

Model Yachting

A Quarterly Publication of the American Model Yachting Association, Winter 2015, Issue Number 182 USD\$7.50

**Featuring
RC Laser**

The AMYA: Celebrating 45 Years!

On the Cover

At the 2014 RC Laser National Championship Regatta in Oxford, Maryland, David Brawner (#53) times the start perfectly. Jim Flach photo.

The American Model Yachting Association (AMYA) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the designing, building, racing, and preservation of all model sailing yachts and is open to all people who are interested in these activities.

In pursuit of these goals, the AMYA publishes *Model Yachting* magazine. *Model Yachting* is published four times per year in accordance with the AMYA Business Calendar. The staff of the magazine is composed primarily of AMYA member volunteers who devote countless hours of their time to produce this publication. Editorial policy and the Editorial Calendar are determined by the Managing Editor. The views expressed by authors in articles or columns in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of the Managing Editor, *Model Yachting* Staff, the Executive Board, the Regional Directors, or any other AMYA officers, staff, volunteers, or members.

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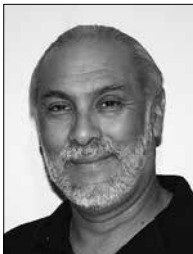
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Helping Clubs Prosper

After that:
RG65

The Masthead

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President's Letter

Howdy all... You know it never ceases to amaze me; when I finish one President's Letter for *Model Yachting* it is time for me to start thinking about the next one. And I have a three-month spread between deadlines! I can tell you it's not like that with our intrepid *Model Yachting* staff. As soon as one issue is off to the printers, the next issue is underway. Sometimes they actually overlap issues. Every three months this great staff (including John Davis, Pat Butterworth, Jim Linville, and Ralph Kanko), all volunteers who share a love for hobby, somehow seems to always pull it off. It all seems so easy to the average readers who just want to get their copies and read them from cover to cover.

One of the most active and diligent volunteers, whose name is always mentioned in the *Masthead*, is our very own Michelle Dannenhoffer. Michelle not only handles the full time job of Membership Secretary but is also responsible for all the advertising in the magazine. Not only does she handle advertising layout and artwork, she also makes sure we get paid for all the ads.

Every issue produced is a collaborative effort of people who do such a great service for us, such as Eric Rosenbaum (Regatta Reports), Fran DiTommaso (Class News), John Stoudt (Collectors), John Super (Rules Column), and Lester Gilbert (Theory & Practice). Most of the aforementioned I have met personally, and my goal before I finish my tenure of President is to meet them all and personally thank them for the great job they do. I hope you will do the same if you see them at the lake!

Featured in this particular issue of *Model Yachting* is the RC Laser. Nick Mortgu, RC Laser Class Secretary, has put together a re-

markable issue, with a variety of articles from some of the best-known RC Laser sailors around. These articles vary from the humble beginnings of the RC Laser to tuning an RC Laser, a chat with the National Champion, and the infamous "Blue Bag"—probably the biggest selling point of this boat! Please enjoy reading and viewing more pictures than you have ever seen in any issue of *Model Yachting* magazine.

Also take a moment to read a short article about the 2015 Inductee to our AMYA Hall of Fame, Earl Boebert, who is known for many things in the world of RC Sailing. If you have ever had the pleasure of meeting Earl, I'm sure you will agree he is most deserving of this honor, and I would like to personally thank him for all his contributions to the world of model sailing and to the AMYA!

Now, I would like to talk some business. In the past few months the AMYA Board of Directors (BOD) has had to make some serious decisions. With the start of the new fiscal year, on October 1, we needed to evaluate some serious money matters. With the increase in almost every cost of doing business these days, even we at the AMYA are not immune to the inevitable. With our continued club support of National Class Championship Regattas, supporting and sponsoring major regattas around the country, including a World Championship this year, promotional items we supply to clubs and members, such as an extra *Model Yachting* issue for new members, titled "Getting Started," we have found ourselves in a bit of a tight squeeze to balance the budget for the 2015-2016 year. It has been around five years since the last \$5.00 increase in membership dues, and the BOD voted that again it was time to increase our membership dues by \$5.00.

This increase will become effective January 1, 2016. It will include only these

types of membership: Adult, & Family, (both New and Renewal) but not Junior. For those with a *Secondary Address* (aka Snowbird Address) during part of the year, the USA First Class Option of \$10.00 will automatically be added to your membership dues to assure effective delivery of *Model Yachting* magazine. (If you already use this USA First Class Option to expedite your *Model Yachting* magazine, there will be no additional mailing charge for a *Secondary Address*.)

A side note: If you know your membership is going to expire by June 30, 2016 or sooner, and you would like to temporarily avoid this increase, please feel free to renew your membership before December 31, 2015, before new membership rates apply. However, you will not be able to avoid the \$10.00 USA First Class Option for delivery to your *Secondary Address*. It will go into effect for all renewals of memberships expiring December 31, 2015 or later.

Just another reminder: all these budget changes will take affect only on and after January 1, 2016. We thank you for your understanding and continuing support of the AMYA.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has sent and continues to send me condolences for the loss of my father (known to all of us here in Texas as "PapaSeta") this past summer. Thank you also for the many words of encouragement and praise for me, the volunteers on our *Model Yachting* staff and the Regional Directors and their Associates. Please remember that our great Board of Directors and I love what we do for the AMYA and try to serve everyone's needs. Always feel free to come up to any of us and let us know what we can do to better serve you.

Good Winds & Take a friend to the lake, Ray.

Editorial Calendar for 2016-2017

Notice: The deadline is not the due date, it is the *last possible due date*. Help everyone, and always try to send in your article before the deadline. *The delivery date for Issues to members with the USA First Class Mail Option is three to eight weeks *sooner* than the Standard Membership for Fourth Class Mail delivery. Also, the *USPS will not forward* Fourth Class Mail to your new address, so be sure to notify Membership Sec'y of any address change.

Issue—Featured Class or Special Feature:	Special, Featured Class, Other Classes, Technical Articles, & the Photos Deadline:	Magazine Ads Deadline:	Final Magazine, Regatta Reports & Class News, Deadline:	Issue Printed & *Approximate Delivery:
183—Special—Helping Clubs Prosper	Nov 10, 2015	Dec 10, 2015	Dec 30, 2015	Spring 2016—*Feb/Mar
184—RG65	Feb 10, 2016	Mar 10, 2016	Mar 30, 2016	Summer 2016—*May/June
185—Wheeler & Canterbury J	May 10, 2016	Jun 10, 2016	Jun 30, 2016	Fall 2016—*Aug/Sep
186—Marblehead & 10 Rater	Aug 10, 2016	Sep 10, 2016	Sep 30, 2016	Winter 2016—*Nov/Dec
187—Special	Nov 10, 2016	Dec 10, 2016	Dec 30, 2016	Spring 2017—*Feb/Mar
188—Micro Magic	Feb 10, 2017	Mar 10, 2017	Mar 30, 2017	Summer 2017—*May/June
189—EC 12	May 10, 2017	Jun 10, 2017	Jun 30, 2017	Fall 2017—*Aug/Sept
190—Nirvana & VO 70	Aug 10, 2017	Sep 10, 2017	Sep 30, 2017	Winter 2017—*Nov/Dec

The RC Laser Class Today

by Nick Mortgu

We like to think of the AMYA RC Laser Class as an entry-level boat, a class that is truly a one-design class, so simple to sail you need to add only batteries and off you go sailing. This very strict one-design concept is what encourages so many new RC sailors to choose the RC Laser. The hull measures 42 inches long and uses four different rigs, so it can be sailed in conditions from a very light-air breeze up to a stiff 35-mph wind. It can be purchased with a very neat bag, which carries and protects the hull, rudder, keel, rigs, and radio. The boat's well-designed electronics compartment makes it easy to replace either of the two servos in minutes. For ease of adjustment, and replacement when needed, all the running rigging is above deck. With a low-priced, ready-to-sail RC boat, our class has grown from 69 members just a few years ago to over 125 sailors from around the country. Many of the top RC sailors in the country are choosing the RC Laser as a second boat to race. They love that the boat is so simple and almost indestructible. Looking over the registrants from last year's NCR, we had over eight national champions from other classes attend our regatta.

We started this year with two RC Laser distributors: (SailRC.com), represented by Theresa Rea Gay, and our newest distributor,

(IntensitySails.com), owned by Jim Myers. With more RC Lasers and parts available for sale, we are seeing more sailing activity. New fleets appeared in St. Petersburg, Florida; Spring Lake, New Jersey; Corpus Christi, Texas; and Blue Hill, Maine; and also in Rhode Island, Virginia, and Bermuda, with more new fleets on the horizon. In 2009 there were just two regattas from which to choose: the North Americans and the Mid-Winter Championships in Marco Island, Florida. Now we can boast sixteen regattas, which include a very popular Southern Circuit, consisting of three regattas during the last week of February, and the AMYA National Championship Regatta.

