

## **Biggest, best primed for Newport Regatta**

By Bill Wagner, The Capital Gazette

June 1, 2011 – Some of the largest, fastest sailboats in the world will compete in the 2011 edition of the Annapolis-to-Newport Race, which begins Friday at noon on the Chesapeake Bay.

Rambler and ICAP Leopard are both 100-foot racing machines that were built specifically for setting course records in ocean distance races. Both boats have the capability of breaking the Annapolis-to-Newport Race record of 42 hours, 58 minutes and 12 seconds that was set in 2001 by Carrera a Farr 60 owned by Joseph Dockery and skippered by Annapolis resident Chris Larson.

Also entered in this year's race is the Farr 80 Beau Geste and the Tripp 75 Bella Pita. All the aforementioned maxi yachts are competing in the Atlantic Ocean Racing Series, which is sponsored by New York Yacht Club, Storm Trysail Club, the Royal Yacht Squadron and Royal Ocean Racing Club. Annapolis-Newport is among seven qualifying races on either side of the Atlantic Ocean that comprise the series, which is highlighted by the Transatlantic Race that begins off Newport on June 3.

"It's great that this new series has prompted these big boats to enter the Annapolis-to-Newport Race. We hope the skippers and crews enjoy themselves so much they come back in the future," said Chip Thayer, chairman of the Annapolis Yacht Club race committee.

Rambler, owned by George David of Connecticut, recently set the course record for a monohull in the Royal Ocean Racing Club Caribbean 600. David, a New York Yacht Club member, called the custom-designed racer a "Volvo 70 on steroids."

The 100-foot canting keel vessel, designed by the renowned Juan Kouyoumdjian, began life as Speedboat under owner Alex Jackson. Volvo Ocean Race veterans Mike Sanderson (skipper) and Stan Honey (navigator) helped Jackson capture line honors in the 2008 and 2010 editions of the Newport-to-Bermuda Race aboard Speedboat.

ICAP Leopard, owned by Mike Slade of Great Britain, has been the primary rival of Rambler ever since both 100-footers were launched. The Farr Yacht Design canting keel racer set the RORC Caribbean 600 record in 2009 and the Fastnet Race record in 2007. London resident Clarke Murphy is chartering ICAP Leopard for Annapolis-Newport and will have an all-star crew of professionals aboard.

Beau Geste, a Farr 80 owned by Karl Kwok of Hong Kong, set the course record for the Bermuda Ocean Race (Annapolis-to-St. George's) last year and has posted outstanding results in every ocean race in which it has competed. Annapolis-based professional Gavin Brady serves as skipper for Beau Geste which was overall winner of the 2010 RORC Caribbean 600.

"Rambler and Leopard will no doubt battle for line honors, but our goal is to beat them both on corrected time," Brady said. "In order to do that, we will need to stay in touch with Rambler and Leopard as long as possible."

Early weather forecasts call for light air for the majority of the 473-nautical mile race, which combines inshore and offshore elements. Brady thinks the 120-mile stretch of the Chesapeake Bay figures to be tricky while the 350-mile ocean passage may not bring stronger wind as it normally does.

"It could be a very frustrating race the whole way and tactics will be important," he said. "It's going to be difficult to decide exactly how best to get out of the bay while there will also be some big decisions once the boats get into the ocean."

A total of 70 boats are registered for Annapolis-Newport, which is being sponsored for the first time this year by Thomson Reuters. The world's largest international multimedia news agency, Thomson Reuters is also sponsoring the Reichel-Pugh 66-footer Aurora (Gus Carlson, New York) for the race. This marks the largest fleet for the biennial Annapolis-Newport since 73 boats entered in 1983.

"We're absolutely delighted to see the race rebounding in popularity and attracting such a large and diverse group of boats," Thayer said.

Organizers have also announced the introduction of an updated tracking system that will make it easier and more entertaining to follow Annapolis-Newport from shore. Each entry will be outfitted with a Yellowbrick GPS transponder that will transmit boat speed and position information every 30 minutes via the Iridium satellite system. That information will be sent automatically and simultaneously for all boats.

This marks a major upgrade in accuracy over the tracking system used in the 2009 Annapolis Newport Race, which collected data from transponders a few at a time over the course of an hour.

Because race officials will be getting more accurate position reports at a higher rate of rapidity, the Annapolis Yacht Club has decided to once again offer trophies for the Chesapeake Bay portion of the race. Those awards, which previously were based on reports from personnel aboard the Chesapeake Lightship, had to be discontinued when that vessel was replaced by an unmanned tower.