



**INTERNATIONAL ONE DESIGN CLASS  
2022 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP  
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**IODs: THE BIG 'LITTLE' CLASS**

*Though few in number, International One-Designs have earned their reputation for developing the world's best racing skippers.*

By Moulton H. Farnham  
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With another America's Class series of trials for the challenge and defense of the "Ould Mug" only a few months over the horizon, you can safely bet that each of the contending American and British 12-Meter skippers will have had somewhere in his racing background a substantial apprenticeship in one of the keenest of all sailboat racing classes, the International One-Designs (I.O.D.).

"Bus" Mosbacher, skipper of Weatherly's winning crew in the 1962 America's Cup match, was Long Island Sound International One-Design champion eight years in a row. "Corny" Shields Jr., who skippered defense contender Columbia, was a two-time I.O.D. champion, while "Ted" Hood, co-skipper of contender Nefertiti, had won the Marblehead I.O.D. championship, and George O'Day, co-skipper of contender Easterner, was a leading skipper in the same fleet. What is there about this relative handful (297) of 33-foot wooden sailboats, distributed from the fjords of Norway to San Francisco's Golden Gate and from Bermuda to Maine that makes them so superior and makes competition in them develop such outstanding helmsmen? The answer is design, in two different senses: The first sense is the usual—the physical form of the boats. But the second, though less familiar, is equally important—design in the sense of the intention that lay behind the creation of the class.

Our story concerns how happily intention and physical form were married to produce this class of champions; it begins on the waters of Western Long Island Sound in the late 1930's. There the undisputed hottest class of racing sailboats was the popular 29-foot Sound Interclubs, Mower-designed sloops that dated back to 1926. And the undisputed hottest skipper in this class was a genial, 39-year-old investment banker with pleasant brown eyes and a mind that could calculate the variables of time, speed and distance with computer precision. His name was Cornelius Shields; his friends called him "Corny". Despairing rival skippers, however, called him "the silver fox of Long Island Sound," a tribute not only to his tactical skill, but to his uncanny knowledge of tide and weather on that fickle body of water. What Babe Ruth was to baseball of that era, Corny Shields was to small sailboat racing – the man to beat. It wasn't easy, though. Shields had honed a native skill to razor sharpness by bringing into the Interclubs the top skippers and champions of other classes throughout the area. He exercised his considerable charm and talents as a salesman in a constant campaign to attract new competition.





“We wanted the top,” he says today, “nothing less. When I was beaten, I wanted it to be by the best.”

The result was that by 1935 a fleet of 28 Interclubs was racing hard and often, and the class spirit was high. Shields was uneasy, however. New advances in design were coming along that might make the Interclubs seem dated to these sharp skippers and break up the class. He felt a new and better boat was needed to hold the group together.

Also, in those days of the Great Depression, he felt strongly that a ceiling should be put on the cost of racing internationally. His experience in the Six Meters showed him that the costs for competing in this and other open classes were fast going through the roof. The time seemed ripe for a new boat that would simulate both national and international competition by being as nearly One-Design as possible.

A One-Design boat – with the major variables of design and equipment stabilized for the entire class – would put the emphasis on the skill of the helmsman, rather than on the designer, or sail maker, or supplier of equipment. It would enable a skipper to feel he had won on merit. Shields reasoned, rather than on superior spending power.

He found his inspiration in Bermuda, where he had gone in the summer of 1935 to race Interclubs and Six Meters. Kenneth and Eldon Trimmingham had just taken delivery of a new Six Meter, the 37-1/2 foot Saga, designed and built for them by Bjarne Aas, of Norway. Shields fell in love with her, though his first view was at a quarter of a mile.

Closer examination confirmed his first impression – she was beautiful and beautifully built, with full-length planks glued on edge, and seem so invisible the topsides shone “like the side of a porcelain bathtub.” How fine it would be, Shields thought, to have a One-Design class similar in appearance, but smaller, of less displacement and, for comfort, with somewhat more beam. He determined to have Aas design and build such a class to replace the Interclubs. Absolute secrecy was essential, lest the Interclubs class fall apart before the new boats were ready. Working closely with his brother Paul and his partner, Egbert Moxham, Shields wrote his proposal to Aas.

