

Mary Coleman Interview

Owner of *ASTRA*



F40 Editor Fiona Brown speaks to Mary Coleman about joining the Farr 40 Class as a relative newcomer to sailing, what it's like racing against the big boys and where she sees the Class going over the next few years.

FB: Where and when did you start sailing and what other classes of sailing were you involved with before buying your Farr 40?

MC: I started sailing 12 years ago in San Francisco Bay. I attended most of the ASA sailing classes and then had a 35' cruising sailboat for several years before buying a Farr 40 at the end of 2000. I have a Vanguard 15 for dinghy sailing and I have crewed on Etchells in one design racing. I crewed on many different race boats in San Francisco Bay and offshore on the Pacific Coast before buying my Farr 40, *ASTRA*, Hull 079, at the end of 2000.

FB: What are your greatest achievements in sailing to date?

MC: Just learning to helm a Farr 40 in intense one design competition has been a major accomplishment for me given that this was my first race boat. We sail in very heavy breeze all summer in San Francisco Bay and it is a real challenge driving a boat well in these windy conditions. I also loved sailing my boat down the California coast in 30 knots of breeze to compete in the Southern California Farr 40 regattas.

FB: How did you first get into Farr 40 sailing and what attracted you to this particular Class?

MC: I first saw *BLUECHIP*, Walt Logon's Farr 40, when racing in the Corinthian Yacht Club Friday night races in San Francisco Bay. I was extremely impressed with the speed and performance of the Farr 40. I arranged a demo on *CAVALLINO* and fell in love with the boat and

ordered a new hull in the fall of 2000. I wanted a fast boat that I could sail in a one design Class as well as in local PHRF races. The main reason that I love this Class is that I get to sail with and compete against the very best sailors in the world. It has definitely helped me become a much better sailor.

FB: How did you put together your crew and who are the key members of your team?

MC: I put together a crew over the last few years and have a number of very talented amateurs and pros that I enjoy sailing with. A key member of our team is Sylvain Barrielle, who has been our coach/tactician/trimmer and sailmaker from UK Sails. Sylvain is a 4 times veteran of the America's Cup campaigns sailing for the French team. I have also been very fortunate to sail with and learn from some really terrific sailors including Hamish Pepper, John Cutler, Dawn Riley and Howie Sheibler.

FB: What strengths do you feel you personally bring to the team and what strengths do the other team members bring?

MC: I bring good organization and people management skills from my years of being a CEO in the technology industry. My boat manager Sylvain Barrielle is an outstanding sailor and helps coach the crew, maintains the boat in top performance and makes sure that we have the rig tuned at optimal performance. Sylvain has also helped us experiment with a number of new sail designs with our new carbon sails.

FB: Are there any advantages to being a woman sailing on the Farr 40 circuit?

MC: One advantage we have is that I weigh much less than most male helmsmen. When you couple this fact, plus a lightweight tactician, we can

Mary Coleman Interview Cont'd.

end up with a 100 pounds more crew weight on the rail where it counts, compared to boats that have heavier helmsmen and tacticians. We also are able to typically sail with 10 crew instead of 9 crew and it is always helpful to have an extra pair of hands.

FB: What are your goals for the 2004 season and what plans are you putting in place to help achieve them?

MC: We plan on practicing regularly through the year and competing in all the Northern California Farr 40 regattas and the Worlds.

FB: What do you do professionally when you are not sailing on the Farr 40 circuit?

MC: I work as a venture capitalist in Silicon Valley focusing on investments in software companies.

FB: What other sports do/have you competed in and at what level?

MC: I swam and played tennis competitively when I was younger. I have also been a very avid skier the last 20 years. I also love scuba diving and fishing.

FB: When Farr 40 sailing and work all get too much what is your favourite way to unwind and get away from it all?

MC: I love to go cruising and fishing in different places around the world. Last year, I went sailing in New Zealand and Tonga. I went game fishing in Costa Rica over Christmas. I also love just taking my Protector out boating in various parts of the US. This summer I will take it up to the San Juan Islands, Victoria and Desolation Sound in Canada.

