

Jo, a presenter and commentator, has recently commentated on the Olympics and Paralympics in Rio

La Solitaire Bompard Le Figaro

Jo Pickard

After recently passing my Level One sailing course at the Club, I was hugely looking forward to the trip to Ullswater. Imagine, no bridges, no million pound boats or tree-filled banks to avoid. What a treat!

Sadly it was not meant to be. Fear not dear friends, as much as I missed your company, the sailing and of course the famous BBQ, I was given my own sailing adventure.

Hell on high water

I was dispatched to Cowes, Isle of Wight and the second stop-over and only non-French destination of *La Solitaire Bompard Le Figaro* (or *Le Figaro* for short)

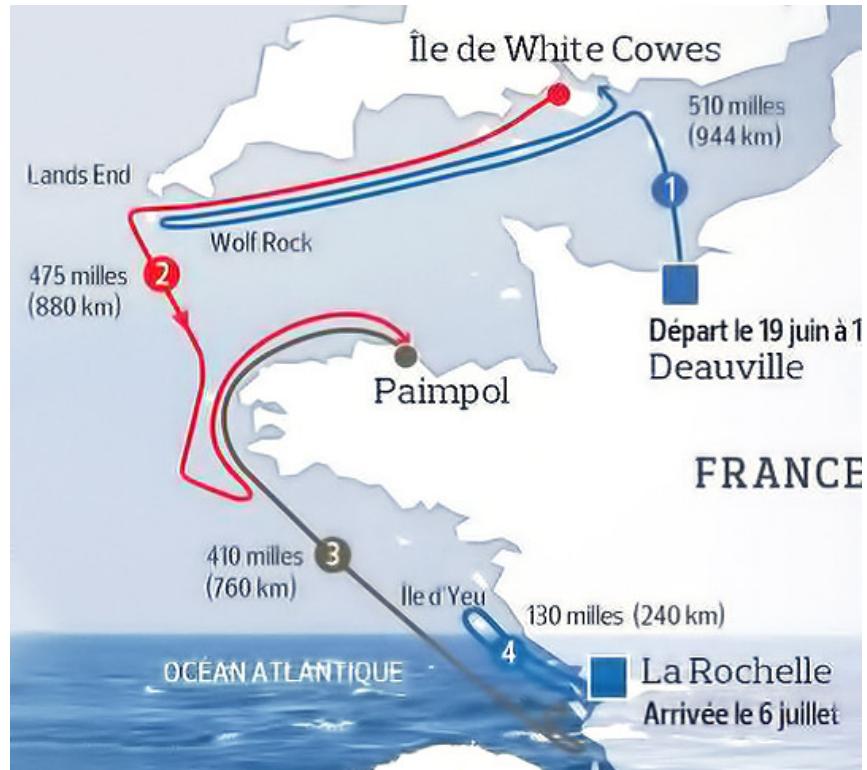
It is a 49-year-old French solo sailing race. I have to be honest, until receiving the job a week before, I really knew very little about it. That changed very quickly!

"...smelly, exhausted and in most cases frustrated..."

It's a truly fascinating affair, I choose that word carefully as it feels that the sailors who go back year after year truly are having a love affair with this race!

It tests every single part of the, quite frankly, crazy individuals that take it on. Some of them paying for their own campaign as sponsors are not always easy to achieve.

With four legs — three long and a final



Route of the 2016 Le Figaro race

sprint back to La Rochelle — they face hell on high water, racing and, at times, match racing under challenging and ever changing conditions.

Now let's imagine if you will, four days at sea, alone in a 33ft boat with pitch black nights, sleeping only ten minutes at a time with two hours racing — and repeat until you reach the next shore.

One sailor confided in me that he gave himself twelve minutes, don't tell anyone will you. I mean seriously how is this even possible!

They arrive, hopefully boat and sailor intact, for a brief stopover in Cowes

after the longest leg from Deauville, France, smelly, exhausted and in most cases frustrated because they know they could have done better.

"...sailing is about learning to lose..."

A wise sailor once told me, that sailing is about learning to lose and I think he's right. The lessons you learn whilst making mistakes are the only way you'll ever win.

Largest team ever

We, the British that is, had the biggest and strongest team ever entered. They set out to make history and try for a leg

win, which to date has not happened. They are trained and nurtured on the Island at the Artemis Training academy so it really was a home-coming to them.

I truly loved my experience and as always am humbled by such sporting dedication and passion. I believe the entries are open for next year when the race will have its big 50th birthday.

Why not give it a go!

Right: A single-handed Le Figaro yacht in action



Commodore's Corner



The latter part of the sailing season has somewhat passed me by, since I broke my leg at the end of July. It's going to be a slow recovery... A couple of weeks ago I did get out in the rescue boat for a while (and it only took four people to help me in and out), but I think sailing is off the agenda until the spring.

Balloons, sweets, floating dustbins...

However, buoyed up by some fine weather (and helped along by an even finer titanium rod and two screws, which I will have for the rest of my life), I did make it to the club on the last Sunday of September. After all, it had been billed (not by me!) as *Commodore's Cake Day*, so it seemed a good idea for the Commodore to turn up – complete with Hat, of course.

It was a good day. Instead of the usual racing, Steve Parry and Phil Green organised a series of games involving boats, balloons, cocktail sticks, sweets, floating dustbins (no, not the *Visions*) and some rather dodgy cups of 'tea'. Oh, and of course lots of cake. Over twenty members turned up – and it was especially good to see our younger members, Michael, Eleanor, Megan, Thomas, Nathaniel and Thea all out on the water.

