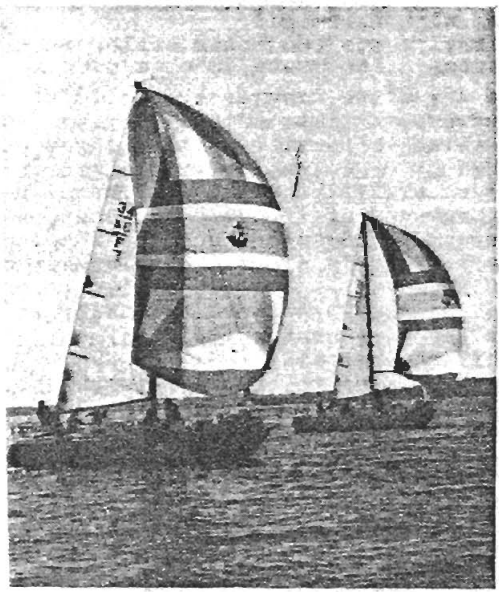


DICK DEEVER WINS BRITAIN'S LYMINGTON MATCHCUP AT HIS FIRST ATTEMPT. JOHN OAKELEY SECOND.

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This was the international debut of the new OOD 34s, designed by Doug Peterson & built by Jeremy Rogers

By winning the Lymington match race series at his first attempt, the Californian sailmaker Dick Deaver, added further to his growing reputation as the world's best match race sailor.

Not only did he lead this series from start to finish - in spite of a protest at mid point which took away one of his first day victories. In the past three years he has won the premier match event, the Long Beach Congressional Cup twice, in '77 and '78 and come a razor close second in '79. Last year he won the first French match event to be held.

This was the fifth Lymington series and the first to be held in boats of the new OOD 34 class designed by Doug Peterson and built by J C. Rogers. To ensure enough boats, only eight instead of the usual ten were invited and this undoubtedly helped to get the series completed within two days with full length races, four groups of heats being held on Friday May 18th and the remaining three the day after. Several who had already accepted, backed out later and here one falls to wondering whether as the day draws near, some begin to fear for their precious reputations and so discover 'pressing engagements'. In the end Lymington's own Peter Bruce came in for Larry Marks, now crewing aboard Ted Heath's Morning Cloud, Deaver and the 1979 Congressional Cup winner, Dennis Durgan, were invited from California. Pelle Peterson came from Sweden, Bruno Troublé came from France Harold Cudmore came from Cork to defend the title he had won, on a protest, last year. John Oakeley who came so near winning at his first attempt last year and Phil Crebbin, winner in '76 and '77, completed the eight.

The sou'westerly gale that had blown for the previous twenty four hours had the good taste to disappear in time for the first heats on the Friday morning. These were sailed in a moderate, westerly that freshened briefly during the occasional rain squall. The second day began with a faint-hearted southerly which backed east playing havoc with positions. Then a light sou'wester blew in from the Needles just in time to rescue the visitors from one of those tide-dodging exercises for which the Solent is notorious.

Race organisation was at all times impeccable. A square run, calling for gybes, was nearly always obtained even though this leg was often across the tide. Only one group of races had to be shortened, all other courses being twice the length of previous years - but then the OOD34s are sometimes close to double the speed of the Contessa 32s used previously. If the new class has one defect for match racing it is manoeuvrability. The quick turning and acceleration speeds up pre-start tactics to such an extent that it is difficult both for observers and competitors to see who is on top at any given moment. This factor can also increase the number of incidents and hence protests.

Every competitor that we asked had nothing but good to say about both the boats and the organisation though one or two did add the rider that the 34s are a trifle heavy to steer - one adding that in his experience every Peterson designed boat feels heavy.

Deaver was only beaten on the water once - first thing on Saturday morning when having emphatically out-maneuvred Phil Crebbin at the start and having rounded the first mark with a handy lead, the light southerly backed eastward just as the flood tide was strengthening with the result that the American found himself dead upwind of the lee mark with Crebbin and the other pairs able to gybe across and cut the corner. But all was not lost. Though Crebbin crossed the shortened finish first (the other British, John Oakeley and Peter Bruce also made the most of this domestic tide-dodging), Deaver was able to convince the jury, sitting on a moored committee boat while the fleet awaited the seabreeze, that Crebbin had failed to keep clear of him, in a port and starboard incident several minutes before the start.

