



Bold thinking

Giuliano Luzzato reports from the helm of the wallyrocket51 off the coast of Valencia at the end of the boat's very successful first racing season

GILES MARTIN/RAGET

With just a whisper of breeze the boat slips forward effortlessly leaving no wake behind, clear evidence of a fine-tuned hydrodynamic design. Despite the light air, the wallyrocket51 feels alive, perfectly balanced thanks in no small part to the expert hands of the professional trimmers. It's surprisingly easy to steer even for an amateur sailor such as the author of this article. That's no small thing, because the wallyrocket51 aims squarely at the owner-driver market. This is a pure racer, conceived for class racing around the cans but equally competitive under rating rules on both windward/leeward courses and offshore, where statistically a light and efficient 50-footer has an excellent chance of taking overall corrected-time victories.

'Hold her on this angle – a puff's coming in,' calls out a familiar voice: Vasco Vascotto. The boat immediately comes alive, accelerating with purpose.

With 8.2kts of true wind our boatspeed reads 8.6, pointing on the breeze at 38° TWA. The wallyrocket51 truly does have remarkable upwind ability. The wind fills to 10kts, we ease sheets, hoist the gennaker and bear away. Reaching, the boat is again faster than the wind: 10.8kts SOG in 10.3kts TWS, sailing at 141° TWA. And these are just the early sea trials; the boat is yet to be fully dialed in, so the target speeds will only improve. But what's really thrilling isn't just the boat's potential, it's the overall experience: sailing alongside professionals, taking guidance from two legends. Guillermo Parada and Vasco Vascotto are both serving as consultants to Wally for this project. That's exactly the experience future owner-drivers will enjoy at the helm of this yacht.

Parada and Vascotto bring to the wallyrocket51 programme a wealth of experience and synergy. They've sailed together for 15 years in the 52 Super Series (notably 10 seasons on *Azzurra*) and in the maxi fleet. 'When Wally first

approached me about this project I told them I would only join if Vasco was involved,' says Parada. 'We've also known Botin and his design team for years, which makes collaboration seamless. That's an essential condition if you want the boat to be as fast and competitive as possible.'

Guille Parada doesn't hide his enthusiasm: 'It's a boat with its own DNA designed specifically for owner-drivers, carrying a more generous sail plan than most in this size bracket and packing in all the latest innovations. I believe it will appeal to a broad spectrum of owners, from those stepping up from smaller race classes to maxi yacht owners looking for something more reactive and rewarding to race with friends.'

This memorable sea trial took place in the spring of 2025. Since then, *Django* the wallyrocket51 has made her mark. She debuted by winning the ORC National Championship for central and southern Tyrrhenian waters in Sorrento (Naples), then moved to the UK for the Cowes-



Dinard-St Malo Race, the Rolex Fastnet Race and the Admiral's Cup. She finished third overall in Admiral's Cup Class 1 after winning the opening 160-mile Channel Race.

After her first full season, it's clear that the wallyrocket51 has delivered on her original promise: a design capable of being competitive under all rating systems – a true all-round winner – while offering maximum flexibility. Her deck layout was designed with offshore racing in mind, avoiding the water ingress issues that plague many pure inshore racers. She can easily be reconfigured from an IRC setup, with a 15-strong crew and pedestal grinders, to the 11-crew class racing version fitted with powered winches.

Concept, design and style

For over 30 years Wally, now part of the Ferretti Group, has made a name by breaking conventions. Always ahead of their time, the marque's iconic yachts have consistently blended extraordinary performance, uncompromising comfort and unmatched style, redefining the super-sailing yachts segment time and again. True to its claim, "20 years ahead",

Wally has now entered the realm of uncompromising racers, anticipating the trend of owners maintaining one comfortable cruising yacht and another (or even several) purely for racing. And of course, it has done so the Wally way.

'Wally continues to embody the forward-looking vision of a brand that remains faithful to its sailing roots and spirit,' explains Vittorio Blengini, sales director of custom business for the Ferretti Group, overseeing the entire superyacht division including Wally.

A passionate sailor himself, with project-management experience in the world of sailing superyachts, Blengini continues: 'Wally has always produced unique yachts, each reflecting its owner's personality. Today we're continuing that path, updating the brand's original philosophy with modern technology. With the wallyrocket51 and wallyrocket71, we've revitalised the racing spirit that's been part of Wally's DNA since the beginning.'

