



Pete Goss returns to solo sailing

Vendee Globe hero discusses his Class 40 Route du Rhum entry

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One of the living legends in offshore racing – Pete Goss – has announced his return to the sport, with the announcement yesterday of his entry in this November’s singlehanded Route du Rhum from St Malo to Pointe a Pitre, Guadeloupe. His steed on this occasion is not an Open 50 nor a radical twin-masted maxi-cat but a Class 40 – the latest *Concise*, belonging to Surrey-based property developer Tony Lawson.

“It really happened by chance – I mentioned to a friend that this was something I was keeping an eye on and he happened to mention it to Tony Lawson in passing who owns and runs Team Concise and a light bulb came on and he sent me an email through the website saying ‘how do you fancy doing the Route du Rhum?’ So here we are,” recounts Goss.

The new *Concise* is one of the new generation racing versions of the Lombard-designed Akilaria we reviewed last year (read about it [here](#)). The boat arrived in the UK this spring and Goss

has already had a chance to take her for a blast in the Channel. "It might not have a swing keel, but it is a real performance boat and a lovely boat to sail. Some boats you have to really work hard, but this one wants to work for you."

While Goss is a new recruit to Team Concise, Tony Lawson's overriding philosophy for the project is to have it primarily as a training platform for young aspirant racing sailors and for this reason there will be two sides to the Concise campaign this year. Sail maker, Tom Gall, who sailed the previous *Concise* doublehanded in the 2007 Transat Jacques Vabre and who has since gone around the world as part of the Puma Volvo Ocean Race shore team, is to be boat captain. And Ned Collier-Wakefield, who skippered *Concise* to victory at the Class 40 World Championship when they were held on the Solent last year, will sail on board with Gall, later this month to defend *Concise's* World Championship title in Gijon, Spain and then on to compete in the RORC's Seven Stars Round Britain Race at the end of August. After that is completed, *Concise* will head down to Plymouth where Goss will take her over and prepare her for the famous French solo transatlantic race.

In fact the delineation isn't that clear cut. Goss will compete with the lads in this weekend's Morgan Cup race to Cherbourg and he will deliver the boat to and from Gijon, the return leg singlehanded, doubling as his Route du Rhum qualifier.

"It is a partnership of two halves," explains Goss. "There are this young group of really talented guys who won the World Championship last year and who are looking at defending it in their new boat this year and they are doing the Seven Stars Round Britain and Ireland. That is one half and the other half is me doing the Route du Rhum, taking on the shorthanded offshore stuff. And we rub off each other in the middle. So it is really exciting. I can't wait to get back competing.

"Their doing the Seven Stars RBI race I personally think is fantastic for the Route du Rhum, because the boat will then have done a long hard offshore trip, pushed hard and that will

identify things that won't have come to light until you do a long trip."



Goss may dip in and out of the campaign as time allows for these days he has a lot of commitments ashore. *Spirit of Mystery*, the Mounts Bay lugger he sailed to Australia last year is back in the UK and refitted and that story, Goss says, will only come to an end when he and the original crew sail her back into Newlyn during Newlyn Fish Festival and then have a quiet pint at the Star Inn, where the plan for the original *Mystery* trip to Australia was hatched 154 years ago. He is also a founding trustee of the education charity, Cornwall Playing For Success. He also does a lot of public speaking and teaches leadership skills (a topic he is lecturing on at Oxford University this Friday morning).

Having sailed *Spirit of Mystery* to Australia in at an average speed of 4.5 knots Goss adds that he is keen to get back into more competitive high performance sailing (readers may remember that four years ago campaigned the doublehanded Round Britain and Ireland race aboard a Seacart 30 trimaran). So he is exciting to be getting into his new boat.

"I have been looking at the Class 40s for quite a long time and always felt it was a really good formula and an exciting thing and watched it growing and developing," says Goss. "It is a really nice boat, really well made. She has been completely fitted out with no expense spared. She is really well maintained. She has been worked up nicely. We have got a really good foundation."

Following on from his superhuman solo sailing feats – sailing a 26ft long Firebird micro-multihull, little more than a beach cat, across the Atlantic in the OSTAR, then of course the 1996 Vendee Globe when he literally saved Raphael Dinelli's life, plucking him from the deck of his yacht as its decks were awash in the depths of the Southern Ocean – a mere transatlantic race starting in France and ending in the balmy French Caribbean must seem a walk in the park for this former Royal Marine.

"I have always loved singlehanded," admits Goss. "I've never

had a career – just a series of daft ideas from one extreme to the other - the British Steel Challenge and the Vendee and I've just done this *Spirit of Mystery* tour to Australia, which was a fantastic project. But I haven't done the Route du Rhum, and it is one of the greats, I've always wanted to do it. So it is doing the Route du Rhum, it is getting back competitive again and doing a singlehanded race and it is nice to be on a modern hi-tech boat. So it is very exciting."

He is also noticing how technology has improved in the intervening years. As he puts it: "Some of the things, like the furler – they are so good you could hang them on your wall!"

While Class 40 numbers are now approaching 100, around 30 boats are expected on the start line of the Route du Rhum. It is definitely the big race for the class in 2010. So how competitive does Goss feel after years away from professional yacht racing? "I guess we'll find out. I have always been competitive and I love racing. I can't help but be anything else. I feel very comfortable doing singlehanded sailing. Obviously I need to work up as hard as I can towards the Route du Rhum. But it is quite funny – I am the old duffer now! Doesn't time go quickly? And there are all these young blades coming in. Maybe there is life in the old dog yet. But I can't wait.

"One of the nice things is that hopefully I can help them with a little bit of wisdom and campaign management. It is definitely a help for me to see the boat pushed up that learning and performance curve and quickly and learning off them. Tom and the lads – I have been so impressed with them. They are the guys to watch in the longer term and it is lovely to be able help."

Interestingly, despite his lengthy career sailing, Goss has never been to the Caribbean. "I've sailed past it so many times and heard so much about it. I have frozen my proverbials off so many times and always thought – 'wouldn't it be nice to be in the Caribbean?' So there is my intention for

this one: A nice cocktail at the end of it!" Tony Lawson also has plans to enter *Concise* in next spring's Caribbean 600.

And the Route du Rhum may be just the beginning of the return of Goss in solo offshore racing. While the campaign is underwritten by Tony Lawson, they are attempting to raise funds for it and have already secured four silver sponsors and are hunting for a gold sponsor who will get naming rights to the boat, thereby covering the costs of the Route du Rhum. For the aim is for Concise to become a two boat team in 2011. A second new boat is on the way... But exactly what form a two boat Team Concise might take remains to be seen.

"This isn't just the Route du Rhum," as Goss explains. "This is a longer term view. There is a new Class 40 coming off the drawing board, aspiring towards a two boat campaign next year, but the nice thing is that it is underwritten and we can prepare and talk confidently. There is no 'if, if, if'. And Tony is not of that nature. There are a few gems in the worlds and I think Tony is one of them." So the days of melting down organ pipes to smelt *Aqua Quorum's* keel are sadly over.

Goss doesn't rule out another Vendee Globe too. "I never repeat anything, not that you shouldn't, but to me life is just too short, so I tend to go off and do all these different things. The Vendee is the only race I'd go and do again. So I am not setting out to do the Vendee Globe – but who knows?"

So if the opportunity came along? "I'd never say no. One thing about the Vendee is that the budgets are so high and these are difficult times - that is the big challenge. But I'd love to do the Vendee again. It is a fantastic race, and but in the meantime I am more than happy to be doing the Route du Rhum in a well funded, professional campaign."