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Farr 40 *Joe Fly* takes a flying leap in the Acura Miami Grand Prix. Photo: Sharon Green/ultimatesailing.com

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES The Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Tel: +44 (0)20 3148 4846. Fax: +44 (0)20 3148 8127
e-mail: yachting_world@ipcmedia.com

ADVERTISEMENT ENQUIRIES Tel: +44 (0)20 3148 4892 Fax: +44 (0)20 3148 8128. e-mail: alan_warren@ipcmedia.com

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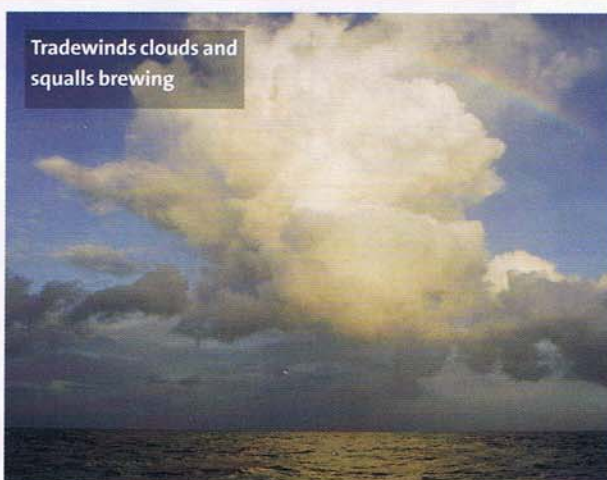


A CROSSING CAPTURED

Tradewinds all the way – a rarer occurrence than you might suppose – made for a fast and mostly straightforward ARC in December. Elaine Bunting spoke to crews at the end of their Atlantic crossing about, among other things, fuel cells, music lessons and flying a kite . . .



Asolare, an Amel 54, under main and Parasailor



Tradewinds clouds and squalls brewing



The crew of Asolare with a fresh tuna



Fast and often furious. As we reported last month, that was the theme of the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) this year. The 209 yachts in the rally from Gran Canaria to Saint Lucia had one of the fastest crossings in the event's 24-year history, with most boats making the 2,700-mile passage three days faster than average.

Fast passages make for happy events and this was one of the best ARCs I can remember. While not everyone finds they enjoy the two or three weeks of rolling and watery horizons, ocean passages don't come better than this: few squalls, consistent breeze and, best of all, tradewinds from day one.

The mainly steady rather than squally conditions did not, however, prevent a high toll of sail and gear damage, and it led to two abandonments. One of the boats involved was not – or should we say has not yet been – salvaged.

Last month we covered the debate about preparations for emergency repairs and jury rigs, and the role training and education should play in preparing people to cope with statistically predictable breakages.

But the likelihood is that the rare crew will continue to abandon their yacht when confidence in it has been

severely shaken and rescue is just an Iridium call away.

What may make a difference in future ARCs is how much easier it will be for abandoned and derelict boats to be pinpointed and salvaged, and it's probable that market forces will come into play in removing the hazard to navigation that these yachts present.

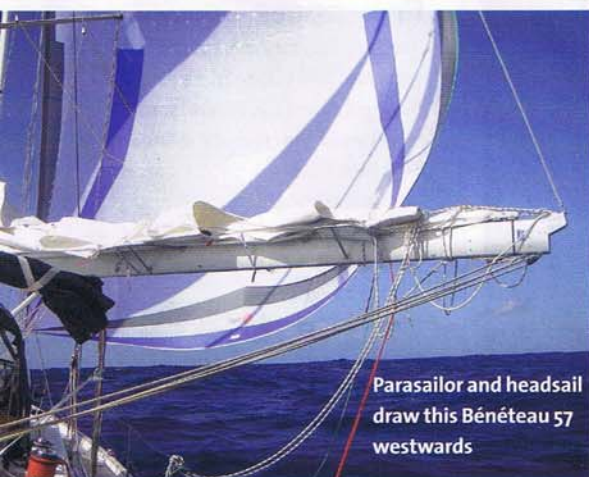
This year, for the first time, Yellowbrick trackers were fitted to the racing division. These paperback-sized position trackers have their own internal battery and are independent of the yacht's power supply. They transmit positions automatically at set intervals or can be polled from ashore.

