



Pip Hare and Paul Larsen teamed up for the 2019 Rolex Fastnet Race

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Pip Hare defies the odds in Fastnet Race

This year's Rolex Fastnet race held several surprises, not least how Poole-based round-the-world sailor Pip Hare pulled ahead of the rest of the IMOCA 60 fleet in the early stages of the race. On paper, her 20-year-old boat should have been towards the back of her class, but instead she led the westbound charge from Start Point to the Scillies.

Pitted against brand-new foiling yachts such as Jérémie Beyou's *Charal*, which took line honours for the IMOCA 60s, Pip's *Superbigou* was never tipped to be lead boat. However, she conclusively proved that technology is only part of the battle – tactics count too. Faced with an expected but difficult to predict

wind shift from south-easterly to south-westerly, the majority of the IMOCA 60s took a south-westerly course to mid-Channel, where the breeze failed, leaving many of the fastest boats drifting backwards on the tide. Meanwhile Pip, who was joined for the race by world sailing speed record holder Paul Larsen, stayed close inshore on the shortest course, well to the north of the fleet. Their decision paid off and *Superbigou* kept sailing, and by the time they had passed Salcombe they were at the head of the pack, a lead they maintained until beyond Land's End.

Pip, who completed the Fastnet in 2 days, 8 hours, 21 minutes and 6 seconds – and who is currently working towards the 2020-2021 edition of the non-stop, single-handed round-the-world Vendée Globe race – said of the event: “It would be easy to assume that with an older boat we had no chance, but we held our own against better boats with bigger budgets. We’re still competitive and we can still make a mark. In two-and-a-half days, we delivered a world-class performance and a great story.”

The result places her just seven hours behind the lead IMOCA 60 and 11 hours ahead of the final finisher in the fleet, even beating a modern foiling boat by over an hour. Explaining her tactics, Pip said: “They were partly driven by budget, and partly by the design of the boat. *Superbigou* is narrower and more easily driven than the newer boats – they have big flat sections which together with their foils are great for power-reaching, but when they stop, they stop. We’ve probably got the biggest mainsail in the fleet, and the boat excels in light conditions both up- and down-wind.

“We had to go with what we had in our sail wardrobe, and our big spinnaker is quite deep. That said, I always thought staying north was the right choice. We gained from the tidal eddies inshore, and kept at least three knots of breeze, always from the south or west.”

Following Pip’s progress on the online race tracker, it’s easy to see how *Superbigou* followed the coastline, turning in to each bay and passing close to headlands to pick up any available tide and keep the breeze. Asked about her experience sailing with ‘king of speed’ Paul Larsen, Pip said: “It was brilliant. Double-handing is very intense, and you need to make the most of both crew. Paul is very focused on performance: he thinks ahead, and that makes you fast. It’s the same philosophy that I have, which makes working together easy. We get on well and have a good laugh, and his experience adds another level.”

With all but one of the IMOCA 60s competing in the race campaigning to take part in the 2020-2021 Vendée Globe, the Fastnet is one of the first chances to see the boats and skippers for the solo round-the-world race compete. The next will be the double-handed Transat Jacques Vabre, sailed in October from Le Havre to Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, in which 34 IMOCA 60s are expected to race.

For a chance to meet Pip and her boat, visit her in the marina at [Southampton Boat Show](#) from 13-22 September 2019.

For more information, visit piphareoceanracing.com.

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Vying for the Vendée

Announcing a Vendée Globe campaign carries no guarantee of competing. Problems with funding and sponsorship aside, under new rules the entries are limited to 30 boats. New boats and those which sailed in the last edition of the race are given priority, which leaves the outsiders to fight for approximately 14 remaining places based on miles. The Globe Series races (Bermudes 1000, Rolex Fastnet, Transat Jacques Vabre, Transat and Transat NY-Vendée) offer a great opportunity to build miles quickly, and Pip has signed up for all of them, a total of 14,500 miles sailed before she even crosses the Vendée start line.

About Paul Larsen

Paul is best known as the holder of the 500m and one-mile sailing speed records. Set in 2012 on his foiling *Sailrocket II* in Walvis Bay, Namibia, he smashed the previous record by nearly 10 knots to hit 65.45 knots. A self-taught sailor and natural innovator, Paul has an exceptional talent for sailing boats fast, and for challenging the accepted technology to push the boundaries of the possible.

Australian-born Paul is now based in Weymouth and continues to pursue his passion for sailing at speed. A regular crew member and helm on the MOD 70 *Concise 10*, he is equally at home racing with Weymouth's A-Class catamaran fleet.