
Défi Azimut - Lorient Agglomération 2024
DÉFI AZIMUT 48 HOURS fleet off to a flying start!



© Vincent Curutchet

Bye, bye Groix Island... A short 455-mile round trip, and back again! At 3 pm on Thursday, with an ideal wind and sea conditions - fifteen knots of north-westerly under a generous sun - 19 boats started the Azimut 48 Hours - Lorient Agglomération.

For the start of this beautiful race starting around Groix, the solo sailors quickly rounded the tip of Pen Men on an initial up-wind leg, before opening their sails along the wild coast.

The 15 men and 4 women who signed up for the race will return to the Groix Island on Saturday morning. But until then, they'll have to roll up their sleeves on a course custom-designed by race director Yann Eliès.

"A W-SHAPED RACE IN THE BAY OF BISCAY"

"It's a tricky W-shaped course, with six waypoints," says the man who, after a long career on the IMOCA circuit, is orchestrating the sporting and maritime aspects of this year's event in Lorient. "We had to deal with a number of constraints, and it wasn't easy to design a race that took into account the timing of arrivals, the need

to avoid an area of high concentration of marine mammals on the continental shelf, and the need to stay in the eastern Bay of Biscay to avoid a windless zone that threatened to close in on the French coast at the end,” explains the race director.

Groix, the Gironde estuary, Ile d'Yeu and the tip of Penmarc'h are the highlights of what will be a highly competitive regatta, with sailors determined to give it all to this last before the Vendée Globe.

On the pontoons, no one is hiding his or her satisfaction at getting down to the nitty-gritty of the race, especially as conditions look set to be perfect for this final trial run before the solo round-the-world race. A long downwind descent with the guarantee of a taste of the great sensations of speed aboard the foilers, before an upwind ascent in increasingly evanescent winds: all the ingredients have been brought together to give rise to a regatta of every moment.

"FULL STEAM AHEAD!"

“We're expecting good weather, with wind but not too much. We'll be going full steam ahead. We are just quite not sure yet about the end of the race: are we all going to end up with no wind at Les Glénan, or on the opposite, get some push for the end? We'll see...” confided Samantha Davies (Initiatives Cœur), all smily after yesterday's high-flying speed runs on her red boat.

Charlie Dalin was in a similar mood, also eager to get down to business. “We're going to start with a long downwind leg to the Gironde estuary, followed by a short reaching leg at full speed, before the big upwind climb. As always, we're expecting to deal with a wide range of wind conditions in terms of strength and direction. This will put us in good shape just a few weeks before the start of the Vendée Globe,” emphasizes the skipper of Macif Santé Prévoyance. Already a two-time winner of the 48 Heures Azimut, he can be counted on to give nothing away in this 2024 edition, of which he is one of the favorites. “We're going to race hard, and we'll certainly arrive very tired on Saturday morning, but that's part of the game!”

TO EACH HIS OWN DOWN WIND SAIL

With just a few minutes to go before the start, Germany's Boris Herrmann (Malizia Sea Explorer) was leading the fleet to the middle of the line, closely followed by Lazare (Tanguy Le Turquais), at the head of the daggerboard IMOCA fleet and under the watchful eye of Justine Mettraux (TeamWork-Team Snef). Romain Attanasio on his Fortinet-Best Western also had good timing, but the threat came soon from the leeward boats, with Charlie Dalin and Sam Goodchild in the lead.

In fact, it was the winner of yesterday's runs who was guiding the fleet on his VULNERABLE at the end of the afternoon across Belle-Île. Speeds had picked up

to over 20 knots, with different paths, reflecting the different sail choices. Juggling between the downwind sails as the expected progressed, anticipating the furling of the Azimut Gautier Sergent waypoint off Royan, changing sails again for the short reaching leg to the Azimut Hervé Laurent waypoint, the solo sailors had no time to waste tonight in the Bay of Biscay!

WHAT THEY SAID ON THE DOCKS OF LORIENT LA BASE

Thomas Ruyant (VULNERABLE): “The course is going to be varied, with breezes and a slightly lighter wind. We'll also be starting with a long downwind run : I really like these conditions. It's going to be one of the first times we see the whole fleet in breezy conditions and in a bit of sea, at the similar VMG downwind speed we'll be having during the Vendée Globe. And there will also be a few strategic moves to make. It's going to be physical, and I don't think we'll be getting much sleep, with lots of sail changes. It's also a last little solo trial run to test the boat, and get ourselves well on board before the Vendée Globe.”

Yoann Richomme (Paprec Arkea): “We've installed a new pair of foils. The next 48 hours will enable us to know it better, even though it's already good. It gives us extra performance in medium winds, and for me it's a question of updating my data. On the way down - a long downwind run of 18-20 knots, maybe more - there are issues at stake, among them choosing between two sails to go down to Royan. I admit I'm a bit lost; and that's fine, I'll see if I make the right choice... or not! At worst, I'll learn! After that, we'll have a number of maneuvers to do and some upwind sailing on the way back up. On the other hand, the last part of the race will be in very light winds. It's going to be very light in Southern Bretagne, and that's where the race is likely to be decided.

Jérémie Beyou (Charal): “The Défi Azimut is a race that I really enjoy! I won it last year double-handed with Franck Cammas. In the Vendée Globe years, the objectives are a little different. Everyone has their own little technical or life-on-board objectives. You're obviously happy to win or finish ahead, but that's not necessarily indicative of what's going to happen on the round-the-world race. It's a big rehearsal, and I'm taking a lot of equipment on board. We're also going to test the crew's jump before the four-minute mark, to make sure the dry suits haven't been damaged!

PHOTOS AND VIDEOS SERVER





FOLLOW THE 48H AZIMUT

TRACKER

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SKIPPERS 2024

PROGRAMM 2024

Monday September 9, 2024

Arrival of boats at the port of Lorient La Base

Tuesday September 10, 2024

OPENING AND CONFERENCES

Conference at the Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly

Wednesday September 11, 2024

AZIMUT RUNS (crew)

Thursday September 12, 2024

AZIMUT 48 HOURS (solo)

Friday September 13, 2024

WORKSHOPS

Round tables organized by Bretagne Sailing Valley,
Brittany Development Innovation & Lorient Technopole

Saturday September 14, 2024

RETURN AZIMUT 48 HOURS

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.: Boat arrivals
7:00 p.m.: Azimut 48 hours Award Ceremony & Crew Evening on invitation

Sunday September 15, 2024

TOUR DE GROIX AZIMUT & PRIZE CEREMONY

11:00 a.m.: Departure from the IMOCA port
12:30 p.m.: Start of the Tour de Groix Azimut
5:30 p.m.: Award Ceremony on the docks of Lorient - La Base

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