

‘WE are very proud of our Congressional Cup; we take it personally,’ said General Regatta Chairman Norton Nelson at the festive conclusion of the fifteenth running of the world’s premier match racing tournament which again took place in Cal 40s. Mr Nelson was speaking paternally of the wonderful organisation of his club, Long Beach, which has helped to build this event into one of world significance while still retaining its unmistakably Californian flavour.

He might just as well have been boasting about the almost complete mastery over the event of Southern Californians which continues even though year by year more and better are invited from elsewhere.

Only once in fifteen years has an outsider left Long Beach wearing the coveted crimson blazer which goes to the winning skipper (the trophy, deeded by the US Congress, is much too large to be carried away). That was one Ted Turner, the year before last. Now, once again, Southern Californians have come out on top, taking the first four places.

Fourth, representing the host club, was Henry Schofield. He scored six wins and went down three times. Third with the same score was the still youthful Scott Allan, who must have been a child when he won in 1967. His big brother ‘Skip’ won the year after that. Allan takes third by beating Schofield in their heat. The Allan brothers’ father, Bob Junior, was one of the creators of the Cal 40 class.

Second was the Cup defender and two-times winner Dick Deaver, 47, representing Balboa Yacht Club, the man who runs the North Sails loft in nearby Seal Beach. He won seven, including an emphatic 4½ minute win over the eventual winner. But Deaver lost twice which proved at least once too often. He lost to Rich Hackett, San Francisco’s match champ. Deaver was trailing by a slender six seconds at the windward mark, then touched the bouncing inflatable buoy and had to return and reround. And at the start of the third and final day he lost to the Mid-West’s John Odenbach and even if the margin was a slim 13 seconds, Odenbach was in command throughout. Deaver finished this one with his red protest flag flying. By his reckoning Odenbach had once tacked too close to him in the short tacking duel which had followed their start. The panel of judges, than which there cannot be another better qualified in all the world, decided otherwise. Thus this result stood which was lucky for Odenbach since on this, his third Cup appearance, he only managed this single victory. If you are going to win only one, why not take the scalp of the Defender and points leader?

Deaver beat Dennis Durgan of Newport Beach but nobody else did. Durgan, 25 years old and tactician for that other Dennis, Conner, when the latter won in



Congressional Cup

Jack Knights reports from California

'73, won all his other heats to finish one match ahead of the field. Had Deaver won that last protest the pair would have been tied on eight each and then Deaver would have had the decision on the strength of that 4½ minute win but it has been established again and again in recent decisions that one boat can tack very close to another and this particular panel of judges, drawn from around the States and chaired by Harry Anderson, Commodore of the New York Yacht Club, had made it clear by its earlier decisions that it would only upset the finishing positions if the protestor's evidence was brass bound and cast in cement.

Durgan might have been beaten and Deaver too for that matter — except for the little matter of the tearing jibs. Ireland's bush-haired Harold Cudmore, the British match race champ, had been squeezed out at the weather end of the start line by Durgan in their match and had then gybed and returned so quickly while Durgan himself was having to dip back over the right side to restart that the

pair came together at the windward mark. By preventing Durgan from tacking till he did so himself Cudmore rounded first. He stayed ahead on the long square run and was comfortably ahead, covering loosely, coming through the start line, second time around. And then a three-inch split appeared half way up the leech of his genoa, just inside the tabling. Within seconds this had developed into a leech-to-luff rent. The Irish cursed their luck, and after all this was St Patrick's Day, then they stoically set to work to set another headsail. Durgan meanwhile romped away unchallenged.

The day before, Pelle Petterson had to cope with the same savage frustration when his genoa ripped seconds after starting safely to windward of Deaver.

