

PRESS RELEASE: THE GREY LADY LURES WORLD-CLASS SAILORS TO HER WINDSWEPT WATERS DURING NANTUCKET RACE WEEK 2014-AUGUST 9-17
TOP SAILORS KICK UP THE COMPETITION AT THE IOD CELEBRITY INVITATIONAL REGATTA

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It's the quintessential New England summer scene: a fleet of classic yachts parade past a picturesque lighthouse en route to the race course, their American ensigns streaming in the stiff breeze.

On August 14th and 15th, a handsome pack of International One Design sloops will slice through the waters of Nantucket Sound, in the capable hands of accomplished skippers and crew, each under the sage direction of a world-famous tactician.

This is the 10th installment of the [IOD Celebrity Invitational](#), a unique regatta that pairs 14 visiting and local teams with 14 of America's top sailing talent as tacticians. The two-day event is a signature feature of [Nantucket Race Week](#), a weeklong celebration of sailing for all ages that benefits Nantucket Community Sailing (NCS), the non-profit that promotes the island's maritime tradition by making sailing accessible and affordable to all.

The Nantucket International One Design Fleet Association provides its fleet of 15 identically matched fiberglass sloops, and many local sailors to stage the racing. One boat is reserved as a spare.

"The IOD's are not a new design, but perfect for Nantucket conditions. They are all very even in speed and provide a wonderful test of sailing ability," says Tom Whidden, a veteran and longstanding supporter of the Celebrity Invitational. In the past he has brought his vast experience -- including multiple America's Cup campaigns -- to Nantucket as a celebrity tactician. This year he serves as the IOD Celebrity Invitational's Honorary Chair. "This will continue to be one of my favorite regattas."

The roster of tacticians reads like a Who's Who of sailing, representing America's Cup Hall of Famers, World Champions in multiple classes, medaled Olympians, collegiate All-Americans, and more than a few sail makers. The accomplishments of these legends would fill pages, but to introduce them briefly, there's Josh Adams (three time collegiate All-American), Jim Allsopp (Star World Champion), Peter

Bromby (four Olympic Star campaigns), Robbie Doyle (twice Sears Cup winner), Dave Franzel (Sonar World Champion), Phil Garland (twice winning navigator in Fastnet Races), John MacCausland (Star World Champion), Mark Reynolds (four Olympics, three medals), Dawn Riley (four America's Cup campaigns, 1992 win), Jud Smith (Rolex Yachtsman of the Year), Mika Toppa (six America's Cup campaigns, two wins), Dave Ullman (470 and Melges World Champion), Will Welles (J24 National Champion), and Jon Wright (five America's Cup campaigns, three wins).

“What's really impressive to me is the commitment of the celebrities to come and, for many, to return multiple times for the honor of helping out NCS in its primary mission of teaching people to sail,” says event co-organizer Bill Druckemiller. “The number of America's Cup, World Championships, Olympic medals is really astounding, and they give their time cheerfully.”

The philanthropic sentiment doesn't seem to deter the competitive spirit. “The racing is close and there is a lot of it. Believe me, it isn't easy. I have never won the regatta because the competition is really tough,” says Whidden.

An impressive line-up of skippers further validates the event's “Celebrity” title. Entrants include Gary Jobson (America's Cup-winning tactician), who will also serve as Honorary Chair of Nantucket Race Week 2014, Heather Gregg-Earl (J70 North American Champion in 2013), and Jeff Ecklund, avid Melges racer with Tom Lihan aboard as crew.

As for the importance of local knowledge at the regatta, Nantucketer David Poor weighs in. “As one of the local skippers, one might hope that we have some kind of ‘home field advantage’. But that's not at all the case! The quality of the sailors, the fairness of the fleet of IOD's, and the close racing make this such a unique event and great fun for all.”



Photo by Karen Ryan