

PRESS RELEASE

BENUSSI BROTHERS WIN BARCOLANA 49 WITH SPIRIT OF PORTOPICCOLO

RECORD-BREAKING REGATTA: 2101 ENTRIES FROM 26 COUNTRIES, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS IN TRIESTE

Trieste, 8th October 2017 – Furio and Gabriele Benussi from Trieste won the 49th edition of Barcolana aboard Spirit of PortoPiccolo, completing the quadrangular 13-mile course from Barcola to Piazza Unità in 1 hour, 12 minutes and 17 seconds. With a total of 2101 entries (1836 Italians and 265 sailing enthusiasts from 26 countries including Chile, Argentina and Europe), 25 thousand sailors at sea and some a hundred thousand people celebrating along the Rive seafront, this year's edition will be remembered as a real record-breaker.

International champions and hundreds of sailing enthusiasts were united in setting the new Guinness World record. *"It's overwhelming to know that today we've made history all together – Mitja Gialuz said – skippers, yacht clubs from across Friuli and the whole city of Trieste: Barcolana is the world's most crowded regatta – we organised it, we won it, we welcomed thousands of people and reached the goal of affirming the importance of sailing as a sport, as well as our passionate love for the sea".*

COVERAGE OF THE RACE | The excitement of the competition began to mount 20 minutes ahead of the start signal: never have so many boats taken to the waters of the Gulf. The big favourites chose to line up on the "Barcola side", where they could put more pressure on their opponents and snatch the wind from them: Spirit of PortoPiccolo led from the start, managing to keep Maxi Jena in check in its wind shadow, while Maxi Jena was late to trim the foresail. As the 2101 boats moved in unison, Spirit of PortoPiccolo sailed full and by to the left, reaching a speed of 15 knots from the very beginning, which resulted in almost three minutes of advantage over Maxi Jena that the boat managed to maintain up to Mark 1.

In spite of perfect trimming and a good route, Maxi Jena was no match for such a rival, and she ended up in second position. Immediately behind Maxi Jena a fierce battle was raging between Lorenzo Bodini's Pendragon, local entrepreneur Gabriele Lualdi's brand new E VAI – helmed by Nicola Celon – and Mauro Pelaschier's Ancilla Domini, which hosted entrepreneur Andrea Illy on board: the boat was in perfect shape and, although she had started underwind behind Spirit of PortoPiccolo, she managed to keep an excellent pace for a cruising yacht.

Spirit of PortoPiccolo reached the first buoy in less than 20 minutes, hoisted the gennaker and got ready for board reach towards Miramare. Maxi Jena followed four minutes later. Behind the two leaders, Bodini's Pendragon, Lualdi's E VAI and Ancilla Domini came in close succession, followed by Unipol Sai – which was later disqualified as OCS – and Alberto Leghissa's Anywave Salfiens. The fastest boats sailed in Indian file along the short offset leg, while behind them countless sails dotted the Gulf of Trieste. The long stretch towards Miramare was a reaching

leg: the leading boats kept their positions, and only the Russian Vladimir Yakimenko's Tp52 Freccia Rossa – helmed by Frenchman Christian Ponthieu – managed to advance, outracing Leghissa's Anywave and claiming the fifth position.

Spirit of PortoPiccolo continued her race towards victory on a solo performance surrounded by tens of motorboats that seemed to want to share her victory. At the Miramare mark, upwind sailing started with short tacks, a 10-knot wind, which dropped along the last five hundred metres off the dam at the Old Port. Whenever the wind dropped the Benussi brothers did not give up and sailed ahead in an attempt to cross the finish line until, between light and strong wind gusts, they snatched the victory at 11.42 pm after 1 hour, 12 minutes and 17 seconds and came first in the most crowded regatta in the history of Barcolana. Four minutes after was the turn of Mitja Kosmina, who grabbed a well-deserved second place, and Pendragon Alilaguna with Lorenzo Bodini scored third place. The TP52 captained by the Russian Yakimenko, with French helmsman and tactician came fourth. They could not believe a regatta like this one really exists. After having claimed an overall win at the Giraglia Cup, they enjoyed a category win. Fifth position was claimed by Anywave with Leghissa, followed by EVAI. Immediately after, a neck-to-neck duel was fought by two RC44s which finished the race in line, one after the other, the Slovenian Scorpio and Magia Docktrine of Marino Quaiat. Among the first ten boats we also found Idrusa, captained by Paolo Montefusco and Ancilla Domini captained by Mauro Pelaschier. Behind those boats, until late afternoon, was a fleet of sails, a great festival and a fantastic city celebrating along the seafront while the sea was dash of spinnakers: an Indian summer, a south-westerly breeze until the spinnakers reach Piazza Unità.