For six long minutes the pair had shimmied slowly towards the line on starboard tack with Petterson always to windward. Petterson had crossed three seconds ahead. As with the disappointed Irish, the Swedish crew gamely dragged up another jib and fiddled its hanks

Congressional Cup

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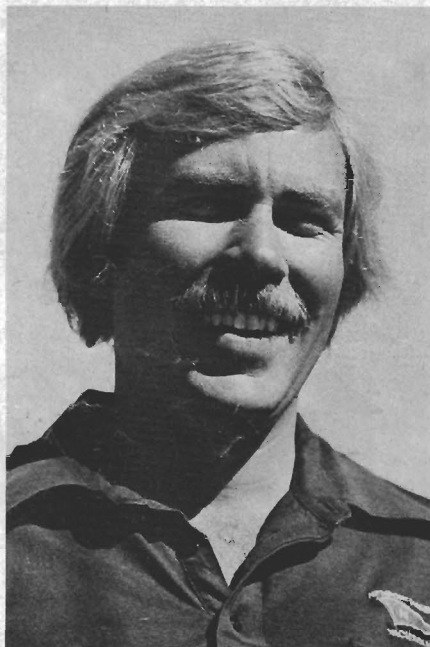
around the forestay but they could only have won if Deaver's mast had fallen overboard and this it did not do.

The genoa saga does not end there for in his previous heat Petterson was matched against Rich Hackett with the pair short tacking towards the line. Then, in the last few seconds, Hackett gybed on to port and Petterson tacked to starboard leaving little doubt that Hackett had got away better. The official record declares that Hackett crossed a full fifteen seconds ahead. And then his jib split, presenting Petterson with a gift win.

France's Bruno Troublé, the man Baron Bich has nominated to steer his recently baptised America's Cup challenger 'France 3', had a jib split on him too. But those thrice-blessed Californians, their jibs held together, every one of them.

In a series as beautifully organised as this, with every last detail looked after by a different committee of ten or more, with the Long Beach Yacht Club's considerable facilities focused for months to a single end — to make a success of the series — these flimsy jibs were sheer tragedy. If the wind had remained as light as it had been for the first day there would have been no trouble. Cy Gillette, the experienced Hawaiian yachtsman, said that he had watched the last ten Congressional Cups and he could not remember a windier spell than this second day when four gruelling sets of heats were sailed. And the third and final day was only a hair less windy.

Which should not be allowed to detract from the performance of either Dennis Durgan or Dick Deaver. Their control and judgement and boat handling and crew work were at least one degree above the others. Deaver won this first day's heats so easily he must surely have won had the wind stayed light. He appeared to have a greater appreciation than anyone of the sheeting needs of these boats. Coming into his start against Harold Cudmore, the Irishman appeared to have the Californian covered but then Deaver eased his sheets a few inches, upped his helm ever so slightly and slipped through the other's lee as if he had switched into overdrive. Deaver's mainsail might have had something to do with his light air speed too. He requested and received permission to have the elderly Neil Pryde mainsail which came with the boat that he had drawn replaced by another, newer, that carried the North Sails label. Afterwards Deaver told me that this was the same boat that Scott Allan had used in the 1978 series. Deaver said that it was



Dennis Durgan from Newport Beach scored a clear win in the series, losing only one race, and that to the second finisher Dick Deaver — photos Guy Gurney.

Scott who suggested that he would have to get himself a better mainsail. Curiously enough Scott Allan was the other Cup contestant to receive special permission to switch to a newish North main. The other eight all made do with whatever mainsail came with their boat. Cuts and condition appeared to vary widely but actually, when the wind came in fresh, the boat speed of the entire fleet became very equal.

In the highest reaches of racing, success often seems to come negatively. And so it was this time. Others had jib sheets shake free of the sails. Some found — too late, at the leeward mark — that their spinnaker halyards had jammed aloft. Some spinnakers fell in the water, some jib sheets looped over mast winches. Some skippers allowed their boats to get so close to the wind before the start that they suddenly lost all headway and with it steering control.

These maladies never seemed to afflict Dennis Durgan and almost Dick Deaver's only mistake was to touch the bouncing inflatable marker buoy when chasing Hackett hard around the windward mark.

