

A DASH OF SALT

Every summer, the world's most important vintage yachts gather for the Panerai Classic Yachts Challenge. Ho Yun Kuan gives a first-hand report from Argentario, which hosted the third leg of this year's race.



Eilean leaned her sleek body to the left, dipping almost half of herself into the azure Tyrrhenian Sea. My camera slid down her back and I stretched to reach it before it could slide into the waters with her. I found it hard to believe that Eilean was 80 years old. "Come here, it's safer!" shouts Andrew Cully over the sound of the waves and wind. As Eilean continued her dangerous teasing, I scrambled over to Cully with my camera now securely in my hand.

Eilean, a beautifully restored sailboat, was heeling sharply as she made a turn, threatening to empty her contents into the

depths of the sea. Cully, her captain, had called me over to a sitting area around the helm, which was bordered by a wooden rim that protruded about two inches off the deck.

We were thick in the action of the third leg of the Panerai Classic Yachts Challenge – not competing, but as spectators watching and following the participating vessels on Eilean. Now in its 10th year, the iconic circuit saw 50 yachts participating in this leg, which was held between 19 and 22 June off the coast of Monte Argentario, a peninsula that extends from the Tuscan coast.

Originally designed and built by



Photos SEA&SEE/GUIDO CANTINI



Main image:
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Inset:
Eilean.

legendary Scottish boatyard Fife of Fairlie, Eilean captured the imagination of Angelo Bonati, CEO of Officine Panerai, when he chanced upon the ship while in Antigua in 2006 for the first leg of that year's race. By then, Eilean's glory days were over, but her derelict condition – a result of a serious collision, termite invasion and over 20 years languishing in a mangrove – did not fool the discerning Bonati. He decided that Panerai should acquire Eilean and restore her. Despite



SKIPPER'S AIDE

The Luminor 1950 Regatta 3 Days Chrono Flyback Titanio is a breakthrough for Panerai.



Beating with a specially conceived in-house calibre, this is the brand's first watch with a complication that is exclusively relevant to the world of sailing - the regatta countdown function, which measures the minutes preceding the start of the race.

These minutes are important as they give the sailboats time to align themselves behind the buoys that mark the starting line – a challenge since the positions of the sailboats are at the mercy of winds and waves.

Although an innovative feature, the regatta countdown is surprisingly simple to use.

To set the countdown time, the wearer simply presses the push button at four o'clock. Each push sets the orange countdown hand back by one minute as

it goes in the anticlockwise direction between 12 and nine o'clock. The scale seen along the edge of the dial here measures the countdown time by up to 15 minutes. Once the orange hand hits zero (at 12 o'clock), it enters the scale that measures the elapsed time. The push button at eight o'clock returns all chronograph hands to zero. Other features include a knots scale to measure the speed of the boat, the 12-hour counter at three o'clock and a small seconds sub-dial at nine o'clock.

Clever use of colours elegantly differentiates the regatta and chronograph functions from the regular time display for easy reading. The former is shown in orange and the latter in blue. The watch has a power reserve of three days and is water resistant to 100m. www.panerai.com



the ravages of time, Bonati could see that the sailboat still had much potential. However, he was ultimately convinced by an uncanny coincidence – Eilean was built in 1936, the same year the prototype for Panerai's now iconic Radiomir was first finished.

Today, the 22m vessel is Panerai's sea-bound ambassador. Her lofty off-white sails,

the tallest of which rises to 28.5m, is a familiar sight at Panerai-sponsored regattas. Those who know the tumultuous history behind her now-beautiful exterior would be able to appreciate the hardy, adventurous spirit she embodies – qualities similar to those exuded by Panerai's watersports models.

www.paneraiclassicyachtschallenge.com

The 22m Eilean is a familiar sight at Panerai-sponsored regattas.



Captain Andrew Cully at Eilean's helm. In 1982, British pop group Duran Duran used the yacht as the setting for their music video *Rio*.