

1930 : during the heyday of Sixes

This article is the second (after 1907) in a planned series of chronicles of the history of French Sixes. The felicitous choice of 1930 is due to the vagaries of the library book fetcher of the French Musée National de la Marine, who happened to place the 1930 issues of *Le Yacht* on the top of the pile I had requested. Virtually all the information in this article is taken from *Le Yacht*.

Le Journal Maritime / Le Yacht was the leading French yachting publication from the late 19th c. to the 1950's. In 1930, each of its weekly issues numbered over 15 pages, for a total of 756 pages. Each issue was divided into four sections: 1.) naval and maritime news, 2.) news reports from French ports, port by port, 3.) feature articles and 4.) yacht racing results. The 51 issues were complemented by a detailed annual index.

It will take future research to determine if 1930 was the peak year of Sixes in France during the inter-war period, but it must surely be a candidate. The intensity of Six Metre racing is truly astounding. The racing season extended from mid-February to November with 74 (!) Sixes participating (Table 1.). There were three major circuits, each corresponding to a stretch of the French coast and to a season: Mediterranean (February – May), Normandy (primarily June and July) & Basque (August – September) - see Maps 1 & 2. In all, 26 yacht clubs organised races for Sixes (Table 2). All races involving metric yachts were designated “international”, to distinguish them from regional and local races for French classes like the 6,50 metres. Over half of the 74 boats raced on the Mediterranean, the Basque circuit attracting 28 boats and Normandy thirteen. The October and November weekend races organised by the *Cercle de Voile de Paris* (CVP) at Meulan-les-Mureaux on the Seine were the continuation of a Six Metre tradition going back to 1907.

The Union des Sociétés Nautiques Françaises (U.S.N.F.), the French affiliate of the International Yacht Racing Union, organised the racing season, assigning time slots to individual yacht clubs. The clubs of the French Mediterranean circuit grouped together under the Fédération des Sociétés de Yachting de la Côte d'Azur. The U.S.N.F. had to juggle their demands with those of the Italian ports of San Remo and Genoa – and on the Basque circuit with San Sebastián.

The commercial fallout of the racing season was fully recognised by the ports, with municipalities providing subsidies for the regattas.

As an example of the intensity of the racing, during the month of March, the boats actually raced 22 days, with 20 boats on the starting line several times. Boats came from seven European countries and the U.S. Their owners were even more cosmopolitan, including one king (Denmark), four counts (France, Italy & Spain), one Egyptian and, last but not least, His Highness the Nabab of Bhopal.

In addition, the U.S.N.F. organised elimination trials for the Six to represent France at the Gold Cup in Gothenburg and the One Ton Cup (the CVP's 1907 Coupe Internationale) at Sandhamn on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the KSSS.

While being wealthy, owners of Sixes were especially sportsmen and sportswomen. Given the intense social activities in the evenings, one assumes that the crews were typically made up of professionals who spared the owners all the work other than their time at the helm. There were, however, a number of all amateur boats.

The emblematic French owner of the period was Virginie Hériot (1890 – 1932), heiress of the Grands Magasins du Louvre. Slim and good looking, she was an ambassador of French yachting and was acclaimed wherever she went. And to get there, she went in her three-masted schooner, *Ailée II* (Winged), whose name provided the stem for the names of her Eights (Aile) and Sixes (Petite-Aile). In 1930, she donated *Petite-Aile II* to the French naval academy, raced *Petite-Aile III* at Gothenburg, Sandhamn and on the Basque circuit and then bought a top French boat to race on the Mediterranean, which she re-named *Petite-Aile IV*.

As a youth, she had spent her summers on her mother's steam yacht. During the period 1924-1932, she raced in 120 international regattas, winning an Olympic gold medal in 1928 with her Eight *Aile VI* and several times the Coupe de France and the Colpa d'Italia.

In 1934, during the 50th anniversary of the Régates d'Arcachon on the Basque circuit, although ill from a fall on her schooner, she insisted on helming Petite Aile VI, but fainted while at the helm and died shortly thereafter.

A younger female competitor was Lina Louis-Dreyfus whose family owned one of the major French shipping lines. To this day, by tradition, the family names its ships with the first name of a family member followed by the initials of their surname. True to this tradition, her Six was *Lina L.-D.* and maintained the name when she sold it to her brother, François, at the end of the season.

