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SALES FROM SAILS



The America's Cup takes place from April to July.

Paolo Mariani The America's Cup? Think Audemars Piguet, Girard-Perregaux, Omega, TAG Heuer, Hublot, and Louis Vuitton. Swiss watchmaking's interest in sailing needs no further endorsement. Furthermore, the worlds of precision and sailing — the Formula Ones of yachting and the equivalent watch manufacturers — get closer every year as their technologies converge. Forged carbon, titanium and rubber constitute masts, booms, watchcases and dozens of other boat and watch components.

Designed for extreme conditions, they require long manufacturing processes, designers, engineers and architects. The result is a concentration of precision, invention and research, that meets on an unforgiving mirror of water where nothing is left to chance and the seconds are crucial.

The 32nd America's Cup. From April to July 7, 2007 the contestants' destinies will be played out in the five last stages of the world's oldest sporting

trophy. On the seas off Valencia, 11 challengers representing nine countries from five continents will try to wrest the celebrated silver cup from the Swiss defender *Alinghi*. It will be boat against boat, country against country and every watch for itself, with each manufacturer competing for visibility while meeting the technical challenge of producing a special model for the occasion. In this final phase of the America's Cup, there's a watch for virtually every syndicate.



Four teams, four manufacturers. Audemars Piguet, long involved in sailing, returns to the starting line on the side of the defender *Alinghi*, its bride in 2003. But success has not thrown the Le Brassus watch brand off its bearings. For this edition, AP has redoubled its efforts with a development of the Royal Oak chronograph commensurate with the event. Strength and low weight are the key words. The solution comes from the aerospace industry in an application of carbon-forging techniques. Thus 2007 will see the birth of the Royal Oak Offshore *Alinghi* Team, entirely in forged carbon — 90 grams in a diameter of 44mm — to count down the start of an America's Cup race. The automatic 2326/2848 movement features instant-restart and countdown

functions. At the first flag, 11 minutes before the start, the button at 2 o'clock sets off the red hand of the chronograph seconds. At the 10-minute gun, the button at 4 o'clock zeroes and restarts the chronograph. The countdown window then displays 10, while the centre-seconds hand embarks on its one-minute tour of the dial. At the five-minute gun, the countdown window and the 20-minute counter at 9 o'clock both show 5. At one minute to start, the countdown window displays 1 on a red background. Finally, at the starting gun, the countdown window shows 10 for the second time while the minutes-counter indicates 10 for the first time. The strap is in vulcanised rubber with integrated studs and an oversized, PVD-coated titanium buckle.

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Girard-Perregaux is on its first ocean venture. Having exhausted all possibilities in 10 years with Ferrari, the manufacturer wanted to move on in sport but no longer in cars.

The America's Cup came naturally to mind. In 2004, G-P's boss, Luigi Macaluso, took part in a training session with the team, at the suggestion of Larry Ellison, a big customer of the brand and founder of BMW Oracle Racing. A couple of weeks later, a long-term partnership was decided. The reasons?

Macaluso's son, Stefano, has a ready answer: "*The team's human and technical qualities...*

I've never in a sport come across such sensitivity, humility and devotion towards the sponsor."

For the occasion, G-P has created the Laureato Tourbillon Regatta Chronograph. The 14-ligne, GPV02 manually wound calibre has a flying tourbillon and single-button, column-wheel chronograph. Its countdown function is specific to the America's Cup regatta rules. The retrograde, five-plus-five-minute countdown indicator is governed by a column-wheel, rotated to start, stop and zero by the single button.

The movement is housed in a 46mm white-gold case. The strap is black rubber.

Watchmaking in the wind

You don't change a winning team, so Omega's back with Emirates Team New Zealand. The pair works well and the young skipper, Dean Barker, is getting promising results, as reflected in the brand's new chronograph — the Seamaster NZL-32. This regatta watch has the automatic Omega 3602 calibre, derived from the Omega 1120 and the Dubois Dépraz 2027. A countdown indicator in a window shows the five minutes to start with points that gradually change from blue to red from one five-minute period to the next. A black subdial ringed in silver at 3 o'clock shows the elapsed minutes, again in blue or red according to the five-min-

ute period. The smaller hours-counter is at 12 o'clock. The red-tipped, chronograph centre-seconds hand ticks them off to the start. The running seconds are at 9 o'clock. The movement is housed in a stainless-steel case on a black rubber strap studded in white.

