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Update: Emirates Team New Zealand

maxon Australia is an Official Supplier to Emirates Team New Zealand. We follow their progress on their journey as Defenders in the 36th America's Cup campaign in March 2021.

America's Cup cheat sheet – two years on.

Emirates Team New Zealand June 28, 2019.

SOURCE: Newsroom - Suzanne McFadden

It's exactly two years since Emirates Team New Zealand won the America's Cup in Bermuda, and a lot of water has flowed under Te Wero Bridge, in Auckland's Viaduct, since then.

A radical foiling monohull has been conceived, and is now coming to life in boatyards around the world. Battles over bases have been lost, and won. Teams have come, teams have gone.

But if you've lost touch with the goings-on of the 36th America's Cup, we've called on the assistance of Team NZ veteran Kevin Shoebridge, to help remedy that; so you can now sound up to speed with your yachting mates at the water cooler. SportsRoom presents The 2021 America's Cup cheat sheet: two years gone, less than two to go.

THE DEFENDER

Team NZ are running like a "well-oiled machine", says Shoebridge, the team's COO. But that's what you'd expect from an outfit whose genesis goes back beyond 1995, and who hit the ground running from the moment they came home with the Auld Mug.

Their team now numbers 120 (with a few bodies more to come), and are fully ensconced in their two HQs – their spectacular main base in the Viaduct Events Centre, and the boat building yard in Albany.

Of those, 42 people are in the boatyard, building the first of their two AC75 extreme racing machines (it's the first time in Team NZ's history that they've built their own boats).

The building process is well on track for the initial boat to be launched in late August, although Shoebridge admits it's taken slightly longer than Team NZ envisaged.

They now have their mast, made at Southern Spars in Auckland's west, and are awaiting the delivery from Italy of the massive foil arms (that look like the legs of a Jesus Christ lizard running across water) which support the boat when it's flying.

The team are at 95 per cent capacity, with the last of the sailing crew to still be named. So far, there's a core crew of eight (11 sailors will be on board the AC75), with the rest of the grinders – to be named this

week – bringing it up to around 14. Yes, grinders are back in; cyclors are out (watch the grinding trials in the video above).

“The core sailing team – the likes of Glenn Ashby, Peter Burling, Blair Tuke and Ray Davies – have been intricately involved in the design process of the boat; you can't design a boat without your sailors,” Shoebridge says.

While they wait for the boat to touch down on the Waitemata Harbour, the sailors are racing around the world. Burling and Tuke are off this week to a 49er regatta in Germany, preparing to defend their Olympic title in Tokyo next year; Ashby is racing the G32 foiling multihulls world champs in Portugal; Andy Maloney and Josh Junior have just finished a successful European season in their Olympic Finn dinghies.

Unlike the three established challenger teams, Team NZ decided not to build a test boat – a scaled-down foiling monohull – opting to “sail” their boat on a simulator, as they did with major success before Bermuda.

“The simulator side of things has given us some really good insights into what the boat's performances will be. Some of the numbers we are seeing at the moment are quite in excess of the 50-foot catamarans we used last time, both upwind and downwind,” [Ashby told Stuff](#).

So the sailing team are itching to finally get back on the Hauraki Gulf.

“It feels like it's time to get out there again. Time to split off from the infrastructure and the event, and finally focus on the sailing,” Shoebridge says.

They won't have long to wait now.

THE CHALLENGERS

As it stands, five teams are still in the running to race in the Prada Cup, the America's Cup challenger series, in January 2021. But in a week's time, the number of challengers could be slashed to three.

There's no danger of losing the trio of challenging heavyweights – Italy's Luna Rossa, Sir Ben Ainslie's Ineos Team UK, and American Magic from the hallowed New York Yacht Club.

But two of the three late challengers that were accepted, Stars + Stripes USA and DutchSail, have until July 1 to confirm their commitment to the Cup. It's no secret both teams have struggled to find the financial backing needed to get a new campaign on the water.

“We're trying to be as supportive as we can to get these two teams across the line, because we all want them to succeed,” Shoebridge says. “The issue is that, sooner or later, they're going to run out of time to build a boat and be in Cagliari next April to race in the first World Series event.”

Teams must race in that first event if they're to compete in the 2021 challenger trials in Auckland.

The Stars + Stripes team, out of Long Beach, California, have had a recent change in management, and launched a public appeal for funding. A campaign big on diversity and inclusion, their boat is about halfway through construction, thanks to buying the Team NZ design package.

The first-ever campaign from the Netherlands is still endeavouring to form partnerships with Dutch tech and marine companies, but say that behind the scenes, “everything is really progressing”. They don't intend to launch their sole boat, Salamander, until next March – at least six months after everyone else.

“They [Stars + Stripes and DutchSail] are doing everything they can to be here, and that deserves our support,” Shoebridge says. “That's why over the last six months we've tried to encourage them by helping

design their boats, which we see as an absolute no-brainer. It gives them something to sell, and prove they can be competitive from day one.”

The third late entry, Malta Altus Challenge, withdrew last month. The campaign out of Malta, backed by an Italian real estate mogul, and made up mostly of the old Swedish Artemis team, couldn't pull enough money together.

THE BOAT

While the four top teams plough on with building their new AC75 foiling monohulls, the three established challengers are out testing their scaled-down versions – which, interestingly, are all very different in shape and size.

American Magic are sailing “The Mule” - an 11.5m monohull modified with foils - off their winter sailing base on Pensacola Bay in Florida. The 38-footer is the longest surrogate boat allowed under the Cup Protocol (teams can only launch two AC75s, which are 22.8m long).

