

Travelling back to the end of the 1960s with a limited edition of the Fifty Fathoms Barakuda

Blancpain is revisiting one of its diving watches from the end of the 1960s, the Barakuda. The 500-piece 2019 edition retains the features of the original version while making the most of the technical innovations resulting from Blancpain's longstanding experience in the field of scuba diving.

When first launched in 1953, the Fifty Fathoms was the only diver's watch that met the many requirements of specialised divers. Frogmen from several of the world's largest marine corps rapidly incorporated it as a fundamental element in their standard-issue gear. The French were the first to equip themselves with Fifty Fathoms models for their underwater missions. Other military elites followed, including the German Bundesmarine in the 1960s. The latter were supplied with Fifty Fathoms models via Barakuda – a company specialising in the production and marketing of technical diving equipment. Alongside the watches intended for the military, the company introduced the German market to a civilian model adopting a distinctive style, notably featuring the use of two-tone rectangular hour-markers, white-painted fluorescent hands, as well as a highly visible date display at 3 o'clock. Some timepieces in this series were fitted with a tropical-type rubber strap that was very popular with divers at the time and particularly renowned for its durability as well as its wearer comfort.

The new Fifty Fathoms Barakuda faithfully reinterprets the aesthetic codes of this timepiece from the late 1960s. Its black dial is punctuated by large red and white hour-markers coated with "old radium" type Super-LumiNova®. The likewise luminescent pencil-shaped hands are white-lacquered, while the date – a key element of the original model – returns to its favourite position in a prominent window. Blancpain has teamed these vintage attributes with its emblematic unidirectional bezel featuring a scratch-resistant domed sapphire insert, an innovation unveiled by the brand in 2003. The steel case of this new watch, water-resistant to 300 metres, has a diameter of 40 mm, a size reserved for Fifty Fathoms timepieces in limited series. It houses the 1151 self-winding movement, whose sporty usage in this model naturally does not dispense it from high-end finishes. The twin barrels are wound via a cut-out rotor, in reference to some of the collection's antique watches. This now atypical geometry formerly served to enhance the suppleness of the oscillating weight in order to protect the movement from potential impacts.

Paired with a tropical rubber strap identical to that of the historical models, the Fifty Fathoms Barakuda embodies a perfect combination of vintage design and advanced technicality. The 500 watches composing this exclusive series are sure to delight experienced divers, collectors, history buffs or simply lovers of fine mechanics.