

Game, Set and Match

The Royal Lyminster Cup as seen by **Jack Knights** — photos by **Guy Gurney**

THE elevation of the Congressional Cup to the Royal Lyminster Cup (made possible by the gift of the cup by Eileen Caulcutt) was marked by more spirited competition than ever before.

The weather marked the change by providing fiercer, more sudden squalls than any match race series needs, particularly when sailed in boats as rolly on the run as an overdriven Contessa 32.

For the first time the event was seriously international. Harold Cudmore we all know is from the foreign country of Southern Ireland, yet he does not need a passport when he comes to see us and for years you could have found him near Cambridge. Pelle Petterson was different. He came all the way from Sweden, driving a Swedish Volvo (whose battery went flat during the opening day because one of its myriad safety aids had failed to self-cancel). He brought along two henchmen in Figge Montan and Goesta Holmin, and since all three were wearing the familiar yellow and blue gear we were constantly reminded that they had recently been through an America's Cup match series.

The other invited international, M. Fabry of France, whose Finot-designed 'Revolution' had won the RORC's yacht of the year award, was prevented from appearing through illness. Jeremy Rogers, builder of all the Contessa 32s used and skipper of 'Moonshine', top scorer in Britain's winning Admiral's Cup team last summer, stood in for Fabry and had a singularly unhappy time. Perhaps

he drew a slow boat in 'Joker' If that is the case then only he, the builder is to blame. Perhaps he had grown too accustomed to the super close-windedness of the Peterson forty-three-footer A Contessa 32 needs to be sailed wide with the genoa sheet eased.

One should add in passing that a Contessa 32 needs special handling techniques. The tiller must be grasped not with the finger tips but with the fists, often both of them together, and when bearing away in a breeze a buttock comes in handy too. In many ways the ponderous responses of this husky racer-cruiser, which steers more like a 64 than a 32, are conducive to good match racing. Once committed to a pre-start manoeuvre, the next twenty or thirty seconds are spoken for. So if the manoeuvre turns out to be mistaken there is no easy escape. In consequence the duelling gains in drama and sharpness. Trying to match race in Lasers, both parties would become dizzy and who actually crossed the starting line in the favoured position would be entirely a matter of luck.

Most of the ten invited helmsmen came to enjoy themselves. As the winner of the event for the last two years, some pressure must have been on Phil Crebbin and he must have started as most people's favourite, the more so as he was this year using his new Soling crew, the highly experienced Barry Dunning and Mark 'Antelope' Dowland. The three had finished fourth in the Soling worlds at Rio de Janeiro.

Yet the man with most pressure must have been John Oakeley. For some reason he had not previously been invited to this event, though he has more than once been an interested spectator.

In the end John Oakeley wound up second to Harold Cudmore along with three others but this doesn't tell the whole story. On the opening day there were four races for each helmsman. Cudmore and Oakeley each won their first three and then they came face to face in the last heat of the last section of the races. Cudmore won the start narrowly and led Oakeley around the weather mark and all the way down the run so that they rounded the lee mark nose to tail. Coming in to the line Oakeley outmanoeuvred the flame-haired Irish boyo and crossed the line the winner. At that stage it looked as if Oakeley was out ahead with four wins and Cudmore was down with those such as Petterson, Crebbin and Lawrie Smith who had three out of four.

But Cudmore had one more shot in his locker. Rounding the leeward mark Cudmore's crew was in a bit of a tangle with their kite and in the excitement, Cudmore stopped steering and began crewing. His boat almost stopped and Oakeley was so close behind it seems that his bow came up and touched the Irish stern. So the red flag was broken out of its stops on the backstay and since in the protest room afterwards, Oakeley could not prove he had not touched Cudmore's boat, he was disqualified. The irony is

that if Cudmore had rounded that lee mark more proficiently there would have been no collision. Many will say that since there was a collision there had to be a protest. However, there were other similarly minor incidents in this series and protests did not result from all of them. But Harold had come to conquer and in the circumstances he resorted, however reluctantly to the protest as a legitimate last resort.