Crews deserve as much tribute as skippers for avoiding the snarl-ups that lose events of this calibre. Therefore let it be chronicled that Dennis Durgan's tactician was Lou Wake, by one year Durgan's senior. They were contemporaries at the University of Hawaii where they match-raced and sailed together and have remained firm friends since. Lou says modestly that Durgan doesn't really need a tactician. He now works for Hobie Cat at Irvine just down the road. Lou's cousin John Wake was in the crew too, together with Duffie Duffield, Bill Messenger,



Harold Cudmore finished fifth out of the ten contestants, the highest placed non-Californian, with five wins and four defeats.

John ('L.J.') Edgecombe and, bringing some age and experience, the one-time Aussie Rex Banks. Several served with Bill Ficker in his Twelve. 'L.J.' was with Turner in 'Courageous' in 1977. Durgan now works for Sparcraft, helping to build yachts and spars in alloy.

Durgan and Deaver usually controlled their starts so well that a great match between the two could be anticipated. It turned out to be routine. This was Durgan's poorest race. Deaver was digging up from leeward as they approached the start and with his fine control, led away, pulling out progressively from then on.

One of the most spirited heats was between Scott Allan and Bruno Troublé. The latter still lacks match experience; he didn't even compete in the first French match series, won by Deaver from Cudmore at La Rochelle last summer, but he cannily wiped off Allan on the lee-end committee boat before their start, steadily went ahead till he led by over a minute at the last mark. Then at the start of this final, short leg, the Frenchman made a cardinal error — he failed to take a starboard-tack hitch, at the half-lead distance. The wind had been variable all through this first day and Allan behind, taking advantage of a 20° backing shift, sailed far higher than Troublé. The latter had to cover desperately but each time they came together Allan split off towards the favourable left-hand side. In the end Troublé scrambled home first by ten seconds, the closest margin of the whole series.

Harold Cudmore's heat with Allan was tense from start to finish. The Irish led from the start and around the first mark. They held a narrow lead through the next lap, made an unnecessary gybe soon after

their spinnaker hoist which gave Allan his overlap. The Irish closed up after the final mark and almost won back the lead but then, finally, two poor tacks enabled Allan to win comfortably. Cudmore's highly experienced crew included Killian Bush on the foredeck, Butch Dalrymple-Smith, Phil Holland and Bill Green and, as tactician, Andy Rose. The latter is a Californian who was tactician to Noel Robbins aboard 'Australia' in the last America's Cup.

Cudmore was involved in another great battle, this time against Petterson. This was towards the end of the series and with Troublé still looking for a third win it took on the significance of a European championship. By reaching down into a gap at the weather end of the line, Cudmore got the jump at the start. Petterson led around the windward mark and his crew were extra fast with their spinnaker. Cudmore surged up later and the issue remained in doubt till, approaching the lee mark, a Swedish crewman made the fatal mistake of leading a genoa sheet inside a shroud. Naturally, the error was not discovered till the lee mark was rounded and by then it was too late. Thus it was that Cudmore finished fifth overall and first of those who do not live in Southern California.

In much the same manner Troublé had trailed behind John Odenbach, from the start of their race till the last mark when Odenbach's spinnaker refused to come down (probably because the halyard had been hoisted too high so that the splice was jammed in the sheave box). Troublé did not need a second bidding.

In the fresh 15-20mph breeze of the second day, with starts happening every five minutes, incident crowded upon incident with such speed it was almost impossible to register each as it happened. Yet certain things remain fixed in the mind's eye. There was the almost

rhythmic way in which Deaver once short-tacked an opponent towards the line. It was a *pas de deux* with Deaver doing the leading — always to the right and with starboard tack up his sleeve. Equally fluid was the way in which he would luff then bear off then luff when approaching the line early. He might have been moving at no more than a quarter of a knot but he was able on the instant to tack or bear off as the situation demanded.

