

# THE "SIXES" SAIL AGAIN

A Look Back Over Twenty-six Years of International Racing

By WILLIAM H. TAYLOR



**S**TARTING with a series of trial races at Oyster Bay this month, American Six-Metre sloops will be back in international competition abroad and at home this season, renewing rivalries that have been outstanding features of the past quarter-century of American yachting. Whether the races for the Scandinavian Gold Cup and Seawanhaka Cup this year turn out to be the swan song of the class in this country or a real revival of its activity remains to be seen.

Long established in European waters, the Sixes made their American debut in 1921 as a result of a conference among representatives of the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club of Oyster Bay, Long Island, and four British clubs, the Royal Yacht Squadron, Royal Thames, Royal London and Royal Victoria. Its purpose was to institute a new series of international races, and the original agreement was that team races would be sailed alternately in British and American waters, using International Rule boats abroad and Universal Rule boats here. The latter proviso was never carried out, as the Sixes were adopted here, partly as the result of a feeling that Universal Rule boats, specifically the R Class, were becoming too big, elaborate and expensive for their rating — a criticism that some years later was levelled at the Sixes as well.

The conference set up the British-American Cup, jointly financed, of which the first country to win two successive team races was to have permanent possession. W. A. W. Stewart, Percy Chubb and Paul Hammond were the Seawanhaka representatives at the conference.

To start the ball rolling, four boats were built here in 1921, two designed by William Gardner and two by W. Starling Burgess. The Gardner boats were *Montauk*, owned by Mr. Stewart and Winthrop W. Aldrich, and *Grebe*, owned by J. L. Saltonstall, E. T. Irvin and Richard DeB. Boardman and sailed by the latter. The Burgess boats were *Genie*, owned by Mr. Burgess and Frank C. Paine and *Sheila*, sailed by C. Sherman Hoyt and owned by him, Paul Hammond and others. The 1921 boats showed a marked difference of opinion as to what a successful International Rule boat should be, the two Gardner sloops being quite similar to existing "R" boats of the day while the Burgess boats were short-ended (only 27 feet long over all) with low free-board. One of them, *Sheila*, had a 23' 6" water line, as long as that of the most modern Sixes, while the Gardner boats were both under 22 feet, though 30' 10" and 33' 10" over all respectively. All four were rigged with jib-headed mainsails — just then being recognized as more efficient than the gaff rig — on curved masts and with big mainsails and small jibs compared to modern racing sloops.

All four boats were frankly experimental and, as was to be expected in competition with the British who had had years of experience with the rule and who built more than a dozen Sixes that year, the American team came off second best on the Solent by a score of 117 points to 88. Sir William Burton, famous as skipper of some of Sir Thomas Lipton's *Shamrocks*, was one of the British skippers.

*Grebe* was the outstanding boat of the American

quartet, and was still good enough to make the team the following year in spite of the fact that 14 new Sixes were built in this country after the decision to hold the second race in the same class instead of in "R" boats as originally planned. Eight designers tried their hands at the rule this time, Burgess, Charles D. Mower, Fred Hoyt, Addison Hanan, Clinton H. Crane, Henry J. Gielow (with whom Sherman Hoyt was then associated) Sidney Herreshoff and John G. Alden. Among the owners were Clinton H. Crane, Addison Hanan, Johnston deForest, Henry B. Plant, Paul Hammond, W. H. Childs, Adrian Iselin, J. F. Bermingham, W. J. Wayte, and a Larchmont Y.C. syndicate, while Boston was represented by Frank Paine, C. H. W. Foster, and Charles A. Welch. In addition to *Grebe*, again sailed by Dick Boardman, the team selected was J. F. Bermingham's *Lea*, sailed by Sherman Hoyt; W. H. Childs' *L'Esprit*, sailed by Butler Whiting, and Henry Plant's *Clytie*. In familiar waters off Oyster Bay, and with a year's Six-Metre experience to "improve the breed," they pulled off a hard-won 111-104 victory over the visiting Britishers, whose skippers were "Wee John" Stephen, Norman Clark Neill, W. F. Robinson and Sir Ralph Gore.

The year 1922 also saw the first match in Sixes for the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club International Challenge Cup which, first put up in 1895, had been on the shelf of the Manchester (Mass.) Yacht Club since 1910. Since the Sixes, at least on the East Coast, have always been primarily an international class, a review of the races for their various major trophies may be the best way to review the class's history.

