



Transat 6.50 Charente-Maritime/Bahia
Start on Saturday 17th September 2005 off Fort-Boyard
Press Info

Friday 1st July 2005

2005 TRANSAT 6.50 CHARENTE-MARITIME/BAHIA : BE THERE ON SATURDAY 17th SEPTEMBER AT 17H17 !

- ✦ **Start on Saturday 17th September 2005 off Fort-Boyard.**
- ✦ **An unchanged course heading towards Salvador de Bahia (Brazil), crossing the Atlantic via Puerto Calero in Lanzarote (Canaries – Spain)**
- ✦ **72 boats will be starting out with almost 20 foreign boats expected**
- ✦ **4250 miles or 7871 kilometres of single-handed racing aboard 6.50 metre boats**

Twenty eight years after the event was first set up, the 15th edition of the Transat 6.50 Charente-Maritime/Bahia will be setting out on Saturday 17th September at 17h17 from alongside Fort Boyard, the famous historical monument in Charente-Maritime on the West coast of France, to head towards Salvador de Bahia (Brazil). An unchanged course, which was launched by the special events service of the Grand Pavois, GPO, back in 2001. Just as during the previous two editions, the competitors will first aim for Puerto Calero (Lanzarote – Canaries) before crossing the Equator and approaching the Brazilian coast. The course requires tactical and technical skills, as the journey will take the fleet around Cape Finisterre, down the Portuguese coast, alongside the coast of Africa, before they go through the infamous Doldrums with their ominous calms and violent squalls. The trade winds in the Southern Hemisphere will then be a welcome relief pushing the 6.50 Minis along to the finish in Salvador de Bahia. 4250 miles of sailing (7871 kilometres) via the Equator

In the same spirit... Since its launch back in 1977, the Transat 6.50 Charente-Maritime/Bahia (ex-Mini Transat) has seen all the greatest names in ocean racing taking part. It was Daniel Gilard on Petit Dauphin, who was the first winner of the event, and he was to be followed by Yves Parlier, Gilles Chiorri, Thierry Dubois and Yvan Bourgnon. However, among the other participants, who have managed to take part on one or several occasions in this mythical race, we can mention the names of Loïck and Bruno Peyron, Laurent Bourgnon, Jean-Luc Van Den Heede, Thomas Coville, Isabelle Autissier, Ellen MacArthur, Catherine Chabaud, Bernard Stamm, Michel Desjoyeaux, Lionel Lemonchois, Halvard Mabire, Marc Guillemot, Lionel Péan, Dominic Vittel, Anne Liardet, Lalou Roucayrol, Benoit Parnaudau, Karen Leibovici, Marc Thiercelin... Nevertheless, what dominates above all is the spirit of this transatlantic race. Laurent Bourgnon, 2nd in 1987 declared: «This is real sailing, just what I love. Anyone can take part. With a small budget and a lot of willpower, you can enter it. Then, above all, the atmosphere is great. There is some real friendship between the participants. We talk to each other and give each other advice. Afterwards, sailing loses that breath of fresh air ...». Mostly involving amateur sailors, the Transat 6.50 Charente-Maritime/Bahia is well known as the gateway to the professional world of ocean racing. The first rung of the ladder, but one which is never forgotten. «It was this race, which gave me the appetite for ocean racing, and I'll never forget it» pointed out Ellen MacArthur, 15th in 1997.

72 boats starting out split into two classes... Over the past 28 years, the number of entrants has grown steadily. While there were only 23 in the first edition, 72 sailors will be setting sail on 17th September from the foot of Fort Boyard. Among them, there are more and more foreign competitors, making this single-handed transatlantic race the most international of ocean races. Thus, 16 sailors

from 11 different countries will be represented, including Spain, Ireland, Switzerland, the U.S., Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Singapore and France. 5 women will be setting out this year : one English woman, one from Singapore and 3 French women. Undeniably down to the success of the Classe Mini, the technical ability of the skippers and their boats has been constantly improving and the battle for first place is increasingly tough in both classes, the Prototypes and the Series boats. The qualifying date has been set for the end of July, but already by the end of June, 44 boats have signed up in the Prototypes and 28 in the series class (you can follow the qualifications on the Classe Mini website: www.classemini.com). We should add that this transatlantic race does not allow the use of a router or external help. The 72 Minis will face the Atlantic crossing alone in this unique ocean racing event, where the only help they are allowed comes from the GPS (global positioning system), automatic pilot and electronic wind gauges. There are no computer programmes for route planning, no help and no weather charts sent to them, no computers on board nor satellite communications equipment. It's almost a journey back in time!

On the 17th September at 17h17... While initially it was planned to begin on Sunday 18th September, it seemed that Saturday 17th September would be more appropriate. «The date is interesting, as the tide is higher» explained Denis Hugues, the Transat 6.50 Charente-Maritime/Bahia race director. «On the 18th, the race would have started later around 18.00 hours, and even with a short coastal run, the participants would have found themselves coming out of the Pertuis d'Antioche in far from easy conditions for a 10 day leg. By bringing the date forward to the 17th September, it allows us to gain an hour in the overall timing. Moreover on Sundays, there are fewer fishermen working, so a smaller chance of coming across them in the Bay of Biscay, thus reducing the risk of a collision.» The time and date has thus been set for Saturday 17th September at 17h17. A highly symbolic date and time, as the start will take place off Fort Boyard, the historic symbol of Charente-Maritime, which in French is Department number 17.

The main features:

- Name: Transat 6.50 Charente-Maritime/Bahia
- Start Date: Off Fort Boyard on Saturday 17th September 2005 at 17h17.
- Course: Fort Boyard / Puerto Calero (Lanzarote – Canaries) / Salvador de Bahia (Brazil)
- Number of miles to cover: 1350 miles between Fort Boyard and Puerto Calero and 2900 miles between Puerto Calero and Salvador de Bahia or a total of 4250 miles. The Transat 6.50 Charente-Maritime/Bahia is the longest distance to cover in the history of the race (7871 kilometres).
- Prologue: September Wednesday 14th
- ETA in Puerto Calero (Lanzarote-Canaries) = September Monday 26th
- Start date from Puerto Calero (Lanzarote-Canaries) = October Saturday 8th 2005
- ETA in Salvador de Bahia (Brazil) = October Thursday 27th
- Organisation: Grand Pavois Organisation.
- Race Director: Denis Hugues.

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