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2008 AUDI MED CUP CHAMPIONS



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When Quantum president Ed Reynolds chose to ramp up his loft profile he couldn't have chosen a more public arena

Sails for a grand prix raceboat. What's the first name that comes to mind? Exactly, North Sails. Ed Reynolds is on a mission to change that. The president of Quantum Sails has big ambitions for his company, and the most visible sign of those ambitions is the big green 'Q' on the mainsail of the TP52 *Quantum Racing*, which skipper Terry Hutchinson is campaigning on the Audi MedCup Circuit in the Mediterranean.

The big, bold branding on the TP52 is a sign of Reynolds' confidence that Quantum now have the ability to take on North at the highest level, to compete with the market leader's 3DL technology. 'Until recently,' admits Reynolds, 'we couldn't match North's 3DL for consistency. But if you go through the major

components of the actual physical structure and physical characteristics of the cloth we build versus the cloth North build today, I believe we can beat them on almost every measurable feature. What we needed to do with our new Fusion fabric was to produce a sailcloth that was as consistent as 3DL, and now we believe we are doing that.'

But Reynolds acknowledges that having the science in place is just a part of the battle. The next step is to prove it on the water, and that is what Terry Hutchinson and his team have been tasked with. Of course, taking on 15 or more other TP52 campaigns all using North Sails is a mighty challenge. The odds are certainly against them, but it is interesting watching them try to upset the status quo. As Reynolds notes with a wry smile: 'I can promise you one thing: a boat with North sails will finish last!'

As *Quantum Racing* was leading the series after winning the third round of the Audi MedCup events in Sardinia and Palma, that is starting to seem like a pretty safe bet.

Reynolds appears to enjoy being the black sheep of the TP family. 'What's in place right now in the sailmaking world is so unhealthy. We think that the pro sailors want an alternative, the customers want an alternative, even the industry wants an alternative. The only reason North are

in the position that they're in today is that the rest of us were behind the curve on being able to deliver top-end technical products to these race programmes.'

Just over two years ago Reynolds embarked on a massive restructuring at Quantum Sails. It was painful at the time, with firings and hirings at a management level, but 30 months and US\$9 million later, he now believes Quantum are well positioned to be able to take on North Sails at the highest level. 'We disassembled the company, put it back together and we're about 95 per cent of the way towards being a company that legitimately has the ability to go after some of that core business of North. But we don't want to be as big as North. We would like to get 15 to 18 per cent of what North have in what I would term the "Grand Prix" market.

'By the Grand Prix market I am referring to products that are out there selling at \$200-400 per square metre, which gets you up to the Farr 40 level, the Swans, the Wallies, the big superyachts.' Reynolds estimates that North have about 98 per cent of that market. 'We have maybe one per cent, maybe 1.5 per cent; nobody else has even a measurable percentage of it.'

Reynolds and the management board of Quantum Sails believe that the TP52 offers the highest standard of grand prix racing in the

We did it!

world right now. With the current hiatus in the America's Cup, it would be hard to disagree. The TP52 circuit seems the most obvious place to tell the world that you're serious about top-level racing.

The big, bold branding on their boat suggests that Quantum are ready to make themselves heard but, as Terry Hutchinson points out, the other purpose of the TP52 campaign is to validate all the technology and management changes at Quantum over the past two and a half years.

'They've done a lot of work on their sailmaking process,' says Hutchinson, 'and the technology they've invested in with different manufacturing plants and processes. They have made significant investments in design and VPP work. So the TP52 campaign is a benchmarking tool as well as a commercial venture, a way of validating those efforts and seeing if they are paying off where it matters.'

Hutchinson says it was also important to hire a group of sailors 'who weren't going to have an ulterior motive other than winning races and helping make Quantum's sails better'. Although that seems obvious enough, Hutchinson says there is an important distinction here between this campaign and most owner-driven projects.

'In many cases professional sailors work in the best interests of the owner and sometimes that



The Botin and Carkeek-designed *Quantum Racing* has been steadily improving under the leadership of Terry Hutchinson (inset), finishing 3,2,1,1 in the first four Audi MedCup rounds of 2008

means if the sail isn't good you have to make a change, possibly by switching brands.' Clearly that isn't an option onboard *Quantum Racing*. 'For this project we wanted a group of professionals who were dedicated to making a better product, which means that if a sail isn't quite right we work on it until we know how to make a better sail.'

