

RORC RACE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

The RORC season this year has been the most packed ever: we have seen some quite brilliant sailing and the closest finish ever in the history of the Champagne Mumm Admiral's Cup.

The Fastnet Race had an excellent entry and the light variable winds made it difficult and testing. I often think that very light weather is much tougher to race in than very heavy weather: the exquisite concentration needed to keep a boat going in almost no wind is one of the most demanding tasks I know.

On the organisation side, the season has been pretty non-stop, so I was glad to take half an hour en route to Plymouth to walk around Stonehenge. There is something infinitely impressive about the accuracy and dedication put into astronomical observation by our ancient forebears. I expect they would have thoroughly appreciated GPS. On the way back from Plymouth I managed to take in practically the whole of Don Carlos on the car radio from Radio 3.

Within the organisation we have been helped this year by many individuals and companies. Andrew Wicklow, for



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instance, with his friend Simon Knocker, joined us with their huge rigid inflatable, Neptune, in which they plan to attack the Round Britain powerboat record next year in aid of the National Trust Charity, Operation Neptune. Their craft is capable of 70mph and was a marvellous help in getting race committee members (including myself) from place to place at short notice. As many CMAC teams also worked out, it is quicker to travel from Christchurch Bay to Cowes by a fast RIB than it is to land at Yarmouth and go by car. But those RIBs which hurtled into Lymington harbour during the Oracle Regatta (also run by the RORC) were not popular.

Andrea Fillachioni and his Olivetti team did great work at the CMAC and for the Fastnet Race turning out race results and interim placings. My race committee used British Telecom cellnet telephones at every mark, often with the line 'live' to race HQ so that a timer in the office was duplicating the passage times as they happened, getting them straight into the computer.

The Olivetti graphics and scoring tables were all re-issued in bound sets with boat and crew names on each individual pack and given to the boats at the new CMAC Awards



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Dinner run by the RORC at Plymouth on the Thursday after the Fastnet start.

A new trick this year was the application of bow numbers to all the CMAC boats. We colour-coded each class: 50-Footers were green (a green class flag and a green colour bar on the bow), Two-Tonners blue and One-Tonners orange. With the Champagne Mumm decal the number was displayed on 3M retro-reflective backing (given free by 3M): you only need to see pictures taken by floodlight after dark to see how effective this material

is. It's essentially the same stuff used on motorway signs and life jackets but with the main difference being that this was proper marine grade material which really stood up to the wear and tear you get on the bows of an Admiral's Cupper, not to mention the salt water. If you're putting this tape on to clothing or lifebuoys, make sure it is marine standard.

As a member of the Admiral's Cup Management Committee I am one of the many studying this year's event and looking forward to the next several. Contrary to some of our carping national press journalists I do not believe the whole thing is a grotesque travesty.

The RORC has managed change in this regatta with considerable skill over many years. Our style is to consult and listen carefully to those who have a sensible contribution. A decision (a package of decisions) may be expected within the next several weeks. France (and what a fantastic result) had then better look out. ●