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The Twenty Hundred Club

By Nick Bowen

The Twenty Hundred Club is a vibrant and growing sailboat racing club on Narragansett Bay that has a wide range of races including island circumnavigations, destination races and pure adventure races (spoiler alert – “Twenty Hundred [hours]” refers to the starting time of the club’s first race in 1946). The club is experiencing a growth spurt, with 60 boats participating in the 2018 season.

The season begins with the Around Aquidneck Island [Newport] Race that is 24.6 nautical miles and the season ends with the Around Prudence Island Race (courses range from 11 to 22 nm). There are two destination races that start in Newport and end in Cuttyhunk (24 nm) and Block Island (22.2nm). The Block Island Race is a three-day event: race out on Saturday with a post-race club BBQ, a day off on Sunday and race back on Monday. The Prince Henry Navigator Race is the first of the adventurous races. The race has seven different starting areas around the bay, with 27 government buoys used as race marks, and each boat picks their own starting area and racecourse. The racers must finish between 15:30 and 16:00 hours at a single mark in the Wickford area and have sailed a contiguous course using any of the 27 buoys. The skippers pick their starting area and course based on tides and expected wind patterns during the day. The boat that clocks the most miles is the winner.

The Around Aquidneck Challenge is a new race that was started in 2014. This is a solo race where the skippers pick the date and time of their attempt to circumnavigate the island. The best race is when you have a midday wind shift and you can minimize tacks. Most skippers wait for the strong October winds to make their attempt. The racecourse is defined by ten government buoys, and the skipper can pick any of the marks as his or her starting location. In 2018 Marcus Cochran, the current Twenty Hundred Club Commodore, broke the all-time record sailing Cruising class on his Class40 *Marauder* with a time of 3 hours, 27 minutes and 05 seconds (since *Marauder*’s PHRF rating is 0, that was both actual and corrected time). His average speed for the 32 nm race was 9.27 knots! In 2016, E.C. Helme found a day that allowed for one tack and one jibe for the day and captured the still standing spinnaker record on his J/92s *Spirit*.

The origins of the Twenty Hundred Club date back to a small set of sailors during the immediate post-World War II era who saw sailboat racing as an endeavor that goes beyond sailing fast and should require seamanship skills including sailing offshore, navigational skills, and dealing with adverse conditions such as darkness and fog. In 1946, Ty Cobb and Charles



Moose McClintock (right) receives the Sheldon Trophy from Twenty Hundred Club Vice Commodore Nick Bowen (left) and Commodore Marcus Cochran (center). This trophy was donated by Gilbert Sheldon, who was a friend of the club’s first Commodore, “Ty” Cobb.
© Lisa Hammond

Dickerson were sailing Ty’s S-Boat *Dilemma* back from Point Judith to the Rhode Island Yacht Club and discussing that the hot-shot “buoy racers” of Narragansett Bay could not do any racing that required more than 15 minutes of compass sailing. On Labor Day weekend, at 2000 hours (hence the club’s name), they started a race fisherman’s style (sails down at the starting gun) from Newport Harbor destined for Onset, Massachusetts. Five boats sailed a 46-nautical mile racecourse with just a starting area and a finish dock!

Another motivation driving the club was that during World War II boats had been largely confined to the Bay and now they could explore the Cape and Islands. They created the Block Island Race in 1949 on V-J (Victory in Japan, a holiday that is only celebrated in Rhode Island) Day weekend. In 1951, they created the July 4th Race from Ida Lewis Yacht Club to Cuttyhunk Island. In 1956, the club along with East Greenwich Yacht Club sponsored the fall race, which today is “Around Prudence Island.” In 1982, they created the Prince Henry Navigator Race. In 2011, the Cuttyhunk racers had dwindled to seven boats (three Cruising class, four Spinnaker) and the board decided to launch the Around Aquidneck Race as the opening spring event and suspend the Cuttyhunk Race. This race proved to be a remarkable success, attracting 33 boats in 2012 (23 Spinnaker, 10 Cruising class). The Cuttyhunk Race was brought back in 2015, and in there were 14 boats in this year’s running, in July.

The Twenty Hundred Club is a virtual club without a clubhouse, and the members are scattered all along the coastline



Marcus Cochran's Marauder (right) passing EC Helme's Spirit in the Cuttyhunk Race. © Nick Bowen

of Narragansett Bay. This makes it very important to promote social events with the club. There is a cookout at the Tiverton Yacht Club after the spring Around Aquidneck Race. After the Block Island arrival, the club sponsors a cookout for the low price of \$10 for dinner and drinks where nearly 90 racers partook last year. The spring awards banquet at the Viking Hotel in Newport had nearly 100 attendees. The club has a long and

historic track record of a strong awards program. There are 26 perpetual trophies that members are allowed to keep for the year. Some of these trophies are more than half a century old. There is also podium swag (vests, coolers, etc.) embroidered with the race name, boat name and finish position. Since the club runs two classes for both Spinnaker and Cruising class boats, there are 48 skippers who get to take swag home.

One of the club's longtime active members, Moose McClintock (six-time J/24 World Champion and two-time America's Cup competitor) has been competing since he was a child when he raced with his father on one of the Navy's S Boats to Block Island in the early 1960s. Moose likes the race format as a break from the many windward-leeward formats on the Bay and commented that it allows for "more well-rounded sailing and navigation and can be better for the

larger, heavier boats." The racing format is amenable to people new to racing. Planning a trip to Block Island? You just need to learn enough to get through the starting sequence and the fleet immediately spreads out and you don't need to stress about close quarters conditions with typical short buoy races. Readers are encouraged to check out the club at twentyhundredclub.org. ■

Nick Bowen is the Vice Commodore of the Twenty Hundred Club and can be reached at vicecommodore@twentyhundredclub.org.

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