



MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DN ICE YACHT RACING ASSOCIATION

RUNNER TRACKS

SEPTEMBER 2025

THE RULES AT LEEWARD & ROUNDING MANEUVERS
BY WARREN NETHERCOTE & MIKE BLOOM
MATT STRUBLE INTERVIEW

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COMMODORE'S REPORT

ROB HOLMAN US3705
LAMBERTVILLE, MICHIGAN, USA

Well, here it is—the daylight hours are growing shorter, the mornings cooler, and before we know it, the first ice will be here.

Before looking ahead, I want to pause and offer my heartfelt thanks to David “The Stoop” Frost for his dedication and leadership as Commodore over the past few years. His steady hand at the helm has served our IDNIYRA organization well, and I’m grateful for his support as I step into this role. I also want to thank all of you for your vote of confidence—I’m honored to serve as your Commodore.

This season, we also carry a heavy heart with the loss of our friend and fellow sailor, Hal Bowman. Hal was more than a competitor; he was a mentor, a friend, and a true ambassador of our sport. Though we will miss his presence on the ice, we can take comfort knowing that he now sails on “Black

Ice” forever. Let’s honor his memory by embracing the camaraderie, sportsmanship, and love for sailing that he embodied.

As we prepare for the season ahead, now is the perfect time to make sure your equipment is ready for first ice. Check your runners, sharpen and tune them, and give your rigging and gear a thorough inspection. A little preparation now ensures that when the first good wind blows across the ice, we’re all ready to launch safely and competitively.

I’m excited for the months ahead and for the chance to share another season with such a passionate and supportive community of sailors. Let’s look forward to new challenges, great races, and plenty of laughter along the way.

Fair winds and fast ice,
Rob Holman IDNIYRA Commodore



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If you were to ask someone where the current ice sailing world champion lives, San Diego, California, would likely be the last place they would think of. However, that's exactly where you can find Matt Struble US183, who is arguably the best DN sailor in the world today.

Within the DN community, Matt needs no introduction. But to those outside the ice sailing world, the idea of a champion iceboater living in Southern California might come as a surprise.

Matt's roots are in Michigan, the birthplace of DN sailing, and that early exposure laid the foundation for a lifelong passion. While he may make it look easy, his success is the result of decades of dedication and training. With five DN World Championship titles and multiple DN North American wins, Matt has earned his place at the top through both talent and relentless effort.

To learn more about Matt's path to the top, Runner Tracks sent him a series of questions about his background, training, influences, and what keeps him coming back to the ice. His thoughtful responses provide insight into the mindset of a champion.



Bottom left: Matt Struble and friends from North America and Germany celebrate his win at the 2008 IDNIYRA World Championship at Lake Lipno in the Czech Republic.

Where were you born, and where did you go to college?

Bay City, Michigan. Attended Saginaw Valley State University under a sports scholarship in track and field. Pole vaulting was my event, achieving NCAA All-American placing at the National Championship. School record of 17 feet.

Can you talk about your father's influence and your family's history in sailing?

In the early 1980s, my dad (Bob Struble US4055) was into powersports (jet boats, snowmobiles, etc.). With the price of gas, that was the end of the power machines. We started sailing and pretty much did everything from the grassroots point of view, figuring it out along the way. My dad has always been pretty crafty, determined, and athletic.

When I was about 10 years old, we moved onto the Kawkawlin River in Bay City, Michigan. Wonderland for me. Living on the water, I was never bored and lived outside. I continued to sail with my dad and family. We had a great time competing in local races and learning to race.

About this same time, my dad thought we should try this ice-boating thing. A friend I met in the neighborhood had this funky iceboat contraption on the side of their house. No runners or rig, so my dad, with a cutting torch and a grinder, made some runners and a gaff rig from a Mayflower plastic dinghy was fitted. When the water froze, this thing was rigged and traveled about 50 feet before its complete collapse. But that was enough to set the hook. The basement was converted to a DN ice-boat shop, and the rest is history.