This decision was critical to the outcome of the series for the previous evening, John Oakeley had successfully protested Deaver for a very similar port and starboard in their starting scramble. Afterwards Deaver had forced Oakeley into starting prematurely and had then proceeded to tour the course with a commanding lead. But having lost this race in the jury room he could not afford another lapse.

Oakeley, in spite of a shakey start with only one heat won on the water of the four sailed on the opening day, managed to recover well enough to finish second overall with five wins to Deaver's six. Second place was guaranteed Oakeley, who is to skipper Britain's new America's Cup boat Lionheart, when he beat Harold Cudmore in the final heat of the series.

After much pre-start manoeuvring, with Oakeley escaping the hook baited by Cudmore by somehow turning his boat through 180 degrees within the twenty feet of water between the outer limit and a committee boat, the pair had started close together with Oakeley to leeward. Oakeley turned the weather mark almost half a minute up and stayed ahead throughout though he had to luff and gybe repeatedly on the second run.

Strangely, this was one of the few heats that these two skippers completed without their red protest flags flying. Cudmore seemed to be starting with one

hand on his backstay, ready on the instant to break out the furling flag. Three of those Oakeley protests were against Deaver and one of them prevailed. The fourth alleged that in the very first heat of the series, Bruno Troublé had failed to approach the starting line from the required side. Happily for commonsense, this was dismissed and though Oakeley led this heat the winner was Troublé, for the simple reason that Oakeley neglected to pass through the line at the commencement of the second round - a fact which is inescapably linked to another - Oakeley also neglected to attend the pre-race briefing, though he did send a deputy. Afterwards, Oakeley said that as he and his crew sailed along they all took a turn reading the instructions without finding a requirement to cross the line between laps. Odd how they should all of them have completely missed Rule 10, Starting and Finishing. We seem to remember that Oakeley managed to get the course wrong in a recent race in the Lymington Spring series, solely because he missed the briefing.

As for Harold Cudmore, his ebullient aggression this time proved less effective than usual. His final protest, lodged against Dennis Durgan was tossed out with Cudmore promising to appeal and saying that in future he would have to collide to prove his point. As an observer, I can only say that if he had won this protest no right thinking yacht owner would ever again lend his boat for a match racing series for it seemed to us that one moment Durgan and Cudmore were on parallel courses both on port tack and about four boat lengths apart and the next, Cudmore had gybed at right angles and was heading straight for the hapless American, yelling 'starboard'. Rule 41 establishes a narrow and often hard to define, dividing line between claiming proper right of way and trapping your opponent by exploiting a right of way. In this particular case we would unhesitatingly say that Cudmore was a long distance the wrong side of this line. Rule 41 comes under heavy pressure during pre start manoeuvring in match racing but it remains clear and forthright and Cudmore surely failed to observe it.

In any event, the cool Dennis Durgan after a close start, was soon a few boat's lengths up on Cudmore and remained there throughout their race, covering carefully upwind and down, even though it took them both out in a foul tide.

Harold Cudmore who had won this event last year, had to be content with four wins out of seven and equal points with Dennis Durgan and Bruno Troublé. Because Durgan beat both he takes third place with Cudmore, who beat Troublé, fourth and the Frenchman nominated to steer Bich's new America's Cup boat fifth.

Peter Bruce, brought in a few days before the event to replace Larry Marks, finished sixth with three wins. Sweden's America's Cup helmsman Pelle Petterson and Phil Crebbin had a hair raisingly close battle to avoid last place, in the first of the final group of heats. This was easily the closest race of the whole series. The pair started very evenly with Crebbin moving slightly faster and tacking away first. Petterson led narrowly around the weather mark but Crebbin closed towards the end of the second run and actually got ahead only to fall back after both gybed. By turning the lee mark tighter and with more speed, then tacking, Crebbin got his nose ahead of

the Swede who had to tack to cover. With the ebb tide speeding them on, the pair finished without any further tacks. Somehow Petterson managed to find enough speed to foot half over Crebbin and win by two seconds.

