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## Update: America's Cup

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

### **Excitement heightens as America's Cup teams and fans anticipate first ever AC75 launch.**

**It is always a big deal in any America's Cup cycle when the first tranche of AC Class yachts is revealed.**

Fans and teams alike pore over every photograph and video they can get their hands on to analyse what each of the teams' design departments have come up with.

That eager anticipation is ratcheted up several levels however when the teams are given the much rarer opportunity to design to a completely new America's Cup class rule – as is the case for the 36th edition of the America's Cup with the advent of the 75-foot foiling monohull AC75 Class Rule.

Even more exciting and challenging is the fact that designing and building a foiling monohull of that size has never ever been done before. It is an utterly new concept – and that means the designers are out on their own, breaking new ground with precious little, if any, relevant data available to refer back to.

It is now a tantalising prospect that four teams – the Defender Emirates Team New Zealand, Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli Team (Challenger of Record), NYYC American Magic, and INEOS TEAM UK – could all launch their first AC75 yachts in the next few weeks.

The fifth America's Cup team – Stars + Stripes Team USA – is yet to complete the build of its AC75, but the team hopes to have the boat on the water later this year.

So what can we expect to learn from this upcoming first round of AC75 launches?

As is always the case with the America's Cup, the teams have been tight-lipped about the direction they have taken with the first of the two AC75s they are allowed to build under the terms laid down in the Protocol for the 36th America's Cup.

But the Head of Design at Emirates Team New Zealand, Dan Bernasconi – who helped mastermind the AC75 design rule in the first place – said he was confident the boats would be thrilling for the fans to watch as well as extremely demanding for the crews to learn how to sail at optimum performance.

"We wanted to develop a class of yacht which was going to be exciting but also really challenging to sail," Bernasconi said. "We will find out when we launch and actually get out on the water, but we think the new boat is going to achieve those aims really well."

According to Bernasconi, until the teams reveal their boats nobody has any idea what they will each look like – but he expects there to be some big differences.

“It’s pretty interesting because the design rule is quite open,” he said. “There is a lot of openness in the hull design – the shape of hull and the layout of the deck – and also in the mainsail configuration and the foil wings and the flaps mechanism.

“So there will likely be quite a big variation between our yacht and everyone else’s yachts. In fact I think they will all be quite different – so there is a huge amount of interest from all the designers in different areas to see what other teams have come up with.”

Martin Fischer – co-design coordinator at Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli Team – was also involved in coming up with the AC75 class rule. He says designing to a totally new America’s Cup class rule has added an extra level of excitement to the process for the designers at the Italian syndicate.

“The opportunity to design an America’s Cup boat to a brand-new rule is very rare – typically something that happens only every 10 or 15 years,” Fischer said.

“Everybody in the team here is really excited to get the chance to work on designing to this new class rule. I think every designer who has been given this opportunity will be really excited, like we are.”

Fischer says the task of producing from scratch one of the first ever 75-foot single-hull yachts has required he and his team to take several steps into the unknown along the way to launching their first iteration of the design.

“We are definitely getting into new territory with these new boats,” he said. “A foiling monohull of this size has never been designed and built before – so there are many, many unknowns.

“There is lots of pressure on the design team because there is no experience from previous boats. Obviously we have the experience from the AC50 catamarans – but there’s never been a boat like the AC75 before.”

“That means you have to turn over every stone and look at every aspect carefully, because around every corner there could be something unexpected. You definitely don’t want to get a nasty surprise once the boat is launched and that adds to the level of pressure on us as designers.”

NYYC American Magic skipper Terry Hutchinson said he and his team were revelling in the challenge of bringing the large-scale foiling monohull concept to life, along with the pressure of delivering a competitive design.

“It’s always great to be on the leading side of design and development and it’s always something that our group have prided ourselves in,” Hutchinson said. “We are in a competition, and we want to win. With that goal comes pressure to deliver.

What differences there might be between the teams’ first AC75 designs, Hutchinson said he was waiting to find out like everyone else.

“We will have to see once the boats hit the water,” he said. “All of the design teams are of the highest standard, so it is an exciting time for everyone.”

Sir Ben Ainslie, team Principal and skipper at the British INEOS TEAM UK syndicate, said he expected there to be huge interest when the first AC75s are launched.

"This is an entirely new concept of boat so there has been a lot of anticipation about how it will sail and how it will perform at this scale," Ainslie said. "We have seen the test boats out there over the last 12 months or so, but to get the real deal – 75-foot foiling monohulls out there means there will be a lot of interest."

Ainslie described the planned launch and first sail of the British AC75 as a milestone moment for the team – especially given that the first opportunity for the teams to race against each other will be in April 2020 at the America's Cup World Series regatta in Cagliari, Sardinia.

"Certainly as a team there has been a huge amount of work and effort that has gone into designing and building this boat," He said. "It will be a real thrill to get it out sailing for the first time and to get it up on the foils and see how it manoeuvres."

The five-time Olympic medal-winning yachtsman said he expected the new boats to be stunning to watch and a real handful for the crews – despite being made up of some of the best sailors in the world – to master.

"I think this boat will turn heads for sure," he said. "I'm expecting it to be the most exciting boat that I have ever sailed – a 75-foot foiling monohull. The predicted speeds of these boats are really quite phenomenal, and it is going to be a huge challenge and a huge adrenaline rush to sail them well."