A team consisting of W. A. W. Stewart's *Hawk*, Henry Plant's *Ingomar*, Clifford D. Mallory's *Clytie*, and *Lea*, with Sherman Hoyt again at her helm, went to the Solent in 1923 and came back defeated and convinced that the British still had an edge over us in designing to the International Rule. This conclusion they had no reason to revise a year later, when the British

H. Robins Hollyday



"Indian Scout," an international winner of the 1936-8 era, subsequently went to the Chesapeake, where this picture was taken



came back to Oyster Bay and took permanent possession of the British-American Trophy by defeating a team consisting of the new *Paumonok*, sailed by Sherman Hoyt; *Dauphin*, Corny Shields; *Heron*, C. F. Havemeyer, Jr., and *Lea*, Henry L. Maxwell.

An editorial on the Six-Metre Class at that time commented somewhat plaintively that some \$300,000 had been spent on building 28 boats to this "foreign measurement rule" in four years, and asked if it wasn't about time we gave up the Sixes and started building to our own Universal Rule again.

Apparently it wasn't, because a new British-American Trophy was put up in 1927, with two Scottish clubs, the Royal Northern and Royal Clyde, participating with the four original British sponsors. The first attempt to lift it, by an American team of *Heron*, sailed by Bill Swan; *Akaba*, Clinton H. Crane (who, incidentally, designed all four boats); *Lanai* and *Red Head*, in 1928 on the Clyde, failed, but the American designers must have caught on, because from then on the American teams won every match. These winning teams included; 1930 — *Lucie*, Briggs Cunningham; *Mars*, Van S. Merle-Smith; *Cherokee*, Herman F. Whiton; and *Aphrodite*, J. S. Johnson; 1932 — *Lucie II*, B. S. Cunningham; *Bob Kat II*, Robert B. Meyer; *Jill*, Philip J. Roosevelt; and *Nancy*, Seawanhaka syndicate; 1934 — *Challenge*, Paul Shields; *Bob Kat II*; *Lucie II*, and *Anis*, C. L. Smith; 1936 — *Indian Scout*, H. F. Whiton; *Lucie II*; *Jill*, and *Mood*, J. S. Johnson; 1938 — *Goose*, George Nichols; *Djinn*, H. S. Morgan; *Rebel*, Paul Shields, and *Fun*, B. S. Cunningham. The races alternated between Oyster Bay and British waters, some of the latter being held on the Clyde and some on the Solent.

As mentioned above, the Seawanhaka Cup came into the Six-Metre picture in 1922 when F. J. Stephen, of the Royal Clyde Y.C., challenged Manchester for the trophy with *Coila III*, a boat which he had designed himself and which had a long, successful career. Frank Paine's *Sakie* was named defender, but was no match for *Coila III* and the cup went to Scotland. The following year Sherman Hoyt tried to bring it back when he took *Lea* to England for the team races, but again *Coila III* won, as she did yet again in 1924 in a match for the same cup against a Norwegian challenger.

In 1925 *Lanai*, a new boat then owned by a Seawanhaka syndicate and sailed by Sherman Hoyt, finally turned the trick and the cup came home to the clubhouse at Oyster Bay for the first time in 30 years. *Lanai* was the first American boat to prove herself faster than the redoubtable *Coila III*. Indeed, *Lanai*, designed by Clinton H. Crane, may fairly be said to have inaugurated a new era in Six-Metre design in this country. She had a long winning career in international competition, and is still going strong on the West Coast, where she won a class championship only last year.

Boats designed by Mr. Crane practically dominated the class in this country for some years. Designing competition appeared, however, when two young naval architects designed their first Sixes, both notably successful. They were Olin J. Stephens, with *Thalia* in 1929, and A. E. Luders, Jr., with *Toten* in 1930. Both these designers followed up with increasingly fast boats during the next eight years, among them the Luders Construction Co's *Challenge* and *Rebel* and Sparkman and Stephen's *Jill*, *Fun*, *Djinn* and *Goose*, the

Rosenfeld



Levick, from Lewis

One of the British-American Trophy team races of 1922. Compare these big mainsails and small fore triangles with modern rigs. "Lea" is in the foreground



