



Freedom of the Oceans Zaca a te Moana

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Anyone who sailed the Antigua waters last season could not fail to have seen the splendid schooner *Zaca a te Moana*. She had almost become part of the scenery down at Antigua Slipway during her extensive refit as Classics approached.



Zaca a te Moana (Freedom of the Oceans in Polynesian) was built in 1992 for Ed Kastelein (previous owner of *Thendara*, *Eleonora* and now *Atlantic*). She is not a replica of Errol Flynn's schooner but she does follow the tradition of the Grand Banks Schooners. Designed by Olivier van Meer and built by the De Amstel Shipyard in the Netherlands, she is 143' (43m) of steel construction and takes eight to ten guests in six cabins.

In 1997 she was put through a major refit, primarily to make her suitable for the charter market. Sparkman & Stephens was appointed to assist with the design and engineering of her propulsion system and associated machinery, a revised interior arrangement and other miscellaneous tasks.

Skipped by Patrick de Radigues, *Zaca* had been cruising the Med for the past five years when Patrick and her owner felt the Caribbean beckon and a Transatlantic was planned.

Arriving in Barbados in December 2011, they sailed north and settled in Marigot, St Lucia until February 2012, before deciding to come to Antigua for their work list. At Antigua Slipway, under the watchful command of General Manager Deon Hector (whose praise was sung by the Captain and

crew), she was hauled and painted, the new interior projects, including increasing the engine room, were completed and her cutlass bearings changed.

Then her masts were pulled by Antigua Rigging, assisted by *Zaca's* crew (some 38m, weighing 3 to 4 tons) and laid in the yard for repairs, modifications and, of course, a lot of varnishing. The *Zaca* crew set immediately to work, which looked and remained like a mission impossible right up until the last day when the masts were actually re-stepped at the beginning of April, just under two months later. Rob Steele stepped in as freelance engineer with great success (and a much appreciated sense of humour).

Tirelessly, the crew and a host of contractors worked many a twelve-hour day to complete the long list of jobs. Driven by their strong desire to be part of the Classic Regatta, the race against the clock began, but still no new hydraulic winches arrived, nor did the new halyards, nor the new sails ...

The work continued. The varnishing never ending ...

The beautiful brass Antal hydraulic winches arrived one week before the regatta, then the halyards. North Sails

delivered their newly built 163m² Foresail and 70m² Staysail of a specially soft woven 14oz Nordac with traditional finishing the day before the briefing and so it looked like *Zaca* wouldn't sail for many days yet . . .

But the sails fit perfectly and the *Zaca* crew stepped it up one more notch, with crews from nearby boats offering to help *Zaca* achieve her goal of sailing in the Regatta. The night before the start of Classics, Patrick and Xavier, the Mate, rigged up the mainsail in the pouring rain until 2am. The next morning, following problems weighing the anchors and engine difficulties leaving English Harbour (no one said it would be easy), *Zaca a te Moana* started the first race of the 25th Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta just 15 minutes late but heavily under-crewed. Xavier told me this was partly "because half of the volunteer race-crew didn't believe she would actually be ready!"

I was lucky enough to sail on board the next day and the atmosphere on the boat was one of immense and justifiable pride. I may or may not have imagined the half smile on Patrick's face at the helm but the energy and camaraderie amongst the crew was legendary. Sporting their infamous faded navy blue *Zaca* T-shirts, many with cut off sleeves, (surely collectors' items by now) they scuttled up the rig with the ease of jungle monkeys and a trip to the end of the splendid bowsprit was a joy as she sailed powerfully through the Trades those few days in April. She came 3rd in her class and I know personally that a big thank you went out to all those who helped *Zaca* sail that morning . . . and they know who they are. Hope to see *Zaca* back for Classics 2013.

