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22 years of spirit at the Bodrum Cup

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Monday, October 11, 2010

CHRIS DRUM BERKAYA

BODRUM – Hürriyet Daily News

Paying international and domestic guests, experienced crews and the sailing vessels are proof that the two goals of the Bodrum Cup are being met every year: Promoting the image of wooden boat sailing in Turkey and increasing the sailing ability and experience of crews of gulets



A 'Circle of Love' of wooden gulets was formed at Gümüşlük Harbor during the 2007 Bodrum Cup. From A. Culasso archive

the boats moving under sail without the help of any engines or conversely lazing and swimming while the fleet waits for the wind to pick up. In the middle of the organized mayhem on many a boat are the paying guests, for the Bodrum Cup International Wooden Yacht Regatta is a unique sailing race in which any novice or hardy sailor can sign up for the experience to be under the sails of a traditional or modern wooden boat for four days. It attracts many international guests, some who come faithfully every year for "their" boats and crews.

Guests, the experienced crews and the sailing vessels are proof that the two aims of the Bodrum Cup are being met every year. According to Erman Aras, from cup organizers Era Yachting & Sailing Club, the cup was established to promote the image of wooden boat sailing in Turkey and to increase the sailing ability and experience of the crews of the hundreds of gulets that cruise the coast.

Mehmet Ayaz, who sails on one of the oldest gulets in the fleet, and the only four-time winner of the cup, the AYAZ, agrees that the Bodrum Cup has definitely changed the technical knowledge behind the Bodrum fleet. "In the first races 1989 and 1990, there were hardly any good sails or sail makers around, now there are proper sails and sail makers. Yes definitely the cup has really helped," he said.

The sight of boats racing at full sail down the coast of the Bodrum Peninsula is an annual delight in October. It is magical to see the proud, traditional wooden boats bearing white sails or brilliantly colored spinnakers cruise over the deep blue sea framed by southern Turkey's rugged islands and sandy shoreline.

On board it may be all shouting, winch work and heaving of ropes to keep



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makers. It's definitely the cup has really helped, he said.

Murat Arslan of Arya Yachting, the owners of another perennial competitor, Nostalgia, also agrees that the cup has improved sailing in Bodrum. He said in the mid-1980s when gulets were built for cruising a mast was usually just for decoration. When the Bodrum Cup was first held in 1989, largely in response to that dismal trend and to encourage gulets to sail, only about a dozen of the 17 participants had traditional canvas sails. Spinnakers were not allowed for several years for fear they would overload and snap the masts.

The 26-year-old family boat Ayaz is owned and sailed by the Ayaz family members of Gümbet. The 25-year-old Nostalgia was built and is still owned by Arya Yachting, one of the earliest established yacht charter companies in Bodrum. The two boats were actually built for sailing then and have since consistently proven themselves as superb competitors as they chalked up decades of competing in the cup.

Nostalgia has often carried off the Blue Flag for the 18.50 - 22.49 meters group as well as the Bodrum Cup in 1998. It is a favorite among locals and always loudly cheered for at the award ceremonies. It has competed for 16 years under Kaptan Cengiz, the famous blind captain who helps steer the boat by touch, and a happy, sociable crew.

Barbara Ateş, a Bodrum resident in 2006, wrote at the time of some of the moments sailing on the Nostalgia. "The boat's Captain Mehmet, a keen competitor, on the second-to-last day, alarmed the guests when he dumped the remaining four tons of freshwater, ["Our showers!" they squeaked] so as to gain advantage for sailing against their class rival Ayaz on the last day to Bodrum. They won [that time]."

Arya Yachting's other boat, AKIN A, won the very first Bodrum Cup, when they went into it "just for fun," Murat Arslan said. "All of the races are fun," he emphasized, having participated in most of them on Nostalgia.

Ayaz echoed the same sentiments. "We go out to the Bodrum Cup to relax and enjoy ourselves, so we will see what happens."

When asked if Ayaz's four wins and more trophies mean that they are very competitive sailors, he said: "For my cousins and I, sailing is in our nature, so we want to do our best. My cousins are 20 now and did all the Optimist and Laser sailing courses and racing with the Era Yachting Club when they were students. Now they are working, so they don't get out so often."

While heavy weather is challenging, light weather conditions also stretch the experience for crews, as it teaches them how to really use sails to maximum effect, and this is where the training and experience of the captains and crew come to the fore.

When asked why Nostalgia so consistently does well, Arslan said, "It is the combination of the boat, the captain and the crew - and they have all been sailing together for a long time."

