

One for the record

Olympic report

The 1984 Olympic event at Long Beach was a record-breaker in more ways than one, not least in that every American boat won a medal, while Britain came home with a Bronze. Adrian Morgan reports

Historians looking for a precedent to the American yachting team's remarkable achievement at this year's Olympics — three Golds and four Silvers — would need to go back to the early years of this century.

France won three Golds, four Silvers and six Bronzes in 1900 and, eight years later, Britain won four Golds, a Silver and a Bronze. The best Olympic performance of all time was the six Golds and three Silvers brought home by the victorious Norwegian team at the 1920 event at Ostend. But one US record is unlikely ever to be repeated. Every member of the American team at Long Beach won a medal.

Sixty two countries — 399 competitors in 188 boats (another record) — took part in the 1984 yachting events of the XXIIIrd Olympiad. Security was strict as only the Americans could make it. The Long Beach venue was turned into an armed camp for three weeks prior to the races. No-one without a pass was allowed in and anyone unfortunate enough to trespass on the four Olympic courses in

San Pedro Bay risked being buzzed by helicopters or chased away by a fleet of more than 100 Coastguard vessels.

The cost of staging the yachting events was high, possibly higher than any other event — and yet no-one, other than a handful of accredited journalists, photographers and a bunch of fortunate wives, girlfriends, team supporters and coaches, was allowed to watch the racing. No other sport could have been organised so exclusively for the sole benefit of so few.

The organisation was magnificent, however. Officials far outnumbered competitors. Every course had its own little fleet of officiating craft — mark boats, jury boats, committee boats, measuring boats, photo boats, boats to make sure the photo boats didn't stray within the magic 50m limit, press boats, spectator boats and the ubiquitous Coastguard vessels.

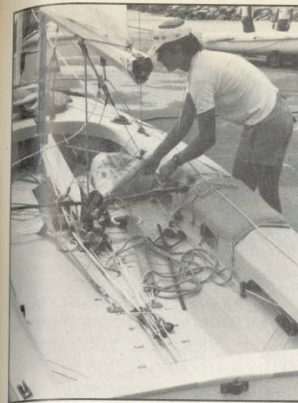
There was also an ABC Network boat filming at every mark and more than one competitor was shocked to see a frogman with underwater camera pop up to grab some footage as he struggled to gybe a wayward spinnaker.



Britain's Bronze medalists, Jo Richards and Peter Allam, didn't have the boat speed to shake the Americans from Gold Medal position

The racing

There was a healthy turn out in most classes despite the Eastern Bloc boycott — 32 Finns, 20 Flying Dutchmen, 41 470s, 21 Stars, 23 Solings, 21 Tornados and 40 Windgliders. The Finns came close to equalling the record for the greatest number of boats in one class — there were 36 in Acapulco, 1968. Flying Dutchman numbers were down a reflection on a class that has come



Left, A packed bunch of mid-fleet 470s battle it out at the gybe mark. Above, US winner of the Flying Dutchman class Jonathan McKee makes some last minute adjustments

close to pricing itself out of the Olympics altogether. The Tornados, once in danger of being axed by the International Olympic Committee are now recognised as one of the classes that still represent the ideals of Olympic sailing — virtually one design, relatively price stable, simple (despite recent rig developments) and not particularly critical in terms of crew weight.

All classes will be retained for the 1988 Olympics in Korea and there is to be a women's 470 event, making eight in all as if to confirm, against much criticism in recent years, that Olympic yachting is alive and well and safe for a number of years to come.

Finn

The battle for the Finn Gold developed early on. John Bertrand, confirmed over trial winner Russ Silvestri only days before the event following a series of protests and counter protests that at one time seemed destined to go to the Supreme Court, took the first race to the 22-year-old engineering student Russell Coutts from New Zealand and Terry Neilson from Canada only to be disqualified in a port and starboard incident. If he had won the race a Gold would have been assured, but this early setback kept the 28-year-old Californian under pressure throughout the series. The battle was between these three on the last day with only a three point spread — US 23pts, NZ 24-7pts, Canada 26pts. Bertrand came in two places behind Neilson (8th and 6th) handing the Gold to Coutts (5th) and narrowly saving a Silver.

The early races were plagued with light winds and big shifts. Britain's Mike McIntyre started badly, capsizing in Race 1 and coming 15th in Race 2, and was effectively out of it despite some better results as the wind filled in for the later races.

