



Storm Trysail Club Block Island Race Week XXIV Presented by Rolex

An Island Anniversary, A Sailing Celebration

Block Island, R.I., (June 19, 2011) – The smallest town in the smallest state of the union — Block Island, Rhode Island — is celebrating the 350th anniversary of its settlement, and as if by design, thousands of sailors landed here yesterday on what was officially Founders Day to begin preparing for one of its most popular, traditional events: the [Storm Trysail Club's \(STC\) Block Island Race Week presented by Rolex](#). The 24th edition of this biennial regatta, which starts tomorrow, will be a festive one indeed for both Block Island residents and visitors when 133 boats add a rainbow of color to the stunning ocean vistas that were secured ten thousand years ago, when glaciers pushed their way down the East Coast and left behind the rocks and soil that was to form this little paradise.

As the Chamber of Commerce literature declares, "Because of the particular forces of nature that went to work on Block Island, no other place on earth shares its geography, nor its balance of species," and it can certainly be said that Block Island Race Week is as different in its own profile than any other sailing event in the country. With five full days of around-the-buoys racing, one day is devoted to an around-the-island race that keeps competitors humbled by the awesome juxtaposition of man and nature. Then there is the top flight race management of the Storm Trysail Club to consider and the hardware to be fought for: trophies for the IRC and J/109 East Coast Championships and the J/122 Nationals (with these one-designs sailing as a subset of PHRF), along with traditional class trophies (and sub-class trophies for Farr 40, Farr 30, J/111, J/29 and Farr 395) and the ultimate prize of the week: a stainless steel Rolex Oyster Perpetual Submariner timepiece, one each to be awarded to the IRC winner of the around-the-island race and the respective yachts with the best corrected speeds from the Red racing circle and combined White/Blue circles.

"This is one of the last true race weeks to be enjoyed," said STC Vice Commodore and Event Chair Nick Langone. "The reason we keep coming back as a club is because Block Island still has its innocent nature, and that, combined with the wonderful attitude of the people, is what makes the partnership successful."

Teams will be sailing in either IRC (four handicap classes for 39 boats), PHRF (six handicap classes for 48 boats) or one-design (four classes—Swan 42, J/44, J/109 and J/105--for 46 boats).

Among the high profile sailors here are 2006 Rolex Yachtsman of the Year Jud Smith (Marblehead, Mass), sailing the Taylor 44 *Africa* in IRC 2, against, among others, Steve and Heidi Benjamin (Norwalk, Conn.) on their Custom 41 *High Noon*. In IRC 1, David and Sandra Askew (Annapolis, Md.), aboard the IRC 52 *Flying Jenny 7*, have added Gary Jobson (also Annapolis) as navigator since they won their class at the recent New York Yacht Club Annual Regatta. Many of the boats they will sail against here are the same as were in the Annual Regatta, including Richard Oland's (St. John, New Brunswick, CAN) Southern Cross 52 *Vela Veloce*, which won Key West Race Week (overall and in class) and the RORC Caribbean 600 (in class) and has Canadian helmsman and Olympic hopeful Richard Clarke aboard.

"The 52s are the sweet spot of IRC racing," says Oland, who won the Annual Regatta's around-the-island race but then succumbed to the Askews in buoy racing. As for the Askews, they feel good about their prospects here among yet another five 52s that will make for exciting, closely matched racing in that class. "The boat is new to us," said David Askew, explaining that he bought the boat in the spring from the King (Juan Carlos) of Spain after it had been hit in competition. "We bought it, hole and all, and we are doing fine with it, but there is a lot of learning going on." The Askew's are not new to Race Week, having finished second in 2009 aboard their J/122 and won it four years ago in their J/120.

There are also many teams, including several with multiple family members, who return year after year to Race Week. "Seven of our crew are in their teens or 20s," said Geoff Pryor (Middletown, R.I.), a crew member aboard Tom Rich's (also Middletown) Peterson 42 *Settler* in IRC 4. "It includes my son Brendan on the bow and Tom's daughter Laurie in the pit. We are serious about the racing, and we won our class here two times ago, but this is my holiday. It's great fun."

Racing headquarters for the 2011 Block Island Race Week presented by Rolex are located at The Oar Restaurant, while evening festivities and award ceremonies are held next door in the event tent. A Rolex watch will be raffled off at the end of the event along with a trip to the Bitter End Yacht Club to benefit the Block Island Rescue Squad, Block Island Maritime Institute and the Block Island Early Learning Center.

Compliments of Rolex, daily video shows of each day's racing will be produced by Annapolis-based T2Productions and will be broadcast on-line each night by 9pm. The videos will be shown daily under the "Big Top" tent where all of Race Week's sponsors will have a presence.

Current Sponsors are Rolex, Toyota, Caithness Energy, Mount Gay Rum, Vineyard Vines, ING Clarion, Gill, Gowrie Group, UK-Halsey Sailmakers, Bitter End Yacht Club, New England Ropes, Hall Spars, Fiji Waters, West Marine, Robert Oatley Vineyards, Heineken, Sailing World, and WindCheck.

For more information, visit www.blockislandraceweek.com, where WindCheck magazine's Daily Race Week News can be read [online](#). Follow us on [facebook](#) and twitter @BIRWXXIV.

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 joins other prestigious Rolex-sponsored events in 2011 including the Rolex Miami OCR, Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, Rolex Fastnet Race, Rolex Farr 40 World Championship, Rolex Big Boat Series, 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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