



Patrizio Bertelli and the AC75 Luna Rossa.

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Patrizio Bertelli on Luna Rossa, Lessons Learnt From Sailing

● The Prada Cup sailing race kicks off today.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

Eyes are turned East – way East, as the sailing races to determine the winner of the Prada Cup between Luna Rossa, American Magic and Ineos U.K. kick off in Auckland today.

The winner of this round robin will advance to the finals scheduled from Feb. 13 to 22. The winner of the Prada Cup will be the official challenger against the defender, the Emirates Team New Zealand, in the America's Cup, from March 6 to 15.

The America's Cup, the oldest trophy in the history of sports and the most prestigious in the sailing world, marks the sixth challenge for Prada's chief executive officer Patrizio Bertelli and his Luna Rossa sailing boat.

The Luna Rossa team was established in 1997 by Bertelli and the team won the Louis Vuitton Cup in 2000, with a record of 38 victories over 49 races. It also competed in 2003 and in 2007, when it reached the Louis Vuitton Cup final.

Here, Bertelli discusses with WWD his enduring passion for sailing, why he chose to participate once again to the America's Cup, what the sports discipline teaches and how he'll watch the races.

WWD: What sparked your passion for sailing? How did it all begin? You are not only an art collector, I read you also collect boats. Can you tell us something about this collection?

Patrizio Bertelli: It all started in the early 1970s in [Tuscany's] Castiglione della Pescaia [home to one of the first sailing clubs in the region], with a group of friends. With them, I started to sail on the 23-foot-long boats VI Classe IOR. I am passionate about sailing and breathing new life into boats that have made history in terms of yacht design, returning them to victory in vintage regattas.

WWD: I've been told that through the years you've acted as both a trimmer and a spinnaker. Do you continue to sail?

P.B.: I've held different roles on boats over the years: bowman, trimmer, helmsman. I continue to sail now, participating in regattas with historical boats.

WWD: When did you decide to take part in the America's Cup once again and why?

P.B.: It was in Bermuda, in 2017, after the New Zealand team won over Oracle. I felt it was only right to resume this project, also to try and bring back to the America's Cup that luster it was losing.

WWD: Twenty years have passed since the first Louis Vuitton Cup and it is obvious that you are moved by true passion and that this is not merely an investment in communication and marketing. What have you learned from these experiences? What does a sports discipline such as sailing teach?

P.B.: First of all, sailing teaches to be humble. You can never be sure you are on the right path and you must constantly put yourself out there. You are not merely facing your opponent, but especially nature and the technological development. There are no certainties, but work and commitment.

WWD: What did you think of the performance of Luna Rossa during the World Series that just ended last month? This was the first event to showcase the new AC75 yachts together on the same racecourse. [The hosting Emirates Team New Zealand won.] Skipper and team director Max Sirena said that through the past three years, the work was practically done in the dark, without being able to evaluate the opponents. What is your opinion? What do you think of the opponents? What are your expectations?

P.B.: Luna Rossa's performance is encouraging: We have demonstrated we are competitive, especially with light wind. Obviously we are only at the beginning and there is still a lot of room for development, and we can't draw any hasty conclusion. For the time being, the New Zealanders have shown they have an advantage in certain conditions, but they don't seem unreachable. It will be a very interesting and hard-fought America's Cup.

WWD: Are you considering going to New Zealand? How will you watch the regattas?

P.B.: In the current situation my place is here, in Italy, next to my collaborators and workers. I feel this as a duty, independently from the logistic difficulties connected to entering New Zealand. I will watch the regattas on television and I am in constant contact with Max Sirena and I actively participate to the life of the team, even remotely.

WWD: How did you meet Max Sirena and what strikes you the most in him? What are his main characteristics and

his main qualities? How has the team evolved in parallel with the technical evolution of Luna Rossa?

P.B.: I met Max Sirena when he was still at the beginning of his sailing life in 1997 and what impressed me the most was his determination, passion and humility: He started right away in Luna Rossa and he quickly climbed up to reach the top, all through his own merit. Max has also been able to always keep up with the multiple technical developments of the Cup and to know how to mix and manage an America's Cup team, which has strong complexities.

WWD: The technological development of these boats is incredible. Do you perhaps think it has become even a bit extreme? Analogies are sometimes seen with the Formula 1 category and how it influences the automotive sector. How do you think the evolution of these boats will affect the world of sailing?

P.B.: In sports, entailing the use of a vehicle – in sailing as in motorsports – the technical research is always avant-garde and opens the path to new perspectives, which will subsequently be absorbed and made accessible to the larger public: what was unimaginable 20 years ago is today almost banal. It's clear that these boats are extreme; we have introduced them together with Team New Zealand developing an increasingly more contemporary trend in sailing: foiling.

WWD: Do you think that technical apparel will influence the development of materials, shapes and treatments for the use of everyday fashion? What do you expect from the Luna Rossa apparel line in terms of content and distribution around the world?

P.B.: Also in this case we have used and continue to use Luna Rossa as testing grounds to experiment new materials and manufacturing, verifying how they react in extreme conditions. The results could later be transferred in our production and in our active collections, to obtain an always increasing quality of all products.

WWD: How has the lifestyle version of the new A+P Luna Rossa 21 sneaker worn by the Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli team been received? What do you expect from this collaboration with Adidas?

P.B.: The collaboration with Adidas was conceived precisely to combine the know-how and skills of both companies to create high-profile products, unique and technological. I am thus very satisfied by the feedback received from customers and to see how this model has been appreciated, in particular by those passionate about sneakers who have enjoyed the lifestyle version derived from the technical model. This encourages us to continue the collaboration working on new ideas.



The Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli boat.