Quantum Racing is unique in another respect, in that it is funded by a company in the marine industry, as opposed to most TP52s which receive sponsorship support from external organisations such as banks and car manufacturers. Hutchinson likes that. 'It's cool. It would be good to see other corporations take it on. You see the Ferraris and BMWs sponsoring cars in Formula One because they realise the importance of it. So for Quantum to invest in the sport like this is great.'

But apart from the America's Cup you couldn't find a much more expensive way of promoting your sails than through a high-end TP52 campaign. 'Yes,' concedes Hutchinson, 'but it answers a lot of questions very quickly doing it at the top end of the competitive sailing world. And if they're competitive, Quantum will dispel a lot of the myths about their sails.'

Talking to other sailors around the TP52 circuit, one of the chief objections to using Quantum is a perception of the sails being heavier than a North 3DL equivalent. Hutchinson says he has indeed had weight issues, but not the ones you'd expect. 'I've been concerned until now that our sails might be too light. One of our mainsails weighs only 27kg and the thing is an absolute glamour.'

'It makes you think, because with just 26 sails that you're allowed to card over six regattas you have to get it right. You know that you're going to do six days of racing at one regatta and then want to get another regatta out of the sail. With an America's Cup mainsail, after about 100 hours the sail will start to show fatigue and would need to be replaced. But the new Fusion cloth is holding up very well.'

However much confidence Hutchinson shows in his sails, he knows that they are fighting an uphill battle to convince people that Quantum are a match for North at the top level. 'The perception is that 3DL is better, and Quantum understand that...'

'They're just trying to get to a market perspective where people feel there is a choice. If they know that their sailors can feel confident, then they need to be able to deliver that. As a professional sailor you don't want to recommend something to an owner and not have it work. We all have a massive vested interest in this succeeding.'

Four events into the season – Alicante, Marseille, Cagliari and Palma – and things are going well for *Quantum Racing*. The team hold a healthy lead at the top of the standings. Reynolds is happy with progress. 'I think we're going very well. Botin and Carkeek have done a fabulous job with the boat. We're very confident with where we are with the boat, the sail optimisation, the whole programme.'

'The sailors are happy to step forward and say we've got everything we need to go and win. We're a new group, but we're beginning to operate more efficiently. Our aim was to get halfway through the season still with an opportunity to win, and we've achieved that. Now we've got to square away the final part of the season. We feel very strongly that we'll continue to improve. There's nothing I would change.'

It would be a massive step for the company if *Quantum Racing* can win the Audi MedCup Circuit this year, proof that Quantum really can take on the market leader at the highest level. But that said, Reynolds believes that in many markets Quantum have been the match of North for some years already. 'I would say 90 per cent of our product line is the best in the world. People don't realise how powerful we are in the one-design world, and our cruising products are spectacular.'

'But let me make an analogy with the bicycle world. We've been very good at building the 900g carbon-framed road bike. The thing is, North Sails has been very good at building the 815g carbon bike...'

'And even though Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France on a 900g bike, even though it was good enough for him, people still lust after the lighter model. In every other line of bikes – beach cruisers, tandem bikes, guys who want to ride across the country, mountain biking – our products were equal if not better than North's. But now we are building that 815g bike, and we can match them at every level, including the highest peaks of the grand prix racing scene.'

'That's what we've been working hard to achieve: developing and building the best possible sails for the very top of the competitive sailing world. And today we are going out there on the water and proving it.'

Andy Rice



FUSION **M** TECHNOLOGY

WHAT QUANTUM DOES

BETTER LAMINATION

- More heat (infrared)
- More pressure (6 tons)
- Less glue

MORE FIBER

- More fiber in more directions

AEROSTRUCTURAL COUPLING

- Every sail is designed and engineered with the world's most advanced computational modeling

POST-CURED SHAPING

- Our sails are shaped after, not during, lamination

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

The Fusion M sail is the first membrane sail guaranteed not to de-laminate.

More fiber means better durability and shape holding and no belly button.

Integrated rig and sail design. Your sail receives the same technology that won the 2008 Med Cup.

Infinitely repeatable shapes with no shrinkage or distortion during the manufacturing process.

ANTICIPATE THE SHIFT

Contact us direct at 1-888-QSDG-889 or visit us online to learn more about our award-winning Fusion M Sails.

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