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YCCS establishes BVI base at Oil Nut Bay

The Yacht Club Costa Smeralda moves into partnership with Oil Nut Bay developer Victor International to create the YCCS Virgin Gorda yacht club and marina in North Sound, BVI



BY TONY HARRIS

▶ If the busy but convivial atmosphere aboard the 40m Westport 130 *Resolute* during the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show was anything to go by, the new Oil Nut Bay development on Virgin Gorda in the BVI's looks to be the place to visit this winter. But idyllic surroundings, a dedicated superyacht marina and the chance to acquire a prime patch of land in an exclusive development were not the only temptations on offer, as *Resolute* was used as the platform for the announcement that the renowned Yacht Club Costa Smeralda was entering into partnership with the Oil Nut Bay developers to create a new YCCS Caribbean base.

The officers and members of the YCCS are very happy to see this new initiative come to fruition, commented His Highness the Aga Khan, president of the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda. "We have aimed to expand our sporting and cruising activities internationally for many years, and this opportunity in Virgin Gorda will give our members access to wonderful new locations for sailing and yachting, as well as all the services that YCCS offers in its current home base at Porto Cervo. We intend to maintain the same level of excellence in all our activities that have come to be recognised as a hallmark of the YCCS in the Mediterranean."

The YCCS Virgin Gorda will be located in North Sound, and the first phase of the superyacht marina, due to come on stream in December

2010, will offer 38 berths for yachts up to 100m. Other facilities will include a clubhouse, docks, a selection of restaurants, shops, a pool, outdoor recreation areas, bars and a concierge service for yachtmen as well as being linked to the 300-acre Oil Nut Bay development and the nearby Biras Creek Resort.

The YCCS Virgin Gorda will play host to a fleet of sail and motor superyachts taking part in the inaugural Caribbean Superyacht Regatta and Rendezvous, organised by Boat International Media and the YCCS, which will take place from 16 to 20 March 2011. Indeed, it was the initial thrust to hold a Caribbean event that helped lead to the partnership between Victor International and the YCCS. "I had met Tony Harris, CEO of Boat International Media, through Westport a couple of years ago," explained Victor International chairman David Johnson during the press launch, "and thought it would be nice to do an event. He suggested that I should meet the president of the YCCS as we shared some of the same ideals. We had further meetings at the Monaco Rendezvous in June, then I had a chance meeting with His Highness the Aga Khan in the BVI's. The result of those meetings was a complete rethink of the planned marina and clubhouse facility. "He said for sponsors, competitors, prizegiving and the like, we needed a piazza for 500 people, so we created an event piazza, added a harbour master dock, created new wings for the yacht club building and moved it up the hill - the day before we were due to pour the footings! The result is impressive - a 270m megayacht pier with two megawatts of power, world class facilities, and a partnership with one of the world's top yacht clubs."

The aim was to create the best facilities in the Caribbean, concluded Johnson - and we spent hours on every room. No one let ego get in the way of excellence. You can do great things with the help of God, a great team of people, and an unlimited budget!

Our mission, continued YCCS commodore Riccardo Bonadeo, was to find an area outside the Mediterranean where we could find excellence, and thanks to Tony Harris we found it. We all know the three "Ls" - location, location, location - but the second element is finding the right people, and we found them. These two elements are the great secret of success.

I love the BVI and have spent many happy holidays there cruising and racing with my family and friends, added Harris. I am looking forward to having a fantastic rendezvous and regatta in the BVIs next March.

For Johnson, the development at Oil Nut Bay and the YCCS partnership marks the attainment of a long-held goal. Growing up in the Great Lakes area of the US, water had always been a part of Johnson's life and he has owned a succession of yachts, including a Cigarette, a Sea Ray 63, and a Sunseeker 75. Then, as his daughters got older, he moved to a 112 Westport, and then finally the Westport 130 *Resolute* - always with the goal of moving to a Caribbean base. If you go past the BVIs, you lose the dayboating aspect," he says as we talk on the day after the YCCS announcement.

As founder of the highly successful Victor International Corporation - a leading real estate developer - the merging of Johnson's Caribbean goals with his development knowledge made for a natural dual-purpose aim. The mission was to create a *Musique*, but with boating, great architecture and harmony with the natural environment, he says. "I wanted a boutique superyacht marina which wasn't "everything for everybody", and wanted to create a resort community that had open space and dedicated nature trails." Development of the 300-acre Oil Nut Bay site involved producing a 1,500-page document studying due diligence, environmental impact and the lake, and the result is a development that offers just 88 plots of land with strict building criteria - no multi-storey houses, and everything in harmony with the



Holding the YCCS burgee, left to right: David Johnson, Tony Harris, Riccardo Bonadeo and YCCS sporting director Eduardo Recchi

surroundings. Prices start at \$1.495 million for the smaller plots, rising to \$25 million for the largest.

The marina, built by Bellingham Marine with consultancy by Floridian company ATM, includes a 99 year seabed lease for the first time in BVI history, to control ingress and egress. The initial plan was for a fixed pier dock. We interviewed the captains of large yachts like *Leander* and *Maltese Falcon* to find out what was best, says Johnson, and they said they wanted a side-to-berth on a floating dock that didn't move. So for the first time in Bellingham's history it built a 20ft-wide dock with 36 inches of freeboard, anchored by piles. We then assessed the difference in windage between a 50m and a 70m yacht, and then doubled the number of piles and tripled the power supply. Yachts will be able to buy a membership berth which will give them first pick on docking, events, and automatic membership of the beach club, as well as a 50/50 split on rental income. The first phase, with 38 berths in water with a depth of 6.5m, will open in December 2010, with the possibility of a second phase with 12m depth to follow in the future.

For more information about the Caribbean Superyacht Regatta and Rendezvous, to be held 16-20 March 2011, turn to page 38