The toughest moment of all for the Gold medal winner came as he stepped ashore after Race 7. It took three

separate weighings before his clothes passed the under 20kg test, by which time the New Zealander was in a state of advanced apoplexy.

Flying Dutchman

Light winds at the start of the series served the American Gold medallists Jonathan McKee and Carl Buchan well, as they did when the pair took the 1983 World Championship, but they were pushed all the way by Canadian 12-metre skipper Terry McLaughlin and crew Evert Bastet.

The seventh race showdown was spoiled by the Canadian's premature start. It was in this race that Jo Richards and Peter Allam clinched Britain's only medal, a Bronze, from the Danish Bojsen Moeller brothers, winners of Race 1, by finishing 2nd — their best result of the series.

With so many last minute developments in the FD fleet no-one was sure what to expect. Some boats were sailing with super raked masts, others with no rake at all. Richards was sure of only one thing — he didn't have the boat speed edge that made him so dangerous at the 1983 Long Beach pre-Olympics.

Rodney Pattison was Richards's tuning partner prior to the series. He suspects that the speed problem stemmed from a reliance on a too flexible upper mast section — fine for depowering in the heavy, but without the necessary drive in the light. Once again the danger of tuning for one set of conditions was brought home to a British crew. But as Pattison commented: "You never get what you expect in the Olympics — it was the same in Acapulco, Kiel and Kingston."

470

Luis Doreste and Roberto Molina gave Spain her second Gold in Olympic competition. Rank outsiders in a notoriously tough class, they sailed consistently — their worst result was 9th — to beat Americans Steve Benjamin and Chris Steinfeldt by 9-3pts.

Confident starting and good first

windward legs were the secret in the 470 fleet. The Americans forfeited their Gold medal chances effectively in Race 5 when they tried to take out a batch of close rivals at the start and gave themselves too little room to return.

The French Bronze medal crew, Thierry Peponnet and Luc Pillot, faded in the middle races after a good first race (2nd), but they regained form when the wind started to conform to statistics with a 3rd, 1st and 6th in the last races. The New Zealanders, Peter Evans and Sean Reeves, would have echoed the Frenchman's comment: "We are not so fast in the small wind." With a fourth race DSQ (disqualified) and a PMS (premature start) in the same race that scuppered Benjamin, they finished at 14th overall, another victim of Long Beach's irritating failure to deliver the winds that the top crews considered their right.

Britain's Cathy Foster and Peter Newlands saved the team from ignominy by winning their last race, the only win in 49 races. Dreams of a victory for women's lib — a phrase Miss Foster hates — remained as such and, with the coming of a separate woman's class, it is highly unlikely that anyone will emulate Foster's achievement.

Soling

Behind the stark fact of World Champion Robbie Haines's Soling victory lies a somewhat less simple tale — of a Silver medal stripped away on a last race protest and of a duel between giants that left the favourite with no competition on the last day.

The American crew won with a day to spare, but it could have been otherwise. The series started with a win by Haines and his talented crew, Rod Davis and Ed Trevelyan, from Britain's Chris Law, Jerry Richards and Ed Leask with whom they had trained. If the odds had favoured the 13-year-old American partnership, the

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The competitors' enclosure at Long Beach turned into a security camp for the Games