The two days brought no luck to Phil Crebbin who in '76 and again in '77 had won this event. This time, he looked lost in the pre start manoeuvring whilst his crew twice left their spinnaker drops too late, having difficulty in clawing the sail down on the wind and losing matches thereby. Once they had the halyard jamb as the sail was on its way aloft. In a moderate wind Crebbin's mainsail, made by Hood, like all the others, looked tight in the leach, possibly because they hadn't taken up on their baby stay and sprung some fore and aft bend in the limber mast, as had most of the others. Losing this split second race after losing his protest against Deaver meant that Crebbin who is certainly one of Britain's best two or three dinghy and small keelboat helmsmen, ended the series without a single victory.

Dick Deaver demonstrated his mastery of this esoteric branch of yacht racing in his very first heat which just happened to be against his old rival and fellow Californian, Dennis Deaver. At the start Durgan managed to get on Deaver's tail. Their manoeuvring was slower and more measured than some of the others. It looked as if each was planning as he went rather than turning for the hell of it but though Durgan clearly started ahead, he was to leeward of Deaver and the latter was able to tack first to port and head for the slack tide in the direction of the mainland shore. Durgan was far enough ahead to clamp tight cover but all the time the tide was helping the leeward boat as it eased sheets and footed off. Once in slack water Deaver initiated a short tacking duel. As always his tacks were unhurried, the turning circle being perfectly matched to the speed of the genoa sheet handlers. It wasn't long before Deaver had forced Durgan about and once ahead it was Deaver's turn to clamp himself to weather, which meant being on the deep water, stronger tide side. However, once Deaver was ahead he stayed ahead. He turned the windward mark 18 seconds up and finished a comfortable 74 seconds in front.

Even though the tide made for a one-way course Deaver showed that it was possible for the second away to be first home.

An approaching storm led to a decision to use Number 2 jibs for these second heats but by starting time the clouds had passed and the boats were undercanvassed, calling for some delicacy on the part of helmsmen and trimmers. Pelle Petterson and Bruno Troublé both approached the line late in their start, Petterson tacked off for the slack water first but Troublé was soon ahead and remained so. It is possible that Petterson's Number 2 jib was not as good as Troublé's.

Dennis Durgan started against John Oakeley with a safe leeward position and better speed. Though Oakeley was first to tack towards the slack, Durgan was able to find that vital edge of speed when they needed it most, such as when starting level on the same tack and needing to inch away into clear air. They each brought some of their own crewmen, then picked up others here. Durgan brought three - Lou Wake, John Edgecombe and Bill Messenger - four if you include Jim Pugh who was here on business for Doug Peterson and added

Sebastian Chamberlain. Dick Deaver brought two (Rod Davis and Jeff Stone) and added David Allen-Williams and Ross Walker. John Oakeley brought leading members of his Lionheart team together with Nick Reilly.

The first group of races on Saturday were the least satisfactory. Starts were made in a light southerly with the flood tide starting to run across the first leg. Each start was very close with nobody succeeding in outwitting his opponent. At the weather mark, Deaver led Crebbin, Durgan led Bruce, Oakeley led Petterson and Cudmore led Troublé. Deaver and Durgan allowed the strengthening tide to carry them eastward on the downwind leg. When the wind backed to the east this put them upwind of the mark. Those behind, seeing their predicament, took avoiding action. Halfway along this leg, Crebbin had passed Deaver and Bruce had passed Durgan and the four pairs had become mixed. The decision was taken to shorten course and Oakeley actually crossed the line first having rounded the weather mark fifth, followed by Cudmore, Troublé, Bruce, Petterson, Crebbin and finally the two Americans. This wasn't match racing but it was typical of the Solent at its more perverse

Wisely, it was decided to stop proceedings till the sou'westerly, already detectable to the west, had established itself properly. It was during this period that lunch was taken and Deaver's protest was sustained against Crebbin. It is possible that Crebbin hung himself by admitting that he told Deaver to hold his course, then failed to get out of his way.

Once the new wind had arrived the last two groups of races were held. Pelle Petterson lost any chance of beating Deaver by crossing early and then being slow to return. Phil Crebbin appeared to be winning the start against John Oakeley but then approached early and had to slow, handing back the advantage. Troublé outmanoeuvred Bruce at the start and led throughout. The closest heat was between Durgan and Cudmore with the former slowly gaining the upper hand, then covering zealously.