The team that will have to wait a bit longer to feel the rush of flying the AC75 is the second American challenger- Stars + Stripes Team USA, led by Mike Buckley.

"Our plan is to launch our AC75 later this year, but the exact date is still to be determined," Buckley said. "The other teams' anticipated launch dates are a little bit prior to that, and we will definitely have boots on the ground, and we'll be trying to learn as much as we can while our boat is under construction."

"The most exciting day for me is the day when we put this AC75 in the water and make sure she floats. Then we will take a deep breath and say: 'well we have a boat that floats – now let's make sure we have a boat that flies'".

"There will be a lot of hard work on the back end of that, Buckley said. "Every day we will be trying to get a little bit better and keeping the fire burning in the team. We will be hungry and we will be pushing, like everybody else."

Although the precise timing of when individual teams might splash their AC75s for the first time is a closely guarded secret, it is likely that they will conduct one or more unannounced 'private' test sails, potentially followed by a more public official launch or naming ceremony.

For now that's going to keep sailing fans around the world guessing as they eagerly await the first glimpses of what the AC75s will look like.

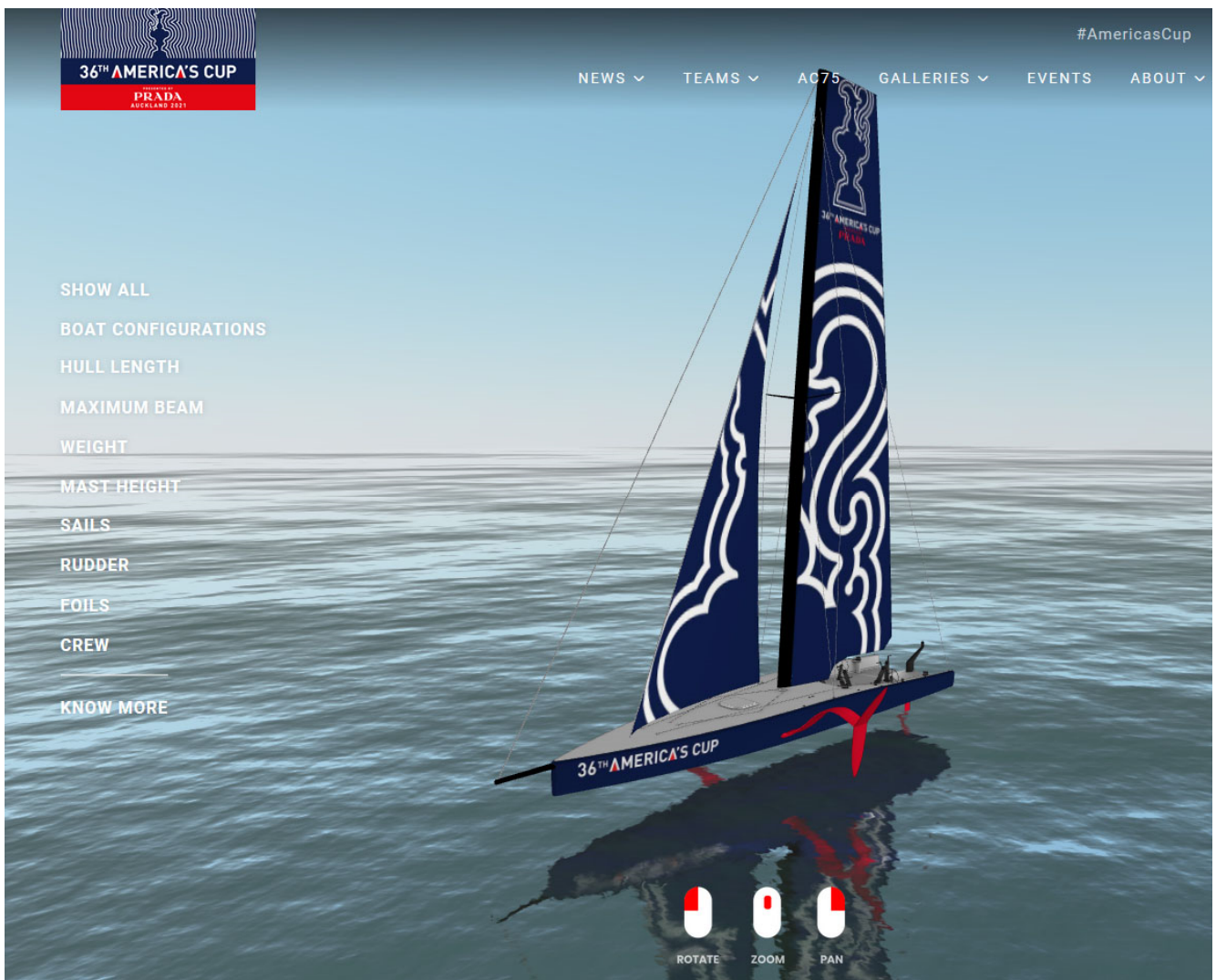
The good news though, is that under the rules of this cycle of the America's Cup the teams are not allowed to shroud their boats with skirts or covers, meaning there should be plenty for us all – the fans and the teams – to discuss when the photos and videos are finally made public.

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