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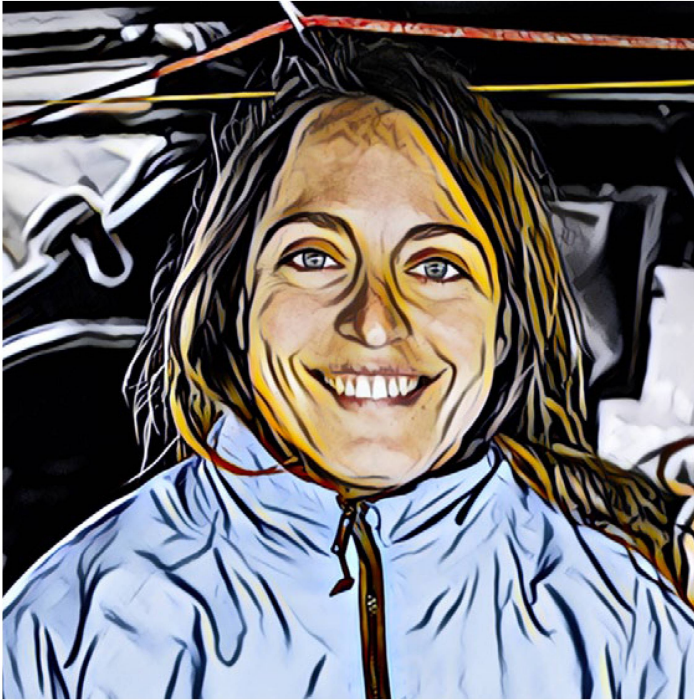
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Justine Mettraux



Justine Mettraux is showing the rest of Switzerland that women are also capable of elite-level sailing. Since 15 January, the 36-year-old from Geneva has been participating in one of the epic events of team sailing: the Ocean Race. Six months at sea on an IMOCA, a 60-foot craft fitted with foils. In this round-the-world race over different legs, the organisers require each crew of five to include a woman. “It’s not just that Justine Mettraux has an outstanding level of expertise; the presence of a woman may also bring a more subtle approach to sailing,” is how an expert explained it. This Geneva native, born into a nautical family on Lake Geneva, leads a remarkable life – as do the rest of her family, since her two sisters and two brothers are all top-level sailors. “My father, who brought us up on his own, had complete confidence in us,” Justine recalls. And it certainly takes confidence to set out alone across the Atlantic, which is what Justine did in 2013, finishing second in the Mini Transat. During the last Route du Rhum, the Versoix sailor finished seventh with her IMOCA, after having led part of the way. The next step is the Vendée Globe in 2024, a solo race around the world where she will compete on an equal footing with her rivals because in a contest of this type, it is not a sailor’s strength that makes the difference, but rather their racing experience, knowledge of the sea, and boat-repairing skills. Justine possesses all of these assets. If she has a shortcoming, it is a certain reticence, perhaps, meaning she is not the type to pose on a beach with her boyfriend for a magazine cover. On the other hand, her passion and example are driving forces in making sailing more accessible to women.

STEPHANE HERZOG

A setback for the Greens ahead of autumn’s national elections

Zurich voters elected a new parliament on 12 February 2023 – and their verdict is being seen as a barometer for the forthcoming elections to the National Council and the Council of States in autumn. This is because the Zurich vote very often reflects the national mood. The centre-right and right-wing parties have emerged from this year’s Zurich elections in a slightly stronger position. The SVP won an extra seat in the 180-seat cantonal parliament, consolidating its status as the strongest political party. The Centre party won three additional seats, while the FDP maintained the same number of seats. The Greens lost three, and the EVP and the Alternative Left lost one apiece. With the Green Liberals and the SP both gaining a seat however, the so-called “climate alliance” consisting of green and left-leaning parties and the EVP retained the parliamentary majority. The national elections take place on 22 October (more on page 24). (MUL)

Questions over the composition of the Federal Council

The federal elections on 22 October are likely to reignite debate on the composition of the Federal Council, whose members represent a very stable bloc of the most popular political parties. This “magic formula” is not set in stone, with the Greens and Green Liberals now looking to participate in government due to their strong showing of recent years. A survey by the Sotomo research institute now shows that a clear majority of voters want the seven-strong Federal Council to have a different party-political composition. The SVP, FDP and SP each have two Federal Council seats and the Centre party one seat under the current formula. (MUL)

Swiss munitions for Ukraine?

Switzerland does not export any weapons or ammunition to warring countries. It also prohibits other countries from passing on Swiss-manufactured war materiel. Germany would like to re-export Swiss-made munitions to Ukraine. So far, Switzerland has withheld its approval. However, the Security Policy Committee of the National Council now wants to loosen this blockade. In January, it suggested waiving the re-export ban, for example if weapons are to be sent to a conflict zone that the UN Security Council or two thirds of the UN General Assembly have condemned as violating international law. (MUL)

A new regional nature park

Val Calanca (in the Italian-speaking part of Grisons) is to be the site of a new regional nature park, after four municipalities approved the project in January. This makes the small valley Switzerland’s first regional nature park south of the Alpine divide. A new big national park called Parc Adula was originally earmarked for the area but opposed by politicians. The new regional nature park is a remnant of the Adula project. Unlike nature reserves, regional nature parks are designed to protect flora and fauna in tandem with environmentally sustainable land use. (MUL)