

Bunching of the fleet off Madeira

To note in this press release:

- The bulk of the fleet passed the island of Madeira over the weekend
- The leaders have squeezed together
- ETA of the fleet in Martinique from 4 May
- Retirement of the South African skipper Adrian Kuttel



The competitors got the chance to share a few photos as they passed Madeira. Here we have Alexandre Bondonneau and Rémy Hurdiel (Sleep Sailing Lab - USS)

After one week of racing, over the course of the weekend, the bulk of the fleet has passed the only course mark in the Cap-Martinique race: Madeira. As they

negotiated the Portuguese archipelago, the main pack squeezed up together again, which may well prompt the fleet to make landfall in Martinique en masse. “There is precious little separating them. They’ve launched an incredible combined attack on the finish line,” enthuses Thibaut Derville, co-organiser of the event. In the double-handed category, two crews are slugging it out for the top spot. Noël Racine and Ludovic Sénéchal (Foggy Dew pour FOP France) from Le Havre moved up into the lead at Madeira, but the youngsters from the south of France, Adrien Follin and Pierre Garreta (SNSM St-Tropez) have just gained the edge again. In solo format, Ludovic Gérard (Solenn for Pure Ocean) and Régis Vian (CMG – EJ pour Ecole Jules Verne) are embroiled in a similar duel. Ludovic won the last edition in double-handed format, whilst Régis Vian was forced to retire due to technical woes. They are within 4 miles of one another, level with the crews sailing double-handed.

Pit stops and a retirement

A few competitors have benefited from being in the lee of the islands to carry out repairs. Daniel Robin and Laurent Cossais (Jaffa Association M Caillaud) made the most of their passage around Madeira for a quick pit stop, whilst Yvan Le and Samuel Comelli hove to in order to re-reeve a halyard. Sébastien and Marine Pejoan (Pour Endofrance) may well do the same. They have announced to Race Management that they have power issues requiring a swift pit stop. Meantime, South African skipper Adrian Kuttel (Sentinel Ocean Alliance) announced his retirement from the race over the weekend. An experienced sailor, Adrian was one of the hot favourites for this edition. Unfortunately, he has suffered damage to his autopilot, which means he can no longer continue racing safely. “My autopilot sensor has been fried. Solely my emergency pilot is working now, but it would not be able to operate efficiently enough to cross the Atlantic. As a result, I’ve made the tough decision to withdraw from the race,” he explained.



Photo: Paolo Mangione (Mon Bonheur à Moi)

Madeira, its climate, its volcanoes... its 4G

Passing Madeira is a key moment in the race since it enables the crews to benefit from a brief 4G connection, as permitted in the Racing Rules. This return to civilisation makes it possible for them to share their delight at being at sea with their nearest and dearest back home. This weekend, Race Organisation received a number of accounts. “Some of the crews are really enjoying themselves”, says a thrilled Thibaut Derville.

Oceanic cavalcades

The passage around the Madeira archipelago is an important step in this transatlantic race. The competitors are now benefiting from some much more favourable conditions, carried along by the trade wind. They're expected to reach Martinique from 4 May.



Hervé Giraud aboard Namaste Enfants d'Himalaya



Miguel Antao and Patrice Carpentier aboard Dessine moi la High Tech

Verbatim

- **Victor Gérin (Planète Urgence):**

After a boisterous Bay of Biscay and a technical descent in light winds, Madeira clearly heralds the start of a new race. Making landfall enveloped in greyness and hats, we exited in shorts and Crocs with 10 knots of breeze and sunshine. So that's the trade wind, I guess?

We've been on a journey of discovery through these wild islands and landscapes and... these formidable wind shadows, which saw us pinned to the

racetrack in the late afternoon. It's also been an opportunity today to reconnect a bit, download the big grib files and do a few video calls with family and friends. It's always good for them to know that we're doing well at sea, whilst having fun and being careful.

- **Jacques Amédéo (Solidarité Paysans)**

Madeira here we are.

The JPK 110 isn't a big fan of reaching. Even our trusty autopilot has had difficulty trying to keep control. As such, it was a great reward to get to the island of Porto Santo in the moonlight. We skirted the island on a course heading due west, bound for the austerity of the main island of Madeira and its imposing fortress, seemingly in the middle of the ocean.

We've been sailing alongside our rivals since early afternoon in a bid to pass Madeira. We're gradually switching back onto our own courses now... It remains to be seen who will be proven right!

- **Ludovic Gérard (Solenn for Pure Ocean)**

The Atlantic is ours for the taking!

And there we have it. We passed the island of Porto Santo on Saturday evening, and ahead of Solenn for Pure Ocean and I lies the Atlantic with a capital A for the next two weeks!

We made landfall at the end of the day making it possible to have a few video calls with my wife and close family. After this busy week, it was great to hear their voices and to reassure them too. It was evident that there was concern among those back on land, and for just reason. It was a chance to really bond with family again in preparation for the next two weeks of sailing before we hook up again in Martinique.

Getting 5G reception obviously made it possible to stock up on 'no-limit' weather data (rather than the Iridium go broadband option) and to get some news about friends on the race website. It was also lovely to read the very touching tributes to Philippe. He's someone I'd have really liked to get to know at the finish after not having much time to chat with him prior to the start."

Bertrand Fourmond (Alpha yesss)

08:00 hours. The wind is beginning to pick up as the expected wind shift kicks

in. We started with 5 knots, gradually building to 9 knots, and we're making headway at 5 or 6 knots, which is very enjoyable! Suddenly... baf! The boom whacks me across the head!

It's okay. There will be a nice bump on the side of my head. I've always managed to avoid that since I bought Pouss1. I wonder if it's a sign!

We're finally heading downwind now. The wind is gradually picking up. I'm on a course of 155 degrees to make faster headway and try to shake off this light patch.

- **REGIS VIAN (Ecole Jules Verne)**

Today is a big weather day. Yesterday involved the passage around Porto Santo and tonight I have to pass between Porto Santo and Madeira. In short, I've got a bit on! Passing an island is a bit like a return to life as we know it. The other boats are converging here too and we're also getting a 4G network (a return to civilised life then...), which means we can send a few photos and above all download some big grib files. The passage around an island is also about dealing with its pitfalls and obstacles as best we can. There are no more 'straight-line courses' like there are in the open ocean. As a result, there is more manoeuvring, more navigation and more vigilance, not to mention eating and sleeping."

- **Pierre-Marie Houchard (Les Dotis)**

I finally reached the island of Porto Santo early this morning. It was a strange sensation. A brutal, black island illuminated by the rising sun. There is not a tree jutting out, but there are a few hints of green and yellow pastel colours, smooth as an egg. Next a few sailboats head off for the Azores and there's a wonderful sense of discovery and we're now making for Martinique. I'm happy to be at sea, but I also feel deeply saddened by the loss of Philippe.

Aquasonic Les Dotis

- **Jacques Rigalleau (Enedis Ora)**

Hello. Firstly, I'd like to extend my initial thoughts to the family of our dear colleague who was lost to the sea. After a nasty fall at Cape Finisterre, I fell on my back (ribs?), forcing me to get some rest. I slept for 5 hrs, the pilot in wind mode, which is why I unintentionally ended up to the east, but there is still a

long way to go! There is no time to get bored. The boat is in tip-top condition and the pilot is doing well too!