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LE DÉFI AZIMUT

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NEWSLETTER

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Taking flight across Biscay

TO NOTE

| A quiet but selective start for the '48 heures' race in summery conditions offshore of Lorient this afternoon

| 11th Hour Racing Team and Malizia-Seaexplorer are neck and neck (The Ocean Race ranking)

| Charlie Dalin (APIVIA) is leading the solo sailors, with Jérémie Beyou (Charal) and Thomas Ruyant (LinkedOut) hot on his heels

| The pace is picking up as the 28 IMOCA's head downwind across Biscay, which the leaders could well devour by daybreak.



After a quiet start in the early afternoon, the fleet of 28 IMOCAs has picked up the pace considerably at the entrance of the Bay of Biscay. At the front of the pack, the leaders are still neck and neck, with 11th Hour Racing heading the TOR group (The Ocean Race) and Apivia setting the pace for the solo sailors. However, with the wind clearly building and sail changes expected, tonight may see some of the boats extend away from their rivals.

“The wind is only going to get stronger. Those at the front of the pack in these ‘48 Heures’ will have the advantage!” warned the skippers this morning, dockside. With less than 8 knots of breeze on the start line, those IMOCAs latching onto fresh breeze to get around the tip of Ile de Groix had the edge, conjuring up some fantastic images around the Pen Men lighthouse.

Among the 24 solo sailors, Charlie Dalin on **APIVIA** took less than an hour to move up to the head of the fleet, whilst other boats like **Holcim - PRB** (Kevin Escoffier) and **Hublot** (Alan Roura) paid the price for a start to leeward of the line and already lamented a 4-mile deficit after an hour and a half of racing... Among the four IMOCAs sailing in crewed format (The Ocean Race ranking), **Biotherm**, which was late over the line, quickly got back into the match and on the hunt behind **11th Hour Racing Team** and **Malizia-Seaexplorer**, which were neck and neck.

Breeze forecast tonight

With the breeze gradually filling in over the course of the afternoon, there was a great deal of jockeying for position among the boats with daggerboards and the foilers, which were beginning to get up on the plane at over 15 knots. Getting off to a very good start, Louis Duc (**Fives Lantana Environnement**) and Benjamin Ferré (**Monnoyeur - Duo for a job**) quickly traded places with Charlie Dalin, who was leading the attack, Jérémie Beyou (**Charal**) also responding well in this first race on his new Manuard design. The duo was able to steal a march on a small group led by Thomas Ruyant (**LinkedOut**), Romain Attanasio (**Fortinet Best Western**) and Maxime Sorel (**VandB Monbana Mayenne**). With conditions still shifty, everyone was being careful with their trajectories, including Justine Mettraux (**TeamWork**), who's right back in the action.



Which downwind sail?

With the breeze gradually lifting, the IMOCAs were beginning to luff up above the direct course this evening, before a scheduled gybe in the middle of the night. As the skippers prepare to grant themselves a first little nap, each of them will be wondering about whether to switch headsail to make good headway along the route and line themselves up for waypoint 1, some 220 miles from Lorient. *“Fluffing a manoeuvre is a major in solo sailing,”* explained our consultant Christopher Pratt during the live coverage of the start. *“It can sometimes pay off to keep up as much of your original sail area from the start as you can, even if it means not performing quite so well. It'll all depend on the strength of the wind and the timing.”*

On the IMOCAs that make up the TOR group though, there's no questions to be asked and all the nocturnal manoeuvring will be a valuable lesson in crew

cohesion. That's exactly what these IMOCA teams were after as they prepare to set sail on The Ocean Race in mid-January. See you tomorrow morning offshore of the Principality of Asturias, where the virtual waypoint 1 will reveal the initial hierarchy after 200 miles of racing.

Ranking 48h Azimut solo at 6:00pm

1. APIVIA (Charlie Dalin) +0.0nm
2. Charal (Jérémié Beyou) +0.0nm
3. LinkedOut (Thomas Ruyant) +1.9nm
4. V&B Monbana Mayenne (Maxime Sorel) +3.4 nm
5. Fortinet - Best Western (Romain Attanasio) +4.3nm
6. Teamwork (Justine Mettraux) +4.7 nm
7. Monnoyeur - Duo for a Job (Benjamin Ferré) +4.9 nm
8. Initiatives-Coeur (Samantha Davies) +5.0 nm
9. Holcim-PRB (Kevin Escoffier) +5.4 nm
10. Fives - Lantana Environnement (Louis Duc) +6.2 nm
11. Imagine (Conrad Colman) +6.4 nm
12. Groupe APICIL (Damien Seguin) +6.6 nm
13. Lazare (Tanguy Le Turquais) +6.9 nm
14. Prysmian Group (Giancarlo Pedote) +7.3nm
15. Freelance.com (Guirec Soudée) +8.2 nm
16. Nexans - Art&Fenêtres (Fabrice Amedeo) +8.9 nm
17. COMMEUNSEULHOMME Powered by ALTAVIA (Eric Bellion) +8.9 nm
18. MACSF (Isabelle Joschke) +8.9nm
19. Gentoo Sailing Team (James Harayda) +9.5 nm
20. DMG MORI-Global One (Kojiro Shiraishi) +9.5 nm
21. Ollie Heer Ocean Racing (Ollie Heer) +9.7 nm
22. Hublot (Alan Roura) +10.4 nm
23. Groupe SÉTIN (Manuel Cousin) +10.9 nm
24. Szabi Racing (Szabolcs Weöres) +12.2 nm