Sketches and plans steamed back and forth across the Atlantic all that winter. They finally simmered down to a design for a 33-foot racing sloop with lines – to quote Uffa Fox, the great English designer and sailor – “as clean as a smelt’s and each and every line perfect for its purpose.”

The new boat measured 21’5” on the water, with a 6’9” beam and draft of 5’4”. She had a lead keel of over two tons, and displaced 7120 lb. She carried a lofty rig, with a 45’ mast and 426 square feet of sail, only 50’ less than a Six Meter. She was beautiful to look at, and promised to be a racer but easy to handle.

Shields was as excited as a new father. But now came the critical period – the changeover.





Carefully timing his move, he showed the plans for the new Aas creation to a few other Interclub members. They were enthusiastic, and agreed to join him in underwriting twenty-five boats at once.

By pegging the selling price of the Interclubs at a minimum of \$2100, Shields protected the market for the old boats from collapsing while class members made the switch to the new International One-Designs, a name conceived by Paul Shields to indicate the scope of the new class. The price for the new boats, delivered in New York, was \$2670, including all sails, spars and running rigging, cradle, insurance, and shipping charges from Fredrikstad, Norway, where they were built.

In mid – December 1936 the first four boats were delivered. Shields rigged his and sailed her from City Island to Larchmont Yacht Club during Christmas week. He used his old Interclub number 25, and the same name, Aileen (for his daughter). Aileen stirred interest and enthusiasm to a fever pitch; her performance exceeded her promise. Every member of the Interclubs bought into the new International One-Design class; by summer of 1937, 25 I.O.D.'s were racing on Long Island Sound. Shields' careful planning had held the group together. For a net cost of less than \$600 each, he had equipped them to compete as never before, in a beautiful new boat under conditions that placed a new premium on the helmsman's skill. It didn't stop there. Bermuda sailors were excited, too.

They had long been discontent with racing their Starling Burgess Bermuda One-Designs against the Long Island Sound Interclubs, winning in light air and getting clobbered in heavy. They were eager for a standardized class in which boats would be so nearly identical, they could step aboard one anywhere in the world and sail it on equal terms. It would put an end to the bother and cost of shipping boats for international competition.

Led by the Trimmingham brothers. Bermudans ordered five I.O.D.'s in 1937. They were delivered in 1938 and put into immediate competition against the United States for a trophy known as the Amorita Cup, donated by Fred Hoyt, who had won it with a boat of that name in a Larchmont Yacht Club competition that dated back to the year 1907.

In the 29 Amorita Cup matches held since 1938- of which 21 have been raced in Bermuda, and 8 on L.I. Sound – the Bermudans have won 16, the Americans, 13. Today, the Bermuda fleet of I.O.D.'s numbers 13. Norwegian sailors also caught I.O.D. fever. The American purchase of 25 yachts in a single order had generated tremendous publicity and interest in Norway. To meet it, Bjarne Aas had set up what was probably the world's first production line for racing sailboats. His fellow countrymen decided they, too, would like to race against the world in this beautiful new class.

Under the inspiration of Aas and guidance of top Norwegian sailors like Kurt Heja and Magnus Konow, a Norwegian fleet of I.O.D.'s was established in 1938. Today, there are two fleets – Inner Norway, at Oslofjord, with 12 boats, and Outer Norway, at Hanko with 24.

With the establishment of the Bermuda and Norwegian fleets, the new One-Designs became truly "International."





Thus began what might well be called a Golden Age of International Racing that today, despite the interruption of two wars, is flourishing stronger than ever. That it is, shows the fundamental appeal of the one-design idea to the world's top racing skippers.