In any event, Harold had the best second day. To start with he was well crewed by Killian Bushe, another true Irishman and by Butch Dalrymple-Smith, an Irishman by temporary adoption and by Andy Rose, the Californian who looks like the son of Cannon and who served as Noel Robbin's tactician, not only aboard Australia in the last America's Cup match but also in the last two Congressional Cups. He and they alone came through the five races of the second day without a single defeat whereas Oakeley and his crew, Nick Ryley, Tony Robbins and Richard Clampett, were beaten by your correspondent who came on strong when the wind faded towards the end and after sustaining five straight defeats, won his last three encounters.

The series ended on the water with Harold Cudmore undefeated after nine and Oakeley defeated only once. Both won their final heats in a dying wind, Cudmore virtually beating Peter Bruce twice, for he beat him to the windward mark and then he had to start all over again and work out ahead of him against the now ebbing stream from the lee mark where they virtually finished up together. Oakeley meanwhile was having a rather closer race with Lawrie Smith but here again Oakeley crossed the finish first by close to half a minute.

All was not finished however. The race committee, having given itself enormous leeway in the sailing instructions to do anything it liked by saying 'Shortened Course, Postponement, Abandonment and Cancellation procedures will be used as necessary', decided at the very last minute to shorten the course for the final two heats. So they picked the mark out of the water whilst Chris Law in the third heat of the final series was still rounding it, then with a great roadway of wash they scampered upwind to replant it closer to the line. So Bruce and Smith, neither of them slow to grasp at straws, both lodged protests that their chances of winning the last race had been prejudiced because the mark was moved so late they had already planned their tactics for the old position (true but, in Bruce's case at least, irrelevant). The Jury who were not a million miles removed from the actual mark mover had to agree that their chances were prejudiced and so it was decided that these two heats be resailed.

Cudmore knew he had won regardless so he would concede the win to Peter Bruce if it made him happy. John Oakeley, who

must still have been smarting from the previous night's jury decision, was not best pleased to find another win taken from him and so he too conceded.

As a result, Lawrie Smith and Peter Bruce were awarded wins they had not competed for on the water and came up to five wins and six wins respectively. Oakeley lost his seventh win and so instead of being a solitary second overall, as he should have been, had to share this distinction with three others—Phil Crebbin, winner for the previous two years, Pelle Petterson and Bruce.

It was very unwise of the Race Committee to act so precipitately so close to the end of the series. There was no time limit and a full spare day remained. It was even less wise of whoever wrote the sailing instructions to give the Race Committee so much rope with which to hang itself. The rope should have been used to cordon them off, to define and limit their scope for error. From the very start of this series four full years ago, this otherwise excellent event had been bedevilled by poor, because inconcise, sailing instructions.

This time two protests stemmed from the very first round of races, simply because there was doubt about how sails could be set. The Committee flew flag Z. Flag Z indicated 'boats shall use only: the staysail, the mainsail, slab-reefed if desired and the genoa, in place of the spinnaker.'

Most, reading this, decided to set the genoa exactly like a spinnaker with one lower corner attached to the spinnaker pole and the other attached to a sheet led to leeward of the forestay and staysail. Lawrie Smith and John Oakeley set the genoa with its tack attached at the bow, winged-out with the clew attached to the pole. They probably lost ground in this way and so they protested. A long, chill delay ensued while the jury members in their various separated boats, failed in their attempt to agree by walkie-talkie. So the next set of races were sailed under another flag and other sail limitations and then in the evening it was decided that Flag Z had meant the genoa could be flown in any way the skipper fancied on the down wind leg. One wonders why the printed instructions did not say so.

The sad fact is that this very trouble gave problems in this event a couple of years back and still it had not been dealt with, beyond all doubt.

