

A range of challenges...

The 2010 ORC season has got off to a great start in South America, where the Circuito Atlántico Sur Rolex Cup attracted numerous top teams from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay to the Mar del Plata. The newest and most competitive boats assembled in the ORC International class, while the biggest class at 44 entries used ORC Club. Both were the first to use the new 2010 ORC VPP.

Which seems to be working well: with a string of victories in the inshore racing and a new course record in the concluding coastal race, Alberto Roemmer's brand-new Soto Acebal-designed 52-footer *Lola* won the overall ORCi trophy in her inaugural regatta.

'It was a new experience for us, and the result was better than we expected,' said *Lola* skipper Guillermo Parada. 'In the long race we were ahead of the course record by one and a half hours, but our deep draft forced us away from the coast, and the unstable conditions of the last part of the race slowed us so that we beat the record by only 24 minutes. And then the boats behind us caught up, leaving us sixth on corrected time!'

Still this was a somewhat unexpected yet encouraging result, as this new lightweight and powerful design is very different from what has been considered the optimised ORC shape. Perhaps this is a positive testament to the 2010 VPP's ability to recognise some great crew work on *Lola* – among the onboard talent was MedCup organiser Nacho Postigo – and not throw favour to any particular typeform. Though in a series with its fair share of light air and choppy seas, there's nothing like having serious horsepower, regardless of rating rules!

Meanwhile, on the Pacific side of the continent in the beautiful islands of northern Patagonia the Entel PCS Chiloe regatta in Chile was pulling together an interesting fleet of mostly older raceboats from the Med plus a brand-new addition, yet another design from Soto Acebal. Nicolas Ibanez's new 42-footer *Trafalgar* looks very different from the 52-footer *Lola*, resembling a design from the last IMS generation in search of being 'ORC-optimised', but being well sailed is what propelled them to the top of the standings. Before heading north to a measurement seminar in Peru, ORC chief measurer Nicola Sironi was on hand to assist with scoring the Chiloe fleet, and reports the *Trafalgar* team benefited not only from being on a brand-new well-prepared raceboat, but also from the help of prominent sailors Santi Lange, Nacho Postigo and Mariano Parada... fresh from their victory the week before on *Lola*. Small world, bigger prizes.

Sironi says this is an unusual regatta: 'The races are along coastal courses, but squeezing through narrow passages and fjords, in variable winds, and in some places with strong tidal currents and tides of up to 7m. The ports at each stage-finish do not have any docks, so each anchored competitor is provided with a support boat to get them to and from a lively social scene onshore.'

Among the ORC box rule fleets several GP42 teams are preparing for another five-stage Audi MedCup, with a slight reshuffling of the schedule from last year. Starting in Cascais in May, the MedCup fleet moves on to Marseille, Barcelona and Cartagena, with the final event this year in Cagliari in September.



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A very powerful beastie. The Acebal-designed *Lola* of the Argentinean Roemmers family shone on the Mar del Plata racing under ORCi even though this TP52-beater (*Seahorse Jan 2010*) was designed primarily for IRC competition. A merging of the ways perhaps...

The Audi MedCup organisers have reported a healthy and encouraging media impact across their key European territories (worth an estimated 25 million euros) during 2009, based upon a study carried out by the German media monitoring company Sport+ on behalf of Grupo Sant Mónica Sports (the event organiser) and Audi, the title sponsor. These figures suggest a 35 per cent increase in the circuit's media impact compared to 2008. 'This is good news for those teams still chasing sponsorship,' said Paolo Massarini, manager of the GP42 class, 'because it shows the solid value the MedCup can now offer to participating teams.'

Finally, in the smallest of the GP classes, the GP26 has now formed an owners' association plus a technical committee to resolve fine-tuning of the class rules. Four new GP26s are currently under construction in the USA, Spain and Turkey. The real challenge for this class remains to create enough critical mass and on a wider basis to generate renewed interest beyond the early promising start made in Argentina nearly three years ago.

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