But the one-design concept is easier to understand than achieve. It sounds simple – set up a series of specifications for a class, and go. At first, perhaps, one yard builds all the boats, one loft cuts all the sails, and everything is dandy. Then the class begins to grow. Other builders enter, other sail makers. Owners begin to experiment with go-fast gimmicks of their own invention that aren't mentioned in the rules. There are racing sea-lawyers, too – men who meet Ambrose Bierce's definition of a lawyer as "one skilled in circumvention of the law;" they want to win no matter how high the cost. Soon, the physical problem of inspection becomes staggering, control is lost, and the one-design idea fades as variables other than the helmsman's skill take over.

What has made the International One-Design so successful as a class is the high degree to which it has remained one-design. But it has not been without a struggle. In a class attracting so much talent, there have been many strong personalities and differences of opinion about what aspects of the boat and equipment were important to the one-design principle. Until 1946, no extensive, detailed statement had been made of its basic philosophy to guide the class in making decisions as new materials and equipment were developed. In that year, an all-star committee, working under the leadership of Corny Shields and William E. John Jr., got together and hammered out the details codifying the I.O.D. rationale, thereby protecting the class from erosion of its principles.

These men – William S. Cox, George Hinman, Arthur Knapp Jr., A.E. "Bill" Luders Jr., Emil Mosbacher Jr. and Roderick Stephens Jr. – great sailors all, and dedicated I.O.D. competitors, worked with Bill John to evolve standards that would implement these two objectives for the class: "To build and maintain a fleet of yachts, One-Design in appearance and performance, by building all hulls at the original shipyard, B.J. Aas of Fredrikstad, Norway, and enforcing strictly the One-Design aspects of the hulls, spars, and sails," and "Cooperation and promotion of competition with other I.O.D. fleets."

Since Western Long Island Sound was the original fleet, these standards and restrictions have served as guideposts for all the other fleets:

1. One builder – Aas – still builds all the boats, as identical as it is humanly possible to make them. The original group of 25 was measured and certified by Norwegian Veritas, Norway's equivalent of Lloyd's, which checked every aspect of the boats for uniformity, including the keel weights. They found less than 20 lb. difference in any keels. Today, each lead keel is poured from the same original iron mold. Though the Oregon pine used in 1937 for planking has been abandoned in favor of African mahogany (for its superior grain and finish), displacement has not been affected. In 1961, two of the original 1937 pine-planked boats were weighed side by side against two 1959 I.O.D.'s planked with African mahogany and tipped the scales virtually equally. So close were they, the total weight of the four boats averaged out at the official displacement figure for the class, 7120 lb.





2. One spar maker (Kretzer Boat Works, City Island) makes all spars. Before World War II, the wooden spars were all made in Europe. Later, to save delays in shipping, arrangements were made to carry three complete sets of spars in stock at all times over here. When a mast or boom is drawn from this stock, another is made at once to take its place.
3. One loft sews all of any one type of sail, and they are distributed by the Class Measurer, by lot. One new major sail is ordered each year – in 1963, it was a jib; this year it will be a mainsail; in 1965, a spinnaker. The class orders the new sails in batches of 35, bills the owners and lets them draw for the new sails. Each spring, when the new sails are delivered, and the old ones become illegal for racing; no build-up of inventory is permitted. Before the new sail is ordered, leading sailmakers are invited to submit a prototype. These are tested against each other in match racing, with skippers and crews swapping sails to find which prototype works best. The present Ratsey spinnaker, for example, was chosen over those submitted by six competitors. In 1954, the original Egyptian cotton specifications for all sails was changed to dacron for main and jib, and nylon for the spinnaker.
4. Major fittings are rigidly specified. The class has nailed down any piece of gear that affects the boat's speed and performance. Size, shape, minimum weight, and position are specified exactly for 19 principal fittings and sets, from masthead fitting (3lb. 10oz.) to rudder heel pintle and gudgeon (4lb. 8oz.). But 125 other fittings are optional. The number, size placement of winches is not regulated, for example, since these do not directly affect either speed or performance. To the informed, no area of racing can produce hotter disagreements than the subject of fittings. It is always one of the liveliest phases of the I.O.D. class business meetings, which are held behind closed doors twice a year to discuss and vote on new ideas. One year, for example, an I.O.D. owner who happened to be an electronic wizard asked permission to hook up an automatic pilot for his boat. After some discussion it was granted, largely because no one believed he could make one that would work without adding excessive weight. But he developed a small device linking his masthead fly to the tiller, so sensitive, especially in light airs, it steered to windward closer than the keenest helmsman. After he won 10 races in a row, and had demonstrated his point, he left his brainchild ashore when racing. The next year, however, as a result of lessons learned from watching his auto-pilot, he won the Class YRA championship!
5. Haul-outs are limited to three per season, with a 120-hour limit on any haul-out and at least four weeks in the water between hauls. No beaching is allowed.

