

Why it's better

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Lia Ditton breaks down Virbac-Paprec 3 and Christophe Launay shoots it for you.

As lead boat in the Barcelona World Race, 'Virbac-Paprec3' heads for the second of the two ice gates south of Australia with more than 500 miles on 'Mapre' in second, let's take a look at what distinguishes this particular IMOCA 60 from the rest of the fleet.

While there was some skepticism during the 'Route du Rhum,' as to whether this lighter, new breed of IMOCA 60 was going to keep pace with the existing and proven top runners in the class, after 6 weeks on the BWR race course there can be surely no doubt of their pedigree.

Interestingly, both of the new boats entered in the BWR - Jean-Pierre Dick's 'Virbac-Paprec 3' and Michel Desjoyeaux's 'Foncia' (which unfortunately was forced to retire with mast damage) share the same design team, VPLP and Guillaume Verdier. Let's not forget that there's also a third, slightly older (2007) VPLP/Verdier on the track skippered by Kito de Pavant under the guise of 'Groupe Bel' (the laughing cow) which has been on and off the podium since the beginning.



Having adopted the preference of Dame Ellen Macarthur (with her IMOCA 60 'Kingfisher,' which amazingly, considering it's 10 year vintage is currently being raced in the BWR as Fòrum Marítim Català) of building afar and sailing home, JP Dick opted to build at Cookson's in New Zealand and deliver 'Virbac-Paprec 3' back to France on her own bottom, affording Dick and his co-skipper Loïck Peyron the opportunity to road-test the boat over half of the 24,000 nm course. Comparatively, 'Foncia' was constructed at Green Marine in Lymington in the UK, a short excursion from IMOCA 60 hub Port La Forêt in Northern France. Rumour has it that between the Route du Rhum and the BWR, some major structural work was undertaken to the 'Foncia' in fear that she was too light. Certainly, by the start of the Barcelona World Race, 'Foncia' was now weighing in at 7,800kg with 'Virbac-Paprec 3' a mere 7,500kg – the latter a whopping 25% lighter than the heaviest in the line up, HUGO BOSS.

5 notable features of the VPLP/Verdier 'Virbac-Paprec 3':

1. Following the latest trend to move life onboard outside, the deck sports a coach roof split into twin cocoons for shelter, with Plexiglas bubbles for all-round vision.

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2. In Jean-Pierre Dick's own words: "The philosophy is monastic! Virbac-Paprec 3 is a very light boat and [therefore spartan](#). Comparatively, Paprec-Virbac 2 was a palace!" Concessions include the helm seats and a single berth designed by a bedding specialist.
3. The boat has two curved daggerboards more akin in shape to the 'banana' boards found on large multihulls, designed to reduce drag by creating lift rather than solely minimizing leeway. The boards appear to slot into a seemingly conventional case.
4. Note the very [modest stainless pulpit](#) and thus weight saving
5. And the achingly simple [rudder drop-down mechanism](#) and anti-cavitation plate.

*Additionally, the boat has a classic mast with 2 sets of spreaders, but only one running backstay cable rather than 3 in order to make further weight saving and reduce wind resistance. In comparison, the 'Foncia' team went with a wing mast and outriggers.