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*Du 19 au 24 septembre 2023*

**Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération**

## 48H Azimut: Challenge fulfilled



Photo : JM Liot

“Unsettled, intense, comprehensive, interesting, painful, fun, magical, full-on... Since 04:18 UTC this Saturday and victory for the Beyou-Cammas duo (Charal) in the 48H Azimut, there has been no shortage of adjectives

to describe the succession of finishers very slowly making for the dock in Lorient La Base. This morning, with barely a puff of breeze around the finish line, conditions could not have been more different from the boisterous tempo that coloured most of the 600-mile course.

With the podium places all filled within 2hrs 15 minutes by the crews of MACIF - Santé Prévoyance (Dalin-Bidégorry) and For the Planet (Goodchild-Ruyant), the denouement of the main event in this Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération revealed how evenly matched the runners and riders are in this 13th edition. Every one of the finishers was delighted to have had the chance to play a part in what has proven to be a highly instructive offshore sprint, combined with the pleasure of racing in breezy conditions, just five weeks before the start of the Transat Jacques Vabre.

#### To note

- The favourites hold rank aboard their honed or very promising foilers
- Some excellent performances by the older boats, especially For The Planet (3rd) and Teamwork (6th)
- Half the fleet are still racing with significant deficits at the finish, which are not a reflection of the incredibly tight match racing at the head of the fleet



For The Planet  
Photo : Pierre Bouras

Wind, sea, sport... This year's competition once again saw breezy conditions generated by an autumnal low pressure system over the neighbouring Atlantic. As a result, Class IMOCA's return to the racetrack has given rise to an incredibly tense offshore battle. The winner sailed a truly masterful race, though their immediate rivals certainly didn't make it an easy task. Evidently, the alchemy of the Beyou-Cammas duo works fantastically well to reveal the potential and versatility of their Manuard design. Securing victory in a race format designed to really put the boats through their paces on every point of sail was all the sweeter having worked hard to thoroughly optimise Charal and the team clearly deserves its status as a firm favourite for the next double-handed transatlantic race.

The same is true for the skippers of the 3rd placed boat, For The People, who knew they could make the most of having a tried-and-tested boat, which already has a Vendée Globe to her credit, to vie for the front of the pack on every section of the race. On top of that, the two stable buddies were able to share a thrilling ride together in the breeze. "I had an absolute ball! We had conditions which the boat really loves, she's been optimised to make the most of them, we know how hard we can push her and sail her together has been really great," beamed Thomas Ruyant, delighted with his front row seat alongside Sam Goodchild assessing his rivals' performances. Among these is the performance posted by Paprec Arkéa, taken from the same drawing board (naval architects Koch-Finot Conq) as the boat with which Ruyant will be lining up for the Transat Jacques Vabre.

### **The price of speed, the cost of performance**

Indeed, in 4th position, the competitors on the red and blue boat can congratulate themselves on having sailed a fine race aboard one of the latest additions to the fleet, which is obviously very partial to boisterous conditions. "The moment there's in excess of 18-20 knots of breeze, we're really in our happy place, no matter what point of sail we're on," enthused Yoann Richomme, alongside an equally thrilled Yann Eliès. "It was pretty fun. When you come out the other side, naturally you're a bit broken and chewed up, but when you manage to push the boat hard and get her powered up right, it's magical," revealed the sailor who has already bagged an IMOCA victory in the Transat Jacques Vabre, so he's well placed to understand the gains in performance by the newcomers to the fleet. There's no doubt that it's exciting aboard these boats, which were polled making an average speed of 30 knots during the reaching leg of a course which more than lived up to expectations during the first night at sea.

However, speed does come at a price. Indeed, capable of dazzling acceleration, discomfort is omnipresent aboard these machines and the skippers have a rough ride, requiring them to be supremely vigilant, especially in building seas. This was evidenced by the misfortune suffered by Pascal Bidégorry aboard MACIF - Santé Prévoyance - broken finger and violent impacting of his shoulder - as the boat slammed into a wave downwind. These painful, though fortunately not serious injuries suffered by the sailor from the Basque region, are an indication of the level of control displayed by his co-skipper, Charlie Dalin. Indeed, the reigning champion of the Défi Azimut, who had to sail singlehanded while his co-skipper recovered, still managed to secure a second place in this 48H Azimut. A fantastic performance!

### **A day of contrasts dockside**

The hard-core ruggedness of the 2023 vintage of this 48H Azimut can also be measured in terms of the unfortunate dismasting suffered aboard Corum L'Épargne during a fast and furious stretch of reaching in breaking seas. This lunchtime, the return to port of Nicolas Troussel and Benjamin Schwarz's boat, without her mast, perfectly illustrates how offshore racing aboard a state-of-the-art IMOCA remains a high-tech mechanical sport with all the hazards and variables that this entails. It's a tough blow for this team, who took receipt of their damaged boat just as another group of competitors thronged around the pontoons of Lorient La Base and Kernevel in jubilant mood. Hopefully the team will soon be back in action again.

We must also pay tribute to the female racers in this 48H Azimut, and in particular Samantha Davies (Initiatives-Cœur with Jack Bouttell) and Justine Mettraux (TeamWork with Julien Villion), who were respectively 5th and 6th, just five minutes apart at the finish. Candidates for the next Vendée Globe, they were



embroiled in a fabulously intense duel in the beat for home. Safe to say that they're able to excel in all manner of formats, from offshore racing in the breeze to close-contact match racing in light airs.

