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**Storm Trysail Club
Block Island Race Week XXIII Presented by Rolex**

Big Wind in Store for Tomorrow's Kickoff

Block Island, R.I., USA (June 21, 2009) – All eyes are on the weather for tomorrow's start of the Storm Trysail Club Block Island Race Week presented by Rolex. For its 23rd biennial running, the five-day event is hosting 153 boats and over 1500 sailors who will no doubt be donning their foulies for the expected 15-20 knots of breeze with gusts up to 40 and seas of 4-6 feet. The forecast prompted the Race Committee to move the around-the-island race up from its traditional mid-week schedule.

"We'll send the fleet clockwise around the island," said On-the-Water Co-Chair Dick Neville (Annapolis, Md.) about the 18-mile course that typically enables crews to enjoy Block Island's stunning vistas – such as towering North Light and the 250-foot Mohegan Bluffs. "With such a significant breeze due out of the Northeast, we think this will be easier on the boats and the crews."

Though fairly foul weather may linger through mid-week, this hasn't dampened the spirits here for one of America's most popular Race Weeks -- a tradition that since 1965 has transformed this quiet island paradise, with a population of less than 1,000 in winter, into a beehive of buzzing summer activity. Originally patterned after Cowes Week in the U.K., the event is considered a staple in the lives of New England sailors and attracts teams from farther afield as well.

Andrew Hall, the owner of the J/133 Jackknife is one from the latter group. The Englishman (from Southport, Lancs) has been coming to Race Week for 10 years and likes the looks of the list of "runners and riders" (his term for scratch sheet) this year. "I also like the island, and it's warmer here!" he says, adding that among his crew is an Irishman, a Welshman and an English woman, with the balance "from around the area." He added, "We have a real mixture of crew, so I'm not sure how we'll do; we'll enjoy ourselves, though, that's all that matters!"

Jackknife is in one of four IRC classes (33 boats total) taking part in the 2009 *US-IRC Gulf Stream Series*. Forty PHRF boats are divided into five classes (one of those being "Navigator" for non-spinnaker), while making up the balance are eight One-Design classes (Beneteau 36.7, NYYC Swan 42, Farr 40, J/122, J/44, Farr 30, J/109, and J/105).

Looking to win the J/122 North American championship being held here as part of Race Week is Doug Shaffer (Bayview, Texas) aboard Gambler. At the recent New York Yacht Club Annual Regatta presented by Rolex, he finished second to Andrew Weiss's Christopher Dragon and counts that team as a main competitor along with Mike Bruno/Tom Boyle/Jim Callahan's (Irvington, N.Y.) Wings. Shaffer explained, "By class rules, we're allowed one industry 'professional,' who can be the tactician, and

we've got perhaps the best three tacticians in this class sailing on our three boats." While Jay Lutz calls tactics for Gambler, Shaffer expects Stu Johnstone and Mark Ploch to do so, respectively, for Wings and Christopher Dragon. The event also is serving as the J/109 East Coast Championship.

The racing format for the week allows for three fleets -- Red, White and Blue -- on three different race courses. All classes, with the exception of the Navigator's class in Blue fleet and weather permitting, will sail a minimum of two windward/leeward course races for four of the five race days. Scheduled for Navigator's class is one race per day around government and/or race committee marks.

Sailors will be gunning for 17 individual class trophies, with each of the fleets vying for a Rolex watch as the overall prize for top-performing yacht. A Rolex watch also goes to the top performing IRC boat in the around-the-island race.

Part of Race Week's charm -- besides searching for crew houses on streets with no names, making the short rides between marinas by bicycle, and drinking famous mudslides at The Oar -- is its own on-site daily newspaper presented by the Northeast's leading sailing publication Windcheck and nightly "Big Top" tent parties sponsored by a huge line-up of supporting businesses and featuring T2p.tv coverage from the day's racing.

Compliments of Rolex, the T2p.tv coverage will be broadcast on-line each night by 9 p.m. on www.t2p.tv. Sponsors of Race Week are Rolex, Caithness Energy, Mount Gay, Lewmar, Bitter End Yacht Club, Gill, Gowrie Group, Hall Spars & Rigging, Heineken, ING Real Estate, *Sailing World* magazine, Summit Yachts, UKHalsey Sailmakers, *WindCheck* magazine, Yellow Tail, and Vineyard Vines.

For more information, visit www.blockislandraceweek.com.

About Rolex Watch U.S.A. Since Rolex Watch U.S.A. first presented timepieces to America's Cup defenders in 1958, the company has consistently recognized and encouraged excellence in every important arena of competitive sailing, including elite athlete preparation, US SAILING championships, disabled sailing, and offshore, one-design and women's events.

Block Island Race Week presented by Rolex is part of the Rolex Yachting Portfolio that includes over 20 world-class sailing events that take place around the world including the Rolex Miami OCR, Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, Rolex Fastnet Race, Rolex Farr 40 World Championship, Rolex Big Boat Series, Rolex US-IRC National Championship, Rolex International Women's Keelboat Championship, Rolex Osprey Cup and the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race.

About Storm Trysail Club Reflecting in its name the sail to which sailors must shorten when facing adverse conditions, the Storm Trysail Club is one of the world's most respected sailing clubs, with its membership comprised strictly of skilled blue water and ocean racing sailors. www.stormtrysail.org.

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