Women were omnipresent on the circuits, with usually one race per season reserved exclusively for them. Other active helmswomen on the Mediterranean were Mrs. & Miss B. Guinness, Mrs Mathilde de Connil, Mrs. Cotnearanu, Mrs Briggs Cunningham and Mrs Saavedra. Mr & Mrs Guinness, with *Quixie* and *Sonia*, comprised the two-boat British team for the Coupe des Nations and regularly raced against each other on the circuit. Despite this family tie, one cannot help but wonder why it was that she also co-owned *Colibri* with the Count J. de Polignac.

On the Basque circuit, it was the Coupe Gonfreville at Arcachon that was reserved for women. The winners in 1930 were *Riquet* (Miss Goudchaux), *Iméon II* (Mrs. P. Blanchy) and *Béguin* (Miss S. Blanchy). Other women competitors on the Basque circuit were Mrs. Paul Dupuy, Mrs A. Esders and Miss Gelot.

Another venerated owner was H.R.H. the King of Denmark who raced his *Dana* on the Mediterranean. Along with *Dadu*, it was one of two Danish boats on the circuit. He donated a trophy bearing his name to the *Union des Yachtsmen de Cannes* (U.Y.C.) and dutifully gave out the prizes. When the *International Yacht Club de Cannes* (I.Y.C.C.) merged with the U.Y.C. to form the *Yacht Club de Cannes* at the end of the season, he extended his patronage to the new club.

Although not a skipper of Sixes, H.R.H. Alfonso XIII, King of Spain, was an ardent supporter. In 1930, he donated an imposing trophy to the *Société Nautique de Marseille* with prize money equivalent to 4,700 € going to the winner of the four race series. In parallel, the *Real Club Nautico* of San Sebastián on the Basque circuit also had a trophy in his name.

The richest purses of the year were the two consecutive five-day series of the Coupe Clerc-Rampal of the *Yacht Club de Deauville* and the Coupe Maurice Taconet of the *Société des Régates du Havre* which paid the equivalent of 1,300 € to each day's winner.

The most expensive trophy (costing the equivalent of 24,000 €) was that of the Coupe des Nations which was donated in 1930 to the I.Y.Y.C. by the Americans Briggs Cunningham and W.H. Bowes who were campaigning the Clinton Crane designed *Lucie* and the C. Sherman Hoyt designed *Saleema* on the Mediterranean circuit. Its deed defined a series of three team races, with each team composed of two Sixes representing a country, based on the nationality of the owners. There was no national restriction as to the designers or builders of the boats.

The countries and owners represented in 1930 were Cuba (Mr & Mrs Fernand de Connil), Denmark (Messrs Graaë & Wett), France (Messrs Girod & Vermorel), Italy (Messrs Oberti & Robasco), Spain (Messrs Gandarias & Zubiria y Olabarra), UK (Mr & Mrs B Guinness) and US (Messrs Bowes & Cunningham). The French team of *Feu-Follet III* and *Ponant* (later *Petite-Aile IV*) won the series. Both boats had been designed by François Camatte.

The deed of gift specified that the helmsmen had to be amateurs. Pride of ownership giving way to competitive spirit, the French owners yielded their helms to Messrs. R. Meiffre and A. Auniac, apparently superior skippers.

A similar 3-race series of international team races was held for the Cup of H.R.H. the Prince of the Asturias organised by the *Sport Nautique d'Andernos* at Arcachon on the Basque circuit. Two 3-boat teams representing France and Spain competed.

The French team was composed entirely of boats commissioned by Baron Philippe de Rothschild. The Rothschild family had a tradition of naming its boats in graduated fashion, similar to Virginie Hériot, but with more eye-catching names. The big yacht was named *Eros*, Eights *Cupidon* and Sixes *Cupidon* followed by another word. A Bjarne Aas design appropriately named *Cupidon-Viking* and two Camatte designs, *Cupidon-Fou* and *Cupidon-Riquet* constituted the French team - this last, having previously been sold out of the family, had had its name shortened to *Riquet*.

The Spanish team consisted of Mr Gandarias' *Lau* which had already competed for the Coupe des Nations on the Mediterranean, *Haïta-Shungurru* (Mr San Gil) and *Or-Kompon* (Mr Amilibia). The French also won this series.