One of the most beautiful boats to compete every year is the pride of Bodrum, STS Bodrum, the only sail training ship in Turkey. It was built at Bodrum's shipyards to encourage a new generation of young crewmembers to improve their sailing skills and experience and in part was conceived as a response to the Bodrum Cup's demand for crew skills. The increased enthusiasm and skills of boat crews then feed through to the charter sector, which now caters to a more demanding market.

Light weather can also exercise the race committee, as invariably over the four days of the regatta there will be at least one windless morning or even a full day, demanding an on-the-spot response.

In 2008, when the boats were leaving from Güllük, deep in the gulf of Mandalya near Bodrum, there was no wind at the original start line. So the committee moved the start to more open waters by an island north of Güllük, where as Dave Stanley, Australian owner of Southern Cross Timer, recalled, "It was fairly blowing dogs off chains." He went on, "The wind varied enormously during the course to Yalıkavak, so much that Southern Cross Timer had her spinnaker explode in a spectacular, and loud, fashion."

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Routes for the cup over the years

In the early days, the routes even took the regatta south past Datça's Knidos as far as Ekinicik, on the southern side of Marmaris, or down the gulf of Gökova stopping at and squeezing into the bays of Mazi, the legendary Çökertme and English Harbor.

Didim is the furthest north the cup has ventured, but now that the enormous protected Doğuş D-Marina is open there, it is providing two nights' shelter and entertainment for the regatta fleet this year. In different years the fleet has moored north of Bodrum in Iasos – where a great party is remembered with the villagers. At Güllük, the large pier has ably hosted many of the yachts in a communal atmosphere, and Türkbükü's now-demolished jetties held a hundred yachts while the beach saw some great parties and hosted the annual fancy-dress night. Again it was where the village met the sea-goers for a grand party.

This year the organizers are close to achieving a longtime dream to spend a night in the neighboring Greek island, Kalymnos. This, after all, was the harbor that saw off a vast fleet every summer as it headed for the African coast around Libya in search of sponges in the last century. It was a quest that Bodrum sponge divers and boats also set out for, and they used to mingle with the Kalymnians on their long searches. To take the boats that have grown from some of the same traditional shipyards and techniques to Kalymnos has a certain rightness about it. The organizers are hoping visas, regulations and national concerns will allow for one night of meeting to celebrate the brotherhood of the seas.

The alternative for boats not able to get to Kalymnos is Gümüşlük, a Bodrum Peninsula harbor, and a popular choice with restaurants and easy access for friends and visitors not participating in the full four days. The small harbor cannot always take all the boats in the race, but it is where in 2007 a "Circle of Love" was formed as boats laboriously moored in a wonderful floating raft-circle.

New handicap system

Worldwide economic stress may mean that the competing fleet will be smaller than past years in numbers, but the old hands are not deterred and there are always new boats ready to test their mettle on the four day course. So quality may reign this year, and as ever a variety of gulets, tirhandil or ayna kış, and traditional yachts are signing up. There are also some beautiful boats and regular sailing yachts competing in their own class of "guest," as they do not qualify for the Bodrum Cup, but they will be there at the start.

As an example of the variety in sizes that compete, in 2008, the year that Dragonfly won the Bodrum Cup, the biggest boat was the British-flagged Aegean at 41 meters. The smallest was the former sponge diver's boat Aksona, all of 7.7 meters in length.

Expected at the regatta again this year to defend the pennant is the winner of 2009 Bodrum Cup, the luxurious and high-tech Daima, which came to the cup virtually brand new from its Antalya shipyard, measuring 42 meters.

The range of boat sizes led to a multitude of competition categories for the competition as boats got bigger. So there is firm support for the biggest change in the Bodrum Cup's rules since its inception, as this year the race will be run on a simplified handicap system, with just three categories. There is one class for the traditional tirandhils, the centuries-old boats of the Aegean with both bow and sterns tapering to a point. Then there are the two main classes for boats measured by their waterline – over and under 21 meters. This categorization will split the boats and the start with two starting times and it is considered that this will make a much more open competition.

"Yes, I think the new system will be a good thing," said Southern Cross Timer's Stanley.

"In theory the smallest boat can now win the Bodrum Cup on handicap. It will be a different prize than line honors." He was impressed by the organization, as his Southern Cross Timer was one of the first entries to confirm and be measured. "The team came and measured the waterline, the length and the sail area – calculating on mast and boom, but actually took out the genoa and measured that sail area, too." In the last week before the race, even though there is always a last-minute rush to enter, the

measurement committee plans to take measurements of all yachts before the regatta.

On land

Since 2007, organizers have started the Bodrum Cup in the middle of the week so that the excitement of the final day's race, and now the extra one-day event, can be enjoyed by the maximum number of spectators and participants on the weekend.

