

## **Blancpain is proud to honor Laurent Ballesta with the “Hans Hass Fifty Fathoms Award 2013”**

**A day after the 94<sup>th</sup> birthday of pioneer ocean explorer Austrian Professor Hans Hass, Swiss watch manufacturer Blancpain and the Historical Diving Society Hans Hass Award Committee awarded French marine biologist Laurent Ballesta the annual “Hans Hass Fifty Fathoms Award”. The public ceremony took place in Düsseldorf (DE) during “Boot”, the largest marine industry exhibition worldwide.**

In the year that celebrates the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fifty Fathoms, Blancpain is proud to present the direct descendent of this first modern diving watch to the winner in honor of his achievement and excellence in the fields of diving, underwater photography, and science. An engraving on the case back has been specially customized for the “Hans Hass Fifty Fathoms Award”.

Ten years after the first Hans Hass Award was established in recognition of the Austrian professor, the annual winner is selected in the spirit of his pioneering work. Professor Hass distinguished himself internationally with his underwater work in science and the arts. In tribute to this living legend, and following the proposition of the Award Committee, Blancpain is delighted to acknowledge Laurent Ballesta, whose passion for diving and dedication to achieving goals once thought unreachable, recalls Hass’s own pioneering spirit.

### **Blancpain & the underwater world**

Driven by its own pioneer spirit since its foundation in 1735, Blancpain’s historical connection with diving goes back to 1953, when the watch Manufacture developed a diver’s timepiece for the French navy: the Fifty Fathoms. This mechanical masterpiece was named after its guaranteed water resistance to 50 fathoms (91.44 meters) and defined the characteristics of diving watches ever since. Today, the collection remains the benchmark in the field, combining watchmaking expertise with indispensable safety standards.

Blancpain’s passion for the underwater world has led to its commitment to helping as many people as possible learn about this vast and mysterious universe. The brand believes that people can only respect and protect what they love, and can only love what they know. To serve this mission, Blancpain strongly supports National Geographic’s exploration, research, and conservation project *Pristine Seas Expeditions*, and publishes *Edition Fifty Fathoms* which is dedicated to underwater science and adventure and has distinguished itself with its extraordinary photography. The Manufacture also has a partnership with record-holding free diver Gianluca Genoni and was lead sponsor of the Economist’s first World Oceans Summit in 2012.

For more information :

International PR : Bénédicte Vandelle & Aude Muller  
Tel.: +41 21 796 36 36  
E-mail: [pr@blancpain.com](mailto:pr@blancpain.com)  
Web Press Centre: <http://press.blancpain.com/>  
Blog Waterworld: <http://www.blancpain.com/blogpost/expedition>

**APPENDIX**  
**MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:**

**Laurent Ballesta**

Born in 1974 in south of France, Laurent Ballesta is a marine biologist and research diver. He combines his passion for underwater photography with his skills at diving to extreme depths. His shared passions attracted the attention of the “Hans Hass Fifty Fathoms Award” nominating committee, which considers nominees who distinguish themselves both in science and art. With meticulous attention to every detail during his deep diving research expeditions and unique photographs from the depths of the ocean, Ballesta has gained recognition in international publications.

**Hans Hass**

Professor Hans Hass, born on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1919, is a diving pioneer and also a pioneer in marine research. His work has been documented in a variety of films along with more than thirty scientific books and catalogues. He has received a number of prestigious national and international prizes. Between 1937 and 1959, Professor Hass led a number of expeditions to remote ocean locations, often recording the adventures with underwater cameras he had designed himself. Professor Hass remained loyal to his passion well into his golden years: he conducted dives in the Maldives in 2005 to examine the impact of the catastrophic tsunami below the ocean’s surface. His studies formed the basis for research diving. He has served as a role model for generations of divers and researchers around the world, who find his work a continuing source of inspiration.

**Blancpain**

Founded in 1735 by Jehan-Jacques Blancpain, the watch brand bearing his name is the oldest in the world. Blancpain is constantly engaged in the renewal of mechanical watchmaking and in passing on exceptional expertise from one generation to the next through constant investment in human resources, production facilities and research. From the creation of components through to watch design, Blancpain is distinguished by its ability to develop exceptional movements. Over the past seven years, the Manufacture has indeed developed no less than 22 new calibres. Through its various models, Blancpain preserves its heritage of precision and elegance, while also displaying an innovative and occasionally provocative spirit.