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# Hampshire sailors taking on the French

**IT is one of the most prestigious yacht races in the world, inspired by the historic coffee trading routes between France and South America.**

Now, a host of Hampshire ocean racers are hitting the water in a bid to become the first non-French sailors ever to win the Transat Jacques Vabre (TJV) yacht race, a doubled-handed 5,000-mile sprint across the Atlantic.

The race is set to be the highlight of the sailing season - and has attracted some of the world's top sailors including Hampshire's own Dee Caffari, Brian Thompson, Mike Golding, Sam Davies and Alex Thomson.

It is the first major ocean race since the single-handed Vendée Globe round the world race, which saw Davies take fourth, Thompson fifth and Caffari sixth out of 30 starting skippers.

Golding was forced to retire hours after taking the lead with a broken mast, while Thomson pulled out just days into the race with structural damage.

Each sailor has paired up with a co-skipper for the TJV, which leaves Le Havre bound for Puerto Limon, Costa Rica, on Sunday.

Dee Caffari and Brian Thompson have teamed up to sail Aviva, Davies will race on Artemis Ocean Racing with Frenchman Sidney Gavigner, Golding has paired up with Spanish sailor Javier Sansó on Mike Golding Racing while Thomson will sail with boat captain Ross Daniels on Hugo Boss.

Caffari, from Titchfield, said: "Having done the Vendée my confidence is much higher and I feel as if I can go out and be competitive.

"Unlike the Vendée this race is a sprint and we are going to give it large. It will be about pushing as hard as we possibly can.

"Now it's down to Brian and me to make it happen."



**EARLY EXITS:**  
Mike Golding, left, and Alex Thomson.



Thompson added: "We have a quick boat and get on well together so I believe we will be competitive out there."

Speaking from the dockside in Le Havre, Warsash sailor Golding said: "It has not been easy to get ready in time.

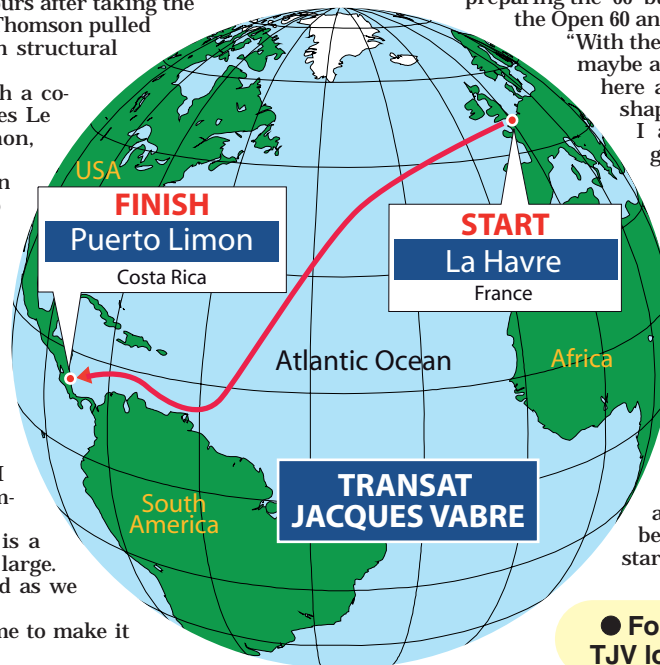
"It has been a heavy schedule with the Extreme 40 and preparing the '60' but it has been nice to get back on the Open 60 and the boat is going well.

"With the refit and everything it has been maybe a little bit last minute but we are here and I think the boat is in good shape and we are in good shape and I am really looking forward to going racing again."

Davies, from Hamble, said: "Sidney and I have spent a lot of time working with the designer to work out the fastest angles to sail - despite a complete refit the boat is still twice as heavy as some of the other boats.

"I am just looking forward to going out sailing again. We really believe we can put in a good performance."

Thomson added: "Racing with Ross will be fantastic, we know each other so well and we are lining up against the very best in the world. I can't wait to get started."



● For all the latest from the TJV log onto [sailsolent.co.uk](http://sailsolent.co.uk)



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