

Seahorse

International Sailing

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News Around the World



In the absence of the usual enormous crowds the fleet lined up in Les Sables d'Olonne in the period before the start of the Vendée Globe still made for an emotive spectacle. Everyone with any connection with this race knows that aside from the dangers ahead on the ocean a few of the immaculately prepared boats here will be back for repair or out of the race altogether during the opening days of the three-month contest. It's not just the sailing that can be brutal; it was no surprise that the sight of the large crowds that turned out to respectfully acknowledge the premature return of race favourite Jérémie Beyou left the heartbroken skipper in tears.

'We can move the GPS points within a defined framework, based on the position of the leader but accounting for their navigation strategy.'

There are also key Traffic Separation Scheme zones which are in place to keep the fleet away from shipping routes. The Sailing Instructions determine GPS points to define prohibited zones at Cape Finisterre, Cape Roca (the westernmost point of Portugal), Cape St Vincent (the southwestern tip of Portugal), Mauritania, and to the east and west of the Canaries.

For this 2020-2021 Vendée Globe the race organisers have also established two additional forbidden zones around TSS areas which previously might not have been considered to be on the usual course to the finish line of the Vendée Globe.

Remember that en route to winning in 2016-17 Armel Le Cléac'h showed that with the foilers under certain wind and sea conditions it was beneficial to head up north of France before slanting back down to Les Sables. So the Ushant TSS and Scilly Ouest also now become prohibited zones.

In the Vendée Globe it is important to be careful!
Patrice Carpentier

NEW ZEALAND

Mark Twain famously had to rebut a premature newspaper obituary with a statement that 'reports of my death are greatly exaggerated'. In similar vein, Jim Farmer, one of the stalwarts of New Zealand keelboat racing, has had to discount rumours that he was about to quit competitive sailing.

He understands, however, how the rumours arose. 'It actually began a couple of years ago,' he said. 'I had an approach from an American yachtsman based in Chicago. He had done extensive research around the world and came to the conclusion that my TP52 was exactly what he wanted. He had been looking for a decent raceboat with good hydraulics and a nice interior and *Georgia* fitted the bill precisely.'

The boat in question was Farmer's sixth race yacht, all of them

36s, an IMS 43 racer-cruiser, a Corel 45, a custom Farr 53, the current 52, which is a customised version of the Botin-design TP52 Emirates Team New Zealand campaigned in Europe, won the 2009 Audi MedCup series.

Optimised for IRC racing, the *Georgia* version featured a modified keel, larger sail plan and revised deck and cockpit layout along with a sophisticated interior. Inspired by the aesthetics of a favourite high-performance European sports car – Farmer also has a passion for exotic cars – the interior was finished in metallic silver polished carbon, with sumptuous red leather squabs. The exterior colour is Grigio Ingrid, taken from the Ferrari palette. Of course,

During the discussions with the American suitor Farmer agreed to sell *Georgia* as long as he could complete the 2019 Bay of Islands Sailing Week. In 2018 *Georgia* won the regatta on PHRF and finished second in IRC and Farmer was keen to do the event one more time.

'It was all agreed,' he said. However, after *Georgia* won on general handicap (there was no IRC division in 2019), Farmer decided he could not part with the boat. 'I told the American I had changed my mind. He was very good about it and said he was thrilled I was enjoying the boat so much.'

'Ironically, he went on to buy the TP52 that Gavin Brady used to look after. Meanwhile, we have resumed racing *Georgia* with increased vigour and enthusiasm.'

When it comes to changing his mind about selling boats, Farmer has some form. His Farr 43 project, built by Cookson boats in 1995, followed a similar philosophy to the more recent TP52, taking a well-proven race design – Helmut Jahn's Admiral's Cup win *Flash Gordon* – and customising it with a full interior.

The result was top performer of the New Zealand team that won the Kenwood Cup in 1996 and it twice won the Air New Zealand IMS regatta in Auckland. In 1998, with Dean Barker at the helm, the 43-footer was runner-up in the Air New Zealand Regatta, beating a brand new *Beau Geste* campaigned by Gavin Brady for Hong Kong patron Karl Kwok.

At that point Farmer sold the yacht to a sailor in the US, who



News Around the World



GILLES MARTIN-RAGET

Remarkable talent... fine human being. The passing of New Zealand champion Dave Barnes prompted a remarkable outpouring of sympathy from sailors and other athletes in every corner of the world. Barnes is widely remembered as an important force in New Zealand's early America's Cup efforts – including skippering Michael Fay's 1988 'Big Boat' (top/left) in San Diego. However, those who knew him best usually thought first of him as the rightful 1984 Olympic gold medallist in the 470s with Hamish Willcox (right). After dominating the 470 class throughout the 1984 Olympiad the three-time world champions missed the Olympic slot when 'local' selectors chose a rival crew, costing the country its second ever Olympic sailing gold alongside 1984 Finn champion Russell Coutts

regattas up and down the Eastern Seaboard. When he learned the 43-footer was for sale in 2005 Farmer immediately bought it back, sight unseen. 'I just became overwhelmed with nostalgia,' he confessed at the time.

After a thorough refit to rate under IRC, the effort was immediately rewarded with victory in the inaugural New Zealand IRC championship. For several years Farmer campaigned two *Georgias*, the 43 and 52 under his Georgia Racing brand.

