

# The Half Ton Classic Cup

## **For people and boats with character: the overall winner is the Half Ton class itself**

From 19 until 23rd August the half ton class, the last survivors of the IOR era, came in action once again in Nieuwpoort, Belgium, for a remake of the mythical Half Ton Cup. It seems that, given the 24 boats and 5 nationalities present, the class never stopped existing. And that they're even experiencing a true revival.

The Belgian Général Tapioca won the beautiful new trophy with only a 0,25 point advantage on Sibelius (FRA), followed by Blue Berret Pi (IRL) after 4 days of sailing and 9 up & down or inshore races.

As from the beginning it was quite clear that three categories of half-tonners had made it to Nieuwpoort: first of all the superior boats, both by outstanding crews as by top of the art materials, most of these boats having been constantly upgraded throughout the years in order to be able to compete at the highest level under various handicap systems, such as IRC, chosen by the organizers for their event to allow the different categories of half-tonners to sail together. A second category of boats obviously came just by the desire of competing against similar boats, and to have serious fun, like many of the Belgian boats... The third category were the boats that maybe do not perform outstandingly, but that thanks to their low IRC rating could prove to be hard to beat in the shoal tidal waters of the Belgian coast. And perhaps even make it to the podium.

The series were held over four days, each racing day being dedicated to a separate sponsor. On the menu each day one or two windward-leeward courses and a short round-the-cans race chosen by the race committee depending on wind and tides as well as on the hour of the daily prizegivings. It was decided not to sail a long offshore race like in the 'old' Ton Cups, regardless of the fact that many boats were prepared for it and even sailed a Fastnet race or a Figaro before. The long offshore was replaced by a long inshore of 25 miles. The practice race sailed on Monday with winds sometimes gusting upto 30 knots, for many boats was an occasion to discover the competition since this fleet never sailed together before.

After the first day where three races were sailed, a small group of contenders for the overall victory moved ahead: Blue Berret Pi (IRL), Dick Dastardly & Harmony (UK), Sibelius (FRA) and General Tapioca & Red Cloud (BEL). The first day Dick Dastardly, sailing under the RAF Yacht Club colours, lived up to its (mainly British) winners' reputation scoring a 2-4-1. Sibelius, helmed by Didier Dardot, president of the French UNCL and an internationally renowned and appreciated half-tonner sailor, moved into second place with a series of 1-5-3. Belgian Général Tapioca followed closely behind in 5<sup>th</sup> place. In 1978 this boat won the French Figaro race and has since then been meticulously maintained, upgraded and sailed by her present owner and co-organizer of the event, Philippe Pilate. Small detail: after having missed the start of the first regatta (over the line too soon), General Tapioca nevertheless managed to finish with the front boats.

The second day as well was marked by light and tricky winds, forcing competitors to tack on every shift. They also had to keep in mind the waves caused by the large spectator fleet, quite unique in Belgian sailing competitions... Day two saw terribly close racing, resulting in minimal differences in corrected finish times. In these conditions a good start is golden and quite some competitors experienced being pushed over the line too soon by the Irish of Blue

Berret Pi who largely compensated their moves by their singing talents each night when they had to come to the podium...

If we have to name some boats in the category “not so fast, but carries low & interesting rating”, we cannot forget Hullabaloo XV, sailed by its owner and his kids, nor the lovingly maintained wooden Alchemist from Cowes, nor the French Silver Shamrock Diabliesse, nor the antique red French Douce Folie 2. Thanks to their rating and sailing skills these boats, and notably Diabliesse, were serious competitors to be reckoned with.

Although the third day the wind had increased in force, the same boats made their way to the podium. On the press boat the photographers had their day and witnessed Blue Berret Pi surfing the waves at +15 knots speed. (Blue Berret Pi: blue like her magnificent hull, designed by Frenchman Jean Berret, carrying sail number ‘πi’, which makes a nice ‘blueberry pie’). The chairman of the international jury, Mr Marcel Leeman (this was his 49<sup>th</sup> Ton Cup...), also had his work with some complicated protests.

