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# The IMOCA Revolution

**High speed, big distances and close racing. The IMOCA concept has evolved dramatically over the past ten years...**

Originating from an open rule design in the 1980s to deliver a platform for the epic Vendée Globe – a non-stop, no outside assistance, solo around the world race - it has evolved over ten 4-year cycles to a more structured box rule class. Now used for all the world's major solo, two-handed and fully-crewed oceanic races, including the Transat Jacques Vabre, Route du Rhum and The Ocean Race, the IMOCA class is the place to be.

Today, the IMOCA class is a 60-foot racing platform mostly made up of cutting-edge foil-borne high-speed monohulls. The beauty of this class now is that the same boat can compete across all three disciplines of offshore racing – singlehanded, two-handed and fully-crewed. When raced fully-crewed, the roster is made up of four sailing crew, including at least one woman and two nationalities, along with a non-assisting fifth person, the On Board Reporter (OBR). The most recent two-handed

transatlantic race, the 2023 Transat Jacques Vabre, saw 39 starters from 17 countries, and the 2024 New York-Vendée singlehanded transatlantic race saw 28 starters from 11 different countries. Forty boats will start the 2024 Vendée Globe this year. No other class comes close.

Across the ten editions of the epic, non-stop, singlehanded Vendée Globe race - sailing West to East via the three Capes - course records have been bettered each time by, on average, four days. In 1989, the first boat took just over 109 days to make it around non-stop, while the current record stands at 74 days and a handful of hours. In the 1989 race, the best 24 hour run by the winner was 304 miles. In the last edition of The Ocean Race, the best 24 hour run was just five miles short of 600 miles!!

The evolution of the competition's popularity has seen sailing technology driven hard towards progress and development. Naval architecture and all its modern

engineering sub-disciplines, composite materials use, and boat-building methods, all within a vast and powerful ecosystem of smaller offshore shorthanded classes, has transformed this once-niche French racing scene into the flagship of global offshore racing attracting many competitive non-French teams.

And with that comes increased media attention. Sailing solo around the world is not what IMOCA racing is all about anymore. The fully-crewed configuration has resulted in the boats being sailed harder, manoeuvres becoming more frequent, and sails being trimmed accurately around the clock. When coupled with the major event organisers' communications plans, this makes for hugely exciting racing, engaging fans for longer across all the modern social media outlets. Sailing lends itself well to this game, and the IMOCA class races have taken this to another level.

The most recent Vendée Globe (2020-2021) took



place during various COVID restrictions, and with football, motorsport, rugby, and tennis all put on hold, the race, the only active sporting competition taking place, received a remarkable upturn in following and promotion. The Vendée Globe, by definition a socially distanced sporting competition, took centre stage for three whole months. Daily live shows featuring updates and interviews with the sailors in two languages stood out as the best TV and social media sports shows to watch. As a result, several solo sailors soon became household names worldwide, and some foreign skippers still can't walk down the street in their hometowns without being mobbed by fans!

Although always commercially successful in France, since the 2020 event, more global recognition of the sailors' incredible feats has delivered significantly better returns on investment for sponsors and technical partners alike and generated much more interest in the next race, which starts on 10 November 2024.

The advent of crewed sailing and the adoption of the IMOCA class by The Ocean Race has led to many new races appearing on the calendar, too. The varied programme represents incredible value for professional or semi-professional IMOCA teams wanting to participate in high-speed, fully-crewed, and shorthanded racing. This is a class of boat that can be used for many types of events. And there's certainly plenty in store over the next three years...

The schedule starts in June 2025, with an 1850-mile race around the British Isles starting and finishing in Boulogne-sur-Mer on the French Channel coast. IMOCA crews can look forward to a challenging week-long race. The Rolex Fastnet Race follows this in late July 2025. Traditionally sailed two-handed



**Data is a critical driver in IMOCA performance and safety. Load sensing on all sail tack points and fibre optic sensing in the foils allows the skipper to stay within the limits.**

by the IMOCA fleet, two divisions – two-handed and fully crewed - will likely be required for the 51st edition of the race, which takes place just ahead of The Ocean Race Europe. Starting in Kiel, Germany, in late August, The Ocean Race Europe will visit five Western European ports, finishing deep within the Mediterranean in late September 2025. Teams then have the choice to continue sailing fully-crewed races – Malta's October Rolex Middle Sea Race, the Canary Islands' December RORC Transatlantic Race, Antigua's February Rolex Caribbean 600, and The Ocean Race's inaugural West to East Transatlantic Race starting from New York in September 2026 – or alternating with the short-handed programme with Le Havre's November 2025 two-handed classic Transat Jacques Vabre, Les Sables d'Olonne's singlehanded



**The “ADVENS 1” navigation station with wrap around screens. The heart of an IMOCA 60.**

Vendée Arctic Race around Iceland in June 2026, and then the French Singlehanded Classic Route du Rhum race from St Malo to Guadeloupe in October 2026.

This then brings us nicely around to the next edition of The Ocean Race, scheduled to start in January 2027 from Alicante in Spain. This itinerant fully-crewed race with stopovers in South Africa, South and North America, and several different parts of Europe brings the two parts of the fleet together for one of the most competitive of around the world races in existence today and a magnificent goal for sailors to aim for and compete in.

At the conclusion of The Ocean Race in early July 2027, boats will be refitted and put back into a shorthanded configuration, ready for the final 12-month build-up to the 2028 Vendée Globe.

This busy calendar of events creates a lot of work for the sailors and the teams working behind the scenes to prepare the boats. From the skipper and crew to the boat captain, shore crew, design office, communications, logistics, commercial and administrative staff, along with project managers, composite experts, electronics and systems specialists, riggers, and one or two interns - it takes a well-oiled team to keep a successful IMOCA project running competitively.