Jim Farmer has always surrounded himself with top sailors, many from America's Cup or Volvo Ocean Race campaigns. His recent line-ups have included Brad Butterworth, Stu Bannatyne, Don Cowie and Daniel Fong, along with his usual crew with George Hendy as boat captain.

In the 52ft class *Georgia* has enjoyed a strong rivalry with *Mayhem*, skippered by Harry Dodson, who Farmer respects as 'one of the best owner-drivers in the world'. In the 2019 Bay of Islands

series *Mayhem* beat *Georgia* decisively on PHRF, but Farmer's crew turned the tables at the RNZYS Jack Tar Regatta the following March in the lighter conditions.

Gearing up for the 2020 Bay of Islands rematch, Farmer turned to his rockstar guests for advice on how to improve boatspeed. 'Some of that involved the usual burden of the yacht owner spending more money (sails, hardware, design modifications), but some of it was improving crew work and, in my case, steering the boat better...' he recounted.

It turned out both *Mayhem* and *Georgia* took a big step forward against their classmates and enjoyed some extremely tight racing this year, with *Mayhem* taking line honours and General Handicap but *Georgia* winning on PHRF and becoming national Division A PHRF champion for the third time.

Consequently, the brief flirtation with quitting the racing scene is now a very distant memory. With Farmer's competitive instincts



The blister coachroof gets it... New Zealand yachtsman and America's Cup rules adviser Jim Farmer's modified Botin-designed TP52 *Georgia*, which a lucky Chicago yachtsman thought he had purchased in late 2019 before receiving a phone call from an apologetic Farmer telling him that he'd changed his mind. From such upsets good friendships sometimes follow and all was amicably resolved. *Georgia* is IRC-turboed in much the same way as Matt Allen's Hobart winner *Ichl Ban*, with increases in righting moment and sail area but without *Ichl Ban*'s heavy emphasis on keeping the Bass Strait outside the boat where it belongs. And that blister... just beautiful

fully aroused once more, *Georgia* has been undergoing a winter refit aimed at overcoming the slight upwind advantage *Mayhem* has enjoyed in their ongoing tussles. 'The rig is 10 years old and technology has moved on considerably,' explained Farmer. He has ordered a new NZ Rigging carbon mast, which will now be supported with carbon rigging. Game on for the summer season – and beyond.

One of the pro sailors with whom Jim Farmer was closely aligned was David Barnes, who died in October after a long struggle with multiple sclerosis. His funeral, attended by a massive crowd of Olympic and America's Cup sailors, provided a reminder of the prominent part Barnes played in New Zealand's rise on the international yacht racing scene.

'Dave was a loyal friend with a quiet sense of humour and all of us have been deeply saddened by the cruel illness that afflicted him and eventually took his life,' said Farmer.

Barnes won three 470 world titles with Hamish Willcox in the early 1980s and was involved in six America's Cup campaigns between 1985 and 2003. He was skipper of Sir Michael Fay's Big Boat challenge in the 1988 Deed of Gift Match against Dennis Conner's Stars & Stripes catamaran, which sparked prolonged court battles in the US.

In 1981, sailing 470s, Barnes and Willcox became the first New Zealanders to win an Olympic class world title. The duo went on to claim two more world titles, but by a strange quirk of fate they failed to fire at the subsequent Olympic trials in a Kiwi 470 fleet that was running hot at the time and never managed to represent New Zealand at the Games.

'David was a very revolutionary thinker,' Willcox said. 'He was always thinking outside the box and came up with new concepts no one had thought of. He was constantly looking for an advantage and was confident enough to do it himself rather than looking to a manufacturer to produce it.'

In 2013 Barnes teamed up with fellow America's Cup veteran Rick Dodson, who also contracted MS, in a bid to compete at the

2016 Paralympics. Barnes's failing health, however, forced him to withdraw from the campaign.

Willcox said Barnes was also a talented endurance athlete, musician and family man to his wife, Karen, and their children, Jason, Sacha and Logan. 'He is a huge loss to them and to the whole sailing community,' Willcox said.

Ivor Wilkins

AUSTRALIA

Opening up

A couple of weeks ago I was tinkering in my workshop when I got a call from Rob Mundle. Rob is a good mate, and when we meet, or used to meet, mostly in Sydney and at Hamilton Island Race Week, there was always a lot going on, but within minutes of us meeting we would both be in animated storytelling mode, laughing hard at an old story, incident or evening out, and so people would often walk by looking sideways at us, and I imagine wondering if we had been on the Robert Oatley Margaret River Chardonnay a little too early in the day...

After a quick catch-up on the phone Rob came to the point. He was stepping down from the selection committee on the America's Cup Hall of Fame and was putting my name forwards to replace him; he just wanted to let me know and was that alright by me? Rob then carried on saying there would be other candidates and of course there were no guarantees, but good luck with it all and see you soon, mate; oh and don't forget to send me your CV so I can pass it on to the selection committee to review.

It was one of those calls that leave you in a bit of a daze, wondering if you heard it correctly, but I did, and it is certainly an honour to be on the short list. So I came into my study to prepare a CV to email, and then paused. On the writing side I have been contributing to *Seahorse* for close to 15 years, but what have I actually been doing?

Well, first and foremost, entertaining. You are not going to read something unless it is interesting, as there are a zillion things