

Bacardi Cup (Cuba Cup) History - 1933. Published in TIME Magazine February 13, 1933



Wherever there is blue water and a sheltered coast, you are likely to find "star" boats—slim little 22-footers with tall Marconi mainsails and narrow cedar hulls. Last week a galaxy of their pointed rigs sparkled in Havana Harbor, racing for two trophies which star boat skippers prize only a little less highly than the International Championship—the Cuba Cup, four feet high, biggest yachting cup in the world; and the Bacardi Cup, put up by the late rum-distilling Facundo Bacardi in 1926.

Both series—Cuba Cup for star boat skippers who finished first or second in their fleet the year before, Bacardi Cup for all star boat skippers who feel like entering—are decided by points, after three races. Somehow or other, Cuban yachtsmen who have the

advantage of sailing on home waters seldom acquire many points. U. S. skippers—Adrian Iselin II, Paul and Cornelius Shields, Harkness Edwards, a jolly Pittsburgher who won the Cuba Cup last year, Edwin Jahncke, son of Assistant Secretary of the Navy Ernest Jahncke—were well in front last week by the time the boats started the last race of the Cuba Cup series.

In a close finish, the Shields brothers' Gull nosed out Skipper Iselin's Ace for first place. They had won the second race also, but a disqualification in the first, for fouling a buoy, left them tied with the Zelda of Nassau for second with 16 points. Harkness Edwards, who finished third in the last race with his Winsome, which he sails on Peconic and Gardiner's Bays in the summers, came in third; with a fourth in the first race and a second in the next, it gave him 19 points, enough to have his name engraved on the Cuba Cup for the second year in succession.

Next day there was a light wind and calm water for the third Bacardi Cup race. Everyone knew what that meant. Adrian Iselin's Ace, a ghost in light airs, already had taken a third in the first race, a first in the second, for 34 points, to 32 for her nearest rival, the Cuban Mara. Sure enough, heeling gently in the breeze, Ace was away fast and well ahead halfway around the 10-mile triangular course.

On the last leg, Jahncke's Tempe III drew close in a puff of wind that Ace missed; the catspaw died with the Iselin boat still in front, 1 min., 15 sec. at the finish. Later in the day, to make the U. S. sweep complete, Ace, Gull, Tempe III and Winsome won a team race against four Cuban star boats, 24 points to 12.

Star boats—there are 940 of them, in 68 fleets in 28 countries, at least one fleet on every continent—are the largest class of one-design racing yachts in the world. They

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were racing on the Côte d' Azur last week; soon they will be racing at Manila for the Philippine Islands championship; at Honolulu, for the Hawaiian Lipton Championship.

The International Championship, No. 1 event for star boats, which Edward A. Fink of Long Beach, Calif., won last summer at Southport, Conn., is sailed every year on the champion's home water; only fleet winners are eligible to compete. The star class started in 1911. Commodore George A. Corry of Port Washington, L. I., homeport of the Ace helped organize the class and won the championship four times (1911, 1912, 1914, 1915) in his famed Little Dipper.

Other famed star boats are B. W. Comstock's Rhody, which won the International Championship in 1926 and placed in it three times; F. T. Bedford's Colleen, International Champion in 1931. The price of star boats varies from \$800 (\$135 more for a suit of sails) from a builder like Parkman of Brooklyn, to \$1,800 from Purdy of Port Washington, who built the Ace and keeps it in trim. Star boats are not frail but they are light and delicate. Only a few owners sail them in open waters. One such is Prentice E. Edrington, U. S. judge of the Virgin Islands, onetime president of the International Star Class Yacht Racing Association, who uses his boat for inter-island voyages.

The victory of the Ace last week brought again to the fore a great name in U. S. yachting. Adrian Iselin's father was the late Charles Oliver Iselin, whose father, Adrian, founded A. Iselin & Co., bankers. Charles Oliver Iselin, from the time he joined the New York Yacht Club in 1877 till well after the turn of the century, was probably the most famed yachtsman in the U. S. He was sailing manager and part owner of three America's Cup defenders—Vigilant, Defender and Reliance; manager and part owner of a fourth, the Columbia. Oldtime yachtsmen consider the third race between the Vigilant and the Valkyrie in 1893 the most exciting ever sailed for the America's Cup.

The British boat led by two minutes at the halfway mark. Against the spanking wind, Skipper Iselin spread all the canvas his mast would carry—spinnaker, balloon jib and a club topsail—then shook the reefs out of his mainsail. The Valkyrie tried to set her spinnaker; the wind tore it into ribbons as Vigilant blew past her like a cloud. When Lord Dunraven's Valkyrie III sailed against the Defender, Lord Dunraven fouled his opponent, then withdrew from the race after charging that the Iselin sloop had been secretly loaded with ballast just before the race.

Yachtsmen expected for a time that Skippers Iselin and Dunraven would fight a duel. A New York Yacht Club Committee investigated. The Committee's findings—that the charges were entirely unsubstantiated—found their way mysteriously into the New York Herald for Jan. 20, 1896, in the most famed newspaper "scoop" of a decade.

With smaller resources than his father, Adrian Iselin has the reputation among yachtsmen of being equally adroit, if a shade less bold. He has owned Victory sloops, six-and eight-metre boats and another star, made of mahogany, the Snapper which he sold when light cedar hulls were coming into fashion. With his Ace, built in 1924, he won

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the International Championship in 1925, the Bacardi Cup in 1927, innumerable minor trophies which, in his house at East Williston (L. I.) make a respectable glitter beside the huge silvery bonfire of the cups he inherited when his father died a year ago.

Three years ago he was on the afterguard of the America's Cup contender Whirlwind, built by his friend and star boat rival Landon Thorne. Adrian Iselin, looking very foxy with his trim mustache, sharp chin and twinkling eyes, makes a habit of arriving cautiously at the dock two hours before a race to keep an eye on the weather. He wins most in light airs. It is his system to keep moving at all costs, away from the mark if necessary, while his opponents stand still with their bows pointed in the right direction.

Like many another yachtsman, he thinks he sails better on the starboard tack, possibly because he finds it more comfortable to hold the gunwale with his right hand while his left is on the tiller. Even-tempered, meticulous, laconic, Skipper Iselin dresses for sailing in a dilapidated Panama hat, corduroy trousers, bow tie. In 20 years of yachting on Long Island Sound, his friend Ed Willis, who is usually his "crew" on the Ace, has never heard him swear the great seagoing oaths with which most smallboat sailors try to compensate for the tinyness of their Victories and stars.

While Adrian Iselin II was winning the Bacardi Cup last week, his son, Adrian Iselin III, 19, was sailing for Port Washington High School in an interscholastic "frostbite" regatta for dinghies on Long Island Sound. Port Washington won. Iselin won two out of four races, scored 20 points to 18 for his closest rival.