Next year their hire will be included in the ARC entry fee and they will be fitted to every yacht taking part. "If the poll interval is changed to once a day, they reckon the battery would last for 280 days," Andrew Bishop, managing director of event organiser World Cruising Club, tells me.

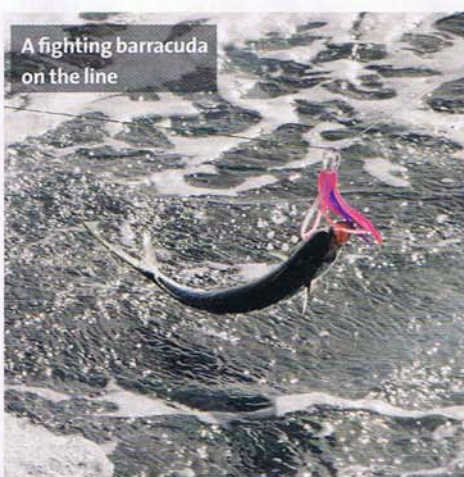
That will make it easier for crews or insurers to organise salvage, but if they are not able to, Bishop says WCC would publish the positions publicly online to display the location of the hazard and this would make it possible for someone else, possibly another crew, to locate and salvage the yacht.

Adam Kok's 47-footer *Elena* rolls steadily downwind under her Parasailor spinnaker

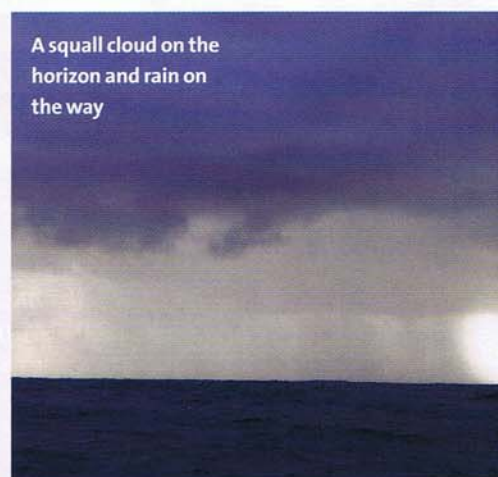
Main photo: M Sanders. Inset: C Pengelly, S Chambers



Parasailor and headsail draw this Bénéteau 57 westwards



A fighting barracuda on the line



A squall cloud on the horizon and rain on the way



Photos: M Karlsson

Jury-rigged

The two abandonments in this year's ARC (see February issue) – one because of a rudder breakage and another because of an impending failure of an inner forestay and lower – understandably overshadowed many successful examples of improvisation and seamanship.

There were two examples on *Liberty*, a Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 45.2. They suffered a broken lower when both bolts fixing the starboard chainplate sheared. Andy Schell from World Cruising Club inspected it and told us it looked as if one

had previously broken as a result of crevice corrosion and the other had parted later.

Despite the failure, the family crew was able to finish under sail in the very respectable time of 19 days by lashing the rigging screw with a rope led back and forth from the midships cleat to the bow cleat, the parts seized together with light line as shown here. This arrangement lasted successfully for many hundreds of miles.

They made another improvised repair after the headsail furler broke. When the securing pin sheared they put a screwdriver in its place.

Jury repairs: from left, the starboard lower lashed to lines led fore and aft; a screwdriver holds the headsail furler from turning; the broken chainplate with sheared bolts



C Pengelly

Vagrant passage

An exhausted cattle egret hitches a lift and takes a break on *Asolare*. Presumably it was blown off course, as the yacht was about 1,000 miles off the coast of Africa at that time.

It eventually flew off in a westerly direction and probably took a ride on another ARC yacht. Photographer Clare Pengelly, who took this picture, says a crew 25 miles ahead reported a white bird on board the following day.