In addition to Mr Gandarias' *Lau*, Mr Zubiria y Olabarra's *El Tritonazo* and Mr Weisweiller's *Philae* also went from the Mediterranean to the Basque circuit. For this, rail was the only solution. *Le Yacht* has several articles about rail transport, announcing new low-bed flat cars designed for yachts and describing the detailed analyses required to ensure that a given yacht would pass undamaged through all the tunnels on the route. It was sometimes necessary to re-route a train to avoid low tunnels. Rail transport appears to have been a bargain. Yachts were charged the equivalent of 0.08 €/per ton per kilometre, for a total cost Marseilles-Bayonne of 300 €

Another transport solution along a coast was to be towed by tugboat. When the Mediterranean circuit shifted from Cannes to Marseilles, the *Société Nautique de Marseille* sent a tugboat, the *Marseillais-28*, to Cannes to tow *Feu-Follet III* and *Tilda* along with two 8,50 m. class boats and five Stars the 100 nm. between the two ports. No details are provided about the disposition of the boats under tow. In contrast, the 100% amateur crew of the Marnac brothers' *Priscilla* labouriously made the round trip under sail.

In such a banner year, it is not surprising that France was the leading builder of Sixes (Fig. 1). One-third of the new Sixes built worldwide were produced by French yards of all three circuits: Basque (Bonnin), Mediterranean (Chiesa, Grossi, Hamel & Romano) and Normandy (Charbonnage, Cherbourg, Collignon, Hève & Macario). Similarly, the Arcachon sailmaker Tenot shipped sails throughout France and also to Switzerland.

1930 ended, as with so many races, with a jury ruling. Mr Weisweiller, whose *Philae* was the only boat to compete on all three circuits, wanted to disallow a protest against him that the jury of the Société des Régates du Havre had accepted after the stated time limit. During the week before Christmas, the national U.S.N.F. finally upheld his claim.