FURIO BENUSSI | *"It is a dream come true, it is an amazing victory. I have looked for this boat for two year, I have dreamt of it and finally, a few months ago, I was able to get hold of it. Winning last year was great, but defending the title this year with my brother Gabriele was even more extraordinary. We knew we were the favourites, so we could only lose. The start was decisive: I have never seen such a crowded Barcolana. We managed to find our way through among two thousand boats and we were already sailing at 15 knots after the first few metres".*

Together with his brother Gabriele, Furio has dedicated their victory to their dad, Dario: *"Our dad is 77 years old, he came with me to Marseilles, he sailed 1280 miles aboard our vessel all the way to the destination".*

Furio's wife Elisa and youngest daughter Marta joined the race: *"I wanted them to see and understand what our Barcolana is all about".*

GABRIELE BENUSSI analyses the course | *"We didn't want to push too hard at the start line, but we were in the right position, near MaxiJena. Our crew was extremely focused, we then exploited a moment of hesitation by MaxiJena and all we had to do was manage the lead and avoid any mistake".*

And then, parading at the end was very emotional: *"Parading at the end of the race in front of the Rive seafront filled with so many people was already a fantastic experience when I was only a competitor, but doing it as a winner gives it a different meaning! They don't have anything like it at America's Cup".*

VASCO VASCOTTO, at the helm of Anemos, Farr 80 launched a week ago | *"The start is always very complex, challenging and unique and it captivates me in an inexplicable way. Today was the most amazing start of all because of the view, the numbers and the public. I won Barcolana in the past and I am pleased that today it was won once again by sailors from Trieste, which means the trophy will stay in Trieste and I hope foreigners will challenge the regatta to try and take the trophy to their homeland. People talk about the regatta. This edition has seen the participation of Argentinians, and for the first time also Chileans. The number of entries will not drop, because if you sail here once you will definitely want to come back: of all sailing events Barcolana is the regatta that must be raced at least once in life. The start was great, as was the ability of sailboats to free the whole starting line in ten minutes: that was another record, it is an edition of records over records".*

MITJA KOSMINA, at the helm of Maxi Jena Tempus Fugit | *"We have to be pleased with ourselves and with the way we have raced - we sailed very well and had a great start. We managed to follow the tactics we had planned before the race. Spirit of PortoPiccolo was faster upwind and we couldn't keep up, we were already pushing to the limit. We were hoping for a drop in wind below Miramare, which was the only theoretical possibility we had: that didn't happen and the spectacle came off best. I think that all those who took part in Barcolana must be proud. We sailors who fight for first place are clearly happier if we win, but that's not the only goal: the objective here, also for us, is to be present. We plan to improve our boat, making use of all the state-of-the-art technology available today. We can't make our boat heavier because the material it is made of does not allow it, but we can head in a different direction: we have developed some ideas that will be ready next year, when we meet up again at Barcolana".*

DONATELLA BIANCHI, PRESIDENTE OF WWF ITALY | *"Barcolana is the beating heart of sports and passion for the sea. Thousands of people at sea and along the seafront give life to a spectacle that is unique in the world, a fair competition where wind, skills and tactics turn the Gulf of Trieste into a natural stage. We are grateful to Chairman Gialuz for having given us the opportunity to launch our message to save the oceans, and we thank the boat ZeroCloud, for being the ambassador of WWF. A year of campaigns to save our oceans (#GenerAzioneMare) rounds off perfectly. Good wind to Barcolana and see you in 2018".*