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## Update: America's Cup

### One year to go to the 36<sup>th</sup> America's Cup presented by Prada.

**A year from today, anybody following the America's Cup closely will be tuning in with one question in mind: "Who's got it right?" It's a universal truth in America's Cup competition, a question that's been asked since the original match in 1851.**

There is an inescapable, unavoidable, nerve-racking moment in every Cup, the moment when years of planning, scheming, designing, building, and training lay behind you, and the day finally arrives, the day when all that's left to do is go out and race, to find out whether you got it right.

The experience will either be bitter, or sweet, depending on how well you and the 100-plus people in your team have fared sweating the small stuff, trying to out-think and out-fox your opposition. It's not uncommon for four years to go by between AC contests, but a team's worst fears can be realised within moments of coming off the start-line for the first time in the AC Match, meaning a long summer lies ahead if you're found wanting.

"It's a unique moment in every America's Cup, part of the event's DNA," says Emirates Team New Zealand boss, Grant Dalton. "The moment when sailors, designers, fans, commentators - everybody really - get the answer to the same question, at exactly the same time, when the Challenger meets the Defender on the start line for the very first finals race, The boats come off the line, foot flat, and we all get a first, good look at whether one has an edge over the other. A classic America's Cup moment."

Few sports deliver such a potentially delicious, yet terrifying cocktail of pressure and intrigue, and this time, it's all by design, a rare phase in Cup history in which a new class rolls out of the shed.

"When we developed the class rule, we really wanted it to be quite open," says Emirates Team New Zealand's Head of Design, Dan Bernasconi, who helped dream up the radical AC75. "We wanted to allow space for innovation and space for different teams to design different hull shapes, different ways of controlling the sails, different foils and rudders. So designers have a much bigger area in which to play. And so as engineers, we love that, it's great. And when each team launched their first boats, we saw exactly that, but we'll find out who's got it right."

Get it right, that's one hell of a confidence booster for any Cup outfit going into the biggest race of their lives.

"The America's Cup is the pinnacle of sailing, really, so to be in that position to be racing for the Cup, that's an incredible opportunity," says INEOS Team UK skipper, Sir Ben Ainslie. "There's always a lot of pressure but if you enjoy that kind of thing then there's no better platform in the sport of sailing."

It's a moment when you discover precisely where you stand as a competitor, whether the hundreds of thousands of small, yet big, decisions over the preceding two, three, even four years of design and build have amounted to a boat that's capable of beating the opposition.

"You're definitely aware of the enormity of it, and we also quite enjoy the pressure that comes with it," adds Emirates Team New Zealand helm, Peter Burling. "In our sport there are lots of different things that bring pressure and add to the occasion and that's all part of the fun of what we do.

"When it actually comes to the first race it's your first chance to really see how things have shaped up over the four years of development and I think that's one of the really exciting aspects of the America's Cup, when so many things come together at the end. It's four years of hard work for, in our case, over a hundred people so it's a pretty amazing challenge."

The warning signal of the America's Cup, like any warning signal of any race, is a moment of tension," adds Francesco Bruni, of Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli, the Italian Challenger of Record. "You have to keep yourself focused on the important things and try to think only about the race and nothing else to perform at the best, and it's going to be a great feeling to be on the start-line in Auckland, one year from now, something I'm really looking forward to."

For the teams, today, 12-months out from that moment, time's disappearing fast as all four outfits race to lock in final designs for boat two, at the same time making the most of every single moment remaining to prepare their boat and themselves for one of the rarest opportunities in sport.

"How we approach our racing is that whether we're sailing around Pensacola Bay by ourselves, or racing day one of the match, each day should feel the same," says NYYC American Magic team head, Terry Hutchinson, a veteran campaigner who experienced this moment for himself back in Valencia, Spain, in 2007.

"I'll be making sure I give the relevant information to Dean, Paul and Andrew about the best strategy for the race and I'll be in the position that I need to be in to execute on the day."

But all the teams will get the chance to test their mettle at the first America's Cup World Series regatta in Cagliari, Sardinia, April 23-26. It's another rare AC milestone, the first time that the new AC75 class yachts will meet to race. There, we'll all get a first glimpse of who's getting it right, or getting it wrong, a crucial opportunity for the teams to get the measure of one another out where it matters, on the water.

Cagliari, followed by Portsmouth (June 4-7) then Auckland (December 17-20), will be equally nerve-racking, given the teams will already be largely committed and building their 2021 boat, but who knows what each has in store for one another come next summer in the southern hemisphere. That's all work in progress.

But what of the boat itself, what can we expect from it, the AC75, making its debut?

"This boat's a real beast. It's the best way to put it," says Emirates Team New Zealand crew, Blair Tuke. "It's a step on aerodynamically to the AC50 from Bermuda, a very powerful boat, more than what we've raced before and that leads to some pretty fast speeds, especially upwind. But, where we're at right now is by no means where all the teams are going to be at next year. It's going to be a different push on to go to that next level."

The day is coming when there is no holding back, no reining in, a day when everything will be on show, because every win, and every point, is vital. That day - March 6, 2021 - is a year from today.

maxon Group tel. +61 2 9457 7477.

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

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**maxon motor Australia Pty Ltd**

Unit 1, 12-14 Beaumont Road  
Mt Kuring-Gai NSW 2080

Tel: +61 2 9457 7477

[sales.au@maxongroup.com](mailto:sales.au@maxongroup.com)

[www.maxongroup.net.au](http://www.maxongroup.net.au)

Twitter @maxongroupAus

**Emirates Team New Zealand**

<https://emirates-team-new-zealand.americascup.com>

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