



LATEST

St. Barthelemy Catacup (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1175>)



<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/st-barth-5.jpg>

While at the Rolex Regatta in St. Thomas last year, I met Jeff Ledee and Vincent Jordil from St. Barthelemy. They told me about a race on and around their island in November called the Catacup. I was intrigued to say the least. I saw Vincent again at F18 world championships in Belgium, who reminded me of the race. I had always kept in contact with Jeff, and I finally pulled the trigger to come over during summer. I was able to get some friends from Holland to sign up, and our new adventure was created. With Carrie Howe racing with me, I knew we'd have some fun on the course as well, just as we did during the 500+ miles of the Tybee.

<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/st-barth-7.jpg>

Finally the day arrived. As I flew in the small plane from St. Maarten n to St. Barth, I noticed the island's small size, with lush trees so plentiful I could only guess where the streets were. I also wondered what type of history could befall such a tiny place of eight square miles of rock and luscious scenery rising far above the clear turquoise water. I thought of pirates, battles between countries vying for the opportunity to use the small port of the island, and goat fur covered marauders invading from small boats, running through the breakers with handmade axes held high above their heads. What amazes me is there are so many beautiful rocks jutting out of the surface of our planet, with histories so numerous. There is no way for any one person or society to document everything. This French island was first recorded in history when Columbus found it on his second voyage in 1493. He named it after his brother, Bartolomeo. The first settlement here didn't get very far, and it was soon sold to the Knights of Malta. I don't know how much a bargain it was, due to the fact that





the Carib Indians took back what they thought was theirs and destroyed the settlement with cannibalistic impunity.

When I wrote about the Global Challenge and had the idea of putting loser's heads on the ends of poles, I didn't know the next place I sailed actually has such a thing in its history! Well, the Carib Indians put the heads of the settlement's dwellers on the ends of poles at Lorient beach to keep any pesky travelers away. Now the idea of heads on poles doesn't seem so appealing. I snorkeled at that beach!

In 1793 the French settled on the island again, some even from Brittany, the site of the [next F18 Worlds \(http://www.cvberquy.org/f18worlds2010/\)](http://www.cvberquy.org/f18worlds2010/). Spanish galleons passed through these parts, so French buccaneers used St. Barth as a stash for their newly acquired Spanish booty. This leads to my favorite pirate name of all time, Monbar the Exterminator. It is believed his treasure is still hidden on the island somewhere, possibly underneath my very feet as I walked, or under our daggerboards as we sailed.

The British took the island over by force for a short time, but it reverted back to a French possession until it was sold to Sweden in 1784, who made it a free port. The island prospered under this structure. The Swedes also named the capital city Gustavia, and also left a beautiful cemetery as a reminder.



<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/cemetary.jpg>

The French then bought the island back and in 1946 (historical year in the world as it relates to demarcation of land) it was made a collectivity of France along with Guadeloupe, St. Maarten, and Martinique, which together comprise the French West Indies.

Although through time there were battles for this island using cutlass and cannonade, our battles fought on these waters required, unbelievably, not as much skill. I'm sure there were races around this island by square riggers long before, but they had to dodge musket and cannon fire along the way. Not to mention, if we lost, we would live to see the fair winds blow the next day.

When I arrived at the airport I was greeted by no less than four event organizers, who helped all of us out the entire eight days of our visit. I was greeted by Christophe, a brown haired, blue eyed burly Frenchman who looked as if he could wield a sledgehammer just as easily as a pen. He took my bag and tossed it into his open Jeep Wrangler with a flick. And we were off, driving through the winding terrain like a thirsty horse on its way to the water bucket. I

could tell he knew his way around the island straight away. He spoke broken but very good English with a thick French accent, whipping through blind turns while explaining our surroundings. He struck me as a French Brando or Hemmingway, the way they probably oozed easy living and fair rules of life on islands.

Cristophe's Creole styled home is exceptional, hand crafted by Christophe himself, made with Brazilian wood so heavy it won't even float. He said he made the house heavy because of the hurricanes. Double doors from the bedrooms on both sides of the house open into the focal point, the swimming pool. The house sits atop a cistern of rain water almost all the way up the mountain. It was a pleasure to take a shower in this water as it was not too hot or too cold, but a comfortable temperature. It felt natural.





<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/St.-Barth-1.jpg>

Morning view from the bedroom

Most nights, we stayed here instead of going out late, opting to have a ti'punch by the pool. The only sounds were crickets chirping and palm fronds rubbing from the sweeping night breeze. While staring at the endless stars we pontificated with Cristophe on philosophy, religion, politics and a little sailing, like French savants must have hundreds of years before.



<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/st-barth-2.jpg>

I think it's one part sugar, one part lime and two parts rum! My kinda drink!

Oh the racing, I got a bit off track. We thought there would not be as much sailing as a normal regatta. We were wrong. The first race led us clear around the island and took about 4 ½ hours, with multiple lead changes, huge pressure differences and shifts, and marks to round laid close to shore. More than once we had to just look around and take in the beauty. Sometimes we were almost too close to the cliffs and rocks. As the swell moved and crashed over the rocks, the boat was pulled closer to the pounding.

