

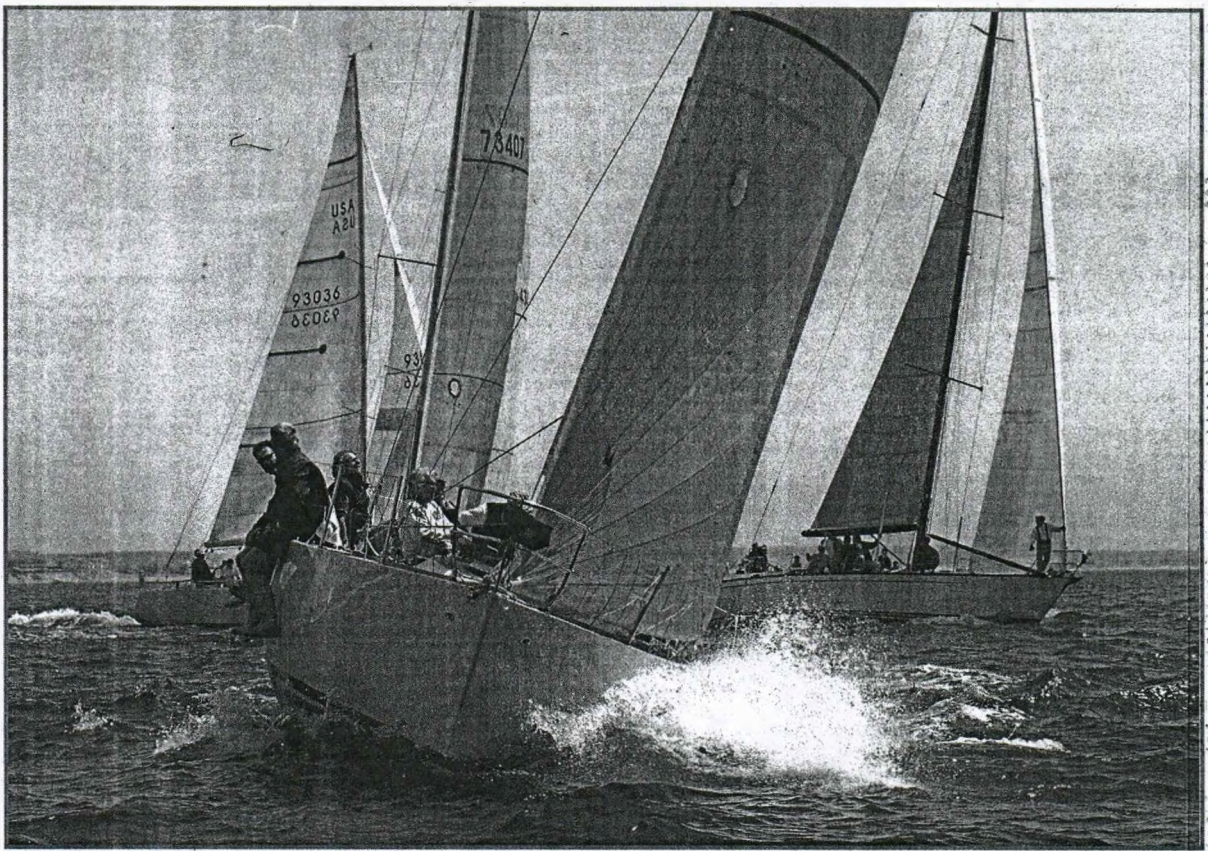
## Sound Sailing

JUNE 10, 2000



ROBERT PATTERSON/The Day

■ *Tao, center, skippered by Phil Dickey, pulls away from the Class C-2 field and sails to victory in competition during the 63rd Off Soundings Spring Series Friday. More than 140 boats in 10 classes will compete on Long Island Sound through today. See story, F3*



ROBERT PATTERSON/The Day

■ *Settler* (foreground), skippered by Jim Rich III and Jim Rich Jr., finished fourth Friday in Class C-1 of the Off Soundings Club's Spring Series. The fleet of 142 boats, competing in 10 divisions, started at Watch Hill and finished at Block Island. The series continues today.

# Off Soundings marks its return

After having its Fall Series canceled by a hurricane, fleet of 142 boats sets sail

By DAVID TRANCHIDA  
Day Staff Writer

**Block Island** — A steady 10-12 knot north-west breeze ushered in the start of the serious racing season Friday morning as the 142 boats for the Spring Off Sounding Series made their way to the start on Watch Hill for the annual two-day event.

Friday's race to Block Island was sailed in near-ideal conditions, providing a respite for the fleet, which has sailed in rain and heavy wind for the past three spring series and had to abandon last year's fall series from New London to Shelter Island because of hurricane warnings.

For the 63rd annual spring series the morning wind provided good conditions for the start, though midway through the race it dropped off a bit.

As the fleet approached the island however, a wind shift to the southwest brought a 15-20 knot breeze and the finish off New Harbor was sailed in a competitive close reach.

"There was good wind and playing the tide had to be considered, so it wasn't just a boring lake race," said Bill Loweth of Noank aboard

his C&C 33, Brer Rabbit III.

"There was some tide at the beach (the island) and that's how we picked up," Loweth said.

Most of the 10 classes sailed a short course that took them to a buoy about two miles off Watch Hill and then east to the buoy off the northern tip of the island and to the finish line outside the entrance to New Harbor. Larger boats were sent on a long course from Watch Hill east to Nebraska Shoals, about four miles west of Point Judith and then out to the island.

One boat was damaged Friday in a collision near the end of the race. *Rogue* and *Shamrock* collided a short distance off the island and *Rogue* apparently suffered heavy damage and could not finish the race.

Dr. William Lieber, who sails *Petard* out of Mystic, agreed with Loweth that the tide demanded attention Friday.

"It was a very tricky rounding of the first mark because of the tide and wind shift," Lieber said.

This was the first time multi-hulls have been invited to sail in the race and they did well. There are seven in the class and they were invited as a way to help build participation in the race.

Peter Hewes of Groton, who is sailing aboard *Petard* and first sailed in Off Soundings in 1954, said he endorses the club's effort to expand participation by inviting the multi-hulls and its plan to seek new members and guests

from among the many boats that spend too much time at the dock.

"I think it's a wonderful idea to try to expose more people to the sport of sailing," Hewes said. "It's good, clean fun and you can get families involved. The club was formed to enhance sailing and we'd like to see the local yacht clubs do more to encourage sailing."

Hewes said too many people are intimidated by Off Soundings because it is sailed in Block Island Sound rather than the more protected waters off Fishers Island Sound and the local bays and rivers. The race is a little more demanding, he acknowledged. But he likened the differences in the two forms of racing to the differences between checkers and chess.

"It's the same board it's just another level, more of a challenge," Hewes said.

## Notes

In the middle of the day, the race committee radioed all boats to beware of a disabled barge being pulled by a tug. Soon afterward, the odd shape of a barge with bow and stern sticking up and water washing over the creased mid-section appeared on the horizon. The tug and barge made their way to the fleet from east to west without incident.

The committee boat, *Summersalt*, was furnished by Steve Purdy of Stonington. The boat replaced *Nor'easter*, owned by the DuPont family and an Off Soundings regular for years.

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