Two *Visions*, two *Oppies*, an *Aero*, a *GP14*, and at least one *Topper* were sailed by various combinations of adults and children. (*Can you stand up straight yet, Tassy and Kate?*) Only one person fell in. The sun shone (some of the time), the wind blew nicely and politely (most of the time), the balloons, the cups of tea and the sweets were collected, delivered, and retrieved when they escaped, and much cake was eaten.

Yes, it really was a good day on the river.

Hugh



Above: Action from one of the Commodore's Cake Day games/races

Right: The Commodore, complete with hat, helpers and balloons



Sailing into a Wall (or why Lake Garda is the perfect upgrade from Ullswater)

Jens Kuhn

On a recent family holiday at Lake Garda, Jens took the opportunity to do some sailing

Initially I must explain why I didn't sail anything fancier than a Topper, because I know you will raise a questioning eyebrow upon seeing the picture.

Now, the first day I actually chose the thing because I didn't have much time for faffing around with anything more fancy and also because it was the cheapest. The second day I did actually try to get my hands on something faster, but alas, everything was already gone. And the Topper, after all, was the cheapest...

"...weather forecasts don't work,"

That said, it was fun to sail it in some more demanding conditions than what I usually do. And that includes Ullswater after the afternoon breeze has picked up and perhaps even Loch Awe on the more breezy days. Let me explain the particulars I experienced on this beautiful Italian lake.

Lake Garda

First of all, weather forecasts don't work. When Windguru tells you that there are only 6 knots of a southerly breeze and you almost think of not going, do it anyway because, in the north of the lake, where most of the sailing happens, you will easily find 18 knots instead! This is due to the fact that the lake is wide at the bottom and narrow at the top with high mountains on either side. So the wind has nowhere else to go than squash itself in there, speeding up considerably in the process.

The wind is thermic, created by the hot sun in the south and gets sucked up into the colder mountains. This wind normally starts at lunchtime and increases during the afternoon until it dies down again in the evening. Exactly



Jens sailing on Lake Garda

how strong it gets depends on how hot it gets. On the first day I was out (when the picture was taken), it was around 30°C but with hazy clouds.

On the second day the temperature was the same but the sky was cloudless and the wind was considerably stronger. There was the occasional whitecap already at 2pm and when I got back to shore two hours later it was almost scary. The boat creamed along more through than over the waves and I actually had to hike out properly for once. On the upside, the water was 25°C and even though I got quite soaked the word cold wasn't in my mind at any time (and that means a lot, as freezing is my default setting...). Talking about the waves, they were quite a lot bigger than I expected, but then, I should have known better considering there is quite a fetch.

To complete the story about the wind, I do have to mention the existence of the

morning counterpart of the thermic action. This happens in the early mornings and eases off at the time reasonable people would even go near a boat, so for me it is of no consequence. The Ullswater windless-morning-sail gang might, however, be in for an interesting surprise should they try it on Lake Garda.

A giant granite wall

Now, if you thought that was it, I am afraid I have to disappoint. I need to go on a little longer. There is the beautiful scenery still to mention, even though sailing right towards a giant granite wall takes some getting used to. And there is the fact that there were mercifully few speedboats around where I was. There seems to be a clear divide on the lake. The speedboats are mainly in the south where there is less wind, and the sailing happens in the north. There is a lot going on, nonetheless, with dinghies, cats, yachts, wind- and kitesurfers. But there is a lot of space and it never really gets crowded.

"...it was almost scary."

So what about downsides then? Well, apart from the fact that there is really only a decent wind in the afternoon, which might make a full race programme a bit compressed or require more days, there is only one. In the summer, the traffic is absolutely killing. There is basically only one road along the eastern part of the lake and queues are inevitable.

It's worth it though.

PS: I rented my boat from <http://www.europasurfandsail.com/> in Malcesine, which I can warmly recommend.

The Round Holes Trophy

– won by a pair of fiddlers!

The second weekend in September was set for our third GP14 Classic Open Meeting. However this year it was a 'home boats only' event and although the entry was modest, the competition was red hot!

Exceptionally light airs on the Saturday forced the cancellation of racing but four Series One boats came to the line in superb conditions on the Sunday.

"Suddenly the violinists discovered how to play in harmony..."

I was at the helm of my much loved and largely rebuilt 4615, supported by a very special crew for the event, Andrew Watkinson. Andrew, one of York's leading violin virtuosos, has been struggling to teach me the instrument. He also used to sail a GP14 in the dim and distant past. This was his chance to find true fame!

Three close races

Mike and Angela are regular competitors in 8921 and Ian dusted down 11837 and teamed up with his 8-year-old son Nathaniel. Jens, still glowing from his victory



Steve sailing the Old Yellow Boat

8921 photographed from the bridge



Steve Parry

last year as crew to Peter Dewhurst, took 7941 with new crews Alastair Girling and Almut Braun taking turns in the front of the boat.

Three 45 minute races were held under the watchful eyes of Race Officers Pete and Phil, with a lunch break after race one. Steve and Mike battled hard at very close quarters in races one and two, achieving one win each. Ian and Jens achieved a similar outcome in the contest for third place.

All on the last race!

So it was all down to the last race – and the wind had freshened to a good force 4/5. Suddenly the violinists discovered how to play in harmony and the Old Yellow Boat began to perform like a pro. Pulling well clear of the field she achieved a decisive victory to win the day. Mike and Angela held on to second from Ian and Nathaniel in a very creditable third place.

It was a great day with lots of family support, we shall no doubt be running the event again next year and we hope that we shall attract some visitors from the wider GP14 community.

All they need is a boat with round holes in the transom!

Icicle Series

Don't forget – the **Icicle Handicap Series** begins on Sunday 23rd October and continues for 5 weeks until Sunday 20th November. Come and enjoy some winter sailing with clearer winds and a quieter river.