"MY DAD
THOUGHT
WE SHOULD
TRY THIS
ICE BOATING
THING"



What kind of impact did the Jan & Meade Gougeon have on you?

A couple of magical things happened after we moved onto the river. In our neighborhood were Mark and Jon Staudacher along with Jan and Meade Gougeon. The Staudacher family has a long history of building competitive hydroplane boats, aerobatic airplanes, and everything in between. Jan and Meade Gougeon were sailing these wild-looking boats they had built.

I just thought at the time, what a cool place to live and really neat people. I had no idea at 10 I was hanging around (bothering) absolute legends. Jan always had a new boat on the drawing board and something with wet epoxy in the garage. I would just drive him crazy,

riding my bike over every day to see what was going on, what was this, what was that.

Everything was made of wood, not like furniture, but a matrix of wood veneer, spruce sticks, and tortured plywood that all created super light structures you could build in your garage. My dad ended up buying one of Jan's trimarans called Splinter, 25 feet long and 28 feet 6 inches wide. Awesome boat that he still is sailing today.

In 1982, Jan won the DN World Championships in Germany. When he returned home, he gave me the runner plank and sail he used. By this time, my dad and I were all about DN sailing and trying to learn how to get better. Jan and Meade were amazing supporters, leaders, and a guiding light for the rookies we were. From that point forward, we sailed together, traveled together, and grew.

The cool thing I loved about Jan was his absolute love for sailing. It was not winning that was the driving force, it was making your equipment and self better. The results on the race course were a result of the love for the sport, adventure, and passion.

Do you remember your first ride in an iceboat?

I do and I was hooked right away. One funny story: In the early days of our DN sailing, we only had one boat. My dad was racing and doing really well, so I was generally relegated to hanging out on the ice all day waiting to get a ride in after racing.

We were at the Cass Lake regatta in Pontiac, Michigan. Typical spring weather, warm, light wind, so the RC set a reaching race from one end of the lake to the other and back. Everyone took off at the start of the race. I was standing there watching, and one of the older guys who did not want to run around the lake said to me, "You want to sail my boat?" In about 10 seconds I was in the boat and sailing after the racers.

I was about 60 pounds at the time and caught the fleet and sailed past my dad waving. So many good memories of the early days of iceboating. The history, depth of talent, engineering, and construction learnings. Just love it. It is a part of me.

What are your goals when you come to the Midwest to train before a big event?

From my days of living in Michigan and sailing iceboats a lot, I have a good foundation to draw from. These days in preparation for the big events, I control the controllables that I can. My fitness is still good (when I am in the gym, I am racing at the Gold Cup), and I am very strategic in my equipment development. I cannot take big risks these days, as I have limited opportunities to validate.

I am always making lists. Two years ago at the NAs, I made a list of items I wanted to explore (runners, sails, etc.). That spring, I was talking to Mike Boston about sails and Ron Sherry about runners. In San Diego, I built some planks and on and on.

Last fall I visited my family for Thanksgiving in Michigan, loaded the rental car with every iceboat kit I own, called John Dennis, and drove to iceboating wonderland, Minnesota. Six days of sailing in most all conditions gave me a chance to be honest about my gear and what to do next. I love this kind of sailing, testing settings, techniques, and the general craft. I learned a lot and always do.

Back to San Diego with another list and returned for Christmas. I am not afraid to drive to find ice and it always pays.



You sail Moths and A Cats. Have you gotten into foiling yet, and has ice sailing influenced your soft water sailing or vice versa?

I have always been in pursuit of iceboating when it

is warm out. Foiling has gotten pretty close. I have designed and built several A Cats with great success, awesome boats. For about the last 10 years, I have been sailing and racing foiling Moths. Super cool, as you can sail the racecourse without the hull touching the water

The Moth is tough to sail and requires a real focus to be successful. This has given me an excellent training platform for DN racing. The Moth is a great experience and I would highly recommend it to any iceboater



Can you share a bit about your family?

