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Headline News

A True Gentleman

“I Am So Sorry”

Giovanni Soldini takes responsibility for *FILA*'s mishaps.



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St Malo, France -- 27 Aug 2001 10:58 GMT The ragged mainsail is jumbled on the boom, telling a sorry tale of *FILA*'s bad luck.

Despite the problems of a broken forestay fitting and blown-out main on Leg 3, and a repeat on Leg 5 with the second blown-out main, the Italians sailed an incredible race coming into St Malo just hours behind the leaders. They had taken the lead days before, but as so often happens off this coast, a high pressure system and adverse tides put an end to their gallop out at front.

The Open 60 *FILA* is not the only *FILA* boat to have suffered mainsail problems. On its inaugural race in June, *FILA Tri* was forced to retire from the multihull world championships when the trimaran's 180-square metre mainsail ripped.

Prior to the start of the *EDS Atlantic Challenge*, the boat underwent a major refit, with a new fin keel and mast work and other deck modifications. But a big oversight was not replacing the sails that had been used in the *Transat Jacques Vabre*.

Believing the sails were good, they were not replaced. Giovanni Soldini, *FILA*'s owner, said, "They were not old sails, but they had been in a container for a year."

The Kevlar main was subjected to extremes in temperature and high humidity, which apparently caused deterioration that was not visible to the eye. Kevlar is the material used in police bullet-proof vests and has been considered, up until now, literally "bullet proof."

"I take full responsibility for what happened to the boat," Soldini said on the

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dock in St Malo, where he had come to welcome his team home. "We did not spend enough time on the preparation."

He also mentioned that the new project, FILA Tri, will be the first trimaran of its kind in Italy to take part in the top international blue water regattas. "It was stupid [of us]," he continued. "We spent money on the keel and new daggerboards. We thought the sails were good, but they weren't."

He continued, "It is my fault and my organization's fault. FILA is a good boat and it is a good crew.

"I am very sorry," he concluded.

Soldini has an impressive solo-sailing record, and is famous for his daring Southern Ocean rescue of Frenchwoman Isabelle Autissier in the last Around Alone Race.

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