

Extreme, Tough, Challenging or Mad?

However you describe it the Mini Transat is considered one of the most demanding yacht races in the world. In 2013, 80 plus sailors in 21ft (6.5m) yachts will race solo across the Atlantic from Douarnenez, France to the island of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean with a stopover in the Canary Islands. The boats have no luxury's what so ever; no toilet, no bunk, no galley. Class rules ban the use of computers, including mapping GPS and all communication is done via VHF. With no communication with the outside world and no crewmates to talk to, the mental challenges are as tough as the physical ones. It is reasons like these that make the Mini Transat the ultimate test of a sailor, which is why MHYC member Katrina Ham wants to race it!

Having been introduced to offshore racing at MHYC she moved to Europe to pursue her short-handed racing goals. Having gained further ocean and offshore race experience and having worked for IMOCA 60 and Class 40 teams, as well as racing on the Classe Mini circuit double handed in 2012, Katrina is ready to take on the challenge of going solo. Entries are limited for the Transat and Katrina faces an uphill battle just to qualify. To do so she needs to complete 1000nm of official class races as well as a 1000nm solo passage.

Katrina has relocated to Lorient, France, the home of Classe Mini, to prepare for next year's race. France's dominance of solo ocean racing comes from events such as the Mini Transat. Ellen MacArthur (1997), Samantha Davies (2001), Brian Thompson (2001), and Michel Desjoyeaux (1991) have all cut their teeth in what is seen as the incubator and test ground for professional solo ocean racing. The training centres in France are second to none and it is why Katrina took the leap of faith and moved without speaking French and without a sponsor or job. Far from the glamorous life many expect of a solo racer, Katrina is teaching English and working as an au pair while preparing her boat and searching for sponsors to make it to the start line.

Follow Katrina's journey on and off the water at www.katrinahamracing.com and at www.facebook.com/KatrinaHamRacing. Contact: info@katrinahamracing.com