that, all's well. We'd love to know where we are in the fleet after our twilight duel with Corto. All the best. Argyll'

* Posreport: file containing the positions of all the competing yachts, sent out daily by the Race Manager.

** Adrena and Jeppesen, partners of the Panerai Transat Classique 2015, provide racing strategy software and mapping software respectively.

Jeremiah Bailey, Adventuress

[...] We left the dock with goodbyes and good lucks and bon voyages and au revours, the gathered

crew of the Adventuress, finding out at the last minute we would sadly be without Victor, El Jefe. Docklines and pushboats and a schooner full of sailors, provisions, and anticipatory feelings of excitement and nervousness, personified by high-fives and hugs. Away and here we go!

The race kicked off with a spread fleet and an ensuing shakedown run around the marks. A few small fixes on the fly and the topsails were flying proudly. The entire field of entries had confident speed, and feeling out our vessel as we made our way down the Lanzarote coast was a proud moment. The conic peaks to the west stoically blessed our voyage, the sails of our competitors to the east beckoned us onward, and we bid adieu to the paparazzi power boats.

Altair weighed with elegance and power, and I had hope that we looked majestic as well, with a sashay in our waltz toward open ocean. The wind built with the sunset, the waves rolled up and under from our stern, and baked chicken steamed up the galley. [...] We also realized we have two potent psychological advantages: Pata Negra hangs with a hypnotizing swing in the main salon, promising fantastic Spanish fare for the trip despite our low cookie count, and our agonizingly slow drip coffee making method inspires dedication and determination for each crew member that tackles the task in turn. [...]

by Panerai Transat Classique

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Contact us at media@sail-world.com, ph: +61 2 4977 2116, fax: +61 2 4977 2528