

February 22, 2000
625 Eugene's Road
Cutchogue, N.Y. 11935

Frank Bohlen, Commodore
1 Scott Lane
Mystic, Connecticut 06355

Dear Commodore Bohlen,

I for one am very pleased with the Off Soundings Club and their spring and fall series regattas. I have been a member for 5 years sailing my boat Persistence in class C-5. Prior to that I crewed for many years on Menace in C-3. I sail out of Eastern Long Island and my C&C 25 is too small and slow to race up and down the sound or take to Block Island Race Week (where I crewed for many years too). To me Off Soundings is as "big time regatta" as it can get and I'm very happy doing it.

I personally think what you did in reorganizing divisions C- 2+3 and C- 4+5 was a very good thing as it put birds of a feather together, racers vs. racers and production cruiser/racers vs., production cruisers. I understand that it did increase the rating band spread a bit but I believe that it still made for better racing in those divisions. As tough as it was for me dealing with the 30+ footers that came from C-4, it was better than watching the J-24s and Evelyms surfing off into the sunset. I'm sure the big boats feel the same way. Classes don't have to have 15-20 boats or need 4th place trophies. Adding another division or 2 with maybe only 10-12 boats and only 3 trophies could solve some of the rating spread problem

One problem I do have is getting near enough to the committee boat to read the course board without being yelled at by bigger boats starting sooner. This has been worked on a bit, the new bigger board, prelisted buoys per course etc, but a second board on the pin boat or more radio announcements could help.

Participation is a universal problem not just for sailors at regattas, but across the board for many groups and organizations around the country. As a past president of 6 various organizations over the years I know how hard it is to maintain attendance for meetings regardless of them being social, service, trade, or sailing and weekly, monthly or yearly. I personally believe that people need to be "spoon fed" meaning they need to be called and reminded individually to help ensure they don't "forget" or "blow off" a meeting as easily. I've been evolved with 2 groups that have implemented a "phone chain" kind of thing and it has increased turn out for both. One of these groups is also using the E-Mail list thing with very good results.

The class fleet captains could be the ones responsible to "shake the trees" and "beat the drum" so to say, to give those skippers "on the fence" that little nudge they need to commit to coming. At the same time they could be getting input as to why some boats aren't coming out anymore... Are the sailors old, in bad health, sold the boat, don't have crew, or they don't like the divisions, courses, competition, venues, etc. Look back 3-4-5 years and see who's missing. Questionnaires are good but these are the people who probably won't send them back anyways. This is not that huge a thing, each person would be calling 20+ people but over a few days it wouldn't be so bad. I'll say again, the phone chain thing does work!

As to the web page idea, I'm all for it. The future is here now and the web and E-Mail are an ever increasing presence. I'm barely computer literate (it took me 2 hours to type this) but have joined the E-Mail ranks and check out a few web sites. One of our local groups Peconic Bay Sailing Assoc. has a web page, www.pbsa.net and is putting one together for the Eastern Long Island Sailing Assoc. www.cnc-owners.com is a link you may also want to add.

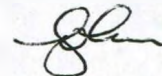
As to the basic format of Off Soundings, I still am quite happy with the races, parties, and venues as they are. Block Island is great and in mid-June, they are all dressed up and ready to go without the crowds yet. Shelter Island (and Greenport) offer plenty of services and Gardiner's Bay is protected and big enough to do our thing. Newport is a little far away for some of the boats and is rather expensive. Racing inside Narragansett Bay is a bit tricky and crowded and racing outside in the ocean doesn't offer anything you can't find back west.

As far as the race courses, I'm not the biggest fan of windward/leewards but they are the "norm" for top shelf racing, stressing tactics, crew work and shifts. Point to point races can occasionally be a reach a thon with a little less tactics, but still can separate the wheat from the chafe on a good pole on the headstay tight reach. The around Block Island race is always a highlight for everyone both tactically and visually and shouldn't be messed with. The race courses incurred during the spring and fall regattas do mix it up a bit. You are kind of stuck with a point to point type race to get us from Connecticut to Block Island and Long Island. The round the island race gives you that "circular random" course. If you're looking for something to change, maybe windwards/leewards in Gardiner's Bay could be a thought. Perhaps you could even enlist a committee boat or 2 from Shelter Island Yacht Club and set up 2 separate courses and run 2 shorter races for ALL of the spinnaker divisions (with offset windward marks and "gate" leeward marks) for even more variation. The cruising canvas classes could still do the usual buoy races at the same time.

Overall, like I said way back, I love doing Off Soundings and you don't need to change anything to keep me happy and coming back, but you did ask for feedback so here it is.

Thanks to all of you who serve on the committees, do all the work, and hear all of the complaints, without getting enough credit or pats on the back. Keep up the good work!

Thanks again,



John Graeb