Those sailing instructions and the ill-advised last moment course shortening apart, the series was in every other way excellent and enjoyable for all concerned, competitors and spectators alike. This is not a series to be lightly undertaken. To start with one has to find twelve well-matched Contessa 32s, persuade their owners to lend them, then ensure that each is similarly equipped in such details as reefing, sheeting, and even tiller extensions. Then twelve new reefing genoas, ▶

Match-racing is all about close-quarters manoeuvring and applied tactics. This is Harold Cudmore luffing Chris Law in an incident which led to Law's disqualification.



Game, Set and Match

continued

twelve new mainsails and twelve full size spinnakers had to be provided by Hoods and Butler Verner, each lettered for its appointed boat. Food and drink had to be piled aboard each boat each day, including a bottle of Scotch per day per boat. Ashore, in the club there were opening and closing parties.

The starts and the finishes were more closely contested than ever before but the fierce northerly squalls often made the crews look positively amateurish. The truth is that the Contessa 32 is a difficult boat to race hard. For its size it has a big foretriangle and heavy gear. Crews really need a couple of settling down races and they certainly, to begin with, needed longer course legs than were set. Robin Aisher lost his race against your reporter purely because his crew screwed up the setting of their genoa whilst we, on this occasion at least, made a smart job of setting it and afterwards taking it down.

To begin with, in the fresh wind, some boats could not match the upwind speed of the others. Then when it dropped the positions were reversed. They all seemed very evenly matched offwind.

There were some wonderful moments

Phil Crebbin and Harold Cudmore were going even-steven for the lee mark and naturally both were reluctant to douse their kites. So they both left it too late. Crebbin turned outside, gybing as he went and the boom floored Mark Dowland, knocking him out completely. So there they were with the spinnaker down, the genoa half up and one crewman half overboard and dead to the world. The Irish were having their troubles too but all their heads proved mainboom proof and they pulled themselves together and pulled ahead to win.

There was a great deal of circling before the start but much of the time it was difficult to see who was hounding and who was hounded and if so, why. What matters is the final half-minute and in this it helps to forget the clock and concentrate instead on your opponent.

Match racing tends to expose areas of the rule which, to your correspondent at all events, seem to be overlapped by various sometimes contradictory rules. Luffing for instance—if the weather boat

has mastline can the lee boat force him up and if so how much? According to Cornelius Shields the weather boat can hold his line. According to others he must gradually come up to a close hauled course.

The line was always truly laid and as the wind veered and backed and the tide flooded and then ebbed, first one end and then the other would be favoured. But though the starts were important plenty of winners came through from behind, as often as not because of good crew work. This was a series in which the names of the crews deserve equal billing with the skippers. Aboard Robin Aisher's luckless boat they were keeping a score—so many points to the crew, so many to the skipper. On paper neither side opened their accounts, except that one of the crew got a lovely port-side black eye.

Andy Rose the most experienced match-maker present said that the Lymington series had several advantages over the original Californian version and he wasn't referring purely to the parties. He thought that the tidal complication actually added to the interest of the duelling.

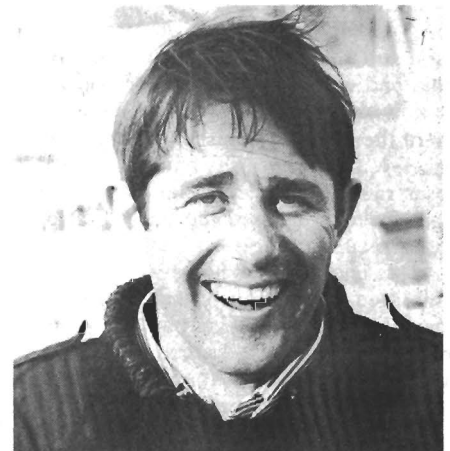
Pelle Petterson too, said that he had enjoyed himself and the sailing with it, once he got his car started.



(above) The victorious Harold Cudmore (8 wins).
(below) John Oakeley, second equal with 6 wins.



(above) Phil Crebbin, another second equal (6 wins).
(below) Sweden's Pelle Petterson also had six wins.



(above) Peter Bruce, five wins plus a give away.
(below) Lawrie Smith (5 wins).

