Promotion of the J/24 is Everyone's Responsibility

by Glenn D. Gustafson

At last fall's World Council meeting, we devoted time to discussion about the future of the J/24 Class. Several issues surfaced that I would like to share with you.

We focused on why members are attracted to our Class now and where we expect growth in the future. We also discussed how to more effectively promote the Class as we see potential competition from new designs like the J/80 and the Melges 24.

Over the last several years, a transition has taken place in the Class, with most of our new members coming into the Class by buying a used boat, as opposed to making a new boat purchase. This transition has taken place as there is an established fleet of good quality used boats which are reasonably priced. It has also happened as a result of the rigid one-design standards we continue to adhere to, which not only assures a person that he/she can easily purchase a competitive boat, but also that he will have a boat which has a ready market should he choose to move up to a new boat. In fact, the price of "entry" into the J/24 Class is less today than it was when the Class was first getting established, taking inflation into consideration.

This "value" advantage is one we must promote over the higher-priced new designs. Combined with the established fleet network of quality racing, it will be our most effective marketing tool.

To help promote the boat to potential members, the Class office has started a database of used boats for sale. This listing is available now, by mail or fax, to anyone interested in buying a used boat.

The Class is fortunate to have an active and supportive copyright holder, J/Boats, which provides the marketing muscle to help the boat get established in new areas with fleet purchase programs. They also provide major regatta support when new boats are required to be available for use by competitors. The Class is the benefactor, as these boats are usually made available at reduced prices to new owners, as is the case with the Voiles '94 in France. We also are fortunate to have active builders in the United States, Italy, Australia, Japan and Argentina.

Members are attracted to the J/24 most importantly due to the high quality racing available to sailors in our Class. The J/24 has some of the best competition available around the world, and sailors know that since the boat is a consistent performer in all conditions, the more they sail the boat the better chance they have of moving up in the standings.

The key ingredient to our continued success will clearly require that we take a more aggressive role in promoting ourselves and the J/24. Unfortunately, we do not have the financial resources to engage in a flashy advertising campaign to mass-market the Class. Nor do we believe this to be our primary job. This responsibility is best handled by the copyright holder and dealer network who stand to gain the profit from new boat sales. Our job is to continue to support the highest quality level of racing to all our members and to promote the boat at the grass-roots level, encouraging sailors to get in the boat and go sailing. Whether it be local fleet participation at local one-design boat shows, or just inviting interested sailors out for a race or two, getting idle boats into the hands of active racing sailors is everyones' responsibility, not just that of the fleet captains, district governors or NJCAs.

We welcome your input and suggestions on how we can more effectively promote the boat and the Class.

Fair Sailing,



IJCA Chairman Glenn Gustafson and former Irish JCA President Michael Clarke share some thoughts at the '92 IJCA Meeting in Annapolis.