



Friday, September 18

J+5

In the clutches of the anticyclone!

- The leaders are ahead of routing projections, with a finish expected late in the coming night.
- Challenged on the first leg, Macif Santé Prévoyance, now unassailable upwind, is firmly controlling the fleet with a lead of more than 30 miles.
- The anticyclonic ridge is seriously extending the race for the daggerboard IMOCAs.



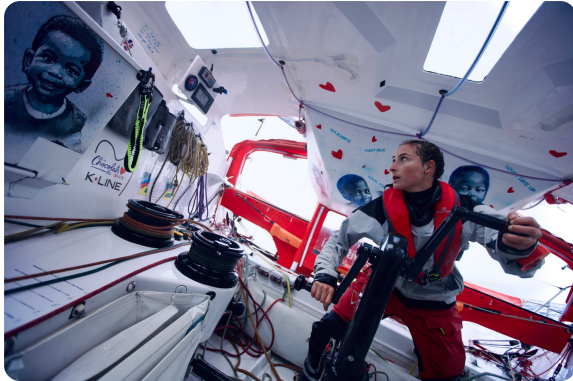
© Lorenzo Sironi / Allagrande Mapei

The leaders were certainly not hanging around last night or this morning. In fact, they were ahead of the pre-race routing despite the presence of a chunky ridge of high pressure barring the way across Biscay. Untouchable upwind, Macif Santé Prévoyance is controlling the fleet and may well make the Azimut waypoint by around midnight.

A camera and a powerful spotlight would have been handy at the BXA buoy last night as the leaders hurtled towards the mark at 25 knots. Very incisive, Ambrogio Beccaria snatched the lead for several minutes before Sam Goodchild's faster manoeuvring enabled the Briton to regain the top spot.

Evidently, there has been a battle royal throughout the fleet with some slight fluctuations in the wind ensuring that there was no let-up in the intensity of the competition. "I was making fast headway from time to time, but there were quite a few minor transitions and I'm a little

disappointed to have dropped back,” admitted Sébastien Simon this morning. Fresh out of the box, his Groupe Dubreuil-Air Caraïbes is however geared up to excel in hard-pressed points of sail thanks to her longitudinal bustle designed by Guillaume Verdier. In actual fact, the naval architect was speaking this morning at the Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly in Lorient during a series of conferences dedicated to innovation, which were organised within the scope of the Défi Azimut (read the interview below).



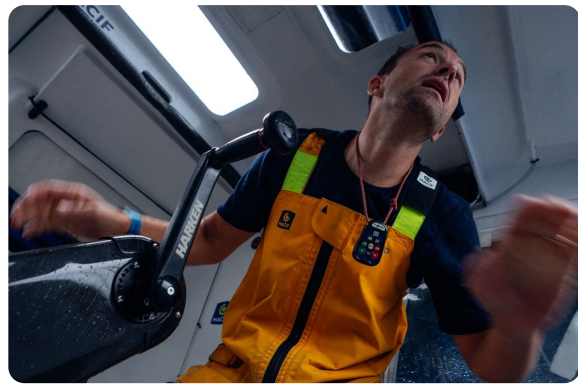
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A natural leader with some fierce matches astern

The level of skill among the skippers along with the work carried out by all the teams clearly suggest that the future is still bright for these 2022 foilers, which are always constantly evolving. “We are making 18-19 knots of boatspeed at 65 degrees to the wind and I’m kind of just discovering these conditions with the other boats. It feels like we’re going very, very fast compared to last year or in the Vendée Arctique,” confirmed Ambrogio Beccaria this morning. It’s worth noting that the Allagrande Mapei team has shaved more than 500 kg off the former Vulnérable skippered by Thomas Ruyant, plus they’ve fitted new, longer foils to this Koch-Finot Conq design.

With Charal right on his tail, the Italian was managing to keep pace with Sam Goodchild until the wind eased earlier this morning. In medium and then light airs, accompanied by a swell, the ‘Franco-British’ sailor (as he’s become known by the Frenchies... a complement indeed!) managed to put a dozen miles between him and his rivals in the space of just five hours. A warning, if it were needed, that Macif Santé Prévoyance is still the boss upwind! However, the faultless performance by Sam Goodchild should not overshadow the epic matches being contested in his wake at the moment. These include that of Violette Dorange (Initiatives Coeur) and Elodie Bonafous (Asssocation Petits Princes-Groupe Quéguiner). “I was really pleased with my speed along the first section, explained Violette at lunchtime in a voice message sent out by her OBR Josselin Didou. Right now, I’m sailing within sight of Elodie as well as Jérémie (Beyou) and Corentin (Horeau). With the big swell and gentle breeze, it’s not easy to get the boat making headway, but the calm weather is also very

welcome at this midway point in the race, because after the ridge of high pressure, the breeze will continue to build.”

Slow boat to Lorient

This leading group put in a tack mid-afternoon, so the last five boats are slipping further and further behind. Bringing up the rear, Manuel Cousin has not managed to keep up with the solid pace set by the daggerboard boats. At the head of this group, Café Joyeux is neck and neck with Résilient skippered by Pierre Louis Attwell, who is putting up a confident performance in his first IMOCA race.