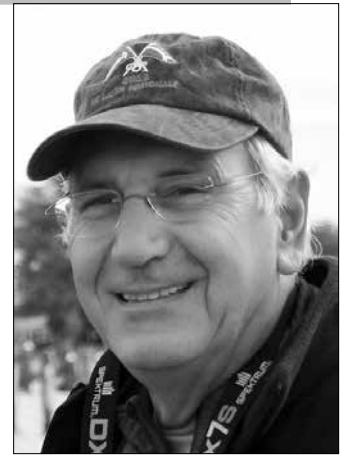
Last year we moved to a new regatta format. This change gives all the sailors a chance to sail with skippers of all ability levels during the first part of the regatta. Then the skippers are divided into Gold and Silver Fleets for the remaining races, with awards for both fleets. By making this improvement we have been able to sell out regattas (30 boats) that were previously losing participants. The most obvious sellouts were the Marco Island Mid-Winter Championship, our last two RC Laser NCRs (Oxford, Maryland, and The Villages, Florida), and the 2015 Florida Southern Circuit Regattas in Coconut Creek and Punta Gorda.

The success of our class is due to the volunteers who unselfishly give of their time

so others can participate. We have some of the best Fleet Captains, Regatta Chairmen, and Race Directors, who are the envy of other RC classes. Jim Flach has developed a great website

(www.rclaser.org) for us, which is up to date and loaded with his excellent photos. Thank you all for your time and energy in keeping the class growing and moving forward.

A very special thank you to those class members who took the time to write stories for various issues of *Model Yachting*, this issue included, and to my good friends Rick Ferguson and Roger Vaughan who used their excellent writing and editing skills to help put this issue of *Model Yachting* together.



Nick Mortgu became AMYA RC Laser Class Secretary in 2013. Jim Flach photo.

A Laser on Every Pond Jon Elmaleh is the father of the RC Laser

by Roger Vaughan

As a kid growing up in Manhattan, Jon Elmaleh's passion for models had drawn him to the Central Park Model Yacht Club to launch a small motorboat he'd built from a kit. There he saw the Marbleheads: 50-inch, elegant boats with a rich history dating to the 1930s. The Marblehead is a developmental class boat, where design and innovation are as important as sailing skills. Jon immediately wanted to build one. A Central Park sailor told him they had decided to switch to 10 Raters: long, leggy sloops with vane steering. With origins based on a complex rule that dates to the late 1800s, the 10 Rater is thought to be the most technically demanding of the developmental model classes, but Elmaleh was entranced by the idea. "The guy told me he'd show me how to build one," Elmaleh recalls. "And he did. It took me two years. The hull was planked with alternating strips of pine and mahogany. It was six feet long. I was barely four feet tall at the time."

The Central Park sailors took Jon in. The pond is small, and the 10 Raters are fast, which meant lots of running. Here was an enthusiastic youngster who could run all day. And sailing 10 Raters was a great way to learn; vane steering means tuning is the key to boat speed. Elmaleh won his first 10 Rater National Championship at age 15.

Elmaleh started building Marblehead 50s in earnest. He made a lot of them, one a year for several years, even when he was a student at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence, Rhode Island. He won three Marblehead National Championships and experimented with putting the larger 10 Rater rigs on Marbleheads. He then began designing bigger boats and dreaming of a career in naval architecture.

Elmaleh graduated from RISD in 1981, got a second degree in 1982, and bounced around for a while designing furniture. He interviewed at Sparkman & Stephens, where he was told he needed to upgrade his math skills.



John Elmaleh: industrial designer, champion model yacht designer, builder, and racer. Elmaleh has crossed the Atlantic on a yacht, but believes that model racing is superior. Bruce Richter photo.

After winning the 1987 European Marblehead Championship with *Archer*, a boat he designed, Elmaleh went to see the noted French naval architect, Bernard Nivel. Nivel marveled at the balance Elmaleh had achieved with *Archer*, and offered him a job on the spot. But moving to France was not in the cards.

Elmaleh got a job at Bob Derektor's boat yard in Mamaroneck, New York. He was told he would run the in-house design team. That didn't materialize, but in the late 1980s Derektor's was a catbird seat for observing a weakening yacht market, which would be crippled by the luxury tax passed in January 1990 on yachts worth over \$100,000.

With his dreams of designing big boats dashed, Jon focused on what he knew best—models. He decided to build an RC Laser (radios had arrived in the early 1970s) because, as he says, "Sailing is all about marketing. You've got to have the right boat. The Laser was so popular. I figured if all those distributors bought ten model versions, I would sell a lot of boats."

Elmaleh pitched Laser designer Bruce Kirby, who was also designing and racing Marbleheads. "One day Jon suggested we get together and do something commercially vi-



Bruce Kirby (l) with author Roger Vaughan. Kirby's designs include boats from the extremely popular Laser dinghy (now an Olympic class) through IOR ocean racers and cruisers to 12-Meter America's Cup challengers. Guy Gurney photo.

able," Kirby says. "He had the Laser in mind. I wondered if it were too wide for its length. Models are usually narrow with deep keels. He said, "give me the lines; let's give it a try. I did, and he took it from there."

Kirby points out that if a boat increases in size, say from 20 to 30 feet, its volume is cubed. "Stability goes up to the fourth power," he says. "That's why boats get narrower as they get bigger. If I make a scale model, it doesn't work too well. You have to beat scaling laws by cheating. On a model you put a lump of lead on a deep keel. For the Laser it worked well, because regarding flotation the lead made up for crew weight. It brought stability up. I was surprised and pleased at how well it worked."

Well aware of the *narrow and deep* standard for RC models, Elmaleh wanted to make the boat thinner. But Kirby insisted that scale be honored. "I should have been stronger," Elmaleh says today. "In model size it doesn't look like a Laser. It looks like a fat boat."

"Since that first RC Laser appeared in 1995, more than 22,000 have been sold."

Elmaleh made a plug and built a few prototypes, which he brought to Rowayton, Connecticut, Kirby's home waters. He used basic Marblehead rudders, and a deep, narrow fin strut, bottomed with a sleek, 3.1-lb. lead torpedo. "It sailed pretty well right out of the box," Jon says. "We initially had two rigs, 1 and 2, or what is now B and C. Some Brits later came up with the A rig for very light air, and also the D rig for heavy-air conditions, which has proved to be fantastic. Kirby was concerned about the boat developing weather helm if it heeled too much, but the deep keel took care of that."

It took nearly two years to work through the legal issues regarding the Laser name and trademark. Building the boats was almost as complicated. Elmaleh raised money from a friend, and the two started Out There Technologies, LLC. Elmaleh is still President of this company, which owns the RC Laser. The original tools were made in the USA, but after an unsuccessful nationwide search, the first round of RC Lasers was built in Malaysia by a medical manufacturer Elmaleh met, who had empty containers being returned to his factory. "His name is Depak Chopra," Elmaleh says, "no relation to the mystic, and he loved the idea of the boats, because he had trouble explaining to his children what he did. So we filled his containers with boat parts." Since the first Laser



Jon Elmaleh (l) with UK RC Laser importer Nigel Seary at the 2013 NCR. Jim Flach photo.

arrived in 1995, Elmaleh sold a thousand of them (up to that point in time) despite little interest from those full-size Laser dealers. But when he went to reorder, no one answered the phone. It turned out the factory had been emptied out, Laser tools and all, and swept clean of both dust and workers.

Retooling was an expensive operation. Elmaleh found a man named Leon Levy, who had hit the jackpot designing and manufacturing Gatorade bottles. Levy said he could do the retooling. Chopra's insurance covered the cost. But now there was no factory. At a boat show in New York, Elmaleh met a guy who used to work for the Hasbro Toy Company. "He put me onto a Chinese company," Elmaleh says. "They gave me a quote, to the penny, for everything except the hull. I said I couldn't do a deal unless I knew what the hull cost. They said they didn't have a tool. Three months later I got a big box in the mail. In it was this horrible looking Laser hull full of bumps. But the Chinese company had spent \$10,000 to make the prototype. I was so taken with that I said, okay, let's do it." Elmaleh bought a 3,000-lb. roll of sailcloth and shipped it to China, went over and showed them how to make sails. "For ten years they made boats," Elmaleh says. "Then a new man became president, and he didn't think there was enough volume and canceled the project."

Suddenly there was a drought of new Lasers, as Elmaleh looked desperately for a manufacturer. After unsuccessful negotiations with two different companies, he was ready to give it up. Then P.C. Yip, a client and friend of Elmaleh's from China, showed up in New York. Elmaleh took Yip to the boat pond in Central Park and gave him a Laser to sail. "His company relies on high volume," Jon says, "so he wasn't a prospect. But he was so taken with the boat, he said we just had to find a way to keep production going."

A few months later Yip introduced Jon to a man named Jacky, who built prototypes for his company. Elmaleh went to see him. "In a day I went over how to build boats and sails with him," Jon says. "He said he'd build ten boats. I went back in two days, and I couldn't believe it, because every boat was perfect, down to the tension on the screw that holds the tiller piece in place. Jacky is meticulous."

Elmaleh says, in the past, whenever he shipped a container of boats there were always calls about deficiencies. Not since Jacky took over. The RC Laser is alive and well and never better. Since that first RC Laser appeared in 1995, more than 22,000 have been sold. Now, with Jacky on the case, Elmaleh cautiously envisions doubling, even tripling the volume. One of these days there could be an RC Laser on every pond.