I am really lucky to have my wife Domonique and two kids. They support my sailing and activities that

allow me to be me. I am a little over the top at times with my determination and focus on accomplishing goals and I could not do it without their support

How does Nissan support your sailing?

Nissan is great and has always appreciated the accomplishments that I have achieved. After the World and North American Championship this year, when I opened my work email, there was a nice congratulations letter from the Chairman of Nissan

Is there a regatta moment that stands out, either a key win, loss, or turning point?

The first World Championship in 2007 was really special for so many reasons. Black ice for miles, huge racecourse, all wind conditions, and Jan was there. For a number of years, I was doing well but could not put it all together for a regatta. The competition was at a high level and this was an achievement I dreamed about for multiple decades.

Going into the last race, Tomas Lindgren S81 and I were tied and whoever beat the other would be World Champion. Seconds from the sunset time limit, the flag dropped. I was so pumped up and focused at the same time, great feeling. Ice was fast, wind dropping, and I had my speed sail on. I won the race

Iceboating is a tough sport and I have had my share of frustration, but the success and enjoyment from the sport have outweighed the lows by a good



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What do you think sets top sailors apart in DN racing?

Experience has to be number one on the list. The conditions are always changing and the people who have seen everything can short-circuit the solution path. In all sailing, it is key to know your equipment and what it does well and not well. The best sailors adjust to what their gear can do and get the most out of it. DN racing is so fast and you need to make decisions fast too, the correct decisions, and that makes the difference

What advice would you give to someone just getting into DN racing?

Go sailing a lot. Ask questions, think logically, and enjoy it

How do you mentally prepare for a big championship?

OMG, I have been tested the last two World Championships. In 2023 and 2025, my first race result was disappointing and you could easily say I was out of the running to do well. My strategy and mental state was simple, win every race.

I did not accomplish winning every race, but it added a clear focus for every race. Generally, the mental preparation before a big event is directly tied to my kit and if I did the work leading into the event. I mentally shift from a development and equipment thought process to how do I execute the best race craft possible

Any pre-race rituals or superstitions?

I am not superstitious and do not do anything special. I am more interested in observing and collecting data all around me about the wind, clouds, race-course, competitors, and so on. I like data and feel data-driven

How has your approach to racing changed over the years?

Experience is key. I am much more strategic and focused these days. I look at the racecourse not as beating my competition, but as can I sail the perfect lap three times

What's something people might be surprised to learn about you?

Good question. Nissan does not pay me to sail. I hate being cold.

Below: Moments after clinching the 2025 IDNIYRA World Championship on Lake Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Photo: Anna Suslova



RULES AT LEEWARD

AVOIDING COLLISIONS, PROTESTS, AND DRAGONS AT THE MARK
PLUS - WHEN DOES A ROUNDING MANEUVER START?

BY WARREN NETHERCOTE KC3786 & MIKE BLOOM US321



Photo: Gilles Morelle

In the last two Runner Tracks we discussed the application of the National Ice Authority (NIA) rules 4 and 5 to yachts sailing off-the wind and on the same tack. Now we examine the exciting bit, rounding the leeward mark.

For the soft-water sailors among us, once again, the NIA rules differ significantly from The Racing rules of Sailing. The NIA rules ignore any concept of a three-length zone around the mark. The speed at which iceboats travel makes such simple, geometric criteria unworkable. Instead, NIA rule 8 provides more flexible criteria for two situations:

- 1) "When approaching or rounding a MARK, an OUTSIDE yacht shall keep clear"
- 2) "[A] faster moving yacht approaching another yacht from the rear shall stay clear of a yacht that has started her rounding maneuver." (see Sidebar 1 for discussion of 'rounding maneuver')

The NIA defines a MARK as "any object, which a yacht round or pass on a required side to properly round the course" and for purposes of rule 8 states "any yacht to the right of another yacht is the OUT-

SIDE yacht." Note the NIA definition of OUTSIDE only works for courses with MARKS left to port.

