

PRESS RELEASE  
Thursday, June 19, 2003

## **Forty Years On, Storm Trysail Club's Block Island Race Week Attracts Big Fleet**

BLOCK ISLAND, R.I. – JUNE 19, 2003—Marking the solstice and the slow, sultry slide into summer, more than 200 racing sailboats will arrive this weekend at Block Island for the Storm Trysail Club's biennial Block Island Race Week presented by Rolex.

This is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club's renowned biennial race week on Block Island, and 205 ocean racing boats are headed to the tiny island off the coast of Rhode Island to race the five-day series that starts on Monday.

The dampening effect of a cool, wet spring, the uncertainty of the world situation, a slowdown in the economy, and competition from other events have combined to put a small dent in this year's entry but only a small one, emphasizes Commodore Dick Neville from Annapolis, Maryland. The fleet is only nine boats less than two years ago. The all-time record for race week was set in the early '80s with a 263-boat fleet.

This year the boats that pack nightly into docks and moorings in Great Salt Pond will do daily battle on four separate courses on Block Island Sound. Traditionally, one day is set aside for a race around the island, weather permitting. To ensure close competition, entrants have been divided into 20 separate classes, some featuring identical one-design boats, one with a variety of boats all competing under the same level handicap rating, and others with boat types and handicaps grouped as closely as possible.

The J/105 Class is fielding the biggest entry with 34 of the popular one-designs slated to race on the same course. Competition in this class promises to be wide open. The top four boats from two years ago are not returning. The boat to beat is Skip Young's Dragon Fly, from Guilford, Conn., flying the burgee of the Sachem Head Yacht Club. She captured fifth place last time.

The biggest one-designs racing at Block Island are the heavyweight J/44's, a closely-governed class that shares and draws from a common pool of racing sails to ensure every boat gets an even break. The favorites amongst the six boats entered are Jeffrey Willis's Challenge IV, from Huntington, N.Y. and William Ketcham's Maxine, from Greenwich, Conn. They finished second and third, respectively, two years ago.

Farr 40s are the Formula Ones of one-designs at Block Island and although the timing of the class world championship series in Europe has resulted in some attrition, seven boats will hit the starting line next week. The Canadian boat Dynamo, sailed by Eric Moog from Niagara-on-the-Lake, finished second two years

ago, and faces tough competition from a strong class, but especially from John Thomson's Solution from Port Washington, N.Y., a perennial champion which placed third at the last Block Island week.

Tsunami, from Edgewater, Maryland, and campaigned by Prebin Ostberg and John Aras won her Performance Handicap Racing Fleet (PHRF) class two years ago and the co-owners will be back this year, competing with the same boat in the six-boat Farr 395 One Design Class.

The biggest boat at Block Island this year will be the recently-launched 75-foot Reichel/Pugh-designed ocean racer Titan. Built by Carroll Marine in Bristol, R.I., Titan was commissioned in April and, racing the following month in the Storm Trysail Club's 185-mile race around Block Island, finished second by less than five minutes to the 81-foot first-to-finish boat Carrera. Titan is scratch boat in a very strong International Measurement System (IMS) big boat class that includes Robert Towse's Reichel/Pugh 66 Blue Yankee, Stamford, Conn. Blue Yankee dominated the big boats in 2001 with six first places and a third.

Other champions returning to Block Island include Robert and William Lehnert's Lunatic Fringe from Cutchogue, N.Y. Two years ago, the Long Island boat won her Performance Handicap Racing Fleet (PHRF) with a low point score that included five first places and a second in an eight-race series. Bill Baxter's Abbott 33 Pirate from Cutchogue, N.Y., is also returning. She won the small boat PHRF class two years ago.

Settler, a well-sailed old Peterson IOR design won her PHRF Class in handsome fashion last time, campaigned by brothers Jim and Tom Rich. She'll be racing again in PHRF this time. Jim from Southold, N.Y., drives while Tom, from Newport, R.I., calls tactics. They credit a core crew of six members for a string of successes over the years.

Gibbs Kane's Baltic 43 Mutiny, from Rye, N.Y., another PHRF class winner two years ago, is returning, as is the Express 37 Troubadour, owned and sailed by Morton Weintraub from Larchmont, N.Y. Two years ago Weintraub won the Express 37 Class. This year he'll be racing in a level rating PHRF class that includes six Express 37s and five J/35s.

Sailmaker Tim Woodhouse, with his Thompson-designed Rumors, from Newport, R.I., won the Sport Boat Class two years ago and will be positioning for another win this time in the big PHRF boat class for boats with asymmetrical spinnakers. James Miller's Santa Cruz 52 Antipodes from Laurel Hollow, N.Y., will be shooting for a repeat win in the Navigators Class and the Sea Scouts from Ship 6 in Norwalk, Conn., will also attempt a repeat victory with Celebration in the Non-Spinnaker Class.

An innovation this year is an earlier starting time for racing to permit the possibility of three races a day, weather permitting. Subject to fog, calms or storms, the Race Committee will signal a "Harbor Start" each day at 9:00 a.m., with the cannon shot the invitation for boats to begin the parade out of the pond for the beginning of

racing at 10:30 a.m. The spectacle of boats crowding the narrow entrance at the Coast Guard station always attracts a small crowd of spectators on the beach fringing the channel. Adverse conditions will trigger two cannon blasts, signaling a postponement until things look better.

The presenting sponsor for Block Island Race Week XX is Rolex Watch U.S.A. which will present Submariner timepieces to the skippers of the outstanding boats in the three biggest fleets. The three skippers will be those whose boats have displayed the outstanding performance in their fleet in the judgment of the race committee.

Other sponsors of Race Week include : Mt. Gay Rum, Jeep and the Tri-State Jeep Dealers, Lewmar Marine, Gill, Hall Spars & Rigging, Sailing World magazine, UK Sailmakers, Heineken, The Rhode Island State Yachting Committee and US Sailing.

The web site for Block Island Race Week is <http://www.blockislandraceweek.com> where daily reports, results and photos are posted every racing day.

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**Note to Editors:** You will receive a press release and agate results after racing each day. High resolution photos are also available without charge. For news and photos of specific boats, or to interview specific skippers or sailors, please contact Keith Taylor on Block Island, R.I, or Barby MacGowan in Newport. R.I.,

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