

The New Zealand supermaxi, *Maximus* scored a notable success by winning the Grand Prix division top prize on the recent Rolex Transatlantic Challenge after a dramatic battle against the larger *Mari Cha IV*.

The challenge was the latest in a series of transatlantic yacht races run by the New York Yacht Club dating back to 1866. The 2005 event was special, representing, almost to the day, the centenary of Charlie Barr's magnificent win at the helm of Wilson Marshall's 185-foot (56.4m) three-masted schooner *Atlantic* in the 1905 race for the Kaiser's Cup. During this race, Barr set a record from New York to the Lizard, a headland on England's south Cornish coast, of 12 days 4 hours 1 minute and 19 seconds.

Although various boats had bettered this time, leaving whenever the weather looked best, in 100 years *Atlantic's* time had never been beaten during an official race.

The Grand Prix division featured two of the world's largest pure racing yachts, Robert Miller's 140-foot (43m) *Mari-Cha IV*, with a strong Kiwi contingent on board, and the brand new Cookson-built Elliott 100-footer, *Maximus* of Charles St. Clair Brown and Bill Buckley.

The feature of the first week was the weather – either too much or too little of it. A depression moved across the fleet and then two days into the race stopped off the Nova Scotian coast.

While some crews reported sailing in 50 knots or more, other yachts caught in the increasingly large centre of the depression found themselves tackling light, shifting breeze.

The conditions took their toll on the leaders, too. Both *Mari Cha IV* and *Maximus* suffered downtime when their mainsail headboard cars failed under compression.



*Mari-Cha IV* crossed the line due south of the Lizard at 10:05:23 UTC on June 1, making her time for the 2,925 mile course from Ambrose light off New York harbour, 9 days, 15 hours, 55 minutes, and 23 seconds, which was 2 days, 12 hours, 5 minutes, 56 seconds faster than *Atlantic's* time in 1905.

*Maximus* passed the Lizard 3 hours, 13 minutes, and 32 seconds after her bigger rival and was 5 hours, 16 minutes, and 31 seconds behind at the Needles finish line, winning the Grand Prix Division on corrected time under IRC handicap.

Whitbread and America's Cup veteran Mike Quilter was on board *Mari-Cha IV* when she set the passage record for the

crossing of the North Atlantic two years ago and was navigator on *Maximus* for the transatlantic race.

"*Mari-Cha IV* feels like an aircraft carrier, and *Maximus* is like a big Open 60," he said. "*Maximus* did pretty well. We made it across and put on a good show, and the boat is obviously really fast. To me it surfs a lot quicker. For the transatlantic record on *Mari Cha IV*, she kept up a higher average speed, but on this boat we had fresh reaching conditions for 12 hours after the Gulf Stream, and we were regularly hitting 30 knots on the GPS every five or ten minutes. Whereas, *Mari-Cha IV* keeps up a high average speed, she doesn't have bursts like this little boat."

## Transatlantic triumph for **Maximus**