On average, for every hour of sailing, 100 man hours of work are required to ensure the yacht remains at peak performance and is ready and in the right place for the next event on the calendar.

Not all of this happens afloat, of course. In Lorient, teams operate from large IMOCA-sized hangars, with associated specialist workshops and office spaces. Seven new boats are already in the planning and construction stage for the start of the next 4-year cycle.

#### ADVENS1

*Advens 1* originally designed as the One Design IMOCA Super 60 for the 2020 Volvo Ocean Race, was the brainchild of Guillaume Verdier. This represented his first foray as an IMOCA designer without the co-design VPLP/Verdier

partnership label. Pure Design engineered the structure, and Persico handled

the production engineering. These entities are prominent in the America's Cup, contributing to Team New Zealand and Prada Luna Rossa.

When the Volvo Ocean Race project collapsed, 70% of the design was complete, and the hull was partially built.

Thomas Ruyant, a celebrated young French sailor, stepped in motivated by unfinished business from a previous Vendée Globe attempt when his boat suffered extensive structural failure in the Southern Ocean.

Over the following years, he put together a group of investors and, with a small team, positioned himself to take on the unfinished Volvo Ocean Race project, signing contracts early in 2018 with Persico and Verdier.

The boat's composite box was delivered to Lorient in the summer of 2019, and launched two months later, ready for the Transat Jacques Vabre. The boat proved extremely competitive, finishing third on the water in Salvador de Bahia.

Over the winter the boat was further optimised for the 2020 Vendée Globe, including ergonomics of the cockpit and cabin, allowing Ruyant to sail the boat hard but also rest and recover during the three-month-long race.

Key upgrades included a custom-moulded, body-hugging, fully orientable seat facing aft with wrap-around computer screens, a trackball integrated into the armrest, and access to hot water from the jet boil without having to leave the seat, A new set of V2 foils from Persico, and swift access to the cockpit for sail trimming and manoeuvring.

The boat performed well in the Vendée-Arctic Race, leading round the top mark near Iceland, and finishing just a few hours after Charal (now known as *TeamWork*) and close to sister-ship Apivia (now known as *l'Occitane*). And excelled during the first two weeks of the 2020 Vendée Globe before port foil damage caused Ruyant to drop to fourth overall on the water.

In 2021, the boat was refitted for the first edition of The Ocean Race Europe. The boat performed extremely well in the fully-crewed configuration, allowing Thomas Ruyant and Morgan Lagravière to get to grips with

the boat's performance, and, with a new V3 version foil package, take the boat to a crushing victory in

the Transat Jacques Vabre that Autumn.

2022 was a solo year, with the classic Route du Rhum as the main objective for Thomas Ruyant. The success of the previous Vendée Globe saw record numbers of new IMOCA builds and with 38 boats on the start line,



*“Advens 1”* in full flight when branded “*Linked Out*” for Thomas Ruyant. Note the keel foil acting as second lifting surface.

an epic battle ensued. Advens 1 demonstrated her competitiveness once again, and Thomas Ruyant led the largest ever fleet of IMOCAs into Guadeloupe. With Thomas' new boat, Advens 2, almost complete, British skipper Sam Goodchild took over Advens 1 for the 2023 season and the upcoming 2024 Vendée Globe.

Sam, whose successful career in Figaros, Class 40s and Ocean Fifty trimarans, had just come off the back of The Ocean Race where he raced on board the almost all-conquering Holcim/PRB before taking over Advens 1 for the rest of the IMOCA season.

His results, despite many newer designs hitting the water, were remarkable. Sam finished on the podium in every race in 2023 and was crowned the 2023 IMOCA Globe Series Champion. Despite being a 2018 design, Advens 1 remains one of the most competitive IMOCAs to this day.

The boat was well designed by Verdier's team and the TRR internal design office, extremely well built by the state-of-the-art composite boat yard Persico, and constantly developed, maintained and upgraded to the highest standards by one of the most professional teams in the industry .

The most recent New York Vendée Transatlantic

Race saw Sam prove that he and the boat are seriously competitive together. His ability to push the boat and position himself in the last major event before this winter's Vendée Globe makes this boat an attractive proposition for the future.

Unfortunately, just a few days before the finish and whilst in the mix for third place, the boat was dismasted, and Sam had to retire. Now a brand-new mast and suit of sails are being fitted and, with barely a hiccup, the boat

will continue its build-up to the pinnacle event of the season in November. *Advens 1* is for sale through Ancasta

Race Boats, with delivery after the next Vendée Globe and its post-circumnavigation refit in Spring 2025. The boat is equipped with the highest-spec systems (inventory on application to Ancasta) and sailing time with the current and past skippers and all associated design and performance information is included.

A supplementary package includes the remaining part of the TRR racing stable in Lorient and all that it entails. With hangar/workshop and office space, as well as elements of a complete management and shore crew, it effectively provides a fast and direct track to competitive racing in this special boat.

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**“Advens 1” partially enclosed cockpit ensures the skipper is still connected to the outdoors for “feel”, but still plenty of protection in bigger seas.**

For a start-up or second-generation Vendée Globe project, this represents an incredible opportunity to climb the ladder quickly and efficiently in this highly competitive environment.

For expressions of interest, please contact Sam Pearson from Ancasta Race Boats [Raceboats@ancasta.com](mailto:Raceboats@ancasta.com) +447759 424900 [ancasta.com/ADVENS1](http://ancasta.com/ADVENS1)