Apart from the closeness of the Crebbin Petterson match, already described, the final group of heats contained no surprises. Peter Bruce started slightly better than Deaver but he wasn't in front for long. The Troublé Durgan start was close but, again, the Californian found the needed reserve of extra speed. The Oakeley Cudmore manoeuvres began with the two stationary, side by side. Oakeley peeled off first.

Cudmore chased him closely, appearing to have him in the classic starboard tack hammerlock. But that was before Oakeley wriggled off the hook by gybing and turning through 180 degrees in the tiny space between the outer limit and a committee boat. This pair finally started very equal, both on starboard, with Oakeley safely to leeward. By the weather mark Oakeley was nearly half a minute up. He remained ahead.

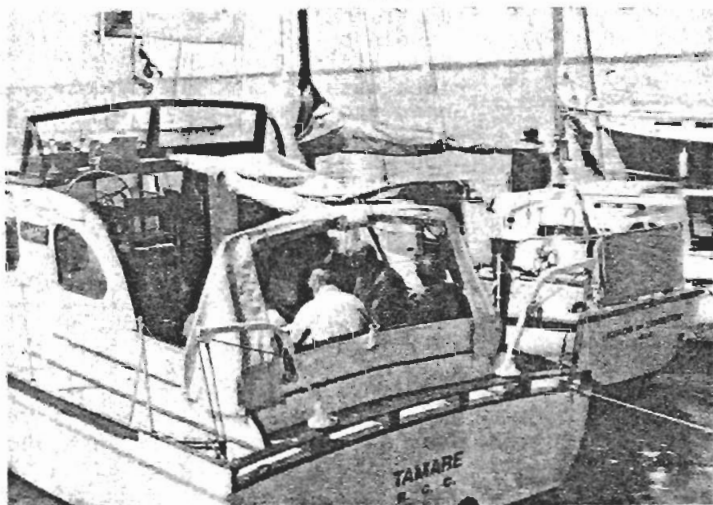
The OOD34s were being sheeted surprisingly hard in the lighter winds. Yet they were moving very fast too. The vital matter was deciding how quickly to bring those sheets in. At the top end of Force 4 the boats were beginning to look overcanvassed with full sail upwind. The two American crews probably tacked and sheeted better than any and it was noticeable that in the lighter velocities one crewman was detailed to grab the genoa clew and walk it aft on each tack.

Those who lowered their spinnaker under the genoa foot and onto the foredeck were able to get away from the lee mark best. If the mark was turned with the spinnaker still up, the sail had to be fought down every inch of the way.

A thought for the organisers: now that their series is of international stature, should they not be planning to take it into the less tidal waters of Christchurch Bay, outside Hurst?

Dick Deaver manages the North Sails loft at Seal Beach, California. He steered Resolute Salmon to victory in the One Ton Cup at Marseilles and was last seen in the Solent in 1977 at the helm of the Chance designed Bay Bea. At forty seven and with a grown son who often crews for him, Deaver was the oldest racing whilst second placed Oakeley at forty five was the second oldest. Match racing, you see, calls for experience and a wise head.

- 1st Dick Deaver USA 6 wins. Lost on protest to Oakeley Bt Crebbin on protest.
- 2nd John Oakeley UK 5 wins. Lost to Troublé for incorrect course. Bt Deaver on prot. Lost to Durgan.
- 3rd Dennis Durgan USA 4 wins. Lost to Deaver, Bruce, Petterson
- 4th Harold Cudmore Ireland. 4 wins. Lost to Deaver, Durgan (protests) Oakeley.
- 5th Bruno Troublé France 4 wins. Lost to Deaver, Cudmore, Durgan.
- 6th Peter Bruce UK 3 wins. Beat Crebbin, Petterson, Durgan
- 7th Pelle Petterson Sweden 2 wins. Beat Durgan, Crebbin.
- 8th Phil Crebbin UK 0 Wins. Lost protest having beaten Deaver.



The critical protest by Phil Crebbin against Dick Deaver was heard afloat between races, whilst the westerly sea breeze was awaited. Case dismissed.