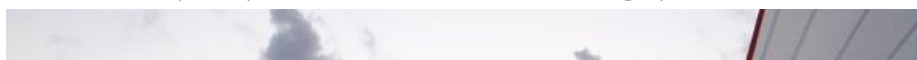


<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/st-barth-8.jpg>

The race management was very professional for the regatta. After a general recall, they immediately put up the black flag, which peaked our interest and we knew we were racing. The first leg of the races always had a beat to a mark close to shore. There were crazy mix-ups there. One boat would have the lead and get close to the mark, only for the breeze to shut off and allow the fleet to get close or even pass. Many times, the first boat to the mark rode the pressure down the course and enjoyed a large lead for the rest of the race. Half of the fun of doing the races was figuring out which rock to round and where to go next! It was refreshing.

The day after the regatta was over, we sailed to an island off the coast of St. Maarten for lunch. I sailed with Jorden since Carrie had to leave that day. The breeze was only about 10 knots but we had fun coasting over the waves, switching off steering, and ooching the waves as hard as we could. While on this island I practiced more of my conversational attention

skills with mostly naked women, thinking, "look her in the eyes, look her in the eyes." I failed miserably. After a little more rum and a fine tropical lunch we sailed back to the port to put the boats in the container for the long trip back to France, where we'll pick them up.



<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/st-barth-3.jpg>



Much thanks to Christophe and Pasqual for their great hospitality, to Jeff and Vincent for their efforts to get us over there, and the many people who helped run this very professional regatta in such a relaxed setting of the French West Indies! Let's get a container from the U.S. next year!

Great photos on [Pierrick Contin's site](http://www.pierrickcontin.com/) (<http://www.pierrickcontin.com/>)!

Results and more on the [Catacup site](http://stbarthcatacup.com/cata/index.php) (<http://stbarthcatacup.com/cata/index.php>)!

Special thanks goes to Bastiaan Tentij, Jorden Veenman, Vincent Huntelman, and everyone who helped load our boat into the container since we couldn't make it!

Dec 01, 2009 | Categories: [Sailing](http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?cat=3) (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?cat=3>) | [Leave A Comment »](http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1175#respond) (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1175#respond>)

St. Barthelemy Catacup Prologue (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1167>)



(<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1167>)

Today we had a small distance race as a warmup for the actual racing that starts tomorrow. I took a quick picture of the course before we went out so we could reference it while racing. It helped, but we were still a bit lost and overstood one of the marks pretty well.

We also had [...]

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Paradise.....yes (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1164>)

I don't usually enjoy getting out of bed, but this week I can deal with it...

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Grounded Again (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1159>)

I just touched down in St. Barth for the Catacup. Here's a quick view of flying into the island in a little puddlejumper. So much for the protective barrier between the pilots and passengers. There was quite a flight delay from St. Maarten to St. Barth, but it was worth the wait. Check it...

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For some reason, when I think of the name Global Challenge, I picture a race where the loser's heads are lanced on top of broken spars while the winner and race committee dance on a hand carved stone altar surrounded by a hot magma moat.

In the real world, last week wasn't so hardcore, but [...]

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Update from JC on Global Challenge (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1133>)

Tad the webmaster here, JC just wanted me to post what racing was like today.

He's having a rum drink now after racing.. they sailed well, with a 1st, 3rd, and a 5th. They had a bad spinnaker halyard problem in the last race that dropped them down – they were in 1st when it [...]

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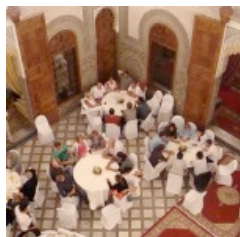
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Starting next Wednesday, F16s start racing at the Gulfport Yacht Club in Florida for the Global Challenge. As a prize for winning the Alter Cup, I was offered a Viper for the week.

I have a new crew for the event, youngster Dalton Tebo, and hopefully we'll be able to do some training for a [...]

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A Taste of Morocco (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1093>)



<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1093>

Last year, we were lucky enough to do a long distance race in Morocco (Raid Maroc).

We had some interesting eating arrangements while we were there. On one particular night in Rabat, our liason came to pick up our group for dinner. After a short drive we came to a small city surrounded by high white [...]

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WWWipeout Wednesddaay!! (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1082>)

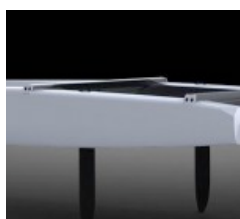


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In a couple ways, I'm a traditional guy. In keeping with tradition, I don't actually post Wipeout Wednesday on Wednesday. Here is a sequence shot by Philip Mumm (205-870-8800, mummmp@bellsouth.net) on a slightly breezy day during the US Multihull Championship. Before I take the piss out on these guys, I've got to say that the [...]

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Somebody's Got A New Toy! (<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1065>)



<http://www.johncaseyworldwide.com/?p=1065>

Just when everyone thought the Capricorn was just getting a makeover, a completely new design is off the table at AHPC. The Cap is fast already, and this design is going to be a step up. Sweet looking boat! With their great build quality, surely it will be stiff, finished and fast out of the [...]



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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4 5
6	7	8		9	10	11 12
13	14	15		16	17	18 19
20	21	22		23	24	25 26
27	28	29		30	31	

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