Dash to the finish



An incredibly close finish after 2,700 miles of racing and being fought to the last. This is the Sun Odyssey 42 *Go Beyond* (left) alongside the Swan 65 ketch *Vahine*. Unfortunately, *Vahine* looks to have a problem furling her foresail, but she still finished just seven seconds adrift of *Go Beyond*. The latter managed a well-deserved 26th in the Cruising Division

T Wright/photocution



SAINT LUCIA

St Lucia or Saint Lucia?

It used to be St and now it's Saint. The Saint Lucia Tourist Board has come up with a new logo for promoting the island and, in common with the government, the full spelling of the name to go with it.

It's official – so much so that I see even 'Wrongopedia' has been updated to the new spelling.

Fish supper

Catching fish for dinner is part of the ideal ARC skill set, but it's a funny old business: some have it and some don't. Here one of the crew of *Asolare* shows off a beautiful dorado, alias mahi mahi or dolphinfish. Freshly caught, they make superb ceviche. Sadly they lose their lovely hues soon after being killed



C Pengelly

French dressing

One of the most impressive crossing times this year was recorded by the Chapdelaine family from France (as we reported last month). Laurent Chapdelaine, his wife Guylaine, 11-year-old son Théo and a family friend sailed their 35ft Maxi 1050 *MiniMaxi* across in 15d 20h.

Their boat was standard in all except three elements. First, they had a special flat-cut 'storm spinnaker' made for them by North Sails which was 70m² instead of the standard 90m² and designed to be carried up to 30 knots. Laurent Chapdelaine told me they used it "for 60 per cent of the time".

At night, if carrying a spinnaker, they had one reef in the mainsail and were mostly hand steering to conserve power (more of that later) and their cautious approach meant they arrived in Saint Lucia with no breakages whatever, another reliable yardstick of seamanship.



Chapdelaine confesses that at one point they "went looking for a squall with the spinnaker up to see what would happen." What happened was that *MiniMaxi* took off when the squall hit, hitting a top speed of 17.3 knots. "The boat was making a low vibration from the top of the mast to the boom," says Chapdelaine. "Never again."

The other two items bought specially for the ARC was an AIS receiver and a fuel cell. The family



We went looking for a squall with the spinnaker up to see what would happen. Never again!

were careful with power, using their autopilot only around 20 per cent of the time and the fridge for only four hours per day, but the Efoy fuel cell provided around 160ah of power a day, estimates Chapdelaine, allowing them to run computers, lights, Iridium phone and electronics without restraint without ever running their engine or fitting other power sources.

There's more about fuel cells in the panel on page 61.

209 boats took part this year. Over ten years **2,000** boats have crossed the Atlantic



Girl power

When their service battery ran out of power on day two and couldn't be recharged, the Girls for Sail charter crew decided to carry on, knowing they would be in for a no-frills crossing.

Their Elan 37 *Diamonds are Forever* suddenly had no fridge, no nav lights, no VHF radio, no wind instruments, not even a compass light. Skipper Annie O'Sullivan and her crew of women had to go back to basics:

occasionally checking heading at night with a head torch, but otherwise learning to steer by the motion of the waves, the angle of the ensign behind them and the feel of the wind.

Their determination is all the more impressive considering they were not experienced sailors. I put it to them that they'd inadvertently had a true sailing challenge and been much more in tune with the elements than if they'd

switched on the autopilot and plugged into an iPod on watch.

"We had a ball," said crew Kirsty. "We had to cook off all our meat and eat it in five days. We had no running water, no music or lights and Annie wanted us to preserve our night vision so we used torches as little as possible. We lived life in daylight hours and began night watches at 1800."