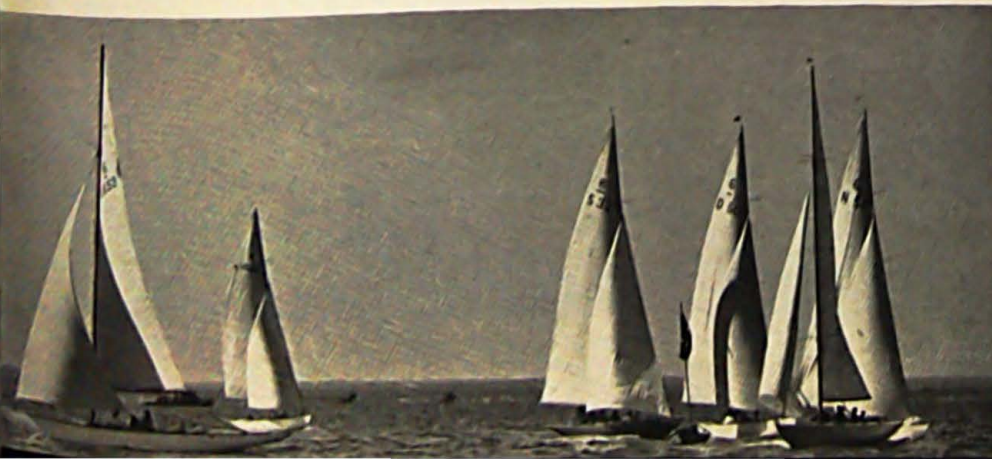
Levick, from Lewis

Prince Olaf's "Oslo" leads "Lea" in a Scandinavian vs American team race off Oyster Bay in 1925. The Americans won, 4 races to 2



"Jill," Prince of Wales Trophy winner, leads "Viking" at Bermuda in 1933. Seward Johnson was "Jill's" skipper that year, Eldon and Kenneth Trimmingham sailed "Viking"

Herman Whiton's "Cherokee" leads in the Scandinavian vs American team race (left) that followed the 1935 Seawanhaka Cup match off Seawanhaka. The visiting team won a close series





## YACHTING



W. C. Sawyer

The old "Lanai" leading in the 1941 Southern California Y.R.A. championship regatta off Santa Barbara, which she won

latter the latest and apparently the fastest Six ever built in this country. But to return to the Seawanhaka Cup.

It was offered for a race in the R Class the following year but there were no takers and, in 1927, Magnus Konow, sailing *Noreg*, owned by Crown Prince Olaf of Norway, challenged and won the cup in a match with *Clytie*, sailed by Sherman Hoyt. This time, however, the cup wasn't gone long. Clinton Crane retrieved it the very next year, sailing *Akaba*, another new boat of his design. In 1929, the cup was raced for in Eight-Metre sloops and won by the Royal Northern Y.C., which fought off a challenge for it by Johnston deForest's Eight-Metre *Priscilla III* in 1931, but lost it in 1932 when Seward Johnson took *Jill* over to Scotland.

The trophy was defended against a Scottish challenge by Bob Meyer's *Bob Kat II* at Oyster Bay in 1934; and again by Paul Shields' *Challenge*, sailed by Corny Shields, in 1935, against Magnus Konow with another of Prince Olaf's Sixes. Two years later, the Shields brothers saved the day again, this time in *Rebel*, a successor to *Challenge*. The last match for the Seawanhaka Cup was sailed in 1938 when J. H. Thom, in *Circe*, of the Royal Northern Yacht Club, defeated *Goose* and took the cup back to Scotland, where it will be raced for this summer.

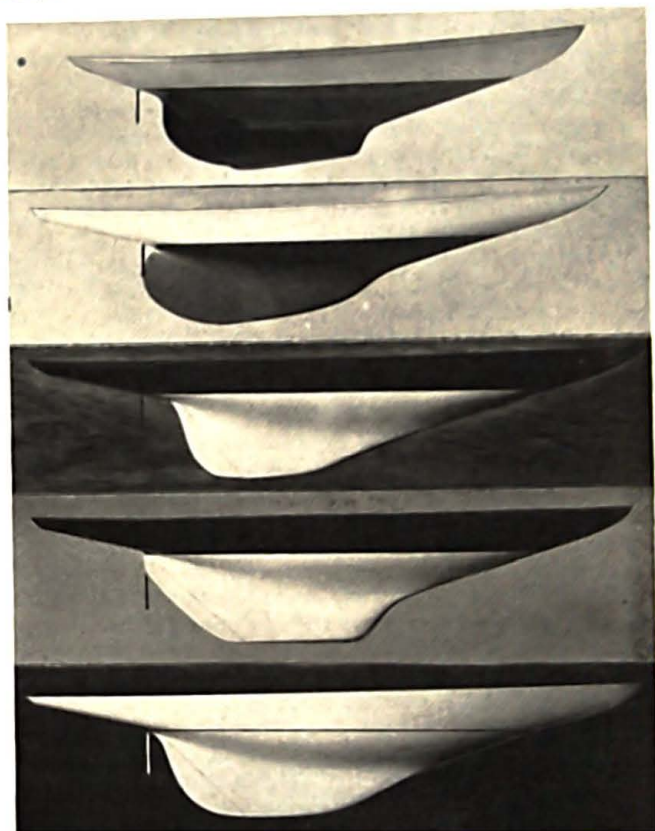
Another trophy famous in the Six-Metre Class is the Scandinavian Gold Cup, which came here for the first time when Herman Whiton took *Lanai* to the Baltic in 1926 and won it. This led to some of the best racing the class has ever seen in our waters. In 1927 the Swedes, British, Norwegians, Danes, Dutch, Finns and Italians all came to Oyster Bay seeking the Gold Cup.



