

Briefs

Minoprio to No 1

BlackMatch skipper Adam Minoprio has made it to the top of the ISAF world match-racing rankings. Minoprio knocked French skipper Mathieu Richard off the top spot to become the first non-French skipper to sit at No 1 since June, 2008.

BlackMatch trail Richard's French team by seven points in the World Match Racing Tour rankings ahead of the St Moritz Match Race in Switzerland from September 1-6. The Danish Open follows from September 9-13, while the Brazil Sailing Cup is scheduled from September 22-27.

Opti worlds

Taylor Burn, brother of newly-crowned Splash world champion Declan, was New Zealand's best-placed sailor at the Optimist world championships held in Niteroi, Brazil last month. Burn (Queen Charlotte Yacht Club) finished 72nd in the 211-strong fleet. Other Kiwi results were: Keith Inglis, 89th; Erica Dawson, 107th; Naomi Mannering, 125th; Jack Collinson 191st. Napier will host the 2011 Optimist worlds.

Eyes on the prize

Amateur match-racing team, SLAM Kiwi Match were in North America at the end of August for three regattas, hoping to qualify for starts in the World Match Racing Bermuda Gold Cup and Brazil Sailing Cup. www.kiwimatch-sailing.com

BOI Sailing Week

Organisers have arranged a spot-prize, comprising a trip for two to New Caledonia compliments of Air Calin and Le Parc Hotel, to lure yachties to the Bay of Islands Sailing Week from January 19-22. www.bayofislandssailingweek.org.nz



Column: Mini Transat countdown

The wait is over

Kiwi solo-sailor Conrad Colman lines up in the famous Mini Transat on September 13. In his second column for *Boating*, Colman charts his race against time to be ready for the race dubbed the 'scary little sister of the big, single-handed ocean races'.

FOR MANY who enter the Mini 6.50 class, the yacht is their first introduction to solo sailing and the concept of a gybe with runners is mind-blowing. Fortunately, I'd had my mind blown by an earlier attempt at solo sailing, when I began an ill-fated campaign for the 2009 OSTAR on a stripped-out racing catamaran.

Stepping down from catamaran sailing, where it felt like death lurked at every gust, Mini sailing has allowed me to become a much more technical sailor, focused on squeezing the last little bit out of a knot at all times, rather than just trying to stay upright and alive.

Knowing that I have a keel also allows me to push harder than I ever have before, leaving me surfing the Irish Sea with my big spinnaker in the middle of a cold front. In April. At night.

In order to gain top-five positions I need to helm up to 20 hours a day. Given that months of preparation can be wasted by a cloudy mind, the single most important contributor to a good result is self-management offshore. To this end I have been working with a sleep doctor at a local hospital to track my personal circadian rhythms so that I can sleep and still be at my most efficient.

Minis are limited to VHF transmissions



and an SSB receiver during the race as all other communications are banned, thereby rewarding prior preparation of routing and meteorology. I am blessed to have been able to work with Jean-Yves Bernot, a French legend of meteorology and a routing master extraordinaire.

Bernot's experience has been invaluable in helping me understand the subtleties of a course that passes through depressions in the Bay of Biscay, the north-west and south-east trades and a passage of the doldrums.

The race passes the Canary and Cape Verdes Islands, bringing local land effects into what is otherwise an ocean race. When I sailed through these islands in 2007 I felt the dramatic acceleration between the mountains, and many sailors seek this extra pressure in order get a jump on others. However, this siren song

of strong wind is not without danger; gusts of 35-40 knots are not uncommon and the higher mountains leave a disturbed wake of over 80 miles to leeward.

With my pre-race refit coming to an end, I have overcome discoveries of cracked and delaminated rudders, a corroded mast and gremlins in the electronics. My life has also become a little easier by the last-minute support of Bainbridge International for sailcloth, Marlow and New Zealand companies like Icebreaker, Back Country Cuisine and The Protein Bakery.

I will be proudly displaying the name of Geneious.com on my topsides. The Auckland-based, global genetic analysis software company is using my race to help celebrate Darwin's voyage of the *Beagle*, which took place over the same course.

I'm not there yet, but for the first time in a long time it all looks possible. ■



Photo: Keith Willis