



Based on its recent metrics, on a 30 days average, Sailing Anarchy claims more than 1.4 million visits, 330,000 unique visitors and 3.7 million pages viewed, with 17% increase in new visits. Perhaps with his name, Scot Tempesta was predestined to cause a tad of a stir in the Sailing Establishment. He has surely done so. Yet, hate it or love it, at a time where the officials of top end sailing programmes are looking at ways at broadening the sailing fan base beyond its inner circle, he is a voice and a force to be reckoned with. An important contribution to our series on the professional sailing ecosystem.

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PORTRAIT OF AN ANARCHIST

In conversation with Scot Tempesta,
our quiet little world's most dedicated trouble-maker!

Alban: *Scot, at a high-level, tell us a little bit more about the emergence of the Sailing Anarchy phenomenon...*

Scot: Oh, we don't do anything at a high level. Actually, all we do is pretty low-brow! I started this site as an answer to what I saw as a real lack of transparency in the sailing

sport in general. Most of the magazines were just doing gloss pieces; there was no real behind the scenes content. And the online aspect of all this was just dawning, and not very good at all. This was a bit more than 10 years ago and there were only a couple of online publications dedicated to sailing. The one that was the biggest in the States, and perhaps the only one at the time was called 'scuttlebutthole' I think. It was pretty weak and boring, and frankly not much has changed in the decade since. They suck.

Back then, I was working in radio, looking at sailing a little bit from the sidelines. I remember sending a critical letter to the "Editor" at one online pub, but they didn't publish it. So I sent an email asking "why?" No response. Oh right! It suddenly dawned on me that I was not in the "Good Ol Boys Club"...How interesting! Clearly alternative opinions were not welcome there, nor really anywhere else. It was all so fucking dull I decided to start something on my own. I did not know anything about anything Internet related. We came up with the name, 'Sailing Anarchy' and put together a pretty crude and primitive website, just for the sake of bitching about things that nobody else was bitching about. Especially bitching about people like Dennis Conner, and Peter Isler, basically people that for various reasons I did not like. I did not like them personally, I didn't like the way they went about sailing. I just thought I could not be the only person with views like that, and if even I was, I didn't give a damn and just did it!

Alban: *You must have made a lot of friends!*

Scot: Oh my god! Once we got going and got some traction, you would not believe the level

of criticism we received. What was funny was that nobody knew who was behind SA when we first started. I never made Sailing Anarchy about me, although I was the one writing the opinion pieces. At the start most readers did not even know who I was. When I started the forum, which I always thought would be the life blood of the site, there was this lingering question: "who is this guy?"

Alban: *Okay Mr. Tempesta, who are you then?*

Scot: Well the fact is that it does not really matter more now than it then did then. The site was about stirring things up a bit and it did not make me any friends but I didn't really care about the fact that people I disliked, disliked the site! Mind you, I do now consider Dennis Conner as a friend, and we now have interesting conversations despite me hammering on him during all those years! Props to him, but most of the haters continue to pout when it comes to us and that actually makes me really happy.

That was in essence why I started SA. But then I realized that I could not just rag about stuff. If the site was to go anywhere, and I had no illusions that it would, it was just a hobby, I had to add different kinds of content rather just me scream about shit. So I started to reach out to the big names in the sport to do interviews, round tables, etc. The stuff was pretty good. The site started to get bigger and bigger. The forum started to get more numbers, and one day, we got our first advertiser! I just could not believe that people wanted to give us money to run an ad. But though I never wanted the site to be too flashy as the essential message was around the content; and I always thought that content would be what would separate us from every-

body else. I think our content is superior to anything else. Mind you, I say that from a very uneducated point of view as I just can't be arsed to look at other sailing publications. They bore me and are, by and large, run by twats!

Alban: *Oh dear, how about Seahorse?*

Scot: I have very few friends in the world of sailing journalism. In fact, I have a ton of enemies, many of whom I created, others who will never like us no matter what, with the exception of Seahorse. They always liked us, and we have always loved what they do, but then what they do is very different to what we do, very technical. I always thought we need to be entertaining. There are a lot of other things people can do with their time other than reading Sailing Anarchy. There is a lot of other places they can go to spend their time, and I think they come to us, in ever greater numbers, because SA is a fun place to come to.