Rosenfeld

"Goose," newest and fastest of the American Sixes, will contend for international honors again this month

*Representative American Six-Metres (below), designer and year built. Top to bottom: (1) "Lea," H. J. Gielow, Inc. (C. S. Hoyt), 1922, 31' 0" X 22' 9" X 6' 8" X 5' 3", s.a., 518 sq. ft. (2) "Lanai," C. H. Crane, 1925, 34' 6" X 21' 9" X 7' 1" X 5' 1", s.a., 475 sq. ft. (3) "Totem," A. E. Luders, Jr., 1930, 37' 0" X 23' 0" X 6' 0" X 5' 0", s.a., 450 sq. ft. (4) "Indian Scout," H. F. Whiton, 1936, 36' 0" X 23' 6" X 6' 2" X 5' 4", s.a., 465 sq. ft. (5) "Goose," Sparkman & Stephens, 1938, 37' 0" X 23' 8" X 6' 0" X 5' 5", s.a., 474 sq. ft.*



Conditions for this cup are rather unusual, in that each series goes to the first yacht to win three races. To prevent a series from going on forever, all boats that have not won one of the first three races are eliminated before the fourth.

The old *Lea* took on a new lease of life under Corny Shield's helmsmanship in 1927 and won the eliminations. She was still a fast boat in light weather, but the weather wasn't light enough and the series went to the Swedish boat *Maybe*, sailed by Sven Salen. In this series, something new was added to yachting in this country. *Maybe* used what was taken for a big reaching jib off the wind, and when she rounded the lee mark she just strapped the thing down and went to windward under it. And how she went! It was the first genoa jib ever seen in this country.

The Gold Cup stayed in Scandinavian waters for nine years, after that one series here, though Henry Plant's *Saleema* and J. B. Shethar's *Ripples* each had a go at it over there. Then in 1936 Herman Whiton, who'd captured it the first time, went after it and won it again, this time with *Indian Scout*, a boat of his own design. In 1937, Briggs Cunningham's *Lulu* successfully defended the trophy against a foreign invasion, taking a full seven races to do so. In 1938, the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club waived its right to hold the Gold Cup races in its own waters and, for the good of the sport, sent it to Finland to be raced for. The club also sent George Nichols along in *Goose* to defend it, with the result that the Gold Cup came back and

(Continued on page 114)



has been almost dormant even on Long Island Sound. Sixes have been entered in the trials and international events under the burgees of numerous clubs, on the Sound and elsewhere, and in years when it was active the class has provided excellent competition in the Long Island Sound regattas. Marblehead was active in the class for a few seasons, and Sixes have raced on the Chesapeake and elsewhere.

On the Great Lakes and the West Coast, the complexion of the class has been quite different, and year in and year out it has been a more consistent factor in local racing there than on the Sound. Throughout the country at large, there are or have been some 90 Six-Metre sloops, of which approximately 70 were built in the United States. The remainder were in part yachts which had been sold here after racing under their own national colors in the various series off Oyster Bay, and in part yachts imported directly from the Scandinavian countries. The last available figures showed, out of 90 boats, 20 owned on the Pacific Coast, mostly in the Los Angeles area but with nine on Puget Sound this season, and 23 on the Great Lakes, mostly at Detroit and Rochester.

One factor in the activity of the class in these waters has been local rules and customs which made competition less expensive and demanding. More latitude has been permitted in experimenting with boats in matters which, for international competition, might have put them outside strict limits of the class. At the same time, limitations on new sails, haul-outs, equipment and other expensive factors have kept them out of the dollar-racing category.