In the first situation, the OUTSIDE yacht when approaching or rounding a MARK shall keep clear, i.e., give 'the other yacht' room to round or pass the mark. What is interesting is that the definition of OUTSIDE does NOT limit the other yacht to being on the same tack at the leeward MARK.

In the second situation, a faster moving yacht approaching from the rear' (i.e., NOT an OUTSIDE yacht) shall stay clear of a yacht that has started her rounding maneuver. In both cases that NIA rules speak of the responsibilities of the yacht giving room or keeping clear, rather than the Right-of-Way yacht or the one owed room. This is consistent with the concept of defining rules to avoid collision rather than to gain a tactical advantage. What does this all mean to a competitor? We will use three cases as illustration.

You are the OUTSIDE yacht. As an OUTSIDE yacht approaching or rounding the leeward mark, you need to give the inside yacht room to round the mark and complete her rounding maneuver. Before

the mark, the inside yacht is the windward yacht and also has Right-of-Way, so you need to keep clear of the inside yacht, whatever she does. Once the two yachts are sailing above a course 90 degrees to the ACTUAL WIND (an NIA defined term) the leeward yacht will have Right-of-Way (NIA rule 4, first part), but may still be required to keep clear of the inside yacht if her rounding maneuver is not yet complete. NIA Appeal 8 indicates that the rounding maneuver may not yet be complete immediately after clearing the MARK. Sidebar 1 suggests that you might need to give the inside yacht room until she is on her close-hauled course.

If there is contact between the OUTSIDE and the inside yacht during the rounding maneuver a rule infraction has occurred. A competent protest committee will find that the OUTSIDE yacht broke NIA rule 8 and the OUTSIDE yacht it will be disqualified from the race. If the contact occurred after clearing the MARK, a protest committee will have to determine whether the contact occurred while the round-

ing maneuver was still taking place, or afterwards. Only in the latter case will the OUTSIDE yacht fare well in the protest.

You are the inside yacht. As an inside yacht approaching or rounding the leeward mark, you are owed room by the OUTSIDE yacht and you are also the Right-of-Way, windward yacht. You can sail whatever course you require for your rounding maneuver and the OUTSIDE yacht must keep clear of you. Once the two yachts are sailing above a course 90 degrees to the ACTUAL WIND (an NIA defined term) the OUTSIDE yacht now has Right-of-Way (NIA rule 4, first part) but the OUTSIDE yacht must still keep clear of you while you complete your rounding maneuver. After the rounding maneuver is complete the inside yacht must keep clear of the OUTSIDE (now leeward) yacht (NIA rule 4, first part).

If there is contact between the inside yacht and the OUTSIDE yacht during the rounding maneuver

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a rule infraction has occurred, A competent protest committee will find that the OUTSIDE yacht broke NIA rule 8 and it will be disqualified from the race; however, If the protest committee finds contact happened after the rounding maneuver was complete, now it is the inside yacht that has broken NIA rule 4 and will be disqualified from the race.

You are the faster moving yacht approaching from the rear. There are three variations in this case.

- a. The yacht ahead of you begins her rounding maneuver and you follow her around the MARK. No drama, no contact, no protest. Life is good.
- b. Unless you do something, you will run into the yacht ahead, so you bear away to go to leeward of her. You are now the OUTSIDE yacht, and everything written above about the OUTSIDE YACHT applies to you. You are going faster: if you sail well and keep your nose clean you could blow through to leeward and come out ahead after the mark rounding. But make sure you keep clear. If you do, no contact, no protest. life is still good.
- c. Unless you do something, you will run into the yacht ahead, so you alter course and sail to windward of the yacht ahead and establish an inside overlap after she has started her rounding maneuver. But remember, NIA rule 8 says you are required to keep clear of her. Establishing a 'late overlap' and forcing the other yacht to give you room is NOT keeping clear. And to make matters worse, it is frequently the start of a collision. If there is a protest, regardless of whether there was contact or not, and the protest committee finds that you established a inside overlap after the other boat began her rounding maneuver, you will be disqualified from the race. Clearly, if you are overtaking a yacht that has begun her rounding maneuver follow the rules and go OUTSIDE. It is safer to steer a course to the OUTSIDE rather than establishing a late inside overlap where you will be forced into a protest you probably can't win.