And although they've capsized it, they've also been crowing about sailing 'dry laps', without the hull touching the water.

Ineos Team UK's test boat, “T5”, is smaller at 8.5 m - scaled at 40 percent of the AC75. The two-crew boat has been sailing off Portsmouth for a year now as part of their design development for the Cup boat.

Just last week, Luna Rossa put their test boat into the waters of Cagliari – the team's base in Sardinia – for the first time, and in true America's Cup fashion, they're revealing little about it.

But rest assured, Team NZ has been watching all three boats very closely. Especially since they haven't built one themselves.

“We decided not to go down that route,” Shoebridge says. “In the initial plan, there was a World Series event in October this year, and we wanted to put all our focus into building our first AC75.

“It would have been nice to have a smaller boat to iron out a few of the bugs, but we're going straight to full scale.”

But there's still a “very good likelihood” that Team NZ will build a smaller boat for testing ideas – because it's quicker, cheaper and more efficient. And they will need something to develop things on while their brand new AC75 heads to Europe in February and will be away racing for six months.

It won't be long now till we see the AC75s edging out of their boatyards for the very first time.

Under the protocol, the boats could be launched any time from April 1. But a hold-up with the design of the boat's foil arms – a one-design component provided to every team – has slowed up everyone's boat building phase.

When the original carbon foil arm failed a stress test in Italy, all of the teams came together to design a stronger version. “Now [we've] got a solution everyone is happy with. Of course, it's slightly heavier and more conservative, but it's reliable,” Shoebridge says.

He's guessing the British boat will be the first in the water in early August. Only the Italians have announced their launch date – August 25. Team NZ will be around that time too – they're fourth in line to receive their foil arms.

“It’s going to be fascinating when we see these boats launched. They might all be similar, but they could be completely different. As the second generation comes around, you’ll probably see the boats coming closer together in design,” Shoebridge says.

When we see the AC75s line up against each other for the first time next April, Shoebridge warns we shouldn’t get too concerned about what happens on the water. “There’s a long way to go from the first generation to where you could end up.”

When the boats compete in that Cagliari World Series, the second boats will already be half-built. All of the teams’ second boats are likely to be on the water in the New Zealand spring of 2020, with most teams probably settling here in September.

THE EVENT

The first of the America’s Cup World Series events, raced between the challengers and the defender, was originally scheduled for Cagliari this October, but has been postponed until April 2020.

Part of the reason was the hold-up of the one-design foil arms; another part was to allow the late challengers to have AC75s ready to compete. But the date shift also gives teams more time on the water working out how to master these new beasts.

“The fact is our first AC75 goes onto a ship next February and takes 52 days to get to Europe; then we won’t see it back in Auckland for another six months,” Shoebridge says.

There will be three, possibly four, World Series events next year – with regattas likely in the UK, the US, and maybe one in New Zealand.

That’s all before the Christmas Cup, in December 2020, contested on the Hauraki Gulf racecourses pegged out for the 2021 America’s Cup. That will be the last time the challengers and defender compete together.

The company running the entire event in Auckland, America’s Cup Event Ltd (ACE), is operating from the second floor of the Viaduct Events Centre, with former Team NZ director Tina Symmans as chair.

THE VILLAGE

From the yellow meeting room inside Team NZ’s sprawling base on Halsey Wharf, Shoebridge looks west to the Harbour Bridge.

“You look out this window and see work on the bases for the Brits and American Magic on Wynyard Point,” he says.

The flattened base pads, where silos once stood, should be handed over in early August to those two challengers, who will construct their own buildings.

“Then you look out those windows,” he says, pointing to the east, “and there’s construction on Hobson Wharf, and the breakwaters and marinas”.

The Wynyard Edge Alliance (WEA), the organisation formed by the government and Auckland Council to deliver the infrastructure, is in full flight.

The dull banging of a pile driver is continuous, as 84 piles are installed for the Hobson Wharf extension, where Luna Rossa’s base will stand. A completed breakwater alongside the wharf will help still the waters around the Viaduct Harbour, and more are under construction. The entrance to the channel has been

dredged – so far over 60,000 cubic metres of “material” has been dug out and disposed of outside the harbour.

“This America's Cup village is going to be a very cool environment, that we're super-proud of,” Shoebridge says.

Team NZ are in the Viaduct Events Centre for the “foreseeable future” – maybe until they lose their grip on the silverware. Although this wasn't Team NZ's original choice of base – finally fixed after six months of tense negotiations between the team, Government and council - Shoebridge concedes “it's the best base we've ever had”.

There will be more public engagement with the team than ever before. People will be able to easily see New Zealand's boats being craned in and out of the shed each day, and large screens on the side of the base will broadcast live racing. The Team NZ merchandise shop is already open and humming on the ground floor.

The team are all together on the top floor, keeping the open plan environment that worked so well for them in their old cramped space on Beaumont St in the last campaign. Just with more leg room.

There's already a hive of activity at the northern end of the building, transformed into a working boat yard, although the boats have yet to arrive.

“The docks are in, the dredging is done,” Shoebridge says. “As soon as we have the boat here, we're ready to sail.”

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Skippers of the challenger heavyweights - from left, Max Sirena (Luna Rossa), Terry Hutchinson (American Magic) and Sir Ben Ainslie (Ineos Team UK). Photo: Getty Images. © Emirates Team New Zealand



The silos have gone - making way for challenger bases on Wynyard Wharf, to be handed over to teams in August. Photo: WEA © Emirates Team New Zealand

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