How to Build an RC Laser

by Rick Ferguson

All photos by Rick Ferguson

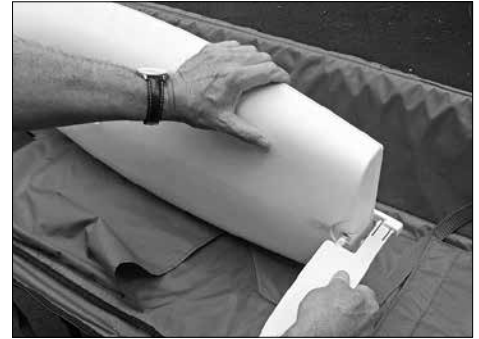
In a typical *Model Yachting* class feature, it is customary to have a “how-to-build-it” article. Here’s how to build an RC Laser:



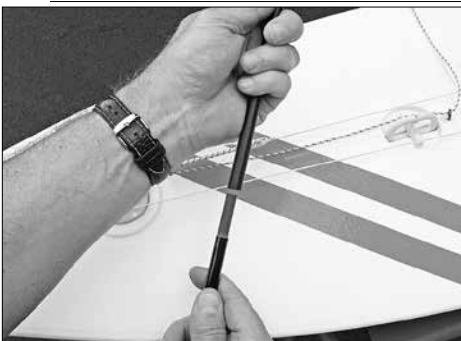
Step 1. Unzip carry bag, remove boat hull.
Time: 10 sec.



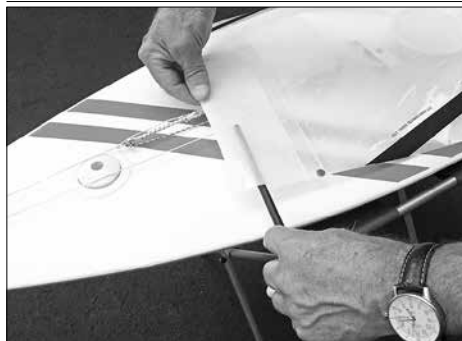
Step 2. Insert keel into slot, turn toggle.
Time: 10 sec.



Step 3. Insert rudder into tiller until it clicks.
Time: 10 sec.



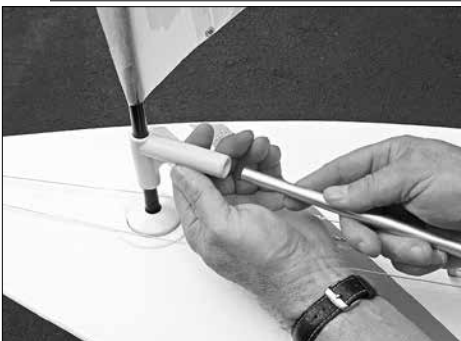
Step 4. Assemble mast sections together.
Time: 10 sec.



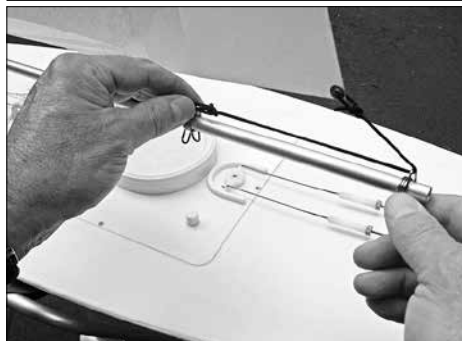
Step 5. Slide mast into sail luff sleeve.
Time: 10 sec.



Step 6. Drop mast with sail into mast step.
Time: 5 sec.



Step 7. Insert boom into fixed gooseneck.
Time: 10 sec.



Step 8. Attach outhaul line to boom clip.
Time: 15 sec.



Step 9. Attach sheet line to boom clip.
Time: 5 sec.



Step 10. Connect the battery pack.
Time: 10 sec.



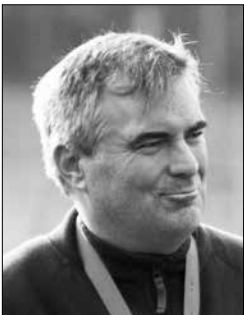
Step 11. Rick Ferguson goes sailing!
Total “building” time: 1 min, 35 sec

When finished sailing, disassemble in reverse order and place parts back in bag. Many RC Laser racers keep each of its sails on its own set of spars, further simplifying disassembly and making sail changes possible in a matter of seconds. This is a lighthearted way of demonstrating the unique simplicity of the RC Laser. It’s a well thought out package, rugged and watertight. If you don’t want to worry about the boat, this is your racing class!

Rob Seidleman Sail Trim Interview

by Nick Mortgu

Rob Seidleman is a member of the West Jersey RC Laser Fleet.



Nick: How do I improve my performance?

Rob: Routinely practice in all conditions. Too often it's heard that I don't do well with the A sail or C sail. If you use only one particular sail during races it's

very hard to get the feel of the other sails and what adjustment will make the boat feel fast. The D sail is the best example. Most sailors have one but have never used it. When the air pipes up during a regatta, it may be the first time they have used that sail. Spend some free time with two or three friends and practice in all conditions.

Nick: Is there any special starting point for setting D and C sails.

Rob: For D and C sails, adjust the sail flat. Any shape to the sail will make it very difficult for the boat to turn into the wind and just as hard to jibe. Trim both sails to the corner of the transom.

Nick: What about the A and B sails?

Rob: A and B sails should be sailed with a slight twist. Even at the high end of wind speed range for those sails, they should still be sailed with a slight twist. Do not close off the leech of the sail; it will slow you down. I suggest trimming this sail to the corner of the transom, but I'm always testing to see if I can get more speed, or speed and pointing ability, by trimming inside the corner or just slightly outside the corner.

A balanced boat will sail faster. This can be achieved by moving the outhaul in and out, and also the position of the outhaul tuning clip.

Nick: Last words?

Rob: Most of all practice, practice, practice, and learn your boat.

Nick Mortgu photo.

Seven Simple RC Laser Class Rules

by Nick Mortgu

The RC Laser is featured as an entry-level, radio-controlled sailboat. The class rules were written so that those new to RC sailing can take a new boat out of the bag, assemble it at the sailing site, and race in an AMYA-sanctioned regatta. Unlike other RC classes, which have multiple pages of rules, the RC Laser has just seven rules, with the last just being a statement. Those sailors new to radio-controlled sailing usually have no problem understanding the class rules. It's the very experienced RC sailor who has multiple questions about what can and cannot be done to the boat. Most of those questions are answered with "Have you read the class rules?, or do you understand the last rule?," which is:

7. Anything not specifically permitted by these rules is prohibited.

The quick basics

All boats and parts must be manufactured and distributed by **Out There Technologies**. Your options are to use any radio or receiver of your choice. You may choose between four AA 1.5 volt cells, or five NiCad or Nickel Metal Hydride rechargeable AA cells of 1.2 volts each, and you may replace rigging with any material as long as it replicates its original function. That's about it! Take it out of the bag and let's go sailing!

AMYA RC Laser Class Rules

1. All boats and parts shall be manufactured by Out There Technologies and distributed through their distribution system. All design changes to boat hull, sails, and rigging shall be made by Out There Technologies.

Out of box (bag)

A. Sailed out of the box with no changes to hull, sails, spars, and rigging. Including sanding or painting of hull, rudder, and keel.

3. Replacement parts

A. The following parts may be replaced due to wear or owners discretion.

Radio transmitter, receiver, batteries, servos, running rigging and sails.

1. Batteries: the boat shall be powered by either 4 over the counter AA cells 1.5 volt, or 5 NiCad or Nickel Metal Hydride re-chargeable AA cells 1.2 volt. Battery packs must remain on cockpit floor.

2. Servos must meet manufacture's original equipment specifications.

a. sail servo: in and out speed of no less than 3.9 seconds.

b. steering servo: side to side speed of no more than 0.15 seconds.

3. Sails: all sails shall be manufactured by Out There Technologies and purchased through its distribution system.

4. Running rigging may be of any material that replicates its original function.

4. Hull and Deck

A. Self-adhesive letters, tape, or decals may be fitted to deck and hull.

Felt tip markers may also be used for decoration. Hull decoration shall not extend more than 3" below the gunwale.

5. Underwater appendages

A. Lead ballasts must be completely covered in original soft plastic dip, or the newer hard plastic cover.

6. Sails

A. Four sail sizes, A, B, C, and D are authorized for racing.

1. Sails may be decorated using decals, tape or markers. Decorations shall not interfere with easy identification of sail numbers, Laser logo, or manufacturer's logo.

B. Sail damage may be repaired as long as the repair does not stiffen or alter the size or shape of the sail.

C. A standard boom may be shortened to no less than 17" (inches) in length for use with the C and D sail.

D. All boats shall display two digit class assigned sail numbers on sail. These numbers shall be 4" Arial Rounded MT bold in Black. Optional country designator shall be 2 1/2" with same font as sail numbers. See attached sail plan for placement.