Creating a 51-footer that exceeds expectations, manageable by an owner-

driver yet capable of offshore sailing with a reduced crew, was a challenge few could meet. For the naval architecture, Wally turned to Botin Partners – the studio behind the most successful TP52s and several other winning 50-footers. The Wally team encouraged them to push innovation even further, and Botin delivered: a boat displacing just 6,250kg, fitted with an advanced 660-litre-per-side

water ballast system that fills in one minute and transfers from side to side in just over six seconds.

Adolfo Carrau,

design partner at Botin Partners, explains that the wallyrocket51 was designed from scratch, drawing on the team's extensive 50-foot racing experience. The studio worked closely with Wally to develop a high-performance yacht that is cost-efficient and straightforward to build. Collaboration also extended to the deck layout and integrated systems. Among the standout features are the yacht's ultra-light displacement which boosts downwind speed and led to a full rethink of sailplan, hull shape and keel-bulb design. A trim

'Wally encouraged Botin to push innovation even further and Botin delivered'



Making the wallyrocket's overall length 1ft shorter than a TP52 gained valuable rating credits



From the drawing board – Adolfo Carrau has his say

This project began in early 2022, following a call from Vasco Vascotto on behalf of Wally Yachts and the Ferretti Group. They were seeking a fresh concept for a new one-design racer that could also be highly competitive under both IRC and ORC rating systems.

The next design discussion centred on size, as usual! At present, it's extremely difficult to outperform a well-optimised 52-footer under either rating rule. The obvious approach would be to go longer, maximising waterline length and upwind speed for tactical advantages. Initially, we developed a 53ft design; a scaled-up modern racer with a traditional fixed keel and a heavy bulb.

However, it quickly became clear that this conventional path wasn't particularly exciting and Wally's philosophy is to always be "20 years ahead." This opened the door to take risks and think boldly. We reversed our approach entirely, opting instead to go one foot shorter. That allowed us to gain valuable rating credits and reinvest them in high-performance features, such as:

- 1. Trim tab:** to enhance upwind performance and narrow the gap to the 52ft despite the shorter length
- 2. Reduced weight:** a one-ton lighter hull to promote early downwind planing, faster acceleration and improved responsiveness in gusty wind conditions
- 3. Water ballast system:** a fast system for both inshore and offshore use, allowing fine-tuning of racing weight and righting moment according to the wind conditions

- 4. Stern interceptor:** to extend the stern wave and adjust longitudinal trim depending on boatspeed.

During the design phase we ran both IRC and ORC trial ratings and confirmed with our static VPP and different CFD dynamic simulations tools that this strategy performed very well. We then moved into detailed engineering with Pure Engineering, the Wally Technical Office and Performance Boats.

Midway through construction of the first yacht, the IRC rule for trim tabs changed. In response, we developed a new fixed keel design that maintained outstanding upwind efficiency and achieved a lower rating, making it a highly competitive option regardless.

As expected from Wally, innovative deck systems were also a priority. Powered winches became a feature of the one-design class and the boats can be configured according to the regatta schedule.

Fast forward to November 2025: three wallyrockets have been successfully launched and three more are under construction.

In the broader context, both the wallyrocket51 *Django* and the wallyrocket71 (2025 Rolex Maxi Grand Prix World Champion) have proven themselves. These ultra-light racing machines have shifted the design paradigm in monohull grand prix racing. They demonstrate that it's possible to combine thrilling, high-speed sailing with consistent success under both IRC and ORC ratings.

tab is also fitted for class racing, though it's omitted under IRC for rating reasons.

'We designed this yacht to be truly all-round,' says Carrau. 'She's engineered and optimised to perform across a wide range of weather conditions and race formats, including offshore events. And like any light, powerful raceboat, she'll be huge fun to drive downwind in a blow!'

Performance and technology aside, it was essential that the wallyrocket51 also carries the unmistakable Wally aesthetic which is an instantly recognisable blend of innovation and style. To achieve this, Wally enlisted Santa Maria Magnolfi Studio to work in concert with Botin and its own in-house team, integrating signature styling elements without compromising the yacht's performance.

