

ST. BARTHS BUCKET

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR!

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BUCKET RACES, HELD EACH YEAR IN SAINT BARTHS and Newport, RI, far from being a stuffy insiders club one might expect from such a long-lasting tradition, instead offer egalitarian fun and great sailing for one and all. Norma Trease, a Bucketeer from way back, explains the very special Bucket charm.

Everybody who is anybody in the yachting world agrees that the Bucket Regattas, embodying at once a fine old tradition of gentleman's racing, enlivened with a constantly updated fleet of hip new yachts unveiled at each edition, combined with the best parties afloat, are hard to beat. From those who meticulously organise every detail, to those who religiously attend these grand events every year, the Buckets, whether in Newport or St Barths, are a must do on the yachting calendar. What makes the Buckets

truly special is the warm, casual, family atmosphere found at each and every one. Yet the true charm of Bucket racing, is that every one who participates, whether enjoying their first – or their twentieth Bucket, feel the joy of this international, extended group hug. For once a Bucketeer, always a Bucketeer.

More than two decades ago, on foggy Nantucket Island, a group of yacht owners gathered at 21 Federal, the restaurant owned by the legendary Nelson Doubleday, over a few Dark N' Stormies, as they decided that all they really wanted to do was race their big sailboats against each other – and so Bucket racing was born. Named after an inelegant antique cup, five yachts, including Mandalay, Gleam and Flying Goose, set out to inscribe their name on that battered silver cup for bragging rights as Nantucket Bucket Regatta winners. Little did they know then that



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what they had so casually started would become a worldwide phenomenon, spawning the growth of an influential, and extremely viable, growth sector for the entire yachting industry.

For fifteen years, these core owners hosted weekends of more or less exciting racing, ending with exuberant beach lobster bakes for an increasingly large group of yachts and best part, according to one of the founding owners Peter Goldstein, was the variety of vessels and nationalities who attended. Commenting on the final Nantucket 'Last Hurrah' event in 2001, he reminisced about what he had helped create: 'each year, we hosted many foreign yachts, bringing together family and friends from all over the world.' Now, Bucket Regattas are held twice each year in the yachting Meccas of Newport, RI and the glamorous Caribbean destination of Saint Barths, attracting several dozen of the world's finest sailing yachts, representing every leading shipyard, today's hottest naval architects, and attracting top sailors of every nationality to race them competitively.

Before long, the Bucket legend was firmly entrenched in yachting lore, spread in large part by a loyal group of repeat participants, including yachts, owners and captains who still Bucket with enthusiasm to this day. The vast amount of event and sponsorship management required is now very carefully handled by the three captains who were entrusted with the stewardship of the Bucket – founding skippers all. Timothy Laughridge, who



started his Bucket career as skipper of the Sariyah, last year guest helmed the Saint Barths Bucket winning vessel Kaori – formerly Doubleday's Mandalay – and her enthusiastic Kiwi owners came back to Newport for more Bucket fun last summer. Tim's new owner, the affable David Murphy this year loaned his motor yacht Tumblehome as Committee Boat in Saint Barths. Original Mandalay skipper, Ian 'Crash' Craddock has won several Bucket awards throughout the years, including two of the coveted Escargot Cups. Hank Halsted, who supports his Bucket habit as a yacht broker with Northrop & Johnson, has been a guest driver on a series of Bucket veterans including Victoria of Strathern, Whitehawk, Highland Breeze, Andromeda la Dea and Gleam. Even Bucket staff require family credentials, as shown by long-time administrator Holly Peterson, who is married to Capt. Ewan Paterson, skipper of several Bucket winners. Sponsors are carefully chosen from yachting businesses who clamour to participate, led by the 'Big Five' sailing yacht building shipyards: Royal Huisman, Alloy Yacht, Perini Navi, Holland Yachtbouw and Vitters, all of whom have long-established clientele and relationships in the extended Bucket family.

Besides being a warm business environment, Bucket racing truly is a family affair. One of the most-beloved of all Bucketees, co-founder Tommy Taylor, was an enthusiastic participant for many years on his yacht Gleam, always bringing along a loyal group of veteran skippers including 'Kiwi' John Pirovano and Tom Miller, as well as his growing young family. After the original Nantucket Bucket was retired, Tom Taylor sold his yacht, which was then re-named Avalon. Literally only hours in advance of the 2004 St. Barths Bucket, he re-purchased his yacht, and sailed her to new glory, with his familiar team on board. She has participated in every Bucket ever since, driven expertly by his son Jason, who after all, grew up sailing with the best of the best. Who knows what racing successes lie ahead for his beautiful young daughter, a third generation Bucketeer? Another veteran Bucket owner and supporter, the exuberant Peter de Savary, has campaigned any number of his many yachts in various Bucket races, but always brings along his lovely wife, and two youngest daughters, who too have grown up under the affectionate gaze of the entire Bucket family.