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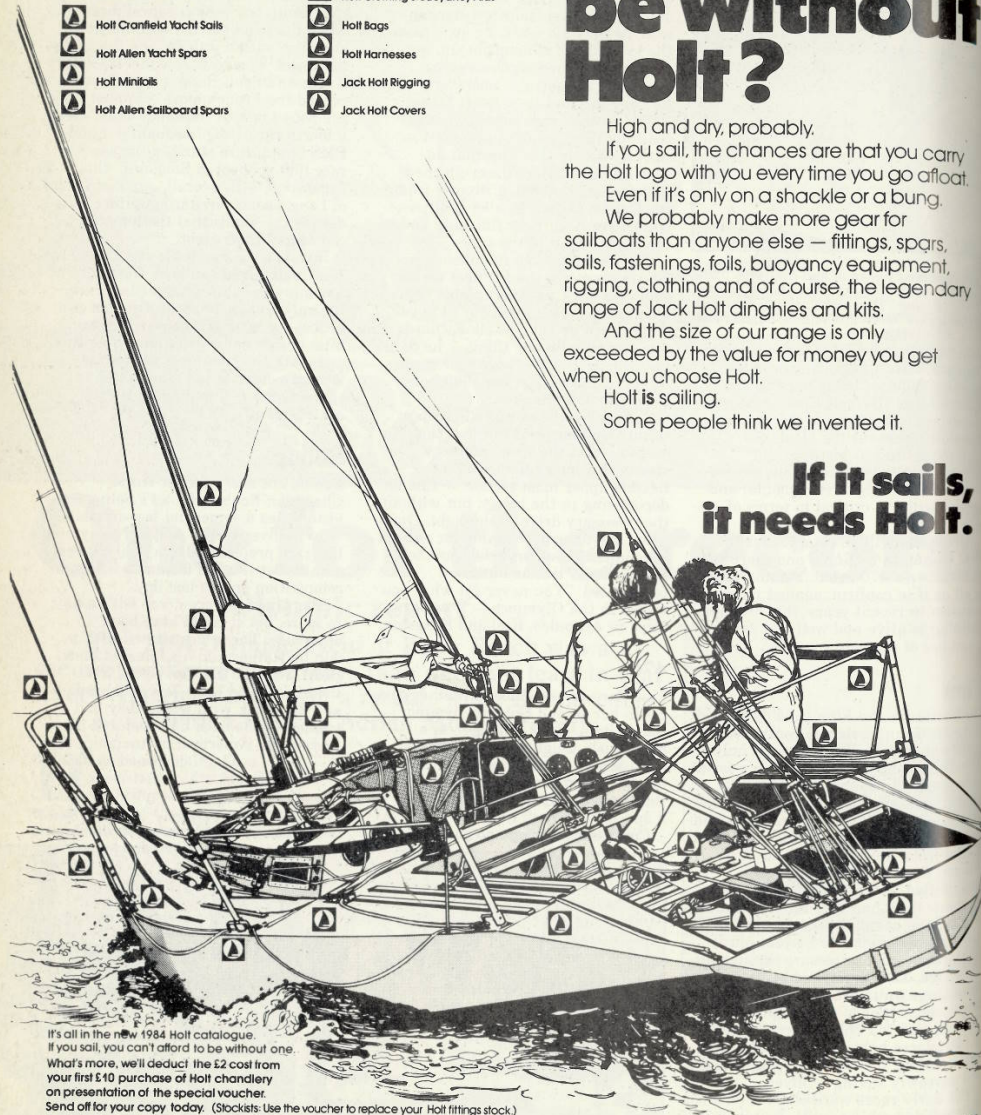
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Law factor seemed guaranteed to make it an exciting battle. Race 2 saw Law and Haines sparring like old adversaries. Law came out on top, just, while the Italians took an early overall lead. Race 3 saw the British slump to 13th — an early, but not disastrous, discard — and recover with a brilliant 2nd place in Race 4, where Haines was 5th. The stage was set for a grand finale as racing resumed after two lay days. But Law started early — he was to dispute this — returned to the starting line and was kept hanging around the committee boat for a minute before the officials cleared him to go. All the while 22 Solings were making their way steadily up the first beat. Law protested and was awarded 30 seconds for the delay. This translated into two

places. Law continued to argue for a more generous award for being materially prejudiced. In the meantime he fumed, but saved his aggression for racing. A 3rd place in Race 6 and a better jury award would have put him in touch with the leaders. But it was not to be. Race 7 was for the Silver between Brazil, Canada and Norway and, although the ill-fated Scandinavian team of Dag Usterud, Borre Skui and Stein Halvorsen were stripped of the Silver after a pumping incident, Law's 7th to the Brazilian Torben Grael's 3rd and Hans Fogh's 5th left him 6pts adrift of a Bronze.

Star

Bill Buchan, the 49-year-old Star World Champion in 1961 and 1970 added a Gold medal to his list of achievements in the Star class.

The early races saw a match race between Buchan and current World Champions Giorgio Gorla and Alfio Peraboni, but they became separated and the battle was between the American and the Greek, Ilias Hatzipaulis, Finn Silver medallist in 1972. Hatzipaulis and his crew Leonidas Pelekanakis lost their first race lead, but made no mistakes in Race 2, winning from Sweden's Kent Carlsson after a dashing port tack start. Thereafter they faded. Buchan recovered from a disaster in Race 3, when he broke a shroud, but saved the mast, and was threatened only by the Italians and Germans, Joachim Griese and Michael Marcour.

