

SUI Sailing Awards: Switzerland's best sailors honoured

At tonight's SUI Sailing Awards in Lucerne, Swiss Sailing, a partner of the *Skippers* magazine, honoured Dona Bertarelli, Chris Rast, Nathalie Brugger and Matías Bühler, Nicolas Rolaz and Max Wallenberg, Dominique Hausser, the races.ch project, and the Ocean Youth Sailing association.

Lucerne, 19 November 2016 – Tonight's SUI Sailing Awards at Lucerne's Museum of Transport honoured Switzerland's best sailors. After two exceptional years for Swiss sailing, Dona Bertarelli (Female Sailor), Chris Rast (Male Sailor), Nathalie Brugger and Matias Bühler (Sailing Team), Nicolas Rolaz and Max Wallenberg (Junior Sailor), and Dominique Hausser (Special award) were rewarded with an SUI Swiss Sailing Award. Awards also went to the races.ch project in the Sailing Project of the Year category as well as the Ocean Youth Sailing association in the Public Award category.

Award winning sailors as role models

"Switzerland's sailors are formidable and extremely talented," exclaimed Vincent Hagin, President of Swiss Sailing and this year's jury. "The performances honoured by this award reflect the great quality, excellence and extraordinary diversity of the sport in this country. Speaking on behalf of Swiss Sailing, I'd like to say how very proud I am to have witnessed these performances and to today reward those who made them happen." He also described the prizewinners as role models who, by their performances, help promote the sport not only in Switzerland but also internationally: "These excellent results and performances portray Switzerland, landlocked though it is, as a sailing nation and home to extraordinary sailors."

Recognition of great performances

The jury of this year's SUI Sailing Awards was composed of Vincent Hagin (President of Swiss Sailing), Brice Lechevalier (Editor in Chief, *Skippers* magazine), Christian Scherrer (Swiss sailor, former participant in the America's Cup and Volvo Ocean Race), Walter Ruegsegger (journalist) et Jean-Claude Ray (Director of Swiss Sailing). An SUI Sailing Award is the highest accolade in Swiss sailing. It rewards sailors for exceptional performances delivered between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2016.

SUI Sailing Awards 2016: the winners

Female Sailor of the Year: Dona Bertarelli (Nyon/canton of Vaud). Dona Bertarelli is the co-founder and skipper of the Spindrift Racing yacht racing stable and a member of the team that clocked the second-best time in history for circumnavigating the world last winter. She is the first Swiss woman to have sailed around the world non-stop as well as the fastest woman to have circumnavigated the planet.

Male Sailor of the Year: Chris Rast (Gunten/canton of Berne). Chris Rast topped the 2014 European Moth ranking, before winning the 2015 Melges 24 world championships. He also came seventh in the Moth World Championships. In 2016, he won three Melges 20 events in Europe and put in great performances in the M32 Mediterranean Series (multihull).

Sailing Team of the Year: Nathalie Brugger (Fribourg/canton of Fribourg) and Matías Bühler (Barcelona/ESP) Nathalie Brugger and Matías Bühler came seventh in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio and were awarded an Olympic Diploma. The award honours this result as well as the entire journey to obtain it, which was punctuated by numerous stops on World Cup podiums.

Junior Sailor of the Year: Nicolas Rolaz (Gilly/canton of Vaud) and Max Wallenberg (Thônex/canton of Geneva) The two young sailors Nicolas Rolaz (Club Nautique de Morges) and Max Wallenberg (Geneva Yacht Club), Optimist World Championship winners in 2014 and 2016 respectively, represent the promising next generation of Swiss sailors. Their world championship titles are among the greatest achievements of Swiss sailing. The Junior Sailor prize is awarded by Mirabaud.

Sailing Project of the Year: races.ch (Bernex/canton of Geneva) The association Races.ch actively promotes and develops catamaran sailing in Switzerland, both among juniors and adults. It also aims to support sailing clubs in the organisation of regattas for all types of multihulls, and to establish a series of catamaran regattas in Switzerland and neighbouring countries.

Special Award: Dominique Hausser (Geneva/canton of Geneva) Member of Swiss Sailing's Central Committee since 2008, and the future head of the regatta department (from 1 January 2017), Dominique Hausser fulfilled a lifelong dream by taking part in, and winning, the Clipper Round The World Race. He is a member of the Geneva Yacht Club, has a wealth of experience in various areas of sailing and is highly committed to developing sailing as a sport in Switzerland.

Public Award: Ocean Youth Sailing (Steckborn/canton of Thurgau) The charitable Thurgau-based association was founded in 2014 by senior members of the Jugendsegeln Steckborn sailing club. One of its primary projects is the construction of a 13.6 metre catamaran for open-sea sailing, or even for circumnavigating the world. Sailing enthusiasts have expressed admiration for the vision and huge dedication of these young sailors, and the project garnered the greatest number of votes in the first ever online vote, winning it the well-deserved Public Award.