

# Congressional Cup

Harold Cudmore first non-American to win



(left) Harold Cudmore leads Terry McLaughlin, who skippered the 1983 Canadian Twelve Metre — all photos Libby Jennings. (above) Celebration time. Cudmore, partly hidden by tactician Michael Meader enjoys a glass of champagne.

**H**AROLD Cudmore could win the America's Cup. What he lacks in time he easily makes up for in ability and experience and, if his two Twelve Metres, one of which should by now be sailing, are as good as they ought to be, we could easily be looking at Torquay for 1990. If the boats are good though that is, but for the time being we are talking of identical Catalina 38s and the Congressional Cup 1986, run in March by the Long Beach YC in California.

As many may be aware, Harold Cudmore, '86 Congressional Cup winner, is the first non-American sailor to win the series. It was his eighth try and could not have come at a better time both from his own personal confidence point of view, and from the point of view of potential sponsors who might be on the point of joining the British battle. It is

interesting to note that Ted Turner was the first person to win the Congressional Cup from outside the west coast of the United States on his seventh attempt. That was 1977, and in that year Turner went on to win the America's Cup.

The competition was hot this year. Most America's Cup syndicates see the value of getting their men some international match practice and the easiest way to do this without revealing all of their expensive secrets is to send them on the international match racing circuit. Other Twelve Metre skippers to compete against Cudmore at this year's series were Chris Dickson who finished second in the recent Twelve Metre world championship and is highly fancied for the main event itself; Colin Beashel, skipper of 'Australia III' from the Bond syndicate; Terry McLaughlin,

who has rules book and will travel; Flavio Scala, skipper of the Italian Twelve Metre 'Italia' who has never really figured in match racing anywhere; and Rod Davis who has figured in several and who is leading the Eagle Foundation America's Cup programme. Also among Dave Perry's crew was Peter Isler who is sailing 'Courageous IV' for the Courageous Challenge.

So there was a fair spread of talent this year, and in order to try to make the event fairer, the organisers, unlike the organisers of the Westerly Royal Lymington Cup in this country who have the luxury of ten brand new identical boats with brand new sails, decided that boats should be swapped each day and arranged for them all to have brand-new sails for the event. This was considered a success, and greatly boosted the significance of the event; there have been complaints in the past of slow boats and sails and unfair competition.

Of those who are not involved with Twelve Metre campaigns for one reason or another, Dave Perry is probably the best known. He has won this event twice before, and is at his best in the one-design keelboat classes. Steve Flam, John Gobbell and Dave Dellenbaugh have all been involved with the Congressional Cup in the past as either crew or skippers and of these, Dellenbaugh put up the best performance to finish fourth behind Cudmore, Perry and Dickson.



Cudmore won the series with seven wins and two losses. His losses were against rival America's Cup contenders Colin Beashel and Rod Davis. He lost to Davis fairly and squarely, but his loss to Beashel came after a meeting in the Protest Room having finished ahead of the Australian on the water. Cudmore recognises the fact that he needed to win the event this time around in order to establish his credibility, and praises his crew, four of whom he brought along with him from Perth and the 'Crusader' camp. These were Jerry Richards, David Woolner, Melvyn Coleman and tactician Michael Meader. The benefit of sailing with crew Cudmore was used to help give him the edge over the tough opposition.

But if Cudmore's win was impressive, he did not have the series his own way, not by a long chalk. New Zealand's Chris Dickson, who placed third overall, Dave Perry and Dave Dellenbaugh were all able to win in the closing stages with scores of 5-2 each — the same as Cudmore. Cudmore had beaten Perry and Dickson in the regatta though, and so unless he lost both of his final two races, they would be unable to beat him for the series. The only real threat to Cudmore then was Dave Dellenbaugh who Cudmore had still to race. Cudmore and Dellenbaugh both won their penultimate races, and so the outcome of the regatta depended upon the race between them. If Cudmore had lost then he would have been third overall as Dave Perry had won seven of his matches and would have been second to Dellenbaugh. As it was, both Cudmore and Perry ended up with seven wins, but because Cudmore had beaten Perry in their match, the Irishman came away with the victory from Perry and Dickson.

It is interesting to note that Cudmore and Dellenbaugh have met in this event in the past. Dellenbaugh has in fact been aboard the winning boat on two occasions with Dave Perry, the last time was in 1984 when Perry beat Cudmore in the last race showdown.

The American series is pretty similar to the British one that it spawned. Over here we have the Crebbin Cup to select an outsider to join the fray, while in the States they have two heats — the Long Beach YC host club sail-off, and a regional sail-off — in order to bring other sailors into the series and give them some experience. This year's Long Beach YC entry was Steve Flam who has competed in several Congressional Cups; he finished eighth, while John Gobbell, the regional entry, ended up ninth, just ahead of the Italian Scala.

Talking about the series Cudmore felt that the American public was with him and giving him palpable support having



(below, left) Chris Dickson, the nominated skipper of the New Zealand Twelve Metre, was third. (below, right) Second place went to two-times Congressional Cup winner, Dave Perry.



(above) Cudmore, to windward, races Dave Perry. In the end both men finished up with seven wins but because the Irishman had beaten Perry in their match he won the Cup.

Cudmore was aware that he almost gave the series away when, sailing against Dellenbaugh, he temporarily lost control of the pre-start manoeuvres. Luckily he managed to get good boat speed and pass Dellenbaugh up the beat and from then on protected the favoured right-hand side of the course to lead at the top mark.

Having won the Congressional Cup, Cudmore will now be absent from the Westerly Royal Lymington Cup for which he will send his helmsmen Eddie Owen and Chris Law. It will be very interesting to see how they get on in that series against some of the people that Cudmore had to beat in order to become the 1986 Congressional Cup winner.

**Results:** 1st Harold Cudmore (Great Britain) 7-2, 2nd Dave Perry (USA) 7-2, 3rd Chris Dickson (New Zealand) 6-3, 4th Dave Dellenbaugh (USA) 6-3, 5th Colin Beashel (Australia) 5-4, 6th Rod Davis (USA) 5-4, 7th Terry McLaughlin (Canada) 3-6, 8th Steve Flam (USA) 3-6, 9th John Gobbell (USA) 2-7, 10th Flavio Scala (Italy) 1-8.

been so close in the past. He also felt that the races were won or lost by the weather mark the first time around. Since the boats accelerate so quickly around the weather mark, the leader is long gone by the time his opponent gets around the mark, and so the usual process of covering the leading boats air is not so effective. The American series differs from that in this country in that there are two rounds of the beat-run course rather than just one. This gives the trailing boat a chance that the leader will foul-up a manoeuvre giving it a chance to slip through.