

## 2016 IDA LEWIS DISTANCE RACE: NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Ida Lewis Distance Race: Over 40 Boats to Start Friday Off Fort Adams**

NEWPORT, R.I. (August 15, 2016) – Take a lunch break on Friday, August 19 and watch the start of the Ida Lewis Distance Race beginning at 12:30 off Fort Adams State Park. Over 40 boats in four divisions – IRC, PHRF Spinnaker, Double-Handed and Cruising Spinnaker – will jockey for best positions on the starting line just like in traditional around-the-buoys racing, but shortly thereafter, skippers, navigators and crew will have to shift to offshore mode as they sail past Castle Hill and into the distance on one of four courses, decided prior to the start based on conditions. The courses run in length between 107 and 169 miles and incorporate waypoints such as Buzzards Bay Tower, Point Judith, Block Island and Montauk, giving sailors an interesting and beautifully scenic experience in this overnight “sprint” that has become a popular late-summer racing tradition in New England.



The start of the Ida Lewis Distance Race in 2015. (Photo credit: Meghan Sepe)

“For us this race is just about perfect: an overnight sail that finishes early in the morning, and we get a little bit of everything,” said Steve Benjamin, a Jamestown, R.I./South Norwalk, Conn. resident who is a 1984 Olympic Silver Medalist and the current Rolex Yachtsman of the Year. He has won IRC class overall at this event the last two years in a row with his Carkeek 40 *Spookie*, and this year he and his 12-person crew, including wife Heidi and Newport resident/Melges 32 World Champion Jeremy Wilmot (serving as tactician) are returning with a slightly larger entry, a TP52 also named *Spookie*. Both the

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boat and its team have been tuned for victory with wins at this year's New York Yacht Club Race Week and Ft. Lauderdale to Key West Race.

"We like this race because of the variety of conditions we get, and the strategy required, especially on the leg from Buzzards Bay Tower over to Montauk," said Benjamin. "Block Island is on the rhumb line, for one thing, so you have to figure out which side of it to go on. Then there are the currents and wind shifts...it's a good challenge. And Ida Lewis Yacht Club puts on a wonderful (Saturday night) party for the awards."

Benjamin is sure to find stiff competition in Stephen Murray (New Orleans, Louisiana), who is returning to the race after a several-year hiatus with the Carkeek 40 *Decision*, which he has owned since 2012. He won the event in 2007 and 2009 with a different *Decision*, a TP52, and still sails with a combination of friends from New Orleans and around the country (including locals Scott Tomkins, Owen Perkins and Mac Manion).



Historic Ida Lewis Yacht Club in Newport, R.I. hosts the Ida Lewis Distance Race each August.  
(Photo Credit: Meghan Sepe)

"The last few years, we've either not had a boat or we've had a conflict," said Murray, who recently steered *Decision* to an IRC class and overall victory at New York Yacht Club Race Week. "It's a neat event, with courses that require us to sail just about every angle. It's fun, challenging, in beautiful waters, and who can forget getting champagne at the finish line!"

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Other defending champions are the Quest 30 *Samba*, sailed by Tristan Mouligne of Boston, Mass. and the Kerr 55 *Irie*, skippered by Newport's Brian Cunha. Like *Spookie*, *Quest* has won PHRF A class here two years in a row. *Irie*, a first-time entrant last year, won its PHRF B Class and also won overall in PHRF.

### A Race for the Young and Young at Heart

Special trophies for Youth and Collegiate Challenges make the Ida Lewis Distance Race a unique opportunity for experienced distance racers to share their knowledge with novices.

Three Youth Challenge entrants have been fielded by Oakcliff Sailing, a high performance sailing center in Oyster Bay, New York while a fourth entrant, the J/35 *Breakaway* will have Paul Grimes (Portsmouth, R.I.) as team leader. To qualify for the Youth Challenge, more than 40% of the crew must have reached their 14th birthday but not turn 20 prior to August 15, 2016.



*Breakaway* will be among the three Youth Challenge entries to compete in this year's Ida Lewis Distance Race. (Photo credit: Meghan Sepe)

Currently there are three Collegiate Challenge entries: Ryan Novak-Smith's (Johnston, R.I.) Beneteau First 40.7 *Terrapin*; Michael Cashel's (Boston) R/P 44 *Miracle* and Alfred Van Liew's/David Brodsky's (Middletown, R.I.) S&S 48 *Odyssey*. To qualify, more than 40% of the crew must not have reached the age of 26 by August 15.

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“My eldest son Conor, who was the captain of the Columbia University sailing team, asked if he could create a college challenge team for this year’s race,” said *Miracle*’s Cashel, who last sailed the race in 2013 (finishing third in IRC) and will be one of two adult supervisors onboard, “so we have a collection of college kids, most of whom have raced in major college programs.” Represented on the boat are sailing alumni from Brown, College of Charleston, Columbia, Denver University, Roger Williams, University of Rhode Island and Yale.

The Ida Lewis Distance Race was inaugurated in 2004 as a biennial event; however, by 2006 its impending popularity was clear, and it became an annual race that same year. Now in its 12<sup>th</sup> edition, the race is a qualifier for the Rhode Island Offshore Challenge, New England Lighthouse Series (PHRF); and Northern and Double-Handed Ocean Racing Trophies (IRC). Top Trophies are The Russell L. Hoyt Memorial Trophy for best elapsed time in IRC division; The Commodore’s Trophy for best corrected time in IRC division; The Lois J. Muessel Memorial Trophy for best elapsed time in PHRF division; and The Lime Rock Trophy for best corrected time in PHRF division.

### Staying Green

For a third year in a row, the Ida Lewis Distance Race has been certified at the silver level for Sailors for the Sea’s Clean Regattas program. The certification system helps sailing events create and manage environmentally responsible events in an effort to educate and motivate boaters to reduce marine debris and preserve the waters upon which they sail.

### Sponsors

Sponsors for the 2016 Ida Lewis Distance Race include Bluewater Technologies, City of Newport, Helly Hansen, New England Boatworks, Newport Shipyard, and Triton Insurance; Contributing Sponsors are DYT Yacht Transport, Flint Audio & Video, Goslings Rum, Mac Designs, North Sails, Rig Pro, Southern Spars, Stella Artois, Toni Mills Graphic Design, and Z Blok.

For more information on the Ida Lewis Distance Race, visit <http://www.ildistancerace.org> or contact Skip Helme, [racechairman@ildistancerace.org](mailto:racechairman@ildistancerace.org), 401-641-2109. Registering is quick and easy at [yachtscoring.com](http://yachtscoring.com). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).  
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