reductions
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SWISS OCEAN RACING CLUB

"Merit" goes from sloop to ketch.

The next Whitbread Round the World Race - the ultimate goal for an offshore maxi-yacht - will not penalize yachts with ketch riggs. Therefore, Pierre Fehlmann had to take a new approach to the question. Being able to adjust to a permanently changing environment is certainly not one of his minor qualities.

Considering his winner's experience when preparing the last edition of that Race, he and his technical team were not sufficiently convinced about all the advantages of a ketch rigg. The door was open for some more innovative "rule - twisters" who proved to be right.

Sailing all summer '90 against his old competitors during the various races of the 1990 Tag Heuer Maxi Yacht World Cup, provided an additional valuable opportunity to collect data and compare the yachts without any meteorological influence on the racing routes. After some more meetings with Bruce Farr's team, the Swiss skipper made up his mind : "We need more masts !"

Pierre Fehlmann is backed by an enthusiastic and successful sponsor, ready to fully support him in this new endeavour. But the timing of this operation is very critical. Early this year, the world economic and political events did somewhat disturb the international yacht-racing calendar. As a result, the entire programme to modify "Merit" into a ketch must now be completed within 7 weeks, including the IOR re-measurement of the boat, as she will take part in the next major yachting event : The Open UAP Race of the European Community, starting in Lorient on June 9th.

What does one expect from such an unusual operation ? First, "Merit" should be able to improve her performance when reaching or sailing downwind. Second, she will provide a valuable testing ground to gain experience that will be used when possibly building a new yacht and also to train her next crew.

And finally, to come back to Pierre Fehlmann's statement during his press conference in Southampton before the start of the last Round the World Race : "One of the big advantages of a ketch rigg against a sloop is that the ketch has a much greater resale value ..." However, we do believe that this is <u>not</u> his major motivation !

We look forward to meeting you during the '91 season.

With best regards,