The famed Perini Navi shipyard, having built a significant majority of sailing yachts exceeding 50 m, have naturally had dozens of their yachts participate in every Bucket race, with a host of families who have become multi-generation Bucket fans. Several years ago, an American family custom-built 50 m Perseus as a luxurious floating platform, conceived to take their young children on an extended educational world cruise. Under the command of Capt. Jonathan Kline, himself a qualified teacher, they began their cruising-racing experience at the St. Barths Bucket. Having circumnavigated the world, stopping along the

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way to participate in still more regattas including New Zealand's Millenium Cup, and with their children now in land-based schools, they set out to conquer Bucket racing in a whole new way. They challenged Perini Navi to develop a whole new concept, of smaller, more racing-styled 38 m sailing yachts, designed by the very au courant French naval architect Philippe Briand, soon nicknamed 'Baby Bucket Boats.' With the inauguration at the

2009 St. Barths Bucket of the first in the already-popular series, Perseus 2, (P2), they have educated the entire Bucket family that Bucket racing can be even more competitive, by adding a wide range of technological innovations, including a fin-and-bulb lifting keel. Built of ultra-modern Sealium, and using PBO standing rigging, sloop-rigged with a 50 m hybrid modulus carbon-fibre mast, setting an impressive 734 m of sail area, P2, racing with her

family on-board, are proving that the newest generation of Bucket racing will be even more exciting.

2009 in St. Barths was a big year for the Perini Navi Bucket family, as all three of their 2008 launches debuted there, showcasing not only the exciting new P2, but also the colourful 50 m Baracuda and innovative 56 m Salute. Sporting the world's second-tallest mast, at 74 m, Salute's sloop rig offers not only a

powerfully speedy performance, but also allowed for the placement of a spacious forward cockpit, inspired by that of sister ship Liberty. Featuring a removable canvas awning, able to be cleverly stored in the mast, with wraparound all-weather lifting glasses, this expansive outdoor terrace offers a comfortable gathering spot with the ultimate sea-view for her dynamic young Dutch owners, who plan to share the joy of sailing on their

ABOVE:
P2

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spectacular yacht with their young children, and wide circle of friends at many future Buckets to come.

Coming onto the Bucket scene just three short years ago, the owners and crew of the happy vessel Antara truly typify the Bucket family vibe. From a long-time veteran skipper, the very talented all-singing, all-picking, all-regatta-winning Capt. Johnno Johnson, to her amazingly warm, hospitable owners, British/Americans Mickey & Diane Gooch, this is family-style sailing par excellence. Starting their regatta career off right by winning their inaugural regatta at the 2006 Perini Cup, they have taken Bucket racing spirit truly to heart, participating in several Newport and St Barths regattas, in addition to this summer's super Superyacht Cup in Palma de Mallorca – where they snagged an impressive 2nd Place Overall. Captain Johnno gathers together a core group of highly experienced sailors, and a remarkably stable permanent crew to form a tightly knit racing team who prove that the human factor truly does make the difference in Corinthian racing – for let's face it, a 19-year old, 302 ton, 47 m, steel-hulled Grande Dame is hardly to be considered the ultimate racing machine.

Antara has proved an excellent learning ground for young Gooch scion, Stefan, who at the tender age of 11, had the gumption to approach Tom Perkins, owner of the 88 m Maltese Falcon, to secure himself a personal invitation to sail on that year's hottest ticket – leaving his yacht without it's regular time-keeper. Families abound on Antara, with navigator David Plowys,

who is married to former Peter de Savary PA, Jane, using regattas to occasionally catch up with their youngest daughter Sophie; who comes to join the yacht – and sees her parents – when she moonlights from her job in publishing, working as extra stewardess during Bucket and other regattas. And it cannot be forgotten that the Bucket lesson the entire extended Antara family has learned extremely well, is that above all, it's not just about winning the race, it's even more about winning the party, which they definitely manage to do at each and every regatta.

The ultimate Bucket insider, Hank Halsted, whose Austrian wife Karin, is a regular crewmember of family-operated German racing yacht Anny, works tirelessly to maintain the seemingly casual Bucket atmosphere, which is what ultimately sets these races apart from all other big boat racing series. He sums up his view of Bucket Regattas explaining simply 'after all these years, it has become a community. The people who come to the table bring joy to everyone.' And that, Bucket racing fans, is a beautiful thing. >||

Author Norma Trease has indulged her passion for sailing and reporting on the events and VIPs of the international yachting scene by sailing in most of the major large yacht racing series, including more than twenty Bucket Regattas, continuing her long career as a professional yacht chef, a crew placement specialist, a speaker, a moderator and an industry volunteer.

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