



SHARON GREEN, ULTIMATE SAILING

How Dorade won the Transpac

Dorade's victory in this year's Transpac (TTs, CB303) in 12d 5h 28m might be the greatest ever racing achievement by a classic yacht. It seems her owner, Californian sailor Matt Brooks wasn't kidding, as they say stateside, when he announced his intention to campaign his Olin Stephens yacht *Dorade* in the major ocean races that she triumphed in during her heyday.

The training Matt and crew underwent to achieve it was refreshingly historical and took as reference the way Olin sailed *Dorade*, both in the book by Douglas Adkins (*Dorade: the History of an Ocean-Racing Yacht*) and through videos of him sailing in the 1931 Transat. The conclusion? "You could say there are no new ideas," Matt relates.

This was a realisation that dawned over the space of 1,000 miles and more of training in open water off the Californian coast during the winter of 2012/13, after a respectable but disappointing placing in the 2012 Bermuda Race. "What we realised is that we had absorbed the modern way of sailing without realising it." What might suit a Farr 40 – or, for that matter, a Laser – was not so effective on an 83-year-old ocean-racing yawl. One thing they noticed from watching video footage was how little steering Olin did, even

when sailing downwind, when the temptation is to make frequent, vigorous corrections to prevent the feeling of the boat starting to broach. Old yachts with long keels will sail themselves, so the adage goes, and this was borne out in practice. "We kept the tiller in the centre. Constant, small corrections are enough." This won't come as news to experienced classic boat sailors. Weight distribution was also key. "We learned that keeping the weight low down in the middle of the boat worked better than sitting out high side," Matt said. This is more than just conjecture. Matt went as far as to make polar charts sailing with crew high side, and crew deep and central in the cockpit. The proof is there.

During *Dorade's* recent Transpac victory, navigation was by sextant.

Above: Dorade racing hard. Below: Matt Brooks, and bottom, with his winning crew



"All our electronics broke on the first day out at sea"

"I suggested taking it on the Bermuda Race last year and was told 'no need' by everyone. Well, all our electronics broke on the first day at sea." Now, sextant navigation is just for the sake of it – "out of respect, to close the historical circle," as Matt puts it.

Apart from Matt, the crew is all professional. "We really don't have roles," Matt says. "We're on a three-hour watch system and everyone does anything. Everyone drives, everyone trims, everyone goes to the bow. Weather and nav are the only exceptions: that's me and Matt [Wachowicz – tactician/navigator]."

Any other vintage techniques? "Yes. Modern boats are worried about weight! We had salami, cheese and wine every night – a different wine and cheese every night in fact. And she's very quiet below, unlike modern boats, where it's like being in a drum and you feel that the boat's going to come apart at any time. It's a lot more civilised."

Matt is now looking forward to more successes in *Dorade*, including the 2015 Transat and Fastnet. His wife Pam, a mean regatta sailor, will doubtless be skippering the yacht to more silver with her all-female crew in the meantime.

A short video about the crew's training regime is now online at www.classicboat.co.uk



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