

# Riding the Wind

For decades, 12-metre yacht racing has drawn together a wide variety of participants, aficionados, and fans. Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay and offshore waters have been the home and venue for many of the yachts and competitions. "Riding the Wind" captures some of the spirit, action, and intensity of the current competitions as well as the design beauty of the yachts and performance precision of the crews.

## What are 12-Metre yachts?

A 12-Metre class yacht is a racing sailboat that is designed to conform to the International Rule for measuring and rating yachts that allows yachts to be designed differently and yet race together in fair competition. Stated as a formula, the rule does not refer to any single measurement on the boat but rather a set of specific boat and sail measurements. In this exhibit, the racing yachts comply with the Third International rule for 12-metre yachts which has been used since 1933. Within the 12-Metre class, the boats are further assigned to one of three divisions based on their keel or rudder design.

## What is their history?

Often referred to as "Twelves" or "12s", the 12-Metre yachts were first built in 1907. These boats participated in the 1908, 1912 and 1920 Olympic Games. From 1958 to 1987, the America's Cup competitions adopted the 12-Metre design class as its standard creating worldwide interest and investment in the boats, their crews, and their designs. When the America's Cup competition changed their standard to more radical designs, the economics of 12-Metre racing changed. However, many America's Cup era veterans and fans sustained the 12-Metre community saving and refurbishing several boats for racing, training, sailing experiences and charters. Today, many international and regional competitions occur in North America, South America, and Europe.

## Tell me more...

Typically, a 12-Metre yacht is about 20 to 23 meters long, weighs about 35 tons, and its mast is about 26 metres high. When racing, the crew is made up of about 11 to 14 on the racing boat. Another one or two are on a smaller powered boat called a tender that may tow the racing boat, hold extra sails, food and water, and follow their racing boat at some distance during the races.

## What makes the winning difference?

Since all 12-Metre class yachts must comply with the same rule, the design decisions are important, limited, and complex. Even after a yacht is built, almost every racing season involves making some changes to the boat, its equipment, its sails and even how the hull is polished. Since the speed of the boats is often similar, the difference between who wins is heavily impacted by good preparation, tactical decisions based on competitors, crew performance, managing the wind and sails, and quick reactions to unforeseen situations.