Basil Carmody

25th May, 2007



Map 1. The Normandy and Basque circuits of Six Metre racing in France in 1930



Map 2. The Mediterranean circuit of Six Metre racing in France in 1930

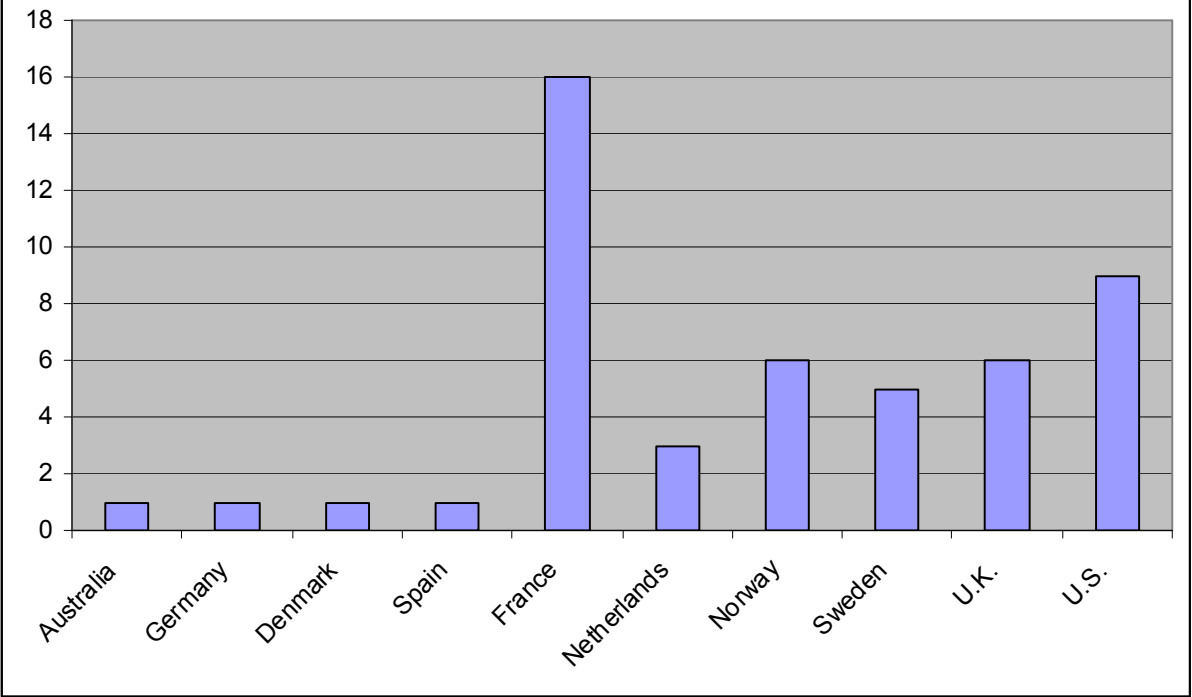
No.	Name in 1930	Sail No.	Owner	Country	1930 campaigns
1	Aa Aa		Wett	FR	Basque
2	Aizu			FR	Basque
3	Almyra	H 2	Madlener	NL	Mediterranean
4	Antiope	Z 3	E. Corte	CH	Mediterranean
5	Aventurine		A. Esders	FR	Basque & Norm.
6	Alfonso III			FR	Basque
7	Béguin		Beaumaine	FR	Basque
8	Bellis II	F 24	Renoir	FR	Mediterranean
9	Bissbi		Trik Aakerlund		Mediterranean
10	Bleu de Roi		J. Houel de Larmor	FR	Brittany
11	Cobra		G. Lacour		Mediterranean
12	Colibri		Mrs. Guinness & Count J. de Polignac	UK	Mediterranean
13	Cora	I 36	Commander Roggero	IT	Mediterranean
14	Cupidon Fou		Ph. de Rothschild	FR	Basque
15	Cupidon Viking		Ph. de Rothschild	FR	Basque
16	Cygne		Louis Grossi	FR	Mediterranean
17	Dadu	D 36	W. Wett → Count de la Gheradesca (Florence)	DK	Mediterranean
18	Dana	D 35	H.R.H. the King of Denmark / Graaë	DK	Mediterranean
19	Davil		E. Piquerez		Mediterranean
20	Dinorah		Max Desouches	FR	Normandy
21	Duca		Miss Gelot	FR	Basque
22	Eilen		Mrs. Paul Dupuy	FR	Basque
23	El Trintonazo		Zubiria y Olabare (Bilbao)	ES	Basque & Mediterranean
24	Feu Follet III	F 41	Paul Girod	FR	Mediterranean
25	Gilda IV				Basque
26	Haïta Shungurru		San Gil	ES	Basque
27	Hélène			FR	Basque
28	Iméon		Michel Goudchaux	FR	Basque
29	Irrintzi		Count de Fuertaventura	FR	Basque
30	Joliette		Bodrero	FR	Mediterranean
31	Jorge Juan		Count de la Romilia	FR	Basque
32	Kabusha		Londails-Lisasoa	FR	Basque
33	Korrigan III		Messrs. Ancel & Darnis		Normandy
34	Lascar		Victor Verstraeten	FR	Normandy
35	Lau	E 19	J. Gandarias	ES	Basque & Mediterranean
36	Léda		Luchaire	FR	Normandy
37	Lina-L.-D.	F 5	Lina → François Louis-Dreyfus	FR	Mediterranean
38	Lorelay		Messrs. Bodo & Usna	ES	Basque
39	Lucie	US 36	Briggs S. Cunningham	US	Mediterranean
40	Mammilia		Djelaleddine	EG	Mediterranean
41	Mano II		Charles Gauthier	FR	Normandy
42	Marisol II		Eizaguirre	FR	Basque
43	Marquitta		Messrs. Bouteleux & Miranda		Normandy
44	Mati	I 42	Rosazza	IT	Mediterranean
45	Miremia		Golet	FR	Basque
46	Miss-Mie				Brittany
47	Nausshaba	K 36	His Highness the Nabab of Bhopal	IN	Mediterranean
48	Normand II		Draeger	FR	Normandy
49	Normand III		Draeger	FR	Mediterranean & Norm.
50	Normand IV		Draeger	FR	Gold Cup
51	Or Kompon		Amilibia	ES	Basque
52	Petite-Aile II		Virginie Hériot → Ecole Navale	FR	Normandy
53	Petite Aile III	F 7	Virginie Hériot	FR	Basque & Gold Cup
54	Philae		A. Weisweiler	FR	Basque, Med. & Norm.
55	Ponant		Vermorel → V. Hériot: Petite Aile IV	FR	Mediterranean
56	Priscilla		Messrs. Pierre & ? Marnac	FR	Mediterranean
57	Qu'importe		Mrs. Cotnearanu		Mediterranean
58	Quixie	K 35	Mr. B. Guinness	UK	Mediterranean
59	Rosita II	F 40	Fernand de Conill	CU	Mediterranean
60	Riquet		Messrs. Gounouillhou & Laroche	FR	Basque
61	Saleema	US 40	W.H. Bowes	US	Mediterranean
62	Silène IV		Messrs. J. Abel de Libran & Borel		Mediterranean
63	Sitaris		Roger G. Goldet	FR	Basque & Norm.
64	Sonia	K 31	Mrs. B. Guinness	UK	Mediterranean
65	Starling			FR	Brittany
66	Tanis	K 18	Miss Guinness → Col. Morrison	UK	Mediterranean
67	Thelma		E. Corte		Mediterranean
68	Ti-Lou		Messrs. Blanc & Labouheyre	FR	Basque (daysailing)
69	Tilda	F 29	Mrs. Fernand de Conill	CU	Mediterranean
70	Toi-Moi		Henri Blanc, pres. S.N.M.	FR	Mediterranean
71	Triton				Mediterranean
72	Twins II		Oberti	IT	Mediterranean
73	Vendredi XIII		Noël Exshaw	FR	Basque
74	Victoria	Z 26	Tronchin	CH	Mediterranean
75	Viky		Bianchi	IT	Mediterranean

