

# Seahorse

## International Sailing

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**Time for change**

– Rod Davis

**The new (Volvo) equation**

– Ian Walker

**More (Jules Verne)**

**adventure – Jocelyn Blériot**

**The lone wolf**

– Jörg Riechers

**The scow angle**

– Giancarlo Pedote

**An important launch**

– Pat Shaughnessy



**On a (Caribbean) roll**  
– Peter Holmberg

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The mighty 67m German all-carbon ketch *Hetajros* is the undisputed line honours king of the Caribbean following another successful winter season of racing. The Caribbean superyacht fleet has witnessed sufficient growth in the number of German-owned boats that after the 2014 St Barth's Bucket there took place an extra German-only day of racing to decide that nation's superyacht champion...

large part of the exercise was to achieve a modern boat at reasonable cost.

'More importantly, we could show him that with these modifications he would have a boat with the potential to win the Barn Door trophy and, in the right conditions, break the record.'

It is a prospect that has energised all those involved in breathing new life into this already accomplished yacht and, who knows, may even inspire others to look anew at similar-aged yachts with a view to their potential for radical rejuvenation.

Ivor Wilkins

### AUSTRALIA

#### It begins

Setting up for a start onboard an AC45 with Jimmy Spithill there isn't a great deal said.

Kyle Langford has the wing trimmed almost to a stall as Spithill looks at his watch, then the line, then a pause and a final glance at his wrist before silently pulling the tiller towards his shoulder and we are off; incredibly fast, incredibly smooth and, apart from the hum from the rudders rising in octaves as we increase speed, incredibly quiet.

The blast of the horn as we hit the line and the muffled 'clear start, clear start' from the race officer heard through the crew's personal radios break the silence, then we are gone, accelerating in the 20kt sea breeze to the rapidly growing first mark. A boat length from the buoy Jimmy utters 'Yup', and the gennaker is deployed – causing both the boatspeed and my eyebrows to lift dramatically.

It is a practice start before a practice session with Team Australia and it is pretty much flawless. And that is why they are here. With the Australian and Oracle senior players battling in the

background with the 35th Cup protocol, the sailors are going head to head on Sydney Harbour, Team Australia and Oracle scorching around under the city's high-rise business district, the America's Cup branding back on show, turning heads everywhere from commuters on the ferries to human specks high up on the harbour bridge climb and, most importantly, giving Team Australia an opportunity for accelerated learning from the best; as Oracle's Tom Slingsby confirms, everybody wins.

'We want to promote the America's Cup and also get high-quality training. We welcome any challengers to come and train with us while we are preparing for the ACWS next year, and are hoping that some other teams like ETNZ and Ben Ainslie Racing will come over for Hamilton Island Race Week. It will be a good chance for us all to get some high-quality racing before next year's World Series starts up.'

And it is fantastic to watch. With sailors in the Australian team such as Troy Tindill, Will McCarthy and Wade Morgan home after competing in San Francisco there is both solid Cup experience and sparkling new talent, including gold medallist and world Rolex sailor of the year skipper Mat Belcher, 18ft skiff champions Seve Jarvin and Sam Newton, plus David Gilmour and Ed Smyth all of whom are not only fast sailors but fast learners.

Chatting to the teams I realise there are now America's Cup sailors who not that long ago had to carry ID if they walked into a bar. Sailors like Seve, Sam, Rome Kirby, Kyle Langford and Tom Slingsby are still in their twenties, and so the banter, humour and energy are fast. Even the old man of the Oracle squad Spithill is 34 but, surrounded by these young guns, he cranks his level of rapport and ripostes up into the red zone.

Extreme kitesurfing forms the pre-sailing chat in the container before we head to the changing area, helmet up and go to the