Alban: *How do you see sailing outside the US? You seem to be more popular in Europe than in the US!*

Scot: You guys seem to be a lot less uptight than we are here. Sailing is becoming so specialised, countries and regions specialise on various things. I don't travel abroad, but Mr. Clean, my Senior Editor, does! There just seems to be a lot more action going on in Europe than in the US. Whether it is an accurate perception, I don't know. We have always been a place where the international community contributes with content from their parts of the world. It is these contributors who have turned SA into a website with a global audience, something I just could not do on my own.

Alban: *Being a 'Sailing Anarchist' we would expect you to sail on something more radical and disrupti-*

ve, and I dare to ask, something a little less conservative than a J-Boat?

Scot: I owned a Flying Tiger 10m for six years – not boring at all! We won almost everything there was to win here, and are now moving into a brand new Shaw 650 – not exactly boring! As far as J Boats, I don't have a particular affection for them. I am not sure where this perception is coming from...Actually I happen to have been pretty critical about the J-105 which has a rabid fan-base, and people have been inflamed by my comments. I do admire J-Boats' unbelievable stream of success. It is unparalleled in the sport. Everything that they do is successful. They just seem to have that knack for producing something that everybody seems to be looking for. I think they are too conservative, they are bad light air boats. They are not what I like about boats, they just lack that performance aspect that I prefer, but I certainly understand their appeal.

Alban: *Will we see you sailing on multihulls one day?*

Scot: No? All right, yes and no! I'd love to go out there and sail them. They are out of my league in some ways. Even if I often behave like a teenager, I am actually 56 years old. The physicality of those things is a step beyond what I am capable of. Do I want to step aboard as a passenger? I had opportunities. Up until a couple of years ago, I was married with two kids, and I just did not want to get involved in something I had no time for. Intriguingly, my interest now is not so much about going sailing but more about just talking about it. This may sound kind of lame! I receive comments like 'you don't really sail, so how come you can talk about it?' Well! I have been sailing for 45 years. But at some point it becomes dif-



difficult to climb up any avenue of sailing. I don't kite surf, I used to windsurf but I don't anymore. My focus is on Sailing Anarchy, and I don't think it necessary involves me sailing everything everywhere; it actually probably precludes me from sailing as it is a business that must be run and I really do love running it. I may do it poorly, but I love it! Yes, the new cats look interesting. Yes, it must be a hell of an experience and fair enough, it is a brave new world. Personally, I don't feel the need to go do it.

Alban: *Is it possible for a Sailing Anarchist to have a sailing hero?*

Scot: It is! Mark Reynolds is

probably the one that I think most highly of, particularly because of how he achieved his success. The Star class was particularly tough during his time and he became, without question, the very best in the world. I watched him progress up the ladder to the very top, as I was the big boat salesman out of Mark's then Sobstad sail loft in San Diego. And the way he did it, methodically, through hard work, dedication, testing. He also did it cerebrally. Smart, and focused. And he is the most unaffected, unassuming and generally good guy that I have ever met in this sport. And it doesn't hurt that Mark and I are politically radical leftists in a sea of right-wingers...!

Alban: *What are your thoughts on the new format of the America's Cup?*

Scot: I think moving to multi-hulls was a bold move. However, I think it is an unmitigated disaster (*). Look at the AC World Series. In some ways I get it, but it simply did not capture peoples' imagination the way they thought it would. The television aspects of it did not work well in part because they rely on the same commentators they had in the past like Gary Jobson. I simply could not think of anybody worse than him! Broadcast people should have had this shit figured out by now. They have enough money to just figure out what they should be

doing. They cast a wide net to try to catch as many viewers, but it won't work because people are confused. They don't really know what it is and they have never understood sailboat racing in general. People see those one-design 45 footers, and then they're told "this is not the America's Cup, the real cup is about those 72 footers". Oh okay, how many of those are they? "...well, there are 3 or 4 of them". Just not compelling enough. The bottom line is that you would simply not hear about the America's Cup unless you go on sailing websites, or unless there is something negative associated with the America's Cup, or about Larry Ellison, for example.

