

## **2019 Rolex World Sailor of the Year Awards nominees announced**

The line-up of Rolex World Sailor of the Year 2019 nominees has today been announced by World Sailing, the world governing body of the sport, and Rolex, the leading name in prestige watches that includes watches engineered specifically for sailing.

Three female and four male nominees represent the success stories in the beautifully diverse and dynamic sport of sailing. Young and old nominees truly highlight the sport as one that can be participated in at the highest level throughout a sailor's career. The nominees have performed at the highest level over the last 12 months and continue to inspire globally.

The 2019 Rolex World Sailor of the Year nominees are:

### **Female**

Delphine Cousin Questel (FRA) – 2018 PWA World Tour Slalom World Champion

Violeta del Reino (ESP) – 2019 Para World Sailing Championship Hansa 303 World Champion

Anne-Marie Rindom (DEN) – 2019 Laser Radial World and European Champion

### **Male**

Antoine Albeau (FRA) – PWA World Tour Slalom World Champion

Mat Belcher and Will Ryan (AUS) – 2019 470 World, European and Hempel World Cup Series Champions

Marco Gradoni (ITA) – 2018 and 2019 Optimist World Champion

Francis Joyon (FRA) – Route du Rhum winner

The female and male winners will be announced at the World Sailing Awards Ceremony in Bermuda on 29 October 2019. Each winner will be presented with the unique marble and silver trophy depicting the globe, crowned with five silver spinnakers representing the continents, together with a Rolex timepiece.

From Tuesday 22 October 2019, members of the public will be invited to vote for who they think should be crowned the 2019 Rolex World Sailor of the Year. The public vote will contribute to 50% of the overall count with the remaining 50% to be decided by World Sailing's Member National Authorities.

### **Introducing the Female Nominees:**

#### **Delphine Cousin Questel (FRA)**

Dominance has become the norm for France's Delphine Cousin Questel who, throughout the nomination period, has won seven PWA World Tour events in the slalom and foil disciplines.

A mainstay on the PWA World Tour since 2010, Cousin Questel won every slalom event in 2018. Success at the Fly! ANA Windsurf, Ulsan and Viana PWA World Cup Slalom rounds ensured she finished 400 points clear of her nearest rivals to claim the 2018 Women's Slalom World Championship title. The world title was Cousin Questel's third and her first since 2014 after Sarah-Quita Offringa (ARU) dominated the circuit.

The French windsurfer, whose first world title came in 2013, continued to succeed in both slalom and foil in 2019.

To date, Cousin Questel has won the 2019 Marignane and Ulsan PWA World Cup Slalom titles with a second place at the Waterz Festival in Hvide Sande, Denmark and leads the race to become 2019 World Champion. In the foil discipline, she won the 2019 Fly! ANA Windsurf and Ulsan PWA World Cup and is on track to make it two world titles in 2019.

### **Violeta del Reino (ESP)**

Spain's Violeta del Reino has become a leading light at the Para World Sailing Championships, racing in the Women's Hansa 303 division.

The Spanish racer won the inaugural title in Kiel, Germany in 2017 before finishing third at the 2018 edition in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, USA.

A Rio 2016 Paralympian in the SKUD18, del Reino went into the 2019 Para World Sailing Championships, held in Cadiz, Spain in July, determined to win back the crown she narrowly missed out on in 2018.

Heading into the final race on her home waters, the fight for the gold medal was not so clear-cut with most of the six-boat Medal Race fleet still in with a chance at a podium spot.

But it was del Reino who kept her composure to clinch the final victory, and with it, the gold medal in her home country.

### **Anne-Marie Rindom (DEN)**

On the road to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, regular success in the Laser Radial has been hard to come by. Danish sailor Anne-Marie Rindom has broken that trend, finding the right rhythm and form as the clock ticks down the 2020 Olympiad as she bids to upgrade her Rio 2016 bronze medal.

In July 2019, Rindom secured her second Laser Radial world title in Sakaiminai, Japan, highlighting her as a favourite for Tokyo 2020. Her World Championship success has not been isolated and throughout 2019 alone she has won four gold medals at high-profile events.

Before she headed to Japan for the 2019 World Championship, Rindom secured gold at the Trofeo S.A.R. Princesa Sofia Regatta in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. She then topped the standings at her second consecutive event after she won in light and challenging wind conditions at the Hempel World Cup Series event in Genoa, Italy. Just weeks later she made it three in a row by securing the European Championship title in Porto, Portugal, moving to World #1 as a result.

Most recently, Rindom finished second on Olympic waters at the Hempel World Cup Series Enoshima event.

### **Introducing the Male Nominees:**

#### **Antoine Albeau (FRA)**

At 47 years old, France's Antoine Albeau claimed his 25th world title in the Pro Windsurfers Association World Tour in 2018 – and he is showing no signs of slowing down.