This group of standards, you'll admit, besides having the virtue of promoting economy of operation by limiting an owner's expenditure on his boat, is pretty well calculated to assure a high degree of uniformity among the boats, old and new, of the International One-Design Class. Vigorous enforcement of the standards keeps them meaningful. Since better than three out of four members of the class attend each of the semi-annual business meetings, any violation of letter or spirit is quickly spotted. Also, a three-man Maintenance Committee runs a continuous check on the boats of the fleet.





As I.O.D. skipper Robert N. Bavier Jr. says so aptly, “It is the time, the effort, and the thoughtfulness which has kept this the finest one-design class in the world.” But one-design rules, even when strictly enforced, don’t of themselves make an active racing class. To publicize those rules and create a program that will attract the right kind of skippers to compete under them requires an organization. In the I.O.D.’s, it is the Class Committee. Since 1960, when Corny Shields stepped down as Chairman of this potent five-man group, the I.O.D. Long Island Sound Class Committee has been headed by William E. John Jr., a powerful ex-tackle from Yale with an enormous ability for organization and capacity for work.

Next to having Corny Shields as founder and first chairman, having Bill John as his successor is the luckiest break that could have happened for the I.O.D.’s. In Shield’s own words: “I’d been looking for a ‘Bill John’ for years – someone with the dedication, ability, and energy to take over the whole complex job of running the class. Bill has far exceeded my most enthusiastic specifications; he is terrific.”

When he joined the class 18 years ago, Bill John was attracted by the racing competition, but soon got caught up in I.O.D. committee work. Over the years, he began to relieve Shields of more and more of the responsibility, until finally, Shields persuaded him to take the chairmanship in 1961 and 1963 – his time on the water runs a poor second to the hours he spends promoting the I.O.D.’s.

“It’s like running a sales organization,” John says of his committee work, “We must not only keep our present skippers and crews interested, we have to stimulate, educate, and train new members of the class, and keep the process repeating from father to son. Then we have our international competitions to promote.” Heart of the local program is a race schedule that starts the first week of May and ends the last week of October – six solid months. With a grand total of more than 80 races. John and his class committee give I.O.D. skippers enough activity to satisfy the most competitive appetite. In both variety and number, the races are carefully planned to build interest and competition. There’s a Tune-Up Race, a Spring Series and Fall Series of five races each, a Friday night “family” series of ten races (without spinnaker), 25 races for the YRA championship, Larchmont and Manhasset Race Weeks, a Bermuda Cup series of six races, Single-Handed and Crew Races, a two-race Alumni Championship, and a Lay-Up Race.

In addition to these local races, this year a new Sound Challenge Cup is being put into competition among all the fleets in the United States – Western Long Island Sound; Northeast Harbor, Me; Marblehead, Mass.; and San Francisco, Calif.

Internationally, there’s usually a spring and fall regatta totaling 10 races against Bermuda for the Amorita Cup. Another team racing trophy is the Skoal Plate, established 13 years ago for competition between Norway and Western Long Island Sound.

Finally, on alternate years, a World Championship Series of seven races is scheduled. To this event, qualifiers may come from the fleets in Norway, England (Cowes), France (Marseilles), Bermuda, and the United States.