But it is when you get to the actual racing that the real disaster will unfold. I could be proven to be totally wrong, but I think we are probably about to see some of the most expensive wipe outs and breakages that we have ever witnessed in our sport. And all this will result in what? A slight bump in TV ratings maybe.

Alban: *But the public likes crashes, right?*

Scot: People compare this to NASCAR and there is this idiotic assumption that people only watch car races for crashes, but they don't. And even if they do, if 10% of the cars crash, there are still 21 cars racing. Given the current uptake of the AC 72's, if only one of those blows up, you end up with just one boat left. So on the one hand I commend what they are doing and moving away from those piggy monohulls that only seem to be competing for boredom but did they had to go for the other extreme? In a way this is awesome. But I don't have a high opinion on how the whole thing has been executed, or on the durability of the boat or of this particular format? It simply won't work and they will have to look for a plan 'B'. Actually, the degree of badness could spell the end of the America's Cup, because nothing has materialised in the way they said it would. Where would they be without a couple of fat wallets? I don't think they captured the sailors' imagination, nor did they capture the imagination of people outside the sailing world. This may change but right now my point of view is that it won't work.

Alban: *So Scot, now we have had the death of Andrew Simpson aboard Artemis. Your thoughts?*

Scot: People die in extreme sports, don't they? Equipment fails, and sometimes people

die. Ayrton Senna was killed because the steering in his Williams F-1 car failed. It should not really surprise us that someone died on the cutting edge of this version of the AC. What I take huge issue with, is the way that Artemis has handled it. They have said nothing, done nothing, other than slam the doors shut. They owe the community at large some public relations. It is inexcusable and Paul Cayard is guilty of doing an incredibly shitty job as the leader. In no other sport would this be acceptable.

Alban: *When it boils down to capturing people's imagination, don't you think that ocean racing is more suitable than racing round the cans for the wider audience?*

Scot: Yes!!! Let's take the Vendée Globe as a perspective. So we have a country, America, where the word 'Extreme' is one of the most over used terms, especially in the world of sports. Everything has to be extreme this, and extreme that. Extreme, extreme, extreme. Now you have an event, the Vendée Globe, which is the most extreme sport ever. It actually deserves the word extreme! You have those guys sailing by themselves those monstrous, wickedly fast, incredibly complicated boats, racing non-stop around the world, and you could not get this country to get a collective fart about it in terms of interest...It is almost like it did not happen! Again and much like the AC unless you were going to a sailing site, you could not hear about this anywhere! How can we Americans not pay attention to this? These guys are delivering all what we are supposed to be waiting for in terms of true sports warriors. It remains incredible to me that this simply did not register. People don't connect to it because it does not relate to anything they know, because they have never even gone sailing.

The barriers for entering into sailing are virtually insurmountable for most people unless you are born in a sailing family. Either you have the opportunity by birth, or you stumble into sailing and have an unshakable determination for it. If you don't go sailing, you won't understand it, from the SailRocket going at 70 miles an hour to sailors going non stop around the world because they simply can't relate to it. So to answer your question, I love it and I wish more Americans could.

Coming back to your point, fair enough ocean racing is easier to understand than round the can races, unfortunately, we don't have long attention spans in this country, and following the VG requires a real commitment from an audience. It is long play in a 30 second video clip world. You are asking people to pay attention for a long period of time. When the most popular form of Social Media is reduced to 140 characters, that says all you need to know about people paying attention. That and we

just don't have the cultural understanding of the sport of sailing.

Alban: *As a conclusion?*

Scot: Thanks to our community, SA has come a long, long way. We have a lot fewer haters than when we started. I think that we are not for everybody, but the numbers don't lie: There are way more people who love what we do. I always thought that by involving the community, by giving it a sense of ownership, it would respond. We do what we want, and how we want it, but welcome the community to influence it. I think this has been a good recipe for success for us, and I am as enthused about SA now as I have ever been.

Interview by Alban James

(*) Note: Scot made this comment before the Artemis tragedy