Albeau started windsurfing aged five and in 1992 he turned professional. Since then he has accumulated national and international titles to position him as one of the greatest windsurfers of all time.

A specialist in slalom racing, freestyle and waves, Albeau fended off competition from 117 slalom racers in 2018 to claim the PWA World Tour Slalom world title. Across the six-race series, Albeau finished outside the podium just once, using all of his experience to claim a convincing victory against a younger fleet of racers. He also finished third in the 2018 Foil World Championship.

In 2019, Albeau remains in the hunt for a 26th world title and is third overall in slalom after four events.

In addition to his World Championship success, Albeau also holds the fastest speed recorded on a windsurfer, reaching 53.27 knots in 2015.

#### **Mat Belcher and Will Ryan (AUS)**

Remarkable consistency, outstanding performance and gold medals are synonymous to Australian 470 sailors Mat Belcher and Will Ryan.

The Australian duo are the leading lights in the Men's 470 and over the last 12 months they have set the performance bar higher than ever.

Throughout the nomination period, the pair have won when it's really mattered. They first clinched the 470 European title in San Remo, Italy in May – their fourth European title together. They followed up with victory at the Hempel World Cup Series Final in Marseille, France before heading to Enoshima,

Japan, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic venue, for a triple header that would define their year.

Up first, the 470 World Championship in a 52-boat fleet. The pair were set for a straight shootout for gold against Spanish rivals in the Medal Race, but their opponents' OCS handed the title to the Australians. It was the pair's fifth world title together and Belcher's eighth in total.

READY STEADY TOKYO – Sailing, the Olympic test event, followed just days later and once again the Australians prevailed by a narrow margin. Belcher and Ryan then signed off their Japanese tour with their third gold medal in almost as many weeks as they took the Hempel World Cup Series Enoshima honours.

Their success on Olympic waters has positioned them firmly as favourites for Tokyo 2020 and on current form, it's hard to picture anyone stopping them.

### **Marco Gradoni (ITA)**

Touted as the most talented and accomplished sailor of his age group, Marco Gradoni's (ITA) results throughout the nomination period certainly highlight that statement.

Gradoni won the 2017 and 2018 editions of the Optimist World Championship, demonstrating his potential but he made history in 2019 as he won the largest ever Optimist World Championship. More than 250 sailors from 65 nations lined up in Antigua and Gradoni excelled, taking the World Championship title for the third consecutive year alongside winning the 2019 Optimist Team Racing Championship with his Italian team-mates.

Outside of his World Championship success, Gradoni has finished first in every Optimist event he has participated in since September 2018.

He started the period off by winning the 2018 Optimist World Championship in Cyprus for the second time, with 9 victories from 10 races. In the spring he topped 940 boats to take the Garda Meeting title for the second year in a row. The final event of his Optimist career was the 2019 World Championship where he won seven of 12 races to claim the title once again.

Throughout the nomination period, he won 14 consecutive gold medals, marking him as a star of the future.

### **Francis Joyon (FRA)**

If at first you don't succeed, try again and again and again.

Having sailed his first Route du Rhum-Destination Guadeloupe in 1990, Francis Joyon never lost sight of winning the famous solo transatlantic race. He finished

second in 2010 and came through in sixth in 2014, but all the near misses were about to change in 2018 as he set sail in his eighth edition of the race.

In the closest finish since the event was first staged in 1978, the French ocean racing veteran won the 40th anniversary Route du Rhum-Destination Guadeloupe solo transatlantic race from Saint Malo to Pointe-À-Pitre.

In the clammy heat and light winds of the Caribbean night, the 62-year-old glided across the finish line on IDEC Sport at 23:21.47 local time on 10 November to beat the poster boy of French offshore sailing, François Gabart on MACIF by just seven minutes and eight seconds.

Joyon's victory concluded a thrilling finale in the ULTIME class as he defeated 123 skippers across six classes and set a new record time for the 3,542-nautical mile course of just seven days, 14 hours and 21 minutes.

Having trailed Gabart for much of the race, MACIF sustained some damage which handed IDEC Sport the initiative. But it wasn't until the famous Basse Terre buoy, 24-miles out from the finish, that Joyon grabbed the lead. This resulted in a side-by-side drag race to the finish as Gabart clawed back time with better light wind performance.

Joyon managed to hold on to claim a famous victory.

### **About the World Sailing Awards**

The World Sailing Awards celebrate outstanding achievement and exceptional contributions to the sport of sailing. The highlight of the annual Awards night is the presentation of the ultimate recognition of excellence - the Rolex World Sailor of the Year Award.

The Awards night is the social highlight of the World Sailing Annual Conference and recognises success throughout the sport. Alongside Rolex World Sailor of the Year, the World Sailing 11th Hour Racing Sustainability, the Hempel Team of the Year and the Boat of the Year Award winners will be announced.

Furthermore, the Beppe Croce Trophy, President Development Award and eSailing World Championship Trophy will be presented.