Dennis Durgan once approached the line on port tack with his rival in command on his weather beam where he was preventing Durgan from tacking. The latter calmly let the situation continue as the seconds and minutes ticked by then, with about twenty seconds remaining, he began to luff just a little harder. His rival, responding, made the mistake of getting head to wind. Durgan spotted this immediately, quickly up-helmed, gained speed, tacked and came back on a fast starboard tack which took him across the line almost on the gun, clear ahead of his bemused rival.

Then there was the time when Rich Hackett put a relentless hammerlock on his opponent John Odenbach. Both were on starboard tack, slowly running and reaching away from the leeward (left hand) end of the line, with Hackett to leeward and behind. When Odenbach made to tack, Hackett would luff across his stern and prevent him from doing so. When Odenbach tried to bear off and gybe, Hackett would dart the other way, get back on the other's lee quarter and hold him there. If Odenbach slowed, Hackett would slow. Odenbach might have been able to escape around a spectator boat — if only one had been handy. Finally Hackett peeled off and gybed on to port, towards the line, leaving Odenbach to tack for it. Unfortunately, Hackett made his move a few seconds early. In

a match race it is far better to be safely late, just so long as your opponent is later. It may be significant that when Hackett, who was well supported by an enthusiastic cheering section from his Coyote Yacht Club in San Francisco Bay, won the match series which earned him a berth in the Congressional Cup, Durgan had served as his tactician. One final excitement: Cudmore and Allan both approached the line early, both on starboard with Cudmore to weather. Both crossed early, both returned by turning away from each other. Then Cudmore, for once, ignored the advice of his tactician Andy Rose. Instead of merely dipping the line on port then luffing towards the wide open spaces to the right for a clean start, he gybed on to starboard and cleaved towards Allan who was caught on port, hardening his sheets. Somehow the American dodged the aggressive, shouting Irishman.

Cudmore finished fifth out of ten thinking, as many another Congressional Contestant must have done before him, that this series is winnable. The small winches and dated deck gear on the Cal 40s had surprised him. Next time he would have more muscle if less age and wisdom in his crew. He said that at first he found the Cal 40s difficult to sail. Then when he began to get the measure of them, he appreciated the skill that was needed to keep that buoyant bow from bouncing into and off a wave. He was kicking himself for making various simple errors he swore he would never make again.

But perhaps Cudmore's major error, if he really wants to win, is to remain domiciled in Cork, near the southern tip of Ireland. The record states unmistakably that if you want to win the Congressional Cup it is an enormous help to live in Southern California.

Results

1st Dennis Durgan, 25, Newport Beach YC, 8 wins 1 defeat (lost to Deaver), 2nd Dick Deaver, 47, Balboa YC, 7 wins 2 defeats (lost to Hackett and Odenbach), 3rd Scott Allan (representing New York Yacht Club), 6 wins 3 defeats (lost to Troublé, Durgan and Deaver), 4th Henry Schofield, Long Beach YC, 6 wins 3 defeats (lost to Allan, Deaver and Durgan), 5th Harold Cudmore, Royal Cork YC, Ireland, 5 wins 4 defeats (lost to Deaver, Durgan, Allan and Schofield), 6th Pelle Petterson, Royal Gothenburg YC, Sweden, 4 wins 5 defeats (won against Troublé, Odenbach, Beckmann and Hackett); 7th Marvin Beckmann, Galveston Bay Cruising Assoc, 3 wins 6 defeats (won against Hackett, Troublé and Odenbach), 8th Richard Hackett, Coyote Point YC, 3 wins 6 defeats (won against Deaver, Troublé and Odenbach); 9th Bruno Troublé, Yacht Club d'Hieres, France, 2 wins 7 defeats (won against Allan and Odenbach), 10th John Odenbach, YRU of the Great Lakes, 1 win 8 defeats (won against Deaver).

A little local colour of the kind rarely found on The Solent. Genuine Californian Sealsions disport themselves on the windward mark — to the evident total disinterest of a competing foredeck hand.