7. Anything not specifically permitted by these rules is prohibited.

How I Learned to Race RC Lasers



Jim Kaighin at the 2014 RC Laser North American Championship Regatta held at Raleigh, N.C. Rick Ferguson frequently saw Jim Kaighin at RC Laser Class Championship Regattas, which Kaighin often won, but Jim's name rarely appeared in other AMYA regatta results. How did he do it? After learning this quiet, friendly, and very accomplished competitor was from where? The Bahamas. Rick asked Jim to explain how he got started in RC Lasers and how he is able to explain his winning ways. Enjoy... Jock Gault photo.

by Jim Kaighin

I was asked to write an article for this issue of *Model Yachting*, featuring the RC Laser. Specifically, I was asked to write about how

I became so successful at racing the RC Laser. I appreciated the compliment, but I, of course, must recognize Jon Elmaleh as the best RC Laser sailor I know, as well being as its designer. There are also some exceptional sailors in the UK.

The short answer to why I have become successful is fairly simple. I have been doing it a long time, I work fairly hard at it, and I love it. By itself, this wouldn't make for much of an article, so I'll elaborate.

We grew up sailing dinghies; I have been racing Sunfish, Lasers, and T-histles for over 40 years. I say we because I must include my brother, Mike, and my dad, Dave Kaighin. In 1998, our mom bought us four RC Lasers for Christmas. It was so much fun. We couldn't get

enough of it. It was something we could all do together, along with my sister-in-law, Lorri. I live in the Bahamas, so we would get together and race occasionally on Sarasota Bay on my trips over to Florida for vacation. Then in 2001, we bought eight boats for my Bahamian family, again as a Christmas gift to the family and something we could all do together.

I tried to keep the eight boats racing as much as possible, but it was difficult to get more than three or four of us out on the water together. However, with eight boats in our fleet, wherever I could, I tried to introduce new people to this hobby. It was still difficult to find three or four people with whom to go sailing. But then I stumbled upon the Marco Island group. I talked Mike into going with me, and we sailed in our first RC Laser regatta in 2004 or 2005. We did reasonably well. I think I was fourth or fifth, and Mike might have been seventh.

In 2007, I traveled to England for summer vacation and planned it around the UK Nationals in Eastbourne. British sailor John Arundel gave me a tip that made a huge difference in how I sailed the boat. His tip was that the boom needs to be positioned over the corner of the transom. I had always sailed with it too tight. Since then, I have won several Midwinter regattas and North Americans. Thanks, John.

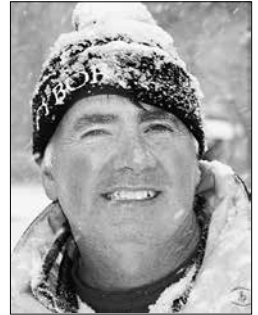
At PGA National, a golf resort in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, with the help of Mike, Lorri, and Dad I hosted a regatta in 2007. I had no local fleet or dedicated facilities, but I had access to a lake and the desire to host the regatta. We were able to pull it together, and John Cleave, from England, won. In the last few years, I have started the RC Laser Tour of Abaco Island in the Bahamas. From January until April we sail about five or six times at different locations around Abaco. I always have boats to lend, and we try to include a social activity after sailing.

There weren't quite enough RC Laser regattas, so I ventured into the EC12 Class. I bought my first EC12 from Dr. Bob Greer, and I was usually around the middle of the pack. I ask myself the opposite question: Why have I not had the same success in the EC12 Class? I still love it, but I have not been sailing the boat that long, and I race the boat only three or four times a year. The competitors against whom I race are sailing many, many more weekends. The competition is also very tough. In addition, the EC12 sails quite a bit differently; the Laser tacks on a dime, while the EC12 takes a bit more...

What I Like About the RC Laser

While the RC Laser is often portrayed as a great beginners boat to get people involved in RC sailing, it's greatest attribute is that you never outgrow it. Just watch one of the masters, like Jon Elmaleh or Jim Kaighin, and you'll realize that you continue learning with this boat. Thanks to very active class management watching over the one-design nature of the class, your boat will stay competitive as long as you own it.

*David Brawner
Mt. Laurel, N.J.*

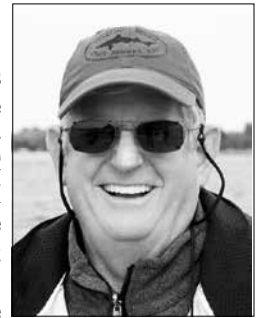


Jim Flach photo.

What I Like About the RC Laser

A few years ago my friend Dave Branning introduced me to RC Laser racing, and I was hooked! Same thrill as the start clock counts down, and all the same strategies as employed with the Hobie 16s my wife and I used to race. Who knew your heart rate would climb just as much racing models? Now in my 60s, I love the competition, and the friendships and the time on the water are even better.

*Bob Roe
Oxford, Md.*



Jim Flach photo.

What I Like About the RC Laser

I've loved sailing since I was a boy: being outside, learning new skills, and facing the challenges that came with the wind, weather, and water. Over the years I have sailed less and less. That changed three years ago when I bought an RC Laser. Now I race regularly with our local club. We sail on different local lakes and travel to regional clubs. It's fun, challenging, and a great way to meet new sailing friends.

*Michael Roberson
Raleigh, N.C.*



Jim Flach photo.



What I Like About the RC Laser

There is nothing complicated or expensive about owning a Laser. It takes only a couple of minutes to ready the boat for the water. The challenge is to work out a strategy to beat the other sailors. What a high you will experience if you are the winner. Owning an RC Laser has opened the door to experiences I never imagined, such as meeting new people, many of whom have become my very best friends.

*Roger Baldwin
Easton, Md.*

Jim Flach photo.



Jim Flach photo.



What I Like About the RC Laser

The RC Laser is the most rugged, versatile, and intelligently designed model sailboat. All you have to do is look at the 20-year-old rental fleet in Central Park; you'll

believe. With the four rigs, it sails in any wind velocity, one knot to 35 knots. Yes, 35; I've done it. So well designed even a klutz can get it out of its carry-bag and into the water in ten minutes.

*Hank Buchanan
New York, N.Y.*

Theresa Rae Gay photo.



Nick Mortgu photo.



What I Like About the RC Laser

The Laser was my first RC sailboat. Upwind, it sails like the big Laser; trim in tight and play the wind. But small changes in sail trim make big changes in performance. Some

boats make you nervous when the wind picks up—not the Laser. The more wind, the more fun it is. Speaking of fun, the people I have met sailing in regattas with my RC Laser have become some of my closest friends.

*Jamey Betz
Meadowbrook, Pa.*

Jim Flach photo.



Nick Mortgu photo.



Jim Flach photo.



Jock Gault photo.



Jim Flach photo.



Jim Flach photo.



David Kelley photo.



Jim Flach photo.



Nick Mortgu photo.



Nick Mortgu photo.



Nick Mortgu photo.



Nick Mortgu photo.

What I Like About the RC Laser

I spend more time sailing this boat than tuning it. Seven minutes from trunk to water. One line to hook up, one tuning adjustment. With four sails, you race in winds up to 30 mph. It takes a direct hit in stride. It's robust, satisfying in all conditions. Kudos to Bruce Kirby for a great design and to Jon Elmaleh for visualizing the model version—and for not changing anything in over 20 years!

Ray Seta
San Antonio, Tex.



Jon Seta photo.

What I Like About the RC Laser

For me, racing the RC Laser has opened a new perspective on sailing. The friendships, fellowship, and fun in the class have made the challenges of competition worth the effort. As with anything in life, you'll get out of it what you put into it. During regattas, sailing the RC Laser makes you think and concentrate to the point of exhaustion. I have developed many lasting friendships as a result of getting hooked on RC Laser racing.

Harry Henkel
Oxford, Md.



Nick Mortgu photo.

What I Like About the RC Laser

Sailboat racing is about speed, strategy, and tactics. I absolutely love the RC Laser because it's a tactical boat, which is easy to get out and sail. I don't have a lot of time, and I'd rather spend my time sailing instead of fussing over the boat. Its simple setup allows me to concentrate on what I enjoy: strategy and racing tactics. Because the boats are so equal, it creates some fantastically close racing.

Barr Batzer
Fort Lauderdale, Fl.



Theresa Rae Gay photo.

An Interview with Dave Ramos, 2014 RC Laser National Champion

by Dave Branning

To find Dave Ramos, who won the RC Laser Nationals in October, you have to go to his workplace at Chesapeake Performance Models in Stevensville, Maryland. Dave builds, molds, and repairs, as well as sails all kinds of RC boats under eight feet in length (www.rcyachts.com). Dave's "office" consists of two rooms. A bench detail work area shares space with a traditional desk, credenza, phone, and fax/printer, with literally dozens of plaques, trophies, and awards of various sizes and shapes, which deck the walls, ceiling to floor, on three sides. The larger room is where building, molding, and fabrication take place. In the office area there are no awards that I could see that are worse than third place. In 2014, Ramos comfortably won five NCRs, including the Santa Barbara, J Class, CR 914, and Star 45, in addition to the RC Laser. He was second to Jamey Betz in a very competitive EC12 NCR held in Chicago this past month. Dave actually borrowed a boat for the Laser National Championship. Before we focused on that win, we started at the beginning.

DB: I'm getting e-mails from Laser folks who want to know who you are and where you came from.

