

The Jester Azores Challenge 2024

Start off western end of Plymouth Breakwater, 1200 noon on Sunday 16th June 2024.
Finish on a line between the north and south moles, Praia da Vitoria Harbour, Terceira, Azores.

Final Sitrep (8/7/2024)

It's a great pleasure to report that Eberhard Harms and *Lange Orm* arrived in good order at Praia da Vitoria this morning, following their stopover at La Coruna for repairs. This means that all fifteen participants completed the passage to the Azores, so once more congratulations to all the skippers for their first-class seamanship. From the photographs we have received, it looks like the participants are having an excellent (and well-earned) time. Praia marina and the town itself always give a warm welcome to the Jester sailors and this year they excelled themselves, laying on a reception hosted by the town's vice-president Ricky Batista, along with the marina manager Jaime Teófilo and his assistant Jorge Neves. The food was made by the Praia da Vitoria catering college. Ricky Batista expressed the hope that the event would continue and that the relationship between the town and the Jester Challenge would continue to grow and prosper. All the Jesters have the same hope and extend a big thank you to Ricky and the marina for their continuing support and exceptional hospitality.

On a slightly different note, we have been contacted by one of the deck officers of the LNG carrier *Seapeak Bahrain*, who spoke with one of the Jester skippers, Richard North and *Mooncresta*, during the event. It seems that the ship's Captain had been encouraging his deck officers to speak with any passing yachts, with a view to the officers refocusing on some of the more traditional aspects of seamanship. This is a great initiative that the company (Seapeak) hopes to promote through the officers of its fleet of 92 vessels, and we will be looking to help the company produce an appropriate article for its newsletter about the relationship between yachts, ships, traditional seamanship and so on.

Sitrep 4 (4/7/2024)

An almost flawless Jester Challenge this year, with 14 out of the 15 starters now sunning themselves in Praia da Vitoria. Even Eberhard Harms and *Lange Orm*, who had a long stopover for repairs in La Coruna, is now less than 500 miles from the finishing line, so we are expecting a 100% of starters to finish, and all in good time. A big retrospective shout out to Peter Collinson and *Blue Shadow*, who at one point mid-passage backtracked under power to stand by Hugh Davies and *Eden Marindim Em*, who had reported a skin fitting problem. The problem was fixed and both yachts were able to complete their passage in good order. We will wait until *Lange Orm* is in before wrapping up completely, but in the meantime congratulations to all those skippers who made such excellent passages.

Sitrep 3 (28/6/2024)

Big congratulations to Mike Atkins and *Calypso*, who crossed the finishing line just after 4 am this morning, after a very clean and fast passage. There is a bunch of six or seven skippers not that far

behind him converging on Terceira, some of whom could well arrive over the next 24 hours or so. With winds looking to remain in the north for the time being, there should not be too much of a hold-up for the rest of the fleet. Overall, it is looking as if this could be one of the quickest Azores Challenges, with a relatively small time spread between the finishers.

Finally, the good news from La Coruna is that Eberhard Harms has completed his forestay repairs on *Lange Orm* and hopes to resume his voyage tomorrow morning. There is a fair possibility, then, that every starter will finish, which is always the best outcome for any Jester Challenge.

Sitrep 2 (24/6/2024)

Little more than a week since the start and the fleet is already homing in on Terceira. The westerly boats have moved east, the easterly boats have moved west, and so the fan has become a more of a phalanx.

Eberhard Harms and *Lange Orm* have put into La Coruna for repairs, following a problem with the forestay. Hopefully he will be able to resume his passage before too long.

Most of the skippers are reporting light airs and pleasant sailing at the moment. There may be a day or two of stronger north or north-westerly winds in prospect, but overall the forecasts look favourable for the fleet to continue its excellent progress to Terceira.

Sitrep 1 (20/6/2024)

After the usual socialising and jollifications at Mayflower marina, Plymouth (many thanks to Charles Bush and Jolly Jack's for their usual hospitality), the fleet got away in good order at midday on Sunday 16th. A big thankyou to Hamish Southby-Tailyour for once again providing the committee boat.

The Jester skippers could scarcely have had better conditions for getting off soundings and across the Bay of Biscay, with east to north-east and now northerly winds predominating. These winds were sometimes light earlier on but are now fresh – anything up to 25 knots – and driving the fleet on in good fashion.

The boats are remarkably evenly matched this year (but remember this is not a race!) and are spread in an almost perfect arc from west to east. At the westerly end, nearest the rhumb line (the most direct route to the Azores) are *Charlotte* and *Macavity*, skippered by Norman Rubenis and Pete Matthews respectively. At the eastern end of the line are Eberhard Harms with *Lange Orm* and Mike Atkin's *Tranquillity*. The rest of the fleet is more or less evenly spaced between these two extremes. As ever, only time will tell whether the rhumb line route or the more easterly, inshore route will prove to be the better choice.

The forecast looks good for the moment. The Azores High looks as if it will be strutting its stuff for a while and will present one or two challenges for the skippers making their westing in the final stages of the passage. So far, so good and we eagerly await developments.