TAG Heuer, another great brand known for its sports experience, has resolved to “embark once more on the legendary adventure of sailing.” But this time with the Chinese contestant — the first in the 151 years of the America's Cup. “This challenge is very different to the others,” says Jean-Christophe Babin, TAG Heuer's boss. “The America's Cup is also totally



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new to the Chinese. We need to enter two or three times to accumulate the winning skills and experience for this high-status race. That's why we think that this partnership is just the first step in a long-term relationship with China Team."

The objectives are twin: to be worn with pride on the wrists of the first Chinese team, and to win the world's most coveted sporting trophy. The first objective is met by the Aquaracer Chrono Calibre S China Team, a quartz watch in a limited edi-

tion of 500. Devised in-house, the new calibre shows the time and the chronograph functions with three central hands. The high-tech movement works off five bi-directional motors and 230 components. In brushed steel with an anthracite screen, an aluminium crown in the red and yellow colours of the yacht, and a unique dragon-stamped caseback, this 44mm model displays two semicircular counters: the one at 4:30 indicates the tenths of a second; the other at 7:30, the function mode — watch, chrono or regatta. For objective number two, Babin is *"aware that this could be a long process, but as in luxury watchmaking, learning and improving are essential."* Here at TAG they mean to tackle the job as a team.



For the second time in a row, the outsider Louis Vuitton will be the official timekeeper of the Cup that bears its name. To honour the races that determine the challenger, the brand decided to show up wearing the Tambour LV Cup Régate Platine. The 20 watches in this limited edition are fitted with the automatic

LV 171 movement. It runs an instant-restart chronograph and a countdown with the traditional five windows at 12 o'clock — all styled with conventional elegance. The 32nd America's Cup looks set to give entire satisfaction to the increasing watch-industry investment in the event.

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Glossary of sail racing

Bad air: The relatively sheltered area in the lee of a sailing boat. One racing tactic is to get upwind of your opponents and so steal their wind.

Close hauled: To sail as closely to the wind direction as possible. Most sailboats can sail about 45° to the wind. America's Cup Class boats can manage nearly 30°.

Grinders: Human-powered winches used to hoist or trim sails.

Numeral pennants: Ten triangular signal flags of different colour combinations, each representing a number from 0 to 9. They were devised by French naval officer, Mahé de Labourdonnais, in 1738.

Match race: Race between two sailing boats around two marker buoys, one upwind and the other downwind.

Sheets: The lines (ropes) used to haul in or let out the sails.

Tack: A boat on the starboard tack has the wind coming from its right and has priority over the boat on the port tack. To tack is to change direction through the wind from one tack to the other.

... and watchmaking

Instant-restart chronograph. A single pressure on a button zeroes the chronograph and restarts it immediately. Useful for timing the legs of a race.



Regatta watches. The first regatta wristwatches date from the early 1970s when Ebauches SA produced a mechanism for the pre-start phase of sailing races.

Today, quite a few regatta watches of interest are based on modules developed in 1993 by Dubois Dépraz (DD): regatta calibres 2027 and 2028.

The first, used in the Omega Seamaster chronograph NZL-32, for example, has a wheel-train for the elapsed-time counters, enabling the 30-minute counter to be centred so as to accommodate a three-colour

disc — white, red and blue. A 2:1 gear ratio gives one revolution in 15 minutes — the pre-start period of conventional regattas. It can however be adapted to the 10 minutes of the America's Cup pre-start. This calibre also has all the normal chronograph functions.

The other calibre, DD 2028, has the same regatta functions, without the chronograph elapsed-time counters.

Some regatta watches are fitted with the DD 2075 calibre, which has an instant-restart chronograph with a central minutes-counter.