As we go to press, Race Management is continuing to run the routing simulations to see how this little group might shake itself free of the ridge of high pressure. The best-case scenario puts them at the Azimut waypoint at 1:00 pm on Saturday. Given the local forecast of a slow finish, an amendment to the Sailing Instructions was published yesterday to push back the line closure to Sunday at 10:00 am.

[Read the article on the website](#)

LOGBOOK



« Well, the boat surprised me! I didn't think I'd be this fast in these conditions, especially since we sailed almost the whole leg on a reach with the J2, and we're the only boat among the leaders carrying the small jib, meaning 10% smaller. I'm very, very happy — I finally managed a good start, even though a cargo ship passed between the line and the first tack. The race hasn't been easy, but with the front, it went better than expected. I managed to hold Macif for a bit, then it pulled away slightly, maybe when the wind eased a touch. Now we've come through the front and we're close-hauled on a broad angle, doing 18-19 knots, 65 degrees to the wind, and I'm getting a feel for these conditions alongside the other boats. It feels like we're going really, really fast compared to last year, or to the Vendée Arctique. We're hoping to use the lull at the ridge to close the gap on Macif and take our chances downwind. It won't be easy, and Charal is pushing hard. »

Ambrogio Beccaria - ALLAGRANDE MAPEI



« The race is going very well. The start was good and I was really pleased with the speed heading toward BXA. Today we're tackling the ridge. Right now I'm sailing within sight of Elodie, but also Jérémie (Beyou) and Corentin (Horeau). With the big swell and light wind, it's not easy to keep the boat moving, but it's also a welcome bit of calm in the middle of the race, because after the ridge the wind is only going to build. There's still a lot of racing ahead, it's a pretty interesting race. The others aren't far off, so it could still go either way. »

Violette Dorange - Initiatives Coeur



« That's it, we're in the ridge now, the wind has dropped and it's very unstable. The swell is big but the period is long so it's manageable. I managed to fit in a few naps last night. Between Groix and BXA I had some decent stretches, but I got caught out by a small wind shift to the left that came out of nowhere, and I got dropped by the lead group. Since then I've made up a bit of ground on Charal and managed to open up a small gap on Initiatives Coeur and Dubreuil. Ronan is on the cameras and I'm on the settings. Still 24 hours of racing left. It goes by fast, so we have to give it everything! »

Corentin Horeau - MACSF



« Everything's going well, I just tacked in the ridge, I had as little as 3-4 knots of wind at times. Normally the breeze is going to build and I'm hoping it fills in for me before it does for the others! We're ahead of the routing, largely thanks to yesterday when we stayed ahead of the front all the way to BXA. It got pretty intense with the front pressing in and Mapei right on top of us. I got passed just before the mark but managed to retake the lead during the maneuver. Now I'm off upwind and I'd like to open up a gap before the Azimut waypoint. Everything's fine on the boat, and of course when you're in the lead, morale is good. »

Sam Goodchild - Macif Santé Prévoyance



« It's Friday noon and we're having a great time with Coline (the onboard reporter). We put together a great charcuterie board with some chips, we invited Résilient over for drinks but they said they'd rather swing by for coffee instead! Right now we're stuck in the ridge. We knew it, the organization knew it, race management knew it too... Tonight we should pick up wind to make ground to the North and try to finish the course on time. We're doing what we can, but at least we're in good company, with Pierre-Louis, Sébastien, and Masai and Manu a bit further back. We're taking it puff by puff, and little streams make big rivers! »

Nico D'Estais - Café Joyeux



« Second day of this Azimut race, and conditions have really eased off. We're close-hauled with about ten knots, and a long head sea, so it's not easy to trim the boat. But the sun's out and it's actually pretty pleasant conditions to rest in. Now we're about to tackle the wing-on-wing run through the ridge. It wasn't easy picking the right angle to make progress to the West. We should be tacking in a few hours, we're waiting for the wind to shift left so we can approach Azimut. I'm expecting 5-6 knots of wind max at the moment we tack, and I'm going to make the most of the still-stable conditions for a little nap! »

Elodie Bonafous - Ass. Petits Princes - Groupe Quéguiner

TODAY'S GUESTS

« It's not AI that designs our boats!" »

Guillaume Verdier, Naval architect

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MEDIAS



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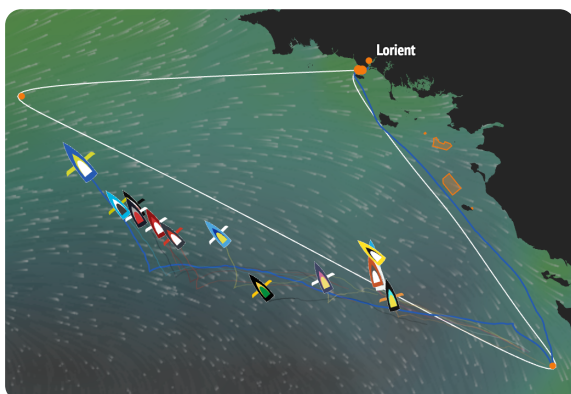
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Follow the race!

Follow the rankings and the fleet's progress on the tracker. Christian Dumard will comment on weather developments in the live chat.

The tracker



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