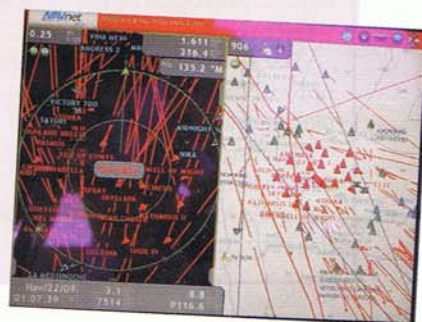
Although World Cruising Club had emphasised at the skippers' briefing the need to keep a VHF watch, the crew weren't able to raise any other yacht on their handheld radio, even when they saw one on the horizon. They did, however, have an Iridium phone and were able to make a few calls.

Being in the racing division, they also carried a Yellowbrick tracker. "We knew everyone would know where we were and that we were OK. It was hard at times, and yes it was very purist, but all we did was laugh."

The AIS club

This photo (below) by Clare Pengelly, aboard the *Amel 54 Asolare*, shows the mass of information from AIS transponders immediately after the start of the ARC off Las Palmas.

The experience of the Girls for Sail crew in failing to raise anyone on VHF radio suggests that the organisers' plea to keep a radio watch is mainly falling on deaf ears, but by contrast Pengelly said that there was an enthusiastic 'AIS club'. Crews would see each other on AIS, knew what boat each was and would call up to say hello and pass the time of day.





Running repairs

It was 0400 when *Beoga*, an Irish First 40.7 was caught by a squall. As the boat rolled, the boom broke just above the kicker.

The crew, all engineers, set about a simple, but clever repair. Seeing that the extrusion was not tapered, they drilled through the rivets of the boom at the gooseneck, cut through the boom behind the break and winched the cut edge onto the gooseneck fitting.

The new boom was long enough to carry a main with three reefs and the boom stayed attached to the gooseneck despite having no mechanical fixings. The crew moved one of the reef fixings forward to use as an attachment for a new kicker, but it broke and they ended up lashing one in place.

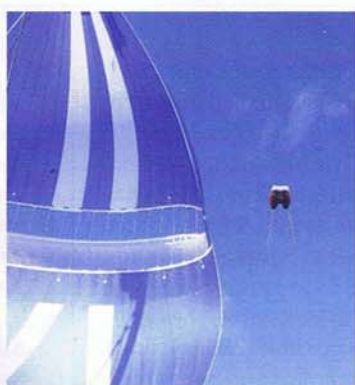
The biggest problem was the shallow angle of the mainsheet, which swept across the cockpit.

Beoga's crew used their autopilot

Left: reattaching the gooseneck fitting after removing the broken part of the boom (centre). Right: the new boom was long enough to carry a main with three reefs

most of the time and complained that the boat yawed enormously "often through 90°". We've seen a number of First 40.7s in the ARC and talked to Ken Acott, an experienced charter skipper who has done several ARCs in the 40.7 *Coyote*. He is adamant the boat does not behave or handle poorly downwind, but he pointed out that if not handsteering on a downwind passage like the ARC it is best to set the autopilot to wind angle rather than compass course.

Bird's eye view



From left to right: the Sutton kite with stabilising tails is released; the camera and bracket is attached and more line is paid out while the camera keeps snapping

At first glance the photo (right) look like a standard aerial shot taken from an aircraft. But it's of German Michael Waldbrenner's Lagoon 38 *Linocat* midway across the Atlantic and well beyond helicopter range. So how was it taken?

The answer is from a kite, but not without careful advance planning and preparation.

Waldbrenner had bought a Sutton Flow Form kite, which is designed for aerial photography. It is very stable so minimal

vibrations are transmitted to the camera, but it can't be steered. To this he added a special bracket, which attaches to the kite line and gimbals on self-levelling purchases.

Picking a day with steady winds that was also bright enough to allow for a high shutter speed, Waldbrenner paid out the kite line until it was 10m above the mast. He attached the bracket to the line and fixed on a cheapish 7MP Ricoh digital camera then paid out another

100m of line until the camera bracket was well above any turbulence.

The camera needs to have an interval self-timer. The Ricoh fired off shots every five seconds until the disk was full.

Waldbrenner comments: "You have to be willing to lose all the equipment because if the wind dies the weight of the line will ditch the kite and bracket."