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Flag F



Flag P

Countdown to the start

The battle for the start is signalled by the attention flag F, 11 minutes before the boats are allowed to cross the line. A minute later, a warning gun, accompanied by a numeral pennant, gives the teams 10 minutes to prepare for the race. The five-minute gun, with flag P, puts the contestants under starter's orders. Competing yachts must have dropped their tows at least a minute before this gun. From now on the boats duel for upwind advantage, calculating time and distance to cross the start line at full speed on the gun. A minute before the start, flag P is lowered, and the numeral pennant drops as the start gun fires.

Bezel tricks... Bulgari and Hamilton have decided to turn their regatta watches into navigational instruments. Bulgari's Diagono Professional Scuba Regatta is driven by the automatic Dubois Dépraz 42028, an instant-restart version of the calibre 2028 developed for the brand. Hamilton's Khaki Navy Regatta uses an inverted Valjoux 7750 with a disc instead of the minutes-hand. The rest of the mechanisms specific to this watch are integrated in the case walls rather than in the movement. In addition to pre-start countdowns — 10 minutes for Bulgari and six for Hamilton — both watches use bezel and dial markings to fix the position of course markers, knowing the position of the first. Hamilton's watch caters for match-race courses, like that of the America's Cup. And if you want the best upwind course, both watches calculate the bearing by triangulation. Finally, Bulgari's Scuba Regatta also tells you your best starting position for a given wind direction.



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Lords of the wind. There are some who just sponsor boats: Audemars Piguet, Girard-Perregaux, Omega, TAG Heuer or even Hamilton, co-sponsor of *Ventilo M2* of Silverarrow-sailing team. (This boat, skippered by Vincent Huguenin and Nicolas Othenin-Girard, competes in the Swiss Championships). Others — Rolex — sponsor events to create buzz around their brands. Yet others sponsor events to launch a new model: Hublot, Officine Panerai, Richard Mille. It all depends on outlook. Some see it as a one-off challenge involving men. For other brands, winning or losing is irrelevant. It's marketing — so nobody's wrong.

It's difficult nowadays not to meet a Swiss watch brand in a nautical sports event. For example, the Panerai Classic Yachts

Challenge puts gorgeous vintage yachts against stunning Mediterranean or Caribbean backdrops. Or take the Perini Navi Cup in Sardinia for which Richard Mille was chosen as official timekeeper in 2006. At this event, the 88-metre (289ft) *Maltese Falcon*, the biggest fully automated private yacht, built by Italy's Perini shipyard, crossed the line on her first regatta. The Giraglia and the Sardinia Rolex Cup, the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, the Rolex Farr 40 World Championship, the Rolex Swan Cup or the Bol d'Or on Lake Geneva; the Hublot Palma Vela, the Monaco Classic Week or the Solitaire Afflelou Le Figaro, for which Hublot is official timekeeper...

The list goes on, but the oceans are quite wide.



Corum, old salt. Corum's love affair with the sea has endured since 1981. Godfather to regattas, sponsor of boats and forever in the picture at round-the-world races, match racing or Olympic events, Corum has learned the mastery of wind and tide, through hours marked in nautical pennants.

Its Admiral's Cup collection gets better every year. Take a look at the new Admiral's Cup Tides 48mm.

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Breitling: in the unlikely event...

No brand, it seems, knows aerodynamics like Breitling does. Perceived as eternally wedded to flying, the brand posts precision timekeeping as the order of the day. The only thing missing from its product range, given the mood of the times, is a regatta watch.

Thus the newly released Avenger M1 (yachting version), a chronograph with a regatta module. Should your boat sink, you will be relieved to know that the watch will keep going at a depth of 1,000 metres. The titanium case has a screw-down crown, a decompression valve

and chronograph buttons that are insulated from the movement.

The Superquartz B73 movement, derived from ETA's calibre 251.262, incorporates a 10-minute, America's Cup-style countdown indicated by a central red hand against a scale of five blue minutes and five red, between 10 and 12 o'clock.