To qualify in any of the local series, a skipper must compete in at least 60% of the races. The Class Season Championship is based on 41 races: Spring and Fall Series (10), YRA (25) and Bermuda Cup Series (6). From the crucible of competition, for a man to emerge as champion once is a feat both skill and endurance. Deduce, then, the ability of these skippers, each of whom has won the I.O.D. Class Championship more than once over the past 26 years: William S. Cox (2) ; William E. John Jr. (2) ; Arthur Knapp Jr. (5) ; Emil Mosbacher Jr. (8) ; Cornelius Shields Jr. (2) ; and Cornelius Shields Sr. (3).

Prizes – visual evidence of achievement – are a great incentive to competition, and the I.O.D.'s award many. Besides place prizes for the single races and series, these are Perpetual Trophies, Semi-Perpetual Cups, and Special Awards. Prizes for a typical season may number nearly 100. And, with an eye always on the main purpose of the class, many are awarded to promote greater skill, as the New Skipper, Spinnaker Handling, and Improvement Awards, and the Crew Cup.

One of the most cherished prizes is not a racing trophy at all, but the I.O.D. Distinguished Service Award, presented in recent years to William E. John, Jr., Cornelius Shields Sr. and Emil Mosbacher Jr.

To promote and develop new crews, more than prizes are needed. An active program of recruitment and training is operated under the I.O.D.'s Crew Committee. Throughout the off-season, crew meetings and dinners are held at which tactical problems and sailing techniques are discussed. Bill John has arranged seminars in New York and Boston at which various top I.O.D. skippers, like Emil Mosbacher and George O'Day, are pitted against each other in solving tactical problems.

An unusual training program for the International One-Design was created several years ago by member Herman F. Whiton, who bought eight I.O.D.'s to launch a Sailboat Training Facility as a means of improving the quality of racing competition. With actual practice on the water supplemented by lectures given ashore by experts on various phases of racing, a pattern was established that might be widely applied. Closely allied to recruiting and training crews is the continuous personal search by the class for outstanding skippers to buy into the I.O.D.'s.

Before a potential member is approached, the committee considers carefully his racing record. He must have established either his ability as a helmsman, or the potential to develop into a good competitive skipper. And though he is not required to be a plaster saint, he must be personally acceptable.

This search, it should be noted, is not confined to men – girl and women sailors have become first-rate International One-Design skippers. Witness, for examples, Allegra Mertz, Jane Page, and Timothea Schneider.

Since the Committee's objective remains to select sailors who take receiving seriously, they expect a new skipper to maintain his boat in proper racing condition, and to race in at least 60% of the season's races. They also ask that he work actively for the class, and for all yacht





racing. Finally, he must agree in advance that if he should ever want to leave the I.O.D.'s, he will sell his boat to the Class Committee.

These requirements, coupled with the cost of owning and campaigning an International One-Design, have kept pressure from developing to increase the Long Island Sound fleet beyond the present limit of 33 boats. For the 1930's, costs are hard to pinpoint, but these rough estimates are from an informed source, at 1964 prices: New hull, from Aas, \$5000 plus; spars (bare), \$800; rigging and fittings, \$2800; sails (main, jib, spinnaker), \$750. With cradle, insurance, and shipping, the investment in a new I.O.D. would probably total close to \$10,000. Used boats. Of course, are much cheaper, and have sold in recent years for \$3500 to \$5500, depending on condition.

If this summary gives the impression that I.O.D. racing is only for the man of means, it is misleading, for many of these keen skippers and sailors mow their own lawns and help their wives shop. To them, owning or sailing one of these beautiful craft is not a luxury, but a way of life. They have found, in this world of turmoil, a bit of perfection that nourishes and enriches the spirit. And they will go through considerable discomfort to indulge it.

As an instance, in the I.O.D. World Championship at Larchmont Yacht Club last fall, Larry Grinnell came all the way from California on crutches, with a broken leg bone, to compete. Each day he hobbled down to the float, leg in cast, and boarded his boat. When the series of races was concluded, he had tied for fifth place among the 11 competing skippers from Norway, Bermuda, and the United States. Why had he done it? "Because they're the most beautiful boats in the world," he said, "I wouldn't have missed it."

It was a convincing demonstration of the kind of spirit that pervades the International One-Designs. And it helps explain why this class continues to maintain its attraction for the world's top racing skippers.