Ranking 48h Azimut The Ocean Race at 6:00pm

1. 11th Hour Racing Team (Charlie Enright)
2. Malizia - Seaexplorer (Boris Herrmann) +2.3 nm
3. Biotherm (Paul Meilhat). +4.5 nm
4. Guyot Environnement - Team Europe (Benjamin Dutreux) +5.3 nm

Follow the rankings on the race tracker

Jérémié Beyou (Charal): *"Aside from the qualifier for the Route du Rhum, it's the first race with the boat. My objective is to link from one course to the next without too many issues. There are no other aims in terms of result. We'll have a bit of everything over this course, a bit of downwind, a bit of upwind. With the manageable conditions, we've been pretty spoilt for our debut. I'm going to try to make the most of it. I'm beginning to really get my bearings. The boat is very similar to the previous one in terms of the manoeuvring. In terms of reliability, the boat is brand-new, so inevitably there is always the odd surprise here and there. I'm just hoping that this won't prevent me from completing the course without too many issues. In terms of outright performance though, I still have a massive amount of work to do to get her set up just right. In yesterday's runs in the final, we were two seconds behind the fastest boat, because we hadn't managed to get her into her groove straightaway. We have a lot of time on the water ahead of us before we can achieve that. These '48 Heures' will be a great opportunity to rack up experience in this regard. Between races, I always have Franck (Cammas) with me to push me hard so I can quickly step up my game!"*

Justine Mettraux (TeamWork): *"This is a first for me and it's fair to say that I feel a little apprehensive and I'm keen to do well. Last night wasn't exactly the best night's sleep in my life. That doesn't change with the passing years. These 48 hours in race format are good to get under your belt. I'll be relieved once I'm into my race and I've spent the first night at sea. Conditions should be easier over the end of the course. I'm eager to get going and continue to learn on this IMOCA. I'm still at the beginning of my apprenticeship. There's a fantastic line-up, the likes of which we rarely see, with some very experienced sailors and new boats which are bound to perform well even though they're still quite young. The fleet is pretty diverse. There will be some separation between the different groups at the finish, but I'm sure there will be a series of matches within the match too."*

Maxime Sorel (V&B-Monbana-Mayenne): *"The first race on this new boat and I can't wait. Conditions are pretty good and it's going to be very, very quick. Those who are very familiar with their boat will head off in front. We're going to need to hang on tight to the leading pack from the get-go and try to maintain a pretty fast pace. It's a rather nice programme for our first battle"*

against the others. I'm just beginning to write the instruction manual for the boat and tame my dragon! We're going to have to try to strike the right balance to sail a good race, without taking any risks I might regret. The main objective remains the Vendée Globe. Completing the Route du Rhum will enable me to qualify. My approach will be more as a company director with a team behind me, and if we break the boat we'll put the campaign in danger. So yes, I'll be careful too!"

Robert Stanjek (Guyot Environnement Team Europe): "We did a lot of offshore training last week, but it's the first competition for this crew. We're lucky to be able to come together and compete with a line-up like this, see the boats and what they can do. To my mind, the main objective of this race is to enable the crew to raise their game by staying focused on the navigation, the tactics and the teamwork. It's an interesting and fairly simple course without much manoeuvring, which is a great way to start."

Samantha Davies (Initiatives Coeur): "I'm very happy to be in this race today, even though I'm not very familiar with this boat yet, as she's fresh out of the box and is a lot more powerful than the last one. I've done a little bit of sailing on her, but only one night sail. There are always surprises with new boats, particularly technical ones, but I hope I can still complete the race. Fortunately, we have great weather conditions with a fairly moderate breeze at the start, which will gradually increase and enable me to test the boat's potential."

Kévin Escoffier (Holcim-PRB): "We're going to need to be good at the start, make fast headway and make the right sail choices to avoid extra manoeuvring. We know that fluffing a manoeuvre in solo format over a short course is fatal. I was pretty pleased with the boat's performance yesterday, though you're always hoping for better when you're competitive. With a one-month refit this summer, being in a race is always very positive, especially with a change of crew, but we've managed to adapt. Our focus remains on singlehanded sailing though, with a major race on the cards, the Route du Rhum, just a month and a half away."

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