Designing a pure raceboat while staying true to Wally's philosophy was a real balancing act between two worlds. On one hand, it had to deliver uncompromising performance. On the other hand innovation and aesthetics, cornerstones of Wally's identity, could not be sacrificed. Design therefore played a crucial role, not only visually but also functionally. Every style choice serves a purpose: reducing weight, optimising surfaces and continuing to express the innovative spirit that defines the brand.

Though its DNA is resolutely race-oriented, the wallyrocket51 still bears all the hallmarks of the Wally family. The trademark reverse sheerline, the transom design inspired by Wally's iconic air intakes, and a sportier interpretation of the distinctive wheel found on larger models such as the wallywind110, all reinforce its unmistakable lineage.

Construction

Building a high-performance lightweight racer such as the wallyrocket51 demands absolute precision and extremely tight tolerances. Wally therefore partnered with Pure Design & Engineering to oversee the project and ensure it met the highest engineering standards. The hull is built from pre-preg carbon fibre with Corecell



The wallyrocket51 has pedestal grinders and 15 crew in IRC mode; electric winches and a crew of 11 for one-design racing

and Nomex cores ensuring strength and rigidity at the lowest possible weight.

The project was guided by a desire to create something new and intelligent, always performance-driven. In a yacht this compact and light, even a three per cent variation in composite weight can mean a critical 36kg margin, so Wally placed obsessive focus on weight control, which is a key factor in achieving the expected performance. The wallyrocket51 carries a 94m² square-top mainsail, a Southern Spars mast, AEROsix carbon rigging by Future Fibres and a total upwind sail area of 160m², increasing to 360m² downwind with a 266m² gennaker.

‘We wanted to create a boat that makes owners and sailors genuinely happy — one that includes all the things people say they want when you share a beer after racing: a yacht that holds its value, that looks like a Wally, that’s faster than anything else out there,’ Vascotto confirms. ‘And every time we sail her in different conditions, she confirms we got it right!’

‘Every time we sail, she confirms we got it right’

Wallyrocket71

At the 2025 Loro Piana Giraglia, the same team behind the wallyrocket51 unveiled her bigger sister, the 71-footer. While the 51 is planned as a small production series, the wallyrocket71 is a true Grand Prix one-off, built to order. Entering both the coastal races in St Tropez and the offshore Giraglia just 10 days after launch, the new yacht was fine-tuned on the fly – and went on to win the Rolex IMA Maxi Grand Prix World Championship in Porto Cervo that September, against a strong

fleet of similar boats.

That was followed by victory at Les Voiles de St. Tropez.

‘I want to express my

deepest gratitude to the owner, Giovanni Lombardi Stronati, whose confidence in this ambitious vision from day one made everything possible,’ said Alberto Galassi, CEO of Ferretti Group. ‘A heartfelt thanks also goes to Botin Partners for their cutting-edge design, to King Marine for their superb craftsmanship and to our Wally team for their relentless passion

and expertise. With the wallyrocket71, Wally opens an exciting new chapter in competitive sailing, launching a yacht designed to be among the fastest in its class. This is more than just a new yacht; it’s a statement of intent, a leap forward reaffirming our commitment to innovation, performance and design excellence.’

Adolfo Carrau of Botin Partners embraced the challenge of creating a maxi capable of redefining the limits of performance and innovation. ‘We started with a clean sheet, asking ourselves how to beat the most competitive Maxi 72s on corrected time,’ he explains. ‘Until recently, that class was bound by a box rule with many parameters fixed. Now, with optimisation under IRC, there’s far more freedom.’

The new Wally has twin rudders, a high-performance keel and bulb, and 2.7 tonnes of water ballast. Yet being slightly shorter than the Maxi 72s, she’s about two tonnes lighter overall. This weight saving allows a smaller keel and slightly shorter mast, creating a virtuous circle that results in a yacht as powerful as her rivals but more agile in light airs, with lightning-fast acceleration.

The only element heavier than the competition is the water ballast, roughly 35 per cent more, but onboard systems allow the 2.7 tonnes of water to shift from side to side in around six seconds, ensuring fast, efficient tacks.

Final word to tactician Vasco Vascotto, who sails on both boats: ‘We’ve worked to create truly new yachts capable of winning straight out of the box. The wallyrocket51 won in Sorrento from day zero and the wallyrocket71 took the Grand Prix Worlds in Porto Cervo on day two. Those results prove just how quick and reliable they are. For anyone chasing results, these boats are the ideal choice.’

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