At the eve of the last racing day 5 boats were still contending for the overall win. It was obvious that the smallest error on the water could be fatal and that every opportunity would be seized to win in the jury room. That was maybe the reason why the race committee decided not to sail a windward-leeward course but a short round-the-cans of about 10 miles instead. Tapioca and Sibelius chose the pin end and went close inshore thus avoiding the light counter tidal current. Dick Dastardly and the Irish of Blue Berret Pi shortly after starting opted for a more direct course to the second mark. Early on in the race by passing the first mark the wrong side Harmony lost her potential podium finish. Sibelius rounded the windward mark first, followed by Blue Berret Pi, who had Tapioca on her heels. Sibelius maintained her lead under spinnaker, securing a first place. The Irish came in second and General Tapioca third, thus securing their first place overall by a margin of only 0.25 points...

Back in the harbour one could read the great satisfaction on the faces of all sailors: nice weather, superb sailing conditions, good races, a high degree of fair play and an excellent organization made this Half Ton Cup an event that will not soon be forgotten. “Even stronger”, adds Didier Dardot French UNCL president, “is that we managed, thanks to the organizers Philippe Pilate and Bert Janssen, to renew a close tie amongst people sailing in similar boats that clearly are not outdated. It are the sailors themselves that took the destiny of the class in their own hands. They will not be seduced by obvious solutions of professionalism and increased expenses. They all want high level racing for less expensive boats. And since it are the owners that pull the strings, we will not allow that money nor profit will rule the class. If we did, we would go the same way as IOR did. That’s why we will create an owners association as soon as possible, so that we can obtain an international class recognition and protect the event.”

This way, every two years a Half Ton Classics Cup will be sailed in European waters. A low profile event, but with a high amount of fun, organized by the owners for the owners. Harwich and Dinard already proposed to host the next Cup, as did the Royal Yacht Club of Nieuwpoort, homeport of the Belgian halftonners.

For more details please click: [www.halftoncup.be](http://www.halftoncup.be)

					R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	Total
	Sailnumber	Yacht	Owner	Club								*		
1	BEL 7548	Général Tapioca	Philippe Pilate	BRYC	<del>11</del>	1	2	2	2	<del>7</del>	1	5,00	3	16,00
2	FRA 8055	Sibelius	Didier Dardot	SRR	1	<del>5</del>	3	<del>5</del>	1	5	4	1,25	1	16,25
3	IRL 31416	Blue Berret Pi	Shay Moran	RStGYC	<del>5</del>	2	5	<del>25</del>	3	3	3	2,50	2	20,50
4	FRA 9156	Dick Dastardly	Guy Nicholls	RAF YC	2	4	1	4	<del>6</del>	1	<del>9</del>	6,25	4	22,25
5	FRA 7443	Diabliesse	Phillipe Villion	SN La Trinité	3	7	<del>11</del>	1	8	<del>11</del>	2	3,75	6	30,75
6	GBR 5444	Harmony	Herbie	Crouch YC	4	3	4	6	5	4	<del>8</del>	8,75	<del>25</del>	34,75
7	BEL 8500	Red Cloud	Tom Florizoone	KYCN	6	6	8	3	<del>12</del>	10	<del>12</del>	13,75	5	51,75
8	B 5399	Bellaquaine	J.M. Gilles	KYCN	<del>17</del>	8	6	8	10	8	11	10,00	<del>16</del>	61,00
9	BEL 5394	Fantasy	Sébastien Meert	KYCN	<del>15</del>	10	10	13	4	2	<del>17</del>	17,50	10	66,50
10	GBR 108	Hullabaloo XV	David Evans	WFYC	13	13	<del>18</del>	11	11	<del>14</del>	7	12,50	7	74,50