Table 1. Sixes participating in the 1930 French racing circuits

No.	Port	Circuit	Yacht Club	Trophy
1	Antibes / Juan-les-Pins	Mediterranean	Club Nautique d'Antibes et de Juan-les-Pins	Coupe du Syndicat des Hôteliers & Coupe Grande Bretagne
2	Arcachon	Basque	Société de la Voile et de l'Automobile d'Arcachon	Coupe d'Arcachon & Coupe du Grand-Hôtel
3			Sport Nautique d'Andernos	Prix de Son Altesse Royal le Prince des Asturias
4			Société de Voile d'Arcachon	Prix de la Petite Gironde Prix de la Sté de Voiles d'Arcachon Coupe Cupidon Coupe Quand-Même Coupe Gonfreville (for helmswomen)
5			Société des Régates de Ferret-Mouleau-Pyla	Coupe de la Compagnie d'Entreprises Immobilières & Industrielles
6			Beaulieu-sur-Mer	Mediterranean
7	Bénodet & Loctudy	Brittany	Société des Régates Bénodet-Loctudy	
8	Cannes	Mediterranean	International Yacht Club de Cannes*	Coupe des Nations
9			Union des Yachtsmen de Cannes*	Coupe de Sa Majesté le Roi du Danemark
10			Club Nautique de Cannes	Konelig Dansk Yachtklub Cup
11	Deauville	Normandy	Deauville Yacht Club	Coupe H. Lillaz & Coupe Clerc-Rampal
12	Genoa	Mediterranean	Regio Yacht Club Italiano	Coppa dell'Irreno
13	Le Havre	Normandy	Société des Régates du Havre	Consular Corps Cup, Coupe des Ailes (V. Hériot), Coupe Maurice Taconet & Coupe-Challenge Lerch
14			Société des Petites Régates Havroises	
15			Sport Nautique du Havre	Coupe Jaco & Coupe Bernard Perquer
16	Marseilles	Mediterranean	Société Nautique de Marseille	Coupe de S.M. Alphonse XIII, Roi d'Espagne
17	Menton	Mediterranean	Sporting Club de Menton	Coupe Ea
18	Meulan-les-Mureaux	Seine River	Cercle de Voile de Paris	Bol d'Or, Coupe Prince Jade & Prix Mantois & Coupe Tuffier
19	Monaco	Mediterranean	Société des Régates de Monaco	
20	Nice	Mediterranean	Club Nautique de Nice	Coupe du Club Nautique & Prix Lympia (sic)
21	Ouistreham	Normandy	Société des Régates d'Ouistreham	
22	Saint-Jean-de Luz	Basque	Yacht Club de Ciboure	Coupe de la Ville de St-Jean-de-Luz
23	San Remo	Mediterranean		
24	San Sebastián	Basque	Real Club Nautico de San Sebastián	Coupe de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Espagne, Grand Prix d'Espagne
25	Toulon	Mediterranean	Marine & Yacht Club de Toulon	
26	Villefranche-sur-Mer	Mediterranean	Club de Voile de Villefranche-sur-Mer	
	Gothenburg	International		Scandinavian Gold Cup
	Sandhamn	International	KSSS (100th anniversary)	Coupe Internationale du Cercle de Voile de Paris (One Ton Cup)
	French Yachting Associations		Union des Sociétés Nautiques Françaises	
			Fédération des Sociétés de Yachting de la Côte d'Azur	
* Merged during 1930 to form the Yacht Club de Cannes under the patronage of H.R.M. the King of Denmark				

Table 2. Yacht clubs and trophies of the 1930 French racing circuits

Fig. 1 1930: number of Sixes built by country



Basil Carmody
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