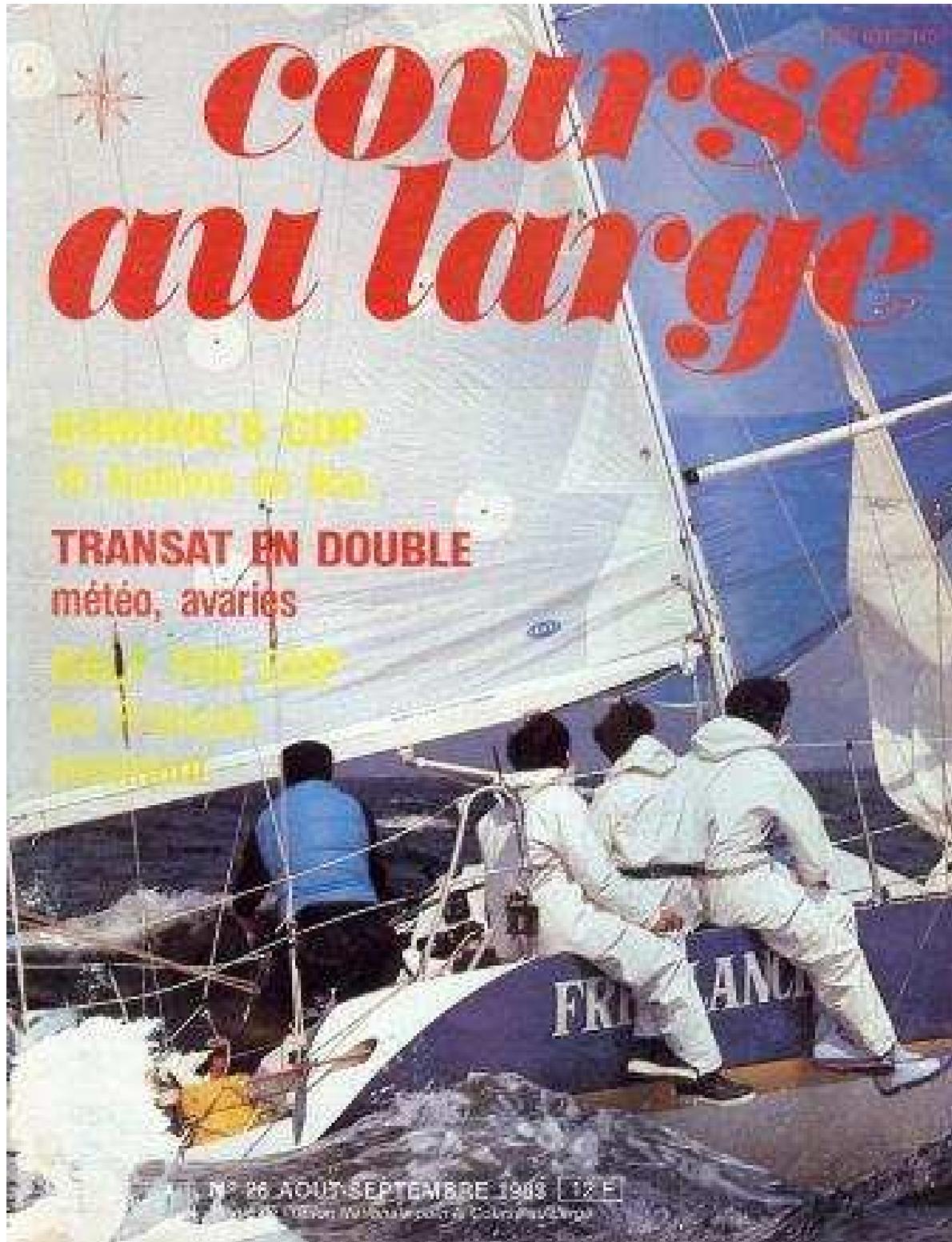


RB Sailing

Free Lance (Briand Half Tonner)

Free Lance was another favourite Half Tonner of mine, this time from the board of French designer Philippe Briand, sporting perhaps some of the sweetest lines of any yacht from the IOR era.



Free Lance was generally considered to be a small Half Tonner, but this was probably an impression given by her low freeboard and modest sail plan, the latter being necessary to offset her fair lines, which resulted in a high rated length, and her moderate displacement. Briand commented that "There are two ways to design a boat. One is to bump the measurement points to gain as much sail area as possible and the other, which I used for Free Lance, is to define how big a sail area is needed and then draw a clean and fast boat".



The distinctively elegant sheerline and low freeboard of the 1983 Half Ton Cup winner Free Lance (above) and easy underwater lines (below)



Free Lance made her first appearance in the 1982 Half Ton Cup, skippered by Briand himself. However, while she entered the regatta as one of the favourites, and started strongly, she was disqualified from the fourth race for a startline luffing incident with Greek yacht Jonathan. This was viewed by many competitors as unduly harsh, and with some anger by the Free Lance crew. In protest at the perceived unfairness of the decision, the Free Lance crew elected not to start the final long offshore race, resulting in a disappointing 20th place in the final standings.



Free Lance seen here during the 1982 Half Ton Cup



For the 1983 regatta, held in Hanko in Norway, Free Lance was the most dominant of the five French yachts that filled the top six places. The regatta benefited from good winds throughout. Free Lance lead from the beginning, winning the first inshore race with a display of tremendous downwind speed.



Free Lance shows her downwind prowess against the 40 boat fleet during the 1983 Half Ton Cup



Fram VIII from Norway, skippered by Prince Harald from Norway, was the only non-French yacht to break into the top group, and with her upwind speed finished the race in second, and then went on to win the second race. Free Lance finished third. In the longer legs of the middle distance offshore race the results were all French, with Free Lance being edged out by Daniel Andrieu's Cifraline 2. Fram VIII finished in seventh.



Fram VIII - a strong upwind performer and designed by Norwegian Eivind Amble



Free Lance makes her way upwind during the 1983 Half Ton Cup

The last inshore race was a hard fight between Free Lance and Fram VIII, with an exciting tacking duel on the last leg, which Fram VIII, with her slightly superior upwind speed, was able to take out. The final long offshore race was another French-dominated affair, and although Cifraline 2 won, Free Lance's second place was more than sufficient to win the Cup. Cifraline 2 finished second, with Scillonia third and Fram VIII fourth. The defending champion, Atalanti II, finished outside the top ten.



Free Lance approaches a finish during the 1983 Half Ton Cup



Free Lance is still sailing today and appeared in the results of the 2005 edition of the Half Ton Classics Cup, finishing 20th.



Free Lance in more recent times

These photos are from the excellent collection of (mostly French) magazine articles held on the Half Ton History site. Many thanks to 'Chorus' for his assistance in translating one of those articles regarding the 1982 regatta.