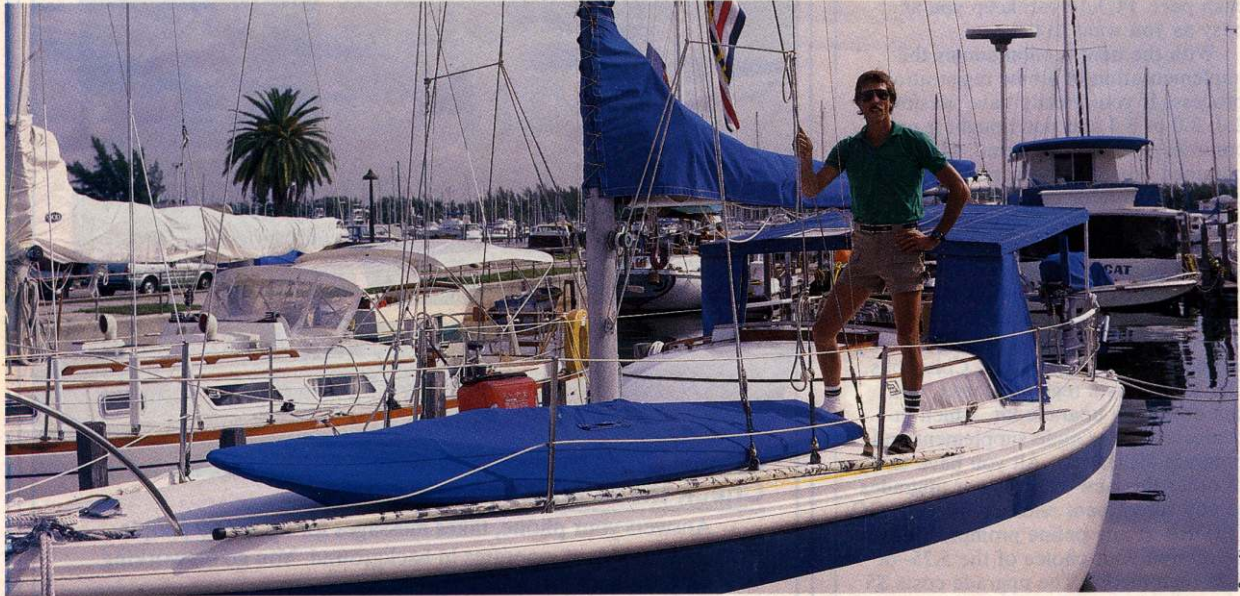


L I F E S T Y L E S



Greg Newman

His "electronic yacht club" tracks race progress, invites questions: Lovell

Chart the Racing Sails

Members Navigate High-tech Seas Aboard the Sailing Forum

by Cathryn Conroy

Any sailor will tell you there is something magical about the sea, some ecstatic feeling that wells from the soul when the mist from the waves sprays your face as the swell and the wind propel the boat forward. This commune with nature hardly seems to have a place in the high-tech world of computers and satellites, but it does. Just ask John Lovell and Keith Taylor.

Lovell, the administrator of the Sailing Forum and an avid sailor himself, and Taylor, former editor of *Sail* magazine and now an editorial consultant, are charting new waters when it comes to high-tech sailing information. Using the Sailing Forum as a medium for transmitting race results almost as they happen, they have transformed a sleepy message board into a fast-paced newsroom based on a complex array of international high-tech communications.

One of the joys of the sailing sport is racing. However, because it doesn't have the popularity of football or baseball, news of sailing races is rarely covered in any great depth by the mass media. Yet sailing aficionados crave details from the height of the waves at each turning mark to the distance made good and the speed of each yacht.

The America's Cup race is perhaps the best-known sailing venture, and for the past few years the coveted prize has been a highly competitive match pitting Australia, New Zealand and the United States against one another. In 1987, the America's Cup was held in Fremantle, Australia, about 60 miles south of Perth. With the race taking place on the other side of the world, US sailors were at a loss for immediate news of the event.

But the Sailing Forum stepped in. Louis Vuitton, the sponsor of the America's Cup Challenger Series, Ing C. Olivetti Co. and AFTER s.r.l. Software set up information centers around the world for race news to be posted as it became available. But as there were only a handful of these centers, the Sailing Forum decided to provide race coverage.

When the races ended at about 4 p.m. in Australia (4 a.m. in New York), Andrea Filacchioni, president of AFTER s.r.l. Software and a computer programmer, called Perth from Fremantle, connecting through the Computer Sciences Corp. international network to CompuServe, to upload the day's race results in greater detail than

any other news source provided. Filacchioni's data was displayed in the Media Centers with lively, colored graphics on a networked Olivetti personal computer system. He then reduced these displays to simple ASCII charts for CompuServe. And all of it was available by 6 a.m. for Americans to enjoy with their morning coffee.

The Sailing Forum provided up-to-date statistical information on the race as fast as it was provided in Fremantle at the local Louis Vuitton Media Center. "This was a beautiful display of two of CompuServe's major strengths," says Taylor. "One is the capability to rapidly pick up and distribute specialized data. The other is the capacity to retain this information in archival fashion for subsequent research."

Information on the 1987 and 1988 America's Cup races is available in the forum's Library 11.

When NBC devoted just 12 minutes to sailing of its 156 hours of television coverage of the Summer Olympic Games in Seoul, the Sailing Forum was where many turned for race results and highlights.

But the true test of integrating the technology with sailing came with the British Oxygen Corp.'s Challenge Around the World Race. Named as the official information source, the Sailing Forum used transmitters, satellites, international telephone lines and more to provide the race news.