(Waldbrenner also took some great shots in January of the boat at anchor in the Tobago

Cays, but ditched the gear – read more on linocat.blogspot.com)

He launched the kite several times, bringing it down to download pictures and if necessary change the settings.

The results are fantastic and quite a demonstration of his Parasailor spinnaker in action, which he flew most of the way across on its own. "They are great photos for not too much investment," says Waldbrenner, who spent €70 on the kite and under €100 on the bracket.

With a little help from my friends

For most people, crossing the Atlantic is a dream fulfilled, but for none more so than Robert Shaw. Two and a half years ago he and a group of friends began to plan to take part in the ARC.

Then Shaw, 61, was diagnosed with motor neurone disease, which progressed rapidly. His friend Stuart Chambers bought *Jasmina*, a Bénéteau 57, last year and his friends went ahead with



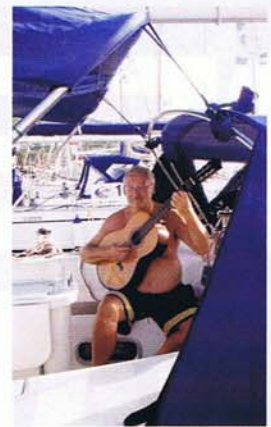
their plan despite the physical difficulties it posed for Shaw.

"It's fantastic that we could do it and, more than that, that Robert had the gumption, spirit and drive to hang on because he is in a very weak state," says Chambers.

Shaw is unable to speak so he had to write everything down in a notebook, and getting around on a rolling boat and using a feeding tube were all very difficult. "It was too hard to steer the boat, but navigation was always Robert's forte so he was more on the thinking side and kept watch by spotting squalls on the radar."

The crew, which included the four original sailing friends, all had extra medical training and had a direct link to his specialist in case of any problems.

Read more on jasmina2009arc.blogspot.com



Music lessons

John Linton unwinds by playing flamenco on board *True Blue of Essex*. Linton was one of the crew, which included his guitar teacher, who although not a sailor had come along for the experience. What he lacked in sailing expertise he more than made up for in musical entertainment.

Fuel cells – the future?

Hydrogen fuel cells are starting to make inroads in cruising yachts. This year two ARC yachts had them. The two biggest manufacturers for yachts are Efoy and Max Power and fuel cells are clean – the only byproduct is water – silent and virtually maintenance-free.

On *MiniMaxi*, a 35ft Maxi 1000 (see page 59), skipper Laurent Chapdelaine had an Efoy 1600. He was very enthusiastic about it, despite its extremely high cost of €3,500. "We did not have to use the engine once," he says.

The fuel cell stack was fitted inside the cockpit locker, as shown below. It runs on methanol, which is supplied in bottles, which Chapdelaine had to change every three days. "The maximum consumption was around 1.5lt per day," he says.

The Efoy fuel cell kicks in automatically to recharge service batteries. "It's easy and absolutely efficient," Chapdelaine comments.

Fuel cells are standard fit in the Mini Transat 6.50 class and I asked British Mini skipper Andrew Wood for his view. He had a Max Power MFC cell and, while he agrees that they are efficient, he doesn't rate them for value: "Value for money is not a phrase I would quote for fuel cells at present, mainly because of the cost of a stack replacement should it go wrong, and repair fees.

"However, for racing a very small, light boat like a Mini they are, in my opinion, a must. They are light and quiet, they keep the batteries at highest possible state of charge at all times, meaning longer battery life and better instrument performance, particularly the autopilot. They produce less waste and need less fuel per amp compared with a traditional combustion generator."

But for a larger boat with an engine he didn't recommend it. "The only real advantage is not having to listen to the engine running for four hours a day."



E Bunting/ywpx



The final aerial photos taken from high above *Linocat*. The images given to us obviously show the kite line very prominently in the foreground, but it's easy to eliminate in PhotoShop. Our art editor made it invisible in a jiffy by using the clone tool

Photos: M Waldbrenner