They were never a "poor man's class," and certainly they aren't today. Some of the first Sixes built in this country cost as little as \$4200 for hull, spars and ironwork, and even in those days it was figured that a full season's racing with international competition in American waters, taking in the cost of sails, gear, a paid hand and incidentals, would run to around \$10,000, while a trip abroad, of course, added some thousands to that figure.

The standard price for boat and rig soon went to \$5000, \$7000, and just before the war to around \$8000, partly due to rising

general prices but more to expensive refinements in hulls and gear. No American boats have been built since the war but authorities estimate that to build and rig a Six today would cost from \$12,000 to \$14,000, and that it would cost at least \$2500 for enough sails just to start racing with, and that with the inevitable extra sails, experimental gear and incidentals, a full season of racing of international caliber might set the owner back around \$30,000. So it isn't surprising that Seawanhaka's effort to promote the building of new boats for this year's racing met with no success.

The boats themselves have changed, as the accompanying photographs and figures show. In the early years, designers experimented with wide boats, narrow boats, deep boats, center-board boats, long boats, short boats, light boats and heavy boats. Gradually they evolved a type from which only minor variations were considered worth experimenting with.

Starting with the 27' over all length of the 1921 Burgess boats, this dimension got up to 37', still considered about the practical maximum, by about 1930. Water line lengths varied widely in the early boats, settled to around the 21' 9" of the outstanding *Lanai* of 1925, and have gradually increased to *Goose's* 23' 8". Some of the early boats were quite wide but since about 1930 this dimension hasn't varied more than a few inches from the 6' minimum established in 1937. There has also been a tendency to increase the draft by an inch or two in recent years though the rule seems to hold it pretty closely, in the typical boats of the '30s, to between 5' and 5' 5".

The earlier and smaller boats carried a lot of measured sail, with their big mainsails. *Lea* had 518 square feet, *Lanai* in 1925 475 sq. ft. *Totem's* measured sail area drops to 450 sq. ft., in 1930, and since then there has been a gradual increase, as witness *Indian Scout's* 465 sq. ft. and *Goose's* 474 sq. ft. But this is misleading, because of the introduction of the genoa jib in 1927. With all the untaxed area in the big genoas, all the boats after 1927 actually carried more canvas, at least in light and moderate weather, than *Lea* had in her original rig. A modern Six-Metre with her big genoa set is actually carrying 30 per cent

more sail than her measurements show — 616 square feet, in the case of *Goose*.

How do they do it? Well, displacement and draft are a function of water line length under the International Rule. Where some of the early boats were as light as 6000 lbs. displacement, the later boats run up as high as 9000 and most of them carry their weight a bit lower. However, the scantlings remain the same for any boat of six metres rating, hence the hull of a 9000 lb. displacement Six need be no heavier than the hull of a 6000 lb. boat. Indeed, with modern engineering applied to the construction, it may be even a trifle lighter. The whole difference in weight goes into the lead keel, giving tremendous sail carrying power and, incidentally, setting up terrific stresses in the lightly built hull. To carry that ballast and that sail area, a light hull must be tremendously strong for its weight. Only a few builders are equipped to build such a hull and even they can do it only by the most expensive methods. What this does to the cost of the boats is obvious. Less obvious, perhaps, is the effect on the long-time utility and value of the boat. Many of the older boats, like *Lea*, *Hawk*, *Cygnnet* (ex-*Ballyhoo*) and others, their racing days done, were fitted with cruising accommodations and are successful fast cruising boats today. But even the best built light hull, subjected to the wringing stresses of a big rig aloft and a lead mine below through a few seasons of hard racing, is going to be too "weak in the stomach" to be worth such conversion and too uncomfortable a sea boat to make a good cruiser, anyhow, due to her excessive ballast ratio of close to 70 per cent.

Some of these considerations share with skyrocketing taxes and price levels the responsibility for the reluctance of racing enthusiasts to build any more Sixes at present. Changes in the rule, in the direction of producing lighter and less expensive boats, are being considered abroad. Some changes have been made since the Sixes started racing here, such as the elimination of the old girth measurement, in 1933, which resulted in more desirable boats at that time, so there is precedent for further alteration. Without some such changes, it is difficult to see how, at least in the predictable future, the class can regain its old stature in the racing picture. And with so few non-one-design classes left, it would be a pity if the Sixes, or some equivalent rating or restricted class, failed to survive and prosper.