DR: My Uncle Pearl started me on regular sailing on Lake Winnepesaukee when I was eight. He also introduced me to scale models as a teen. I quickly became addicted to racing. My first boat was a Hobie 16. I trailered that thing from Corpus Christi, Texas, across the Midwest to Chicago, and from Maine to Florida. I also raced big boats on the East and West Coasts—even Japan—from Maxis to basically just about anything that would float—almost.

DB: What about other One Designs?

DR: Yes! I sailed Stars, Etchells, Melges24s, J24s, and J22s. The Hobie was the smallest one-design I ever sailed.

DB: How did the transition to designing come about?

DR: A friend of mine suggested I look into small-craft designing, so I went down to Sparkman-Stevens, and I spoke with Bill Lang. He told me to look into small-boat design at The Landings School in Maine. Bill was on the Board at the time. He told me to finish my mechanical engineering degree, so I did—graduated first in my class.

My first job was with Hunter Marine, lasted three to four years, then I worked for a sailmaker in St. Pete, Florida. While there, I



Former RC Laser NA Class Secretary David Branning (left) chats with Dave Ramos about RC Lasers. Ramos won the 2014 RC Laser NCR and is the holder of national championships in several other AMYA model yacht classes. Jim Flach photo.

got a call from my father's secretary, who said, "Do you know who Bruce Farr is? He's trying to get a hold of you." Well I raced to *that* interview, got the job, called my then girlfriend, Karen (now wife and mother of two), and said we're moving to Annapolis, Maryland. Karen said, "But we don't know anyone there." And I said, "We'll meet people."

"You can't afford to get upset when someone fouls you or you miss the mark. When you get upset, you're done."

DB: Was modeling going on in your life at this time.

DR: Oh, yeah. I've been modeling since I was 16–17. I started low-key model racing at 18, with the EC12 in Hilton Head, where my parents had a summer place, and in Kansas City, where they lived. I was sailing big boats, but my mom told me to have a look at the pond on the golf course. That's when I started building and racing the EC12 against guys who were not big-boat sailors and who lacked tactical experience. I did very well against them as you might expect.

DB: After Farr, how did you get to your

present state of building all sorts of RC boats?

DR: After almost four years at Farr I went into the computer industry, and on the side I was a dealer/builder, refinishing the CR 914 in my basement. That started to take a lot of my time, because Greg Worth, the 914 distributor, was burning out and sending me all sorts of work. I had a three-month backlog of 914 work, worth more to me than my current computer job, so I quit, thinking I was just taking a break. Greg sold me the CR 914 distributorship in 1999.

But I was still sailing the EC12, and the competition had improved—a lot. Eventually I started refurbishing EC12s, then I got the tooling and started building them. My business has since added the building of the Santa Barbara, the Star 45, and the J Class Shamrock, as well as refurbishment of all the above and then some.

DB: So you were racing RC since the age of 16. What are some of the lessons you have learned in RC racing?

DR: Crap happens in RC racing. It took me a long time, actually years, to learn to chill out when does. You can't afford to get upset when someone fouls you, or you miss the mark. When you get upset, you're done. I do some clinics on occasion, and I tell everyone: "Listen, you *will* get screwed-over in a race. Getting upset works against you."

DB: How do you approach what happens after a bad start or a foul at a mark, when

you find yourself playing catch-up?

DR: The boats in front of you are telling you something about the wind, the pressure, sailing angles. Those skippers are reacting to stuff, and you are anticipating it. Paying attention to what's ahead can help you anticipate, as well as avoid, so overstand and sail around them. If you are trying to make up 14 boats, you probably have a 40 percent chance of that happening. Each leg you should focus on making a 12th into a ninth, and the next leg make a ninth into a sixth. Regattas aren't necessarily won with firsts. Work to improve in increments if you are behind, and it will make you a more successful skipper.

DB: Moving specifically to the RC Laser, your CR 914 business is somewhat in competition with folks who are attracted to the RC Laser. Why did you sail in the RC Laser Nationals?

DR: The best thing about this sport is the people. A dozen of my racing friends, affectionately called the "traveling vagabonds" were sailing in that event, and they said, "come on, here's a boat, race with us." I certainly did not approach that regatta with expectations of winning. I wanted to race with my friends at a terrific venue, knowing it would be a great time against great competition. The Tred Avon Yacht Club has a great reputation for putting on a first-class event for boats, large and small, but the main attraction for me was the people. The offset is I'm in the business, I get to meet new people, and that can help. The new AMYA top officers, Ray Seta, from Texas, and Ron Stephanz, from Alabama, were coming, and I was looking forward to meeting them.

DB: What did you observe sailing against top RC Laser competition?

DR: Overall, I'm convinced I had better tactics. The majority of the competition seemed to start ok and then bang the left corner and take one or two tacks to get around the windward mark. Mark Rinehart (a new RC Laser skipper, but top skipper in the EC12 Class) and I tacked on the headers immediately and were able to gain quick advantages over those who just kept chasing one tack for longer periods of time. Since the RC Laser tacks quickly, it was also helpful to wait for smoother water to flip, so you did not get into irons in the chop of the Tred Avon River. There is a heavy penalty in the RC Laser for tacking into irons. In addition, hitting the corners doesn't always work, so looking ahead and learning what others are experiencing helps you make course adjustments sooner.

DB: Do you like the pure one-design aspects of the RC Laser?

DR: Absolutely. The RC Laser and the CR 914 are both one-designs. That means no

real battle of the wallets with either boat. Look at the IOM Class. Someone wins a regatta with this design or that design, and everyone races to duplicate it. That can get expensive. I prefer the idea of me against you.

"In light air, tacking too much can cost you more than continuing to sail on a headed tack."

DB: Any nuances of the RC Laser you picked up as you learned the boat?

DR: In Oxford we had good wind both days. The nature of the boat is that when heeled, the bow drives down, lifting the rudder, costing you some rudder control. Downwind, I learned (from a fellow skipper standing next to me) to wiggle the stick to lift the bow and avoid plowing under. Another tactic I learned to use is to play the sail in and out slightly to keep the boat driving and lifting. I noticed that I sail a little higher than most. I'm a pincher, but in the RC Laser if you are bringing that boom in a little from the sheer toward the centerline you better focus on not getting into irons. I found that constantly working the sails and rudder while avoiding that unforgiving point of irons requires constant focus.

DB: Would you like to sail an RC Laser in the future?

DR: You bet. Being with my friends is really most important. We sail quite a few RC boats together. Adding the Laser to the mix is just part of the fun. I'll come back to defend. I don't like guys who win and don't defend. It's

bad form. I owe it to the class to come back and, certainly, try my best to win again. Plus, my friends will be there.

DB: How about telling us a few of the things you concentrate on while racing.

DR: I'm happy to. Many of these things apply to big-boat sailing as well.

Steering: Steering smoothly is fast. Steering less is fast. Have patience. Let the boat react rather than forcing the rudder over hard. Why? Because it is faster. Using too much rudder movement is like applying a speed brake. It kills the boat's momentum. Oversteering means that you have to apply opposite rudder because you turned too far. Smooth and less is especially true in light air.

Tacking: Minimize tacking in light air. In light air, tacking too much can cost you more than continuing to sail on a headed tack. It depends on where you are on the course whether or not you tack on a shift or continue on. In very shifty conditions that have me confused, I will sometimes count to three before tacking to make sure I am being headed and not, in fact, experiencing a velocity header. To explain: a velocity header is a drop in wind speed combined with a boat's continuing momentum. It looks like a header, because your telltales and sails are displaying all the signs of a header, but in fact the boat's forward momentum through the water is bringing the apparent wind forward. In a velocity header, when the boat slows a bit, the true wind shows it is still from the same direction.

Never ever give up: When fouled, or if you blew the start, or for whatever reason you find yourself at the back of the fleet, remember it isn't over until it's over. The boats ahead will give you indications of what the wind is doing. Instead of reacting to a shift, you will be expecting it, and that little time



Mark roundings can get crowded. Dave Ramos (#53) keeps his cool under pressure. RC Lasers have tough hulls and no shrouds to snag. Jim Flach photo.

savings means closing the distance to the front and getting back into the race. In the nationals video you will see me (#53) get caught in irons prior to the start and give the fleet a huge lead off the line. Oops! What you may not see was that the fleet showed header as they sailed off to the left side course on the first beat. Seeing this, I tacked and went right on the lifted port tack, then tacked back short of the starboard lay line in anticipation that the wind would come back to the right again, lifting me on starboard tack to the mark. That's exactly what happened. I rounded the first mark in third. "It's not over 'til the fat lady sings." Never give up; keep your cool; sail fast.

Trim: Know what kind of sailor you are. Are you a footer or a pointer (pincher). Footers sail a bit faster but sail farther. Pointers sail closer to the wind and a shorter distance but are in danger of stalling the boat. Pointing requires a higher degree of concentration and focus on sail trim and boat angle to the wind than does footing. One technique is not necessarily better than the other, but the demands are different. As mentioned, pointing demands are high, but a footer needs to pay attention as well. Since the footer is not constantly testing whether he (or she) can sail higher, a footer can get caught sailing way too low and traveling even a greater distance than

needed. Every so often footers need to ease the sails a bit to check the wind angle. If they stay full, you are low and need to head up a bit.

