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Ewan Lebourdais captures a Moonbeam moment amid heavy skies at the Richard Mille Cup



THE RICHARD MILLE CUP 2026

Doon The Watter

WORDS STEFFAN MEYRIC HUGHES
PHOTOS EWAN LEBOURDAIS, JAMES
ROBINSON TAYLOR, TOM COLLIER

This June, as a small, rainy nation took on all-comers in the World Cup, an amazing fleet that included some of the world's most famous classics gathered on the waters of the Clyde. It forms part of one of the world's great bucket list sailing grounds: 1,500 square miles of islands, forests, castles and lochs. As Scotland's World Cup campaign hit the buffers, sailors from near and far had brought their yachts to race on these hallowed waters, where the ghosts of her sons – the Fife Dynasty, GL Watson, Alfred Mylne, David Boyd, Charlie Barr – are still within family memory. Many among the large Breton contingent, who arrived as ready to party as to sail, were on their first visit here, and all understood that it was an odyssey of near-religious importance; particularly after the first few drinks at one of the magnificent houses and castles that hosted the parties. For all that, Largs these days is probably better known as a domestic holiday resort: fish and chips, ice-creams and toes in the cold, early summer water were the scene on the foreshore, while just a few hundred feet out in the bay, the likes of *Mariquita*, both the *'Moonbeams'* and the schooners *Atlantic*, *Elena* and *Adix* took off around the cans, racing boat for boat like a fleet of Dragons at Cowes Week. These two big classes were joined by two more – smaller bermudans and smaller gaffers.

Over eight races in ten days, the fleet saw everything from mist to near-calms, stiff breezes and 30-degree sunshine. Despite the often light airs, no race was cancelled, and these ghosting





- 1 The schooners *Atlantic* (black hull) and *Elena*, the hills of Cumbrae and the mountains of Arran in the background
- 2 *Saskia* heading towards *Moonbeam*
- 3 *Thalia*, the oldest boat at the regatta, built in 1889
- 4 Overall winner *Sonny*, seen here sailing towards *Moonbeam IV*
- 5 Team Fife, all hands on deck
- 6 *Elena*, winner of Class One (schooners)
- 7 *Waverley* is the world's last seagoing paddle steamer
- 8 The three-masted schooner *Atlantic* with the 115ft Fife gaff cutter *Moonbeam IV* beyond

contests were in their way the most interesting of all, testing intuition and tactics, opening up great gambles as yachts went on long tacks in search of dark water, and the smaller, lighter yachts had a chance to catch up the giants and take them on boat for boat. The stunning 1896 Fife III gaff cutter *Kismet*, owned by Oyster founder Richard Matthews, was the clear winner in Class Four, with six first places in eight races. In Class Three, the smaller bermudans, the S&S sloop *Sonny* emerged victorious, after fighting off a great challenge from the Fife III 8-M yacht *Saskia*, whose owner, the Essex smack-racing man Richard Haines, had brought his smack crew up from Essex to take possession just days before the regatta.

Class Two was convincingly won by Fife's last surviving 19-M yacht *Mariquita*, whose sail number C1 has become a familiar, yet still thrilling sight at regattas around the the Mediterranean for decades now. Class One, the schooners, was the closest of all, with *Elena* and *Atlantic* finishing equal on points, *Elena* winning by a hair's breadth on countback.

The final day was one to remember. All participants and hangers-on boarded no less a ship than the *Waverley*, the world's last seagoing paddle-steamer, for a three-hour cruise of the lochs of the Clyde. She's 240ft (73m) of steel, riveted together by shipbuilders here on the Clyde in 1946, overshadowing even the great schooners *Atlantic* and *Elena*. Two leaping dolphins drew alongside to escort her down the water, the ships blasting their horns back and forth in mutual respect. There was hardly a dry eye on board. At the prizegiving that evening at Ardgowan House, the overall winner of the metre-high, solid silver Richard Mille Cup was announced; it was *Sonny*.

Following its inaugural 2023 launch in the Solent and then a move to northern France in 2024, the Richard Mille Cup arrived at its spiritual home and just might have found its best location yet. Impressively enticing the cream of the Mediterranean classics away to the north, credit must go to the organisers, owners and crew for making it happen so spectacularly well. As Marie Tabarly, crewing on *Elena*, put it, there's a 'weird magic' to this part of the world, which is as close as anyone came to describing what so many felt. The Richard Mille Cup will return. To where, no one knows, which is part of its mystique and charm.





1 *Mariquita* (C1) and *Moonbeam IV* hard on the wind

2 Gaffers and schooners mixing it up; the battle for line honours was classless on some days

3 Another view of the Fife 19-Metre *Mariquita* (foreground) and *Moonbeam*

4 Some of *Elena's* crew celebrating their win in the schooner class

5 The sight of crew up masts and out on bowsprits was a common one in the bigger classes all week

6 The crew of overall winner *Sonny* hold the metre-high, solid silver Richard Mille cup aloft

7 Class Two gaffers running in the mist

8 *Mariquita's* crew celebrate their win in Class 2