The Bodrum Cup Festival will open with a cortege bearing "Queen Artemisia" representing the first female admiral of ancient Halicarnassus into the İskele (Harbor) Square, and will be followed by a mix of bands and dance shows.

As part of the expanded festival this year, along with yachts displayed along the quay, there will be two naval exhibitions. Findings from excavations of the Ottoman frigate Ertuğrul, which sank off Japan in 1890, will be exhibited, and the visiting research ship Nautilus of renowned underwater explorer and discoverer of the Titanic, Dr. Robert Ballard, will host a deep sea technology exhibit.

For the first time in Turkey and in the world, wooden yachts made in Bodrum shipyards will be displayed both on land and at sea. The events of the whole week have been designated as the Bodrum Cup International Yacht Festival this year.

Aras said that thanks to the festival, Bodrum and the wooden yachts produced in the town had become well known around the world and added that the festival was a good reminder of how the yacht sector in Turkey has developed through years.

Each evening the day's winners are announced, but the overall places and prizes are not announced until the end of the final day of the race at the gala prize ceremony and party at The Halikarnas Club in Bodrum on Saturday, Oct. 23.

It may then be a test of fortitude on everyone's part to delay celebrations and get out for the new event on the following and truly final day – the Winner's Shoot Out between the top two boats in each class in the Bodrum Challenge Trophy on Oct. 24 held just off shore from Bodrum.

The tremendous efforts of the regatta organizers, Era Yachting, in running the race are aimed at celebrating Bodrum Peninsula's way of life, the way of the seas. It is open for all to enjoy, experienced or novice sailors, come rain or shine, storm or calm. Cabin places are still available on competing boats for those who just want the experience of being up close, and of course boats can enter up to the last day.

Bodrum Yacht Festival and Bodrum Cup 2010 Program

Bodrum Yacht Festival Activities between Oct. 16 and 19

Bodrum **iskele** Square (in front of Bodrum Castle)

Oct. 16-19 Exhibitions

*Opening of the Bodrum Naval Museum

*Titanic Discoverer, Dr. Robert Ballard's Deep Marine Technology Exhibition aboard his research vessel the Nautilus

Place: In front of Bodrum Castle

*The Ertuğrul Ottoman Navy Ship exhibition (objects retrieved in an underwater excavation in Japan).

Place: Institute of Nautical Archaeology Exhibition Salon (Turn before the State Hospital)

*Yacht Cuisine Competition (This is being organized for the first time this year. Because catering is extremely important on chartered boats, the competition aims to raise standards in the field. The competition is open to the staff of participating yachts while a jury will inspect the kitchens and taste the entries. The head of the jury is Haldun Tüzel, a well-known gourmet cook and restaurant owner.)

Oct. 19, Tuesday

Bodrum İskele Square

Music, Dance, Animation Groups 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Race Briefing (Bodrum Castle Northern Moat Theater) 6:30 p.m.

Cocktail Prolongé (Bodrum Castle Moat Theater) 7:30 p.m.

Opening Ceremony / Concert - 9 p.m.

Bodrum Cup 2010 International Wooden Yacht Regatta Oct. 19-24

Wednesday, Oct. 20

MM Proje Course (Bodrum - D-Marin Didim)

Start: 11 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 21

2nd Course (D-Marin Didim Triangular Course)

Start: 11 a.m.

D-Marin Didim Cocktail Prolongé 8 p.m.

Fashion Show and the Boat Crew Fancy Dress Contest/Concert 9:30 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 22

Ant Yapı Course (D-Marin Didim – Kalymnos/Greece)

Start: 10 a.m.

Cocktail Party 6 – 8 p.m.

Concert 9:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 23

4th Course (Kalymnos - Bodrum)

(Starting line will be between Kalymnos and Gümüşlük as boats have the option to stay overnight in either port)

Start: 12 a.m.

Cocktail Halikarnas The Club 7 p.m.

Concert: 8 p.m.

Regatta Prize Giving Ceremony 9 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 24

1st Bodrum Challenge Trophy (Winners' Shootout)

Start: (Between Bodrum and Karaada) 10 a.m.

Trophy Prizegiving Ceremony - İskele Square 6 p.m.

RACING CATEGORIES

A) Wooden Yachts - Traditional Design

Bodrum Cup Mega: Yachts with water level 21 meters and over

Bodrum Cup Traditional: Yachts with water level 20.99 m and below

Bodrum Cup Tirhandil: All Tirhandil yachts will be in one category.

B) Performance Cruiser Wooden Yachts

C) Yachts of Non -Wood Construction (As Non-Competing Participants)

Daily information updates will be provided on the official Bodrum Cup website

<http://www.bodrumcup.com/2010/en/#>

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