Learn from other boats' sail trim relative to yours. If you are not able to sail the same angle as the other boats in the fleet, or you just seem to be slower, compare the faster boats' trim to yours. Do their sails have more twist, or less? Is their sail fuller or flatter? Compare outhaul position. Are they trimmed tighter, or looser? If there is a difference, make the change to your trim. If you are suddenly faster, ask yourself why. Sailing is a sustained learning experience, so always be open to ideas.

How Three Clubs Built Fleets

About the Oxford RC Laser Fleet

by Jim Karr



Jim Karr is a member of Tred Avon Yacht Club and founder of the Oxford, Maryland, RC Laser fleet, one of the first and still most active fleets in the country. Jim Flach photo.

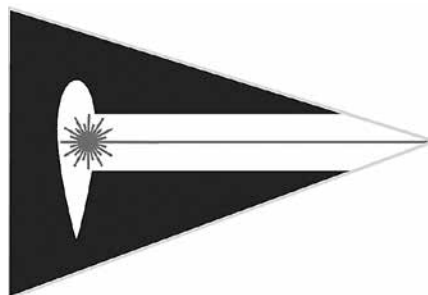
The Oxford RC Laser Fleet began when my wife, Paula, and I hosted Steve Lang (SailRC.com), who had traveled to Annapolis in 2004 to sail in the CR 914 Championships. Steve introduced me to the world of RC sailing. At the time, he was the US distributor of RC Laser sailboats.

A week or so after Steve left, three boats arrived. He said he thought I might enjoy sailing them with friends. It was a canny move. In short order I had sold four of them to friends at Oxford's Tred Avon Yacht Club (TAYC). Informal RC Laser racing started in the yacht club basin that summer. Members of the TAYC watched with fascination as these well-conceived boats performed in the basin as if they had tiny skippers on board. Before long there were more than 30 Lasers in the Oxford TAYC fleet.

Paula and I started informal Wednesday-night racing off the docks of TAYC in the spring of 2005. Bob Shattuck, better known as "Bubbles," a former, hot Etchells sailor from Connecticut, became our first PRO. Bubbles ran a tight, humorous ship. Back runners could expect to hear Bubble's resonant voice telling them, "Come on in, I'll give you a finish." Bonnie Richards joined us to take finishes, and has stayed the course.

Tot O'Mara eventually replaced Bob Shattuck. An accomplished racing sailor, Tot

was the first female Commodore of the TAYC. Her keen wit, established by Bubbles, sustains the relaxed mood on the dock. On one of her first nights as PRO, someone asked Tot what the first course was. "Shrimp cocktail," she said without hesitation.



Oxford RC Laser burgee.

In the fall of 2006, the Oxford RC Fleet hosted its first National RC Regatta, with sailors arriving from the entire East Coast and as far away as England and the Bahamas. Since then, two other national championship events have been held on Oxford's broad waters.

The Oxford fleet is now in its 10th season. Dave Branning, an early participant and an enthusiastic developer of the Oxford Fleet, became secretary of the RC Laser National Association. During his term, Dave added a dozen new national events for the RC Laser Class and got us traveling to a variety of RC Laser events.

One of the reasons for our fleet's success is our skippers' willingness to take on jobs, from making race marks to serving as fleet captain. And our guys are creative. Two years ago, Oxford's Roger Baldwin and Harry Henkel initiated a long-distance event that has been a big hit. Our skippers enjoy the camaraderie as much as the racing.

Thanks, Steve. Those gift boats begot a wonderful fleet, opened our eyes to a pastime that's great fun, and best of all created a close-knit fraternity of sailors that can't be beat.

Raleigh Fleet

by Rick Ferguson

Rick Ferguson is Commodore of the Triangle MYC in Raleigh, N.C. He began building an RC Laser fleet five years ago; TMYC now has 20 boats and hosted the 2014 RC Laser North American Championship Regatta. Jock Gault photo.



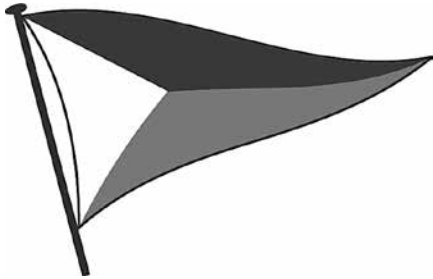
I raced one-designs in my younger days; when the Laser came out, I was impressed by the simple, elegant design and the philosophy of the class. Fast-forward a couple of decades; when I discovered the RC Laser, I found it shared many qualities of the full-size Laser. I bought one, but mine was the only one around. I began racing Victorias, my club's entry class, but I really wanted to race the Laser.

I found a couple of used boats and persuaded a few good skippers to race with me on open sailing days. We liked the Laser's simplicity and ruggedness, but we were continually fiddling with our other boats. These qualities made the RC Laser a great entry class for new skippers, as well as people who just don't want to tinker with stuff. With a low price and easy access to standardized parts, the Laser was easy to get into.

Many guys who had raced full-size, one-design dinghies had a natural affinity for one-design racing and had come to a stage where other demands on their time made racing "people boats" no longer viable. With the RC Laser, one could enjoy the same mental challenges, and you could do it for a couple of hours on a Saturday morning and still have the weekend for other things. You may know some

former racers; look them up and recruit them.

Also, to create an immediate interest, strong enough for it to become a reality, you have to make it visible. To do this, stage your races where you have some spectator traffic, such as a popular public park. Have some used boats on hand, so a prospect can get a boat right then, without having to make a big decision (read: ask the spouse). I started looking for used RC Lasers and refurbishing them. I didn't want an interested new guy to have to wait or track one down. I want to have a good boat available immediately.



The Triangle MYC burgee.

Keep the energy level up with frequent communication and informal races. There are plenty of AMYA classes where one can find serious racing, and indeed the upper levels of the RC Laser Class attract some of the best competition anywhere, but keep it low-key for your fledgling fleet. Your job is to make it more fun for people to race Lasers than to do something else.

Hold seminars on sail trim, tactics, and rules. Round up people for an impromptu sail when the wind is blowing. Hold low-key regattas at different or unusual places (preferably visible; see above). Help new guys with their boats, especially if they are entirely new to RC. Do everything you can to enhance their enjoyment. If you do these things, soon you will have a critical mass of local guys with whom to race. Then, get them traveling to regattas!

RC Laser Sailing in Paradise

by David L. Kelley



David Kelley is Captain of the RC Laser fleet in Honolulu, Hawaii. Inspired by the RC Lasers in New York's Central Park, he and friends established a fleet on Oahu, Hawaii—12 boats

in three years. David Kelley photo.

The greatest part of RC sailing in Hawaii is it is truly a year-round sport. With trade winds blowing on most days, shining sun and calm harbors provide the perfect environment for RC sailing. The Ala Wai Harbor on the South Shore of Oahu, the main island of the Hawaiian chain, is home to a fleet of 12 RC sailors from two different yacht clubs. Both clubs, the Waikiki Yacht Club and its neighbor across the harbor, the Hawaii Yacht Club, are home to the sailors who regularly launch their RC Lasers right into the Pacific Ocean. Additionally, on the windward side of Oahu, the Kaneohe Yacht Club has a few RC sailors, with a fleet of fairings, located on Kaneohe Bay, the largest bay on Oahu, which also provides perfect sailing conditions most every day. The Lahaina Yacht Club also has plans to begin a fleet of RC Lasers very soon.

Just three years ago, when I visited Central Park in New York City and saw, in person, RC Lasers on the great pond, it was then and there that I immediately became interested in RC Laser sailing. I watched dozens of sailors from all around the world racing their

boats, and other people sailing RC Lasers. I became so interested I decided to begin a fleet when I returned to Oahu, Hawaii. Now our fleet has grown to over a dozen boats in just three years, and we are enjoying learning about this exciting sport.

We are so fortunate to have the Ala Wai Harbor, and other such harbors and bays, to race our Lasers right in the ocean. The harbors edge near the breakwater, with its flat water and steady tradewinds, make for excellent sailing conditions. We currently have plans to hold our first official regatta this summer. Last summer, with several boats, we held a "mock regatta" at Waikiki Yacht Club. It was a fundraiser for the Junior Sailing program. Also, The RC Laser captains gave the Junior Sailors and other children each an opportunity to race against each other. The course was windward-leeward, with two marks to go around. The children and RC Laser sailors all had a great time sharing their newfound hobby together.

All of the RC Laser sailors get together on most weekends and practice against one another. The constantly changing wind conditions provide excellent opportunities to gain valuable experience in these fun races and practice sessions.

We are now in the process of forming our **RC Laser Fleet** club. Someday, we would like to have the opportunity to hold the RC Laser Nationals in Hawaii. With so many sailors already and growing every month, and the best weather on the planet, not to mention a world famous tourist destination, Hawaii would prove to make an ideal setting for competitive RC Laser racing.