Back out on the race zone, mid-afternoon, the S'ly wind is beginning to pick up and is finally enabling the other competitors to make it back into port. Welcome Malizia - Seaexplorer (Herrmann-Harris), V and B - MONBANA - MAYENNE (Sorel-Pratt), Fortinet - Best Western (Attanasio / Loïs Berrehar) and L'Occitane en Provence (Crémer-Roberts), who complete the top ten in a 48H Azimut filled with contrasts. Though there are big gaps between the boats, this in no way reflects how competitive the fleet has been throughout this epic offshore test...



Photo : JM Liot

## Des retours au port contrastés

La rugosité du cru 2023 de ces 48 Heures se mesure aussi à l'aune du malheureux démâtage, survenu dans le fameux et fumant bord de reaching sur une mer cassante, à bord de Corum L'Épargne. Ce midi, le retour au port du voilier de Nicolas Troussel et Benjamin Schwarz, privé de son espar, illustre que la course au large à bord d'un IMOCA dernier cri reste un sport mécanique de haute technologie, avec tous les aléas que cela engendre. Le coup est dur pour cette équipe qui réceptionne ce bateau blessé alors que les arrivées d'un nouveau groupe de concurrents animent les pontons de Lorient La Base et Kernevel.

Honneur aux femmes de la course, Samantha Davies (Initiatives-Cœur avec Jack Bouttel) et Justine Mettraux (TeamWork avec Julien Villion), respectivement 5e et 6e, que seules cinq minutes séparent sur la ligne. Ces candidates au prochain Vendée Globe ont livré un duel d'une belle intensité dans le dernier bord de près. Une chose est sûre, elles sont très fortes dans tous les compartiments du jeu : au large dans la brise, comme en régates au contact dans des petits airs.

Sur le plan d'eau en milieu d'après-midi, le vent de sud commence à rentrer et permet enfin aux autres concurrents de rejoindre à leur tour le port. Bienvenue à Malizia - Seaexplorer (Herrmann-Harris), V and B - MONBANA - MAYENNE (Sorel-Pratt), Fortinet - Best Western (Attanasio / Loïs Berrehar) et L'Occitane en



Provence (Crémer-Roberts) qui composent le top ten de cette course de 48 Heures tout en contrastes. Les gros écarts qu'ils affichent aux arrivées n'illustrent en rien le niveau de compétitivité dont ils ont fait preuve tout au long de cette preuve offshore...



L'Occitane en Provence. Photo : Anne Beaugé

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- Charal (Jérémy Beyou / Franck Cammas)

- Corum L'Epargne (Nicolas Troussel / Benjamin Schwartz)
- Coup de Pouce - Giffard Manutention (Manu Cousin / Clément Giraud)
- DeVenir (Violette Dorange / Damien Guillou)
- D'Ieteren Group (Denis Van Weynbergh / Erwann Le Mene)
- DMG MORI Global One (Kojiro Shiraishi / Benoit Mariette)
- Fives group - Lantana environnement (Louis Duc / Remi Aubrun)
- For the Planet (Sam Goodchild / Thomas Ruyant)
- Fortinet - Best Western (Romain Attanasio / Loïs Berrehar)
- Foussier - Mon courtier Energie (Sébastien Marsset / Sophie Faguet)
- Freelance.com (Guirec Soudée / Roland Jourdain)
- Gentoo Sailing Team (James Harayda / Stéphane Le Diraison)
- Hublot (Alan Roura / Simon Koster)
- Human (Antoine Cornic / Jean-Charles Luro)
- Initiatives Coeur (Sam Davies / Jack Bouttell)
- La Mie Câline (Arnaud Boissières / Gérald Véniard)
- Lazare (Tanguy Le Turquais / Felix de Navacelle)
- L'Occitane en Provence (Clarisse Cremer / Alan Roberts)
- MACIF (Charlie Dalin / Pascal Bidégorry)
- MACSF (Isabelle Joschke / Alain Gautier)
- Maître Coq V (Yannick Bestaven / Julien Pulvé)
- Malizia - Seaexplorer (Boris Herrmann / Will Harris)
- Monnoyeur - Duo for a job (Benjamin Ferré / Pierre Le Roy)
- Nexans - Arts & Fenêtres (Fabrice Amedeo / Andréas Baden)
- Oliver Heer Ocean Racing (Oliver Heer / Nils Palmieri)
- Paprec Arkéa (Yoann Richomme / Yann Elies)
- Prysmian Group (Giancarlo Pedote / Gaston Morvan)
- STAND AS ONE (Eric Bellion / Martin Le Pape)
- Szabi Ocean Racing (Weöres Szabolcs / Irina Gracheva)
- Teamwork (Justine Mettraux / Julien Villion)
- V AND B - MONBANA – MAYENNE (Maxime Sorel / Christopher Pratt)

## CONTACTS



### **Sillages Communication**

Matthieu Honoré

06 30 54 42 90

[matthieu@sillages-communication.com](mailto:matthieu@sillages-communication.com)

[www.sillages-communication.com](http://www.sillages-communication.com)

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