

The 2012 Onion Patch Series

The 158th New York Yacht Club Annual Regatta
The 48th Newport Bermuda Race®
The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club Anniversary Regatta



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Take the Onion Patch Challenge

By Talbot Wilson

When you plan your 2012 racing schedule, be sure to include all three events in the triathlon of sailboat racing, the 2012 Onion Patch Series. This is a tough series sailed over a scant three consecutive weeks in June. Offered every other year, it is a challenge to yacht, skipper and crew to prevail in these three spectacular events and venues.

This unique five-race triathlon begins with windward-leeward racing in the Rhode Island Sound's often brisk winds and tricky currents, it is centered by the daunting challenge of the classic 635-mile Newport Bermuda Race® with its exciting Gulf Stream crossing in the *Thrash to the Onion Patch* and concludes with a windward-leeward race and a scenic flexi-course in flat water with shifty breezes on Bermuda's Great Sound, Granaway Deep and Hamilton Harbour.

Entry for the series and the other two events may be made on the New York Yacht Club website: <http://www.nyyc.org/158th-annual-reggatta-jun8-10/>. The Onion Patch Series results, photos, news, Notice of Series and much more will be posted at <http://www.onionpatchseries.com/>.

"The Onion Patch is a tough series to win as an individual entry," said Rives Potts owner of **Carina**, the St David's Lighthouse Trophy winner in the 2010 Newport Bermuda Race. He came in fifth overall in the 2010 Onion Patch and has yet to win the series.

"You have to be very good in all conditions and on all types of race courses," he added. "Not many boats or crews excel at both. The guys that do well in the Onion Patch have a lot to be proud of. They prepare their boats right, are able to shift gears from long-legged races to short-legged races, and have very good sailors on board."

"To win as a team," Potts concluded, "is even more difficult. All three boats on the team have to do very well in all three phases of the series. The winning team is usually the team who makes the fewest mistakes and is consistent throughout."

The series originally began in New England and concluded with the ocean race, but since 1994 it includes the New York Yacht Club Annual Regatta on June 9-10, the Cruising Club of America/Royal Bermuda Yacht Club's Newport Bermuda Race® starting on June 15, and finishes with the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club Anniversary Regatta on June 22.

This is the 48th anniversary of the Onion Patch Series. In 1962, the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club donated the Onion Patch Trophy for the series. Now, 48 years later the series is being sailed for the 24th time. The series was fashioned after the Admiral's Cup, but the Admiral's Cup has not been sailed in its original format since 1999. The Onion Patch allows for teams representing countries, yacht clubs or other sailing organizations. The modern teams mostly represent yacht clubs and sailing organizations with the last national teams competing in 1994.

The Onion Patch continues to attract fleets of about 35-45 boats because of the exciting challenges it offers to professional and amateur sailors alike. In 2010, there were 38 individual entries and five three-boat teams. In 2006, the Bermuda Race Centennial year, there were 48 individual entries and seven teams, while 2008 had 30 entries and four teams. The top three-boat team wins the Onion Patch Trophy, while the top boat is awarded the Henry B. du Pont Trophy.

Winners of the past three competitions illustrate how difficult it is for one type of yacht to prevail consistently or for all-out professional racing boats to win. This is a tough series with a mixmaster of conditions that do not make for an easy victory. Winning requires consistency in all conditions.

In 2010, the hot British entry **Ran**, a JV 72, took first, the mini-maxi **Bella Mente** was second and **Sforzando**, a Kerr 55, was third. In 2008, the winner was **Cabady**, a Taylor 42, with **Flying Jenny VI**, a J122, second and **Chrisma**, a classic S&S 57, was third. The Swan 44 MkII **Crescendo** was first in 2006, followed by the Grand Soleil 37 **Kalevala II** in second and the Navy 44 **Swift** in third.

The top team in 2010 was composed of **Sforzando**, **Rambler 90**, and **Bella Mente** representing the New York Yacht Club. Second place went to the US Naval Academy with its NA44s **Flirt**, **Swift** and **Invictus**. In 2008, the US Sailing Team comprised of **Rambler 90**, **Flying Jenny VI** and **Bella Mente** took first place and Indian Harbor YC with the Swan 441 **Cygnette**, **Christopher Dragon**, a J122, and **Crescendo** was second.

To compete in the Series, yachts must qualify for and race in the Newport Bermuda Race® in the Gibbs Hill Lighthouse Division or the St. David's Lighthouse Division. Safety-at-Sea courses and other safety requirements must be met and crew qualification requirements also apply in the Newport

Bermuda Race in the St. David's Lighthouse Division which is for predominately amateur sailors. Yachts must apply for an invitation to enter the Newport Bermuda Race® on their website: www.bermudarace.com.