

GENEVA

Spectacular racing in

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS xxxxxx

The Société Nautique de Genève celebrated its 150th anniversary with a week of activities on the water and a full social program every evening in July. Modern yachts mingled with classics on Lac Lemman, which is home to a large contingent of 6-M yachts. Honorary guests at the event were the 24 8-M yachts that held their World Championship there.

There was only one modern 8-metre among the 24 participants. The top classic, wooden 8s can make it difficult for a modern but in the end, and especially downwind, a wing-keeled polyester design from 1984 should come out on top, as designer Jacques Fauroux's Yquem did, repeating her world champ victories of 2015 and 2019, both years when she was up against the fastest modern boats, as well as classics.

Participants were unanimously generous about Yquem's win, understanding that the International Rule is a development class designed to promote ever-faster boats. Any criticism was reserved for Yquem's modern rivals, which did not arrive. Furthermore, Yquem is based on the lake, so would hardly remain at her berth during a world championship in her class!

To keep the ingenuity of designers somewhat in check, a few adjustments were made to the Rule in 1919 and 1933, and so we now have First, Second and Third Rule yachts depending on the period in which they were built. Loosely based on this, there are sub-divisions and awards in which one can become World Champion. The International 8-Metre World Cup is for the fastest 8 regardless of age. The Sira Cup is for boats built before 1960. The Neptune Trophy is for yachts built before, or based on a design, from before 1960, but where the yacht is still built and rigged in the authentic manner. This means: wooden masts, traditional deck fittings, no exotic sails and no reinforcements in the hull with epoxy etc. The First Rule Cup is for all 8 Metres built before or built to a design from before 1920 or sailing with a gaff rig. Finally, there is the Coppa d' Italia. This is for the European Champion in any type of 8 Metre. So, there are actually four yachts that can become World Champions in their own classes but for instance a Neptune yacht could theoretically win all three except for the First Rule Cup. Why will be made clear later on.

Where the overall World Championship was somewhat lacking in excitement, the Neptune Trophy and the Sira Cup were absolutely not. I am a big fan of the Neptune yachts and not just because many of them have my winches. The Neptune's are sailed with more respect for their age and historical value, whereas the Sira's I feel are heavily stressed due to the modernisation of their rigging and equipment. Many only come out of the shed to sail a





1-12-Metre class start 2-and-3-Jenetta
4-Kiwi Magic 5-Oliver Berking
helming Jenetta, followed by Anitra
with owner-builder Jozef Martin at
the helm 6-Flica II led from the start
and went on to win the first race 7-
Olin Stephens-designed Vim 8-
Bowman on Jenetta
9-Northern Light was the overall
winner of the regatta with just 13
points over the nine-race series



championship for a week and then head straight back to their winter storage. The Neptune's are sailed more intensively. Dutchman Jan Willem Ypma's Dutch Falcon, for example, competed in the Fife Regatta in Scotland earlier this year and is also regularly seen in Cannes and Saint Tropez. Anne Sophie, Carron II and Suzette can also be admired here.

Twelve boats competed for the Neptune Trophy, no fewer than six of which had won this class earlier. On Lake Geneva, pure boat speed isn't everything. Due to the difficult conditions on a lake between the Alps, luck or rather bad luck sometimes has a greater influence on the results than many would like. For example, the 1930 Fife Falcon, a former World Champion in the Neptune Class, scored three first places, as many as Bona, the eventual winner, but despite a well-trained team with Volvo Ocean crack Bouwe Bekking as tactician, a false start and two ninth places made them come fourth. Those ninth places were entirely due to wind shifts and what in the end turned out to be a wrong choice. Simply bad luck, in other words. This same effect could be seen on several yachts as on one day they would finish two races in the top two or three by going left. The next day they would score a ten or even worse by doing the same!

The Fife design Vision was launched a few weeks before this World Cup after a thorough restoration by Mario and Andrea Quaranta at the Sibma Yard near Imperia in Italy. Owner Paolo Manzoni had gathered a good crew of mainly Dragon sailors and saw this regatta as a kind of training for the World Championships to be held next year in their home port of Genoa. To their delight and surprise, they sailed a very consistent series of second, third and fourth places that eventually brought them second place overall. We knew Vision was fast because between 1983 and 2000 the Vision won the Sira Cup seven times but fresh out of the box like now in the Neptune Class was a surprise result!

Bona was the eventual winner of the impressive Neptune Trophy. After 15 years in a shed Véra Mogna, the daughter of the last owner, brought her out and after only a few weeks of training she proved unbeatable, even leaving several Sira boats behind. In two races she even came to the windward mark before Yquem. It was also nice to see that Véra did not settle for a cozy spot on a winch but helmed her boat all week! This is a pleasant and notable development in the 8-metre class. Owners, sometimes in their 70s or 80s or as is the case with King Harald of Norway on his striking green Sira who is 85, steer their own boats.

In the Sira Class, the brand-new Starling Burgess was unbeatable. Originally designed in 1930 but never built and now beautifully recreated by boatbuilder Jozef Martin at his yard on Lake Constance she consistently finished first, second or third and once more proved the genius of Starling Burgess of J-Class Ranger fame. Her owner, now 86-year old Rudiger Stihl, indeed of the garden tools, was





- 1 Congestion at St Just mark
2 Real figurehead on the
artha Primrose
3 Crew of Alva 4 Fleet moored up
at Falmouth Haven 5 Falmouth
Working Boat Helen Mary 6 Crew
and helm on pilot cutter Agnes
7 Maybe, Marguerite and Eda
Frandsen 8 Jazz duo on Hillyard
Maffick at Falmouth Haven
9 The oldest boat in the fleet
Kathleen 10 Cornish pilot gig
Fear Not
11 Crew of Falmouth Quay punt
Curlw 12 Falmouth Working
Boat Victory and Cornish pilot
gig Penarrow