Aloha~~~~~



The Blue Bag

by Roger Vaughan

Several years ago, an older sailing friend of mine became wheelchair bound after a car accident. A bunch of us bought him a radio-controlled boat he could sail on a local pond. I don't remember much about the boat, but I'm sure it came with one of the first radios. I do recall it had a little spoked wheel on the transmitter for rudder control. I used to go to the pond with my friend and take a turn sailing the boat. I'd been hooked on sailing for many years by then, but the day I first sailed that radio-controlled version, another hook was set. It was the best vicarious thrill I'd ever had.

Fast forward to 2004 when a friend gave me an RC Fairwind kit for Christmas. The Fairwind is a cruising design with a full keel, which has to be filled with five pounds of #12 lead shot. I built it, sailed it some, then discovered the CR 914—sleeker and faster, based on an International America's Cup Class design, and I built one of those. Both were fun, but?...

It wasn't until I ran into The Blue Bag that my RC sailing took off in earnest. I discovered The Blue Bag one day seven years ago in the office of Dave Pulzone, a magazine publisher. Dave races a J80 and is known for his good taste in essential toys. At my query, Dave unzipped the bag, and there inside was everything one needed to sail an RC Laser. For me,

it was the answer.

With no skipper on board to keep the boat flat, the ballast of a long, fin-keel with a shapely lead bulb on the end is an RC necessity. For the Laser, an extension on the top of the keel slides into a slot in the bottom of the hull and locks neatly in place at the deck. But the rest is pure Laser. A two-piece, flexible, carbon mast fits into the open luff tube of the sail. The boom slides into a clever gooseneck fitting, molded onto the mast, and is held in place by the clew of the sail, attached to the outhaul. The rudder snaps effortlessly into a tiller fitting connected to the rudder servo. It's altogether an elegant bit of engineering. No rigging! From bag to launch, it promised to take five-to-eight minutes. Instant satisfaction! I quickly put my CR 914 up for sale, went to see Jim Karr, who had the local RC Laser franchise, and became proud owner of boat number 42.

Sailing any radio-controlled boat is fun, but the responsive RC Laser provides an immensely satisfying experience. It takes only two thumbs, which can be educated quickly. The left thumb handles the sail trim lever on the radio, which transmits signals to on-board servos: lever up to ease, lever down to trim. The right thumb steers by moving the other lever left and right. Skippers quickly learn the secret of putting themselves *on* the boat, otherwise steering when the boat is coming at you (for

instance) can be disorienting. Then you read the wind, and off you go. Reading the wind is key, because the RC Laser flies four different size sails. The A sail is for light winds; B for 7 to 16 knots; C for 17 to 22 knots; and D for 23-plus. Sail selection is a vital part of race strategy.

Sailing an RC Laser takes full focus, so it is a great getaway, a calming, meditative exercise when you are sailing by yourself. For me it never fails to be magical, exhilarating. Unlike a full-size boat, you can sail the RC version and enjoy the sight of it performing at the same time. With the Laser, one savors A-sail days because of the mesmerizing play of light on calm water and the delight in discovering how little wind it takes to move this sensitive little boat. On heavy-air days, skippers revel in the robust nature of the Laser as it drives upwind into waves under D sail in 20 knot winds or more. The Laser is a boat for all conditions.

There are scores of RC choices. The model boats display the same sailing characteristics of their full-size big brothers, so one makes a choice. The Laser, for instance, maneuvers on a dime and accelerates quickly, and as stated it adapts well to a variety of conditions. The bigger, heavier racing boats—like the EC12 (East Coast 12 Meter), with main, jib, full keel, and adjustable rigging—carry lots of momentum into tacks and mark roundings. The Star and Soling are agile copies of the



Nick Mortgu photo.

full-size versions. And the top of the line the RC J-Class boat, which is eight feet long with a mast towering ten feet off the deck, takes plenty of room to maneuver. J-Class skippers on crossing tacks have to remember those masts, which are carried like obliquely protruding lances on the heeled boats. The first thing you have to do after you acquire a J boat is buy a larger car. Then you need to convince at least one friend to help you launch the 90-pound vessel.

On the full-size circuit, the Star and the Etchells are famous for always attracting the best sailors to their important regattas, from America's Cup skippers to national and world champions in other classes. Because of its simplicity; the way it performs well in all conditions; and its pure, one-design quality; the Laser has the same sort of attraction for the best sailors from other RC classes. Ask many of those other top sailors what they sail, and in addition to Class X, the add-on will often be: "...and RC Lasers."

"I think it's because the RC Laser Class is well-managed," says Jon Elmaleh, who founded the class in 1995. "With no rigging it's simple to launch and sail, and there's no development in the class. It's easy to jump back to a Laser because it doesn't change." Others point out that the performance of full-size one-designs is dependent on crew weight and sail design. With its one-of-a-kind sails—and absence of crew—the RC Laser might be the most pure one-design of all boats, full size or RC.

In the Oxford (Maryland) RC Laser Fleet, several of our skippers sail Star 45s and EC12s, and one had a J Class boat for a while. But the RC Laser is king in Oxford, satisfying those of us who like the boat's agility and acceleration. The Oxford fleet is 30-strong, with as many as 15 boats showing up to race on Wednesday evenings in season. The RC version is an accurate scale model of its big brother, bearing Laser designer Bruce Kirby's original lines as well as his stamp of approval.

Like the Olympic version, the RC Laser was made for racing, and therein lies the fun.



*Dave unzipped the bag,
and there inside was
everything one needed to
sail an RC Laser.
For me, it was the answer*

We often comment on a Wednesday evening that we have the biggest one-design fleet on the Chesapeake Bay. In addition, we launch and recover quickly, and, of course, unless it's raining we stay dry regardless of conditions on the racecourse.

Racing RC Lasers has improved my race strategy. RC racing provides the broad perspective you always wish you could have from a big boat. Standing on a dock, racing RC, you can see the whole racecourse. So strategy becomes a more comprehensive, realistic entity. And when you are the port-tack boat on a cross and have to decide to tack or dip, the broad view of the course provides you with a lot more information for making that decision.

The RC Laser is also fast, sailing in the equivalent of 30 to 40 knots (scale wind) on a C-sail day on a tearing reach. Maintaining control of the boat at such times is a challenge for the best of skippers. Decisions have to be made quickly, under pressure. And at the start, instead of craning your neck to see down the line or being blocked by boats on either side of you, the line is spread out before you like a

wide shot from a helicopter. You can see the holes opening up, and you can tell if you are early, or spot on. Somehow, all this translates favorably when you get back on a big boat.

For those of us who have grown up sailing dinghies, the RC Laser has to be most satisfying. Because of the boat's agility, last-second tacks are part of one's tactical arsenal. Even down-speed tacking (several tacks in succession) can work to your advantage if conditions are right. But timing changes dramatically; in an RC Laser, 20 seconds to the start can seem like an eternity.

Two Oxford sailors created the long distance "Cannonball" race two years ago, which has been great fun for the fleet. Part of its success has to do with the portability and simplicity of the RC Laser. The river course is a mile-and-a-half-long. Skippers sail from chase boats. Many times during the race, sail changes which, would be impossible on other boats, are required. With the Lasers, skippers carry their sail inventories with them and make changes quickly (in well under a minute) while the chase boats are stopped, and in neutral.

At the end of a racing day, everything is rinsed, dried off, and back in The Blue Bag in less than 10 minutes. As we head for refreshment, thinking about sailors in other fleets fussing with stays, shrouds, spreaders, and turnbuckles, we try not to act too smugly.

That day when I first encountered The Blue Bag in Dave Pulzone's office, I knew right away that the RC Laser was the boat for me. What took longer to discover was how important the friends I made sailing Lasers would become. It's a mysterious and strong link that connects us, overcoming politics, religion, and other pesky differences. RC Laser sailors are very competitive, we all enjoy winning, but mostly we are as tight as a neighborhood gang. Part of that can be ascribed to how sailing brings people together, but part of it has to do with the Laser's proud history and the robust, satisfying nature of the quarter-scale version.

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2015 RC Laser North American Championship

by Bill Ewing

Dave Ramos edged out 2015 Laser National Champion David Brawner to capture his first North American RC Laser Championship. Ramos, who won last year's Nationals in his first ever Laser regatta, sailed more consistently than the other 17 skippers. The field consisted of skippers who have won many national and international championships.

The conditions on Saturday were "are we really going to sail in this?" blustery and cold. Two skippers tried C rigs but quickly abandoned them and joined everyone else by using their D rigs for the remainder of the day. The first day's results from the odds-and-evens format showed multi-time Laser champ Jim Kaighin, who traveled from the Bahamas, in first, followed by Jamey Betz, William Bentz, Dave Ramos, and David Brawner in second through fifth. All five were within 11 points of each other. Everyone sailed thirteen races on Saturday.

On Sunday, the fleet was divided in two, with each fleet completing 10 more races. Sunday's weather was in the low 60s with northeast winds again, but this time they were more moderate. In fact, two skippers tried their A rigs, but they found it a little too uncomfortable in the 18-mph puffs. Unfortunately these puffs were occasionally followed by 2-mph lulls, making several mark roundings memorable for the spectators.

Brawner had a spectacular day on Sunday. His scores were six bullets, three thirds, and a throw-out. He easily won the day. Unfortunately his eleven-point deficit starting the day was a little too much to overcome. Ramos had three bullets and finished consistently well, to move up from fourth starting the final day. EC12 National Champion Jamey Betz was in contention but slipped just enough to drop to third, seven points ahead of Kaighin, who experienced a failed rudder servo, among other problems.