There it is. It is tempting to say 'clear as mud' but the situation isn't that complex, at least when approaching the mark. If there is one piece of advice to offer, it is to avoid establishing a late inside overlap. To quote the tales of old, "There lie dragons."

Sidebar 1: When Does a Rounding Maneuver Start or End?

Any discussion of NIA rule 8 and the leeward mark inevitably includes a discussion of a yacht's rounding maneuver.

Thus, we include that discussion in this sidebar and think it best to start with an understanding of what is a maneuver?

Various common definitions of maneuver include, as a noun, 'a movement or series of moves requiring skill or care,' or as a verb, 'move skillfully or carefully' or 'carefully guide ... something to achieve an end.' But, for purposes of applying NIA rules, it is worth noting that NIA rules talk in terms of a 'yacht', not the skipper. So, logically, evidence of a rounding maneuver should be reflected as movement – in this case course alteration – of the yacht.

It is tempting to tie the initiation of the rounding maneuver to something done by the skipper, like the common practice of moving forward or sitting up when initiating the rounding maneuver. Either body movement may be indicative of a rounding maneuver, and in some cases is a necessary body movement, but neither is a movement of the yacht. As a result, body movement should probably be seen as an indicator of a current or impending maneuver rather than the rounding maneuver itself.

The NIA rules are elastic when it comes to a yacht 'starting her rounding maneuver.' The rounding maneuver can occur at different distances from the leeward mark, such as:

- a. In light air a yacht may sail directly to the MARK, only beginning to turn as she reaches the mark – her rounding maneuver begins mere boat lengths away from the mark, when she turns up, to windward.
- b. In the heaviest of air, a port-tack yacht may bear away 20 or more lengths from the mark to begin setting up for a wide-entry, close-exit MARK rounding – her rounding maneuver begins when she first bears away, 20 or more boat lengths from the MARK.
- c. A starboard tack yacht, sailing from the leeward Darling MARK may begin her rounding maneuver when she first bears away to gybe prior to the rounding, although the gyb-

ing yacht must ensure that she does not 'involve the probability of collision with another yacht which, owing to her position or speed, cannot keep clear' (NIA rule 6). This is a case where two rules may be in play simultaneously, since the NIA rules do not provide for precedence of one rule over another.

The core NIA rules are silent on the question of when a rounding maneuver ends: is it when the MARK is left astern or can it last longer? The first part of rule 8, "When approaching or rounding a MARK, an OUTSIDE yacht shall keep clear" suggests that it ends when the rounding is complete. The soft water rules turn off their mark-rounding rules when the mark is left astern; however, NIA Appeal 8 indicates that the NIA rules do NOT turn off rule 8 as soon as the mark is left astern.

In NIA Appeal 8, contact between the inside and outside YACHTS occurred approximately a boat length after passing the mark and NIA Appeal 8 upheld the disqualification of the

OUTSIDE yacht. Therefore, a rounding maneuver and the application of rule 8 can extend beyond simply clearing the MARK. NIA Appeal 8 provides no further guidance.

A logical end to the rounding maneuver may be available. While the rounding maneuver is integral with the act of rounding the MARK, the Mark also connects two legs of the course, one OFF-THE-WIND and one ON-THE-WIND. Therefore, many believe the rounding maneuver is complete when a yacht is on ON-THE-WIND, as that term is defined in the rules. Watching a Gold fleet rounding of the leeward MARK supports this concept, with a stream of well-controlled maneuvers with yachts on their new, close-hauled courses very soon after leaving the MARK, if not even before leaving it astern. Silver and Bronze fleets present a different picture with differing, if not wildly different exit angles after the MARK, implying different distances from the MARK for the end of the rounding maneuver.