Carlsson's consistent 4th, 2nd, 2nd, 4th and no obvious discard put him within reach of a Silver at least. But he too faded and Buchan's task on the last day was to finish ahead of Italy, Germany and Sweden to take the Gold. "Halfway up the first weather leg," said Buchan after the race, "we were starting to think about how we could protect a Bronze medal. We could have been last if the wind hadn't finally moved to the right." They recovered, picked off the Italians, who brushed the leeward mark, and took early leaders

Iain Woolward and John Maddocks and Hubert Raudaschl for the winner's gun and the Gold medal.

The British pair were 9th overall with a 5th, 12th, 8th, 17th, 12th, 5th, 4th score sheet.

Tornado

New Zealanders Rex Sellers and Chris Timms upset all predictions by beating two World Champions with a day to spare, despite having sailed together only once before the series started. If heavy weather specialists Chris Cairns and Scott Anderson (Australia) put it down to the lack of wind in the early races, they were having to revise that opinion as the Kiwis, with a four-year-old mainsail, continued to dominate in the heavier weather.

Sellers, who spends half the year fishing — he runs a crayfish and lobster boat — broke with his trial winning crew to team up with Timms at the last moment. The combination gave them a brilliant 3rd, 2nd, 1st, 2nd, 1st, 2nd, DNS to record the lowest final score of all the seven classes.

Smyth (USA) and Cairns saw the New Zealanders stretching their advantage to the point of being out of reach. Although the Americans won Races 1, 4 and 6, they failed to finish Race 2, and Race 7 was a formality to ensure the Silver, while Cairns scraped to the medals ahead of Paul Elvstrom and his daughter Trine by 0-7pts, with a final day's win.

Rob White and David Campbell-James slipped further and further from a Silver medal, despite some early race results — 2nd, 5th, 2nd. More wind seemed to make no difference — if anything they went slower (8th, 6th, 7th, 7th). Elvstrom and the Bermudian crew of Alan Burland and Chris Nash squeezed them into 6th place overall. At one time they seemed reasonably certain of a Bronze, separated from the Danes by 1-4pts at the start of the last race.

Robbie Haines (US) and his crew, Rod Davis and Ed Trevelyan, took the Soling Gold

Olympics Results

			Net points
Finn Gold	Russell Coutts	NZL	34.7
Silver	John Bertrand	USA	37.0
Bronze	Terry Neilson	CAN	37.7
(Britain's points)	Michael McIntyre	7th,	70.7

Flying Dutchman

Gold	Jonathan McKee	USA	19.7
Silver	Carl Buchan	USA	22.7
Bronze	Terry McLaughlin	CAN	22.7
	Evert Bastet		
	Jo Richards	GBR	48.7
	Peter Allam		

470

Gold	Luis Doreste	ESP	33.7
Silver	Roberto Molina	USA	43.0
Bronze	Steve Benjamin		
	Chris Steinfeld		
	Thierry Peponnet	FRA	49.9
	Luc Pilot		
(Britain's points)	Cathy Foster and Peter Newlands	7th,	70.0

Soling

Gold	Robbie Haines	USA	33.7
	Ed Trevelyan		
	Rod Davis		
Silver	Torben Grael	BRA	43.4
	Daniel Adler		
	Ronaldo Senfft		
Bronze	Hans Fogh	CAN	49.7
	John Kerr		
	Steve Calder		
(Britain's points)	Chris Law, Ed Leask and Jerry Richards	4th,	54.7

Star

Gold	Bill Buchan	USA	29.7
Silver	Steve Erickson		
	Joachim Griese	FRG	41.4
Bronze	Michael Marcour		
	Giorgio Gorla	ITA	43.5
	Alfio Peraboni		
(Britain's points)	Iain Woolward and John Maddocks	9th,	78.0

Tornado

Gold	Rex Sellers	NZL	14.7
Silver	Chris Timms		
	Randy Smyth	USA	37.0
Bronze	Jay Glaser		
	Chris Cairns	AUS	50.4
(Britain's points)	Scott Anderson		
	Rob White and David Campbell-James	6th,	53.7

Windglider

Gold	Stephan van den Berg	HOL	27.7
Silver	Scott Steele	USA	46.0
Bronze	Bruce Kendall	NZL	46.4
(Britain's points)	David Hackford	21st,	145.0