In the Silver Fleet, Dave Branning dominated. His throw-out for the day was his only second; the remaining finishes were all firsts. His less-than-perfect day-one relegated him to just two positions below the gold fleet break. Although 23 points behind the leader, Henry De Wolf demonstrated why he was the top Silver Fleet qualifier, garnering a second place award. Victor Oberg was the final trophy winner, rebounding well from his ill-advised A rig adventure earlier in the day.

A complete, brand-new Laser was donated by Jim Myers of Intensity Sails, and all skippers were eligible for the prize. Dave Branning, who had already won the Silver fleet award and was presented a bag of sand by his fellow competitors, also took home the new Laser.

In all my years of competitive sailing, I have never seen what the skippers did for Deb Herschman. She was such an unbelievable help to each and every skipper that they took up a collection and presented her with a very nice thank-you gift. She singlehandedly launched and retrieved every boat for all 46 races. *Bravo!*

Summary of the 2105 RC Laser North American Championship

Date: September 26–27

Location: Spring Lake, NJ

Host Club: Marbleheaders of Spring Lake MYC

Entries: 18

Winds: 20-plus on Saturday, 13–18 on Sunday

Scoring: Odds and Evens, both Gold and Silver

Race Committee: **Bill Ewing**, Event Chairman; **Eileen Ewing**, **Skip Hall**, **Jerry Franco**, **Deb Herschman**, **Andrew Herschman**, **Dominick Bonanno**, and **Rod Woolley**, Committee.

2015 RC Laser North American Championship Results

Gold Fleet

Place	Skipper	Points
1	Dave Ramos	51
2	David Brawner	52
3	Jamey Betz	60
4	Jim Kaighin	67
5	William Bentz	72.8
6	James Flach	89
7	Harry Mote	94
8	Jerry Franko	111
9	Ray Szulczewski	135

Silver Fleet

Place	Skipper	Points
1	Dave Branning	74
2	Henry DeWolf	97
3	Victor Oberg	102
4	Fred DeSantis	118
5	Terry Rapp	123
6	Dave Martens	125
7	Rod Woolley	125
8	William Sysyn	141
9	Mike Campbell	144

2015 Lake Naomi RC Laser Summer Regatta

by John Whipple

The RC Laser Fleet #9 held its Annual Summer Regatta on August 8 at the club's Administrative Office Marina. With light but steady winds across the course and copious sunshine, it was a beautiful day for RC Laser sailing. We had a mix of local and off-lake participants.

Thank you to all the sailors for participating and to Sue Neely and Fran Whipple for the food and drinks. Sue was also the PRO. A total of eighteen races were completed on the day.

Summary of the 2015 Lake Naomi RC Laser Summer Regatta

Date: August 8

Location: Pocono Pines, PA

Host Club: Lake Naomi Club RC Laser Fleet

Entries: 8 (1 withdrew)

Winds: Light, but steady across the course

Scoring: Low Point

Event Chairman: John Whipple

Race Committee: Sue Neely

2015 Lake Naomi RC Laser Summer Regatta Results

Place	Skipper	Points
1	Ryan Lippincott	20
2	Larry Lefczik	32
3	Dean Neely	40
4	John Whipple	48
5	Abby Spector	80
6	Tony Seay	82
7	Rich Daggett	85

2015 Tilghman Trifecta RC Laser Regatta

by Nick Mortgu

Twenty-three skippers showed up on a Wednesday for the RC Laser part of the Tilghman Trifecta Regatta, held at the beautiful Tilghman Club in Tilghman, Maryland. Part two would be EC12s and part three, the Star 45 NCR, would follow over the next four days. Regatta Chairman Dave Branning couldn't have picked a better day. For the morning seeding races the wind was a strong B sail, and the afternoon called for C sails. Lots of liquids were required as the temperature was in the low 90s.

The regatta drew skippers from Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Florida, with some staying for the other two regattas that made up the Trifecta. One family had four members competing: brothers Steve, Skip, and Tom Lippincott and brother-in-law Nick Mortgu. After the fleet was split up according to the Mason Dixon Line, the six seeding races began. Race Director Danny Thomas did an excellent job choosing the course and keeping the races going on this hot day. After each of the two fleets finished seeding, we adjourned to the air-conditioned Tilghman Club for lunch. Following a deserved rest and lunch, to everyone's surprise the wind had picked up enough to change to C sails. Sailing in the Chesapeake Bay in salt water required extra care in keeping your boat cockpit dry. There were more than a handful of mysterious electronic problems during the day, including a battery fire in Cape May Ray's pocket!

In the gold fleet, RC Laser National Champion David Brawner sailed flawlessly to a 13-point first place and was awarded the Jim Karr Trophy. He was followed by Roger Vaughan with 20 points and regatta chairman Dave Branning with 38 points. Rick Ferguson, who sailed one of his best regattas, placed fourth with 41 points.

The silver fleet is always the fleet to watch, as these skippers are sailing against their peers for a separate set of awards. First place went to the Oxford Fleet's Roger Baldwin with just 34 points. Bob Roe, an-other Oxford sailor, finished second. Jersey Boys Harry Mote and Cape May Ray Szulczewski finished third and fourth respectively. This was Ray's first trip to the RC Laser trophy stand.

Extra thanks go to Regatta Chairman Dave Branning, RD Danny Thomas, "girl Friday" Elaine Hepkin who registered us, fed us, rescued our boats, and tallied the scores, and part-time scorekeeper Beth Lippincott.

Summary of the 2015 Tilghman Trifecta RC Laser Regatta

Date: September
Location: Tilghman Club, Tilghman, MD
Host Club: Oxford RC Laser Fleet
Entries: 23
Winds: 15-plus
Scoring: Low Point
Race Committee: **Dave Branning**, Event Chairman; **Danny Thomas**, RD; **Elaine Hepkin**, Scorekeeper and Chase Boat; **Beth Lippincott**, Scorekeeper.

2015 Tilghman Trifecta RC Laser Results—Gold Fleet

Place	Skipper	Points
1	Dave Brawner	13
2	Roger Vaughan	20
3	Dave Branning	38
4	Rick Ferguson	41
5	Gerry Cobeley	48

2015 Tilghman Trifecta RC Laser Results—Silver Fleet

Place	Skipper	Points
1	Roger Baldwin	34
2	Bob Roe	42
3	Harry Mote	49
4	Ray Szulczewski	51
5	Victor Oberg	53

RC Laser Class News & Tips

by Nick Mortgu rcLaser@theAMYA.org

I hope you have had a chance to read this issue's articles about the RC Laser. First, I have to thank Rick Ferguson and Roger Vaughan for their masterminding most of the stories and layout. Excellent job guys. There is another team that made this issue happen: *Model Yachting* Managing Editor John Davis, and Copy and Photo editor Pat Butterworth. Thank you both!

There were three RC Laser regattas this summer. The Lake Naomi Regatta, the Tilghman Trifecta, and the North Americans. All three had very good turnouts and drew skip-pers from significant distances to race. We know there are so many small groups sailing RC Lasers around the country, which we find out about from time to time. We would like to in-clude them on our class website and will report their series results as they happen. To have your fleet listed and your activities recorded for other RC Laser skippers to see, you may contact our webmaster, Jim Flach, via the RC Laser Class website. If you are not receiving Jim's Blast you may register on the website to be included.

If you purchase a new or used RC Laser and need a sail number but don't want to du-plicate a number of a local boat, on the AMYA RC Laser homepage you can see what numbers are in use in your region. The most frequently assigned sail numbers are listed. The far right column lists the region. To make regatta scor-ing easier do not chose a number already in use in your region. If you must have a special num-ber that is in use, you would be recorded with a 1, 2, or 3 in front of that number.

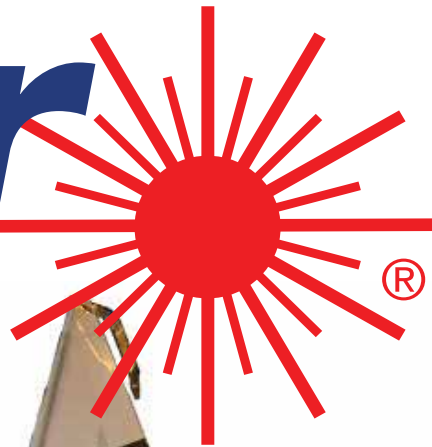
There are a few regattas left for this fall, the Leftover Bowl, the Trick or Treat Regatta, and the Fort Stokes Down River. Information can be found on the class website.

Congratulations to RC Laser Skipper Ryan Lippincott for winning the Star 45 Nationals!

Tip of the year! Don't put a freshly charged battery in your pocket with loose change.

Laser

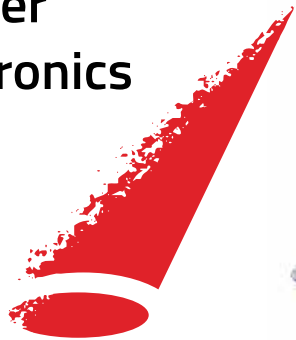
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