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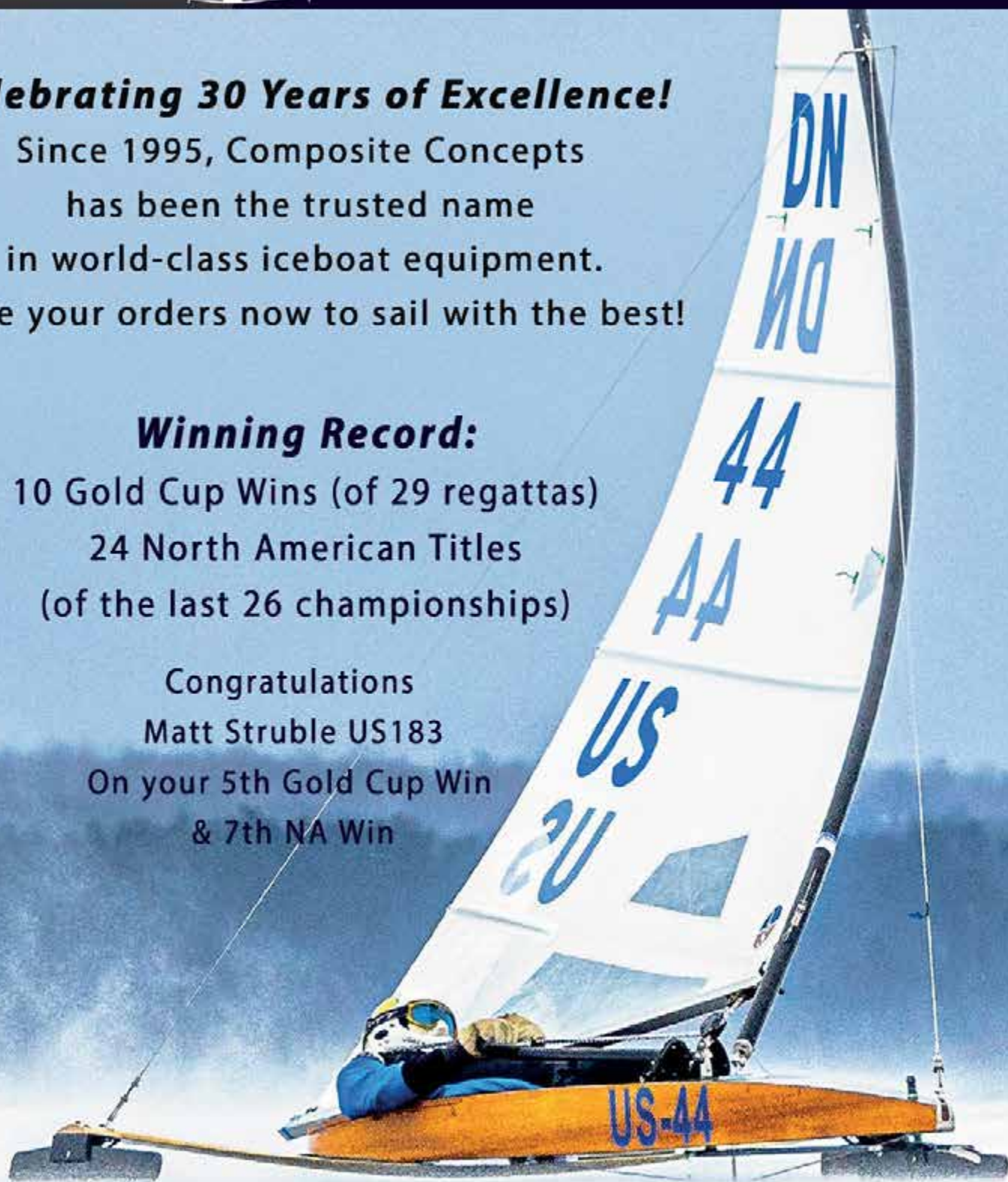
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