

*Polka Dot*, the successful American Defender, with a bone in her teeth in the last race.

## The International Model Yacht Race

By C. G. DAVIS

### The First Race

WEATHER conditions were unpropitious even for small models on Little Neck Bay, Thursday, June 8, 1922, when the surface of the water showed a flat calm prevailing at the time for the start of the first International Race. A fleet of wide squat oyster sloops and schooners lay anchored north of the fleet of motor boats and small sailing yachts moored off the Bayside Yacht Club.

The regatta committee held a council of war and the ultimate outcome of it was to sail the three-mile windward and leeward race over a course laid from the judges' boat, anchored off the Douglaston shore, to a mark-boat anchored three-quarters of a mile to the westward, under the low hills of Willets Point, twice around. A light westerly breeze had decided this course and the oyster boats had hoisted sails and started to drift lazily back and forth across the fertile oyster beds, but with a revenue officer patrolling in a speed launch no interference was expected. Quite a fleet of spectators had assembled in all kinds of craft, from forty-mile motor boats to yacht dinghies.

The preparatory gun was fired from the little box-like houseboat nicknamed the *Camel* at 4:00 P.M. The warning gun followed at 4:05. Both contestants had towed their boats out behind their skiffs from which they handled the models. The rules permitted the owner to adjust

the trim of his model as often as he pleased, but prohibited any pushing.

The preparatory gun found a light air rippling the water from about west by north. Mr. Daniels, in an ordinary skiff, with Mr. Cook at the oars, had *Endeavor* at the north end of the starting line, while Mr. Bull, alone in one of the special built skiffs, had *Polka Dot* still farther north. They had a two minutes' interval after the starting gun at 4:07 in which to cross the line and the English boat was first to be started, close hauled on the starboard tack, followed several seconds later by *Polka Dot*, the American defender.

*Endeavor* did not point up as *Polka Dot* did by a full point. Daniels saw this and rowed up and put her about while *Polka Dot* went about at nearly the same time. Both tacked back again to starboard at 4:14 P.M., with the American boat 50 feet to windward. The air was shifting and both contestants made another hitch in which the American gained still more. Mr. Daniels was not used to sailing from a skiff, as in England they sail their models from shore to shore across a pond, doing all their adjusting before starting the boats.

Ten minutes after the start it fell a flat calm. *Endeavor* was heading N.W. with boom to port, *Polka Dot* heading S.W. with her sails trimmed the same way. Then an air came from astern, about due east, booms were let away out and what

was to be a beat to windward developed into a drift before the wind. *Endeavor* kept her boom to port until 4:55 by which time she had sailed half way across the bay and gone between a schooner and two oyster sloops. The latter, being to windward, pulled up their oyster rakes, started their motors, and swinging around moored out to give the little fellows clear wind. *Polka Dot*, meanwhile, had jibed a couple of times and kept farther away from the smacks and increased her lead to several hundred yards.

At 4:55 the westerly air was felt again and both boats flatted in for a beat to windward. *Polka Dot* made four tacks, fetching close around the mark-boat, leaving it to starboard, and with her sheets away out Mr. Bull started her back down wind. *Endeavor* made a short hitch on starboard tack, then took a long port board, fetching north of the buoy and then made it in one more short hitch.

Their official time will show how they stood at this point better than words:

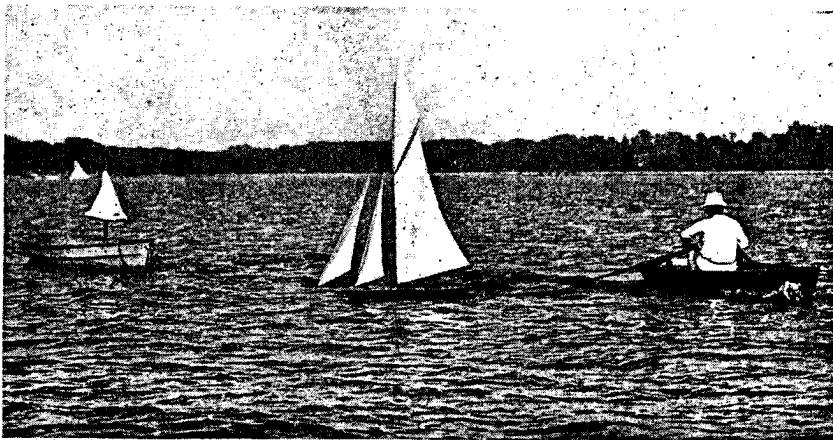
*Polka Dot*, first mark, 5:11:30.

*Endeavor*, first mark, 5:26:20.

At 5:15 *Polka Dot* running passed *Endeavor* beating out. The American yacht sailed a beautiful course back, running straight for the home mark until 5:40 P.M. when she came into a head wind and had to beat in to the finish of the first round. She made a very pretty turn, just clearing the mark



*Endeavor* in a soft spot, of which there were many.



*Polka Dot* filling away to round the windward mark.

boat by a few feet, and then Yankee luck attended her again. She seemed to just hit the puffs favorably. *Endeavor* was not half way home and was all but becalmed out in the middle of the bay, but no sooner had *Polka Dot* started on her second round than a nice south westerly puff darkened the water and, close hauled on the port tack, she rippled her way west half way across the bay before she ran into the doldrums. Her high rig seemed to fan her through these soft spots while the smaller sail spread of the English boat hardly moved her.

When *Endeavor* did drift through the calm spot that prevailed in the middle of the bay she ran with boom broad off, had to make a jibe to pass the mark-boat to starboard and, losing considerable time by going too far to leeward, rounded at 6:02:29 while *Polka Dot*, which had rounded at 5:47:50, was then away across the bay making several hitches against a westerly air near that mark. Bull jibed the *Polka Dot* the second time around the windward mark-boat at 6:20:20 but it looked so hopeless that many spectators had left the scene. These missed the best part of the whole race. According to the Model Yacht Racing Association rules a yacht must sail the three-mile course in two and a half hours, so *Polka Dot* had to make the run across the bay, three-quarters of a mile, in less than 19 minutes. The question, "Could she do it?" was on everyone's tongue. A model yachtsman on our boat who knew their capabilities said she could, and, as if to help her out, soon after she rounded the southwesterly breeze came sweeping across the bay and *Polka Dot* increased her speed until she was fairly flying before it with her owner bending his back trying to keep pace with her. Her sails bellied out hard and round, her gaff pressed clear around forward of her mast and her main boom lifted

high. Her long shovel-nosed bow was needed to keep her head up out of the seas as she flew through them, rolling a big bow wave and dragging a quarter wave that would curl a man's hair to look at, had she been a real boat.

A couple of hard puffs hit her and Mr. Bull had to adjust the tension on her helm to give her just the right amount, but when he got it set she came scudding for home like a homeward-bounder. Excitement among the spectators on accompanying yachts began to break out in shouts of encouragement to the winning skipper, watches were scanned closely and exclamations of "She'll do it!" "She'll make it!" became frequent.

And make it she did. She made that three-quarter mile in 12 minutes and 43 seconds, and as the gun on the committee boat boomed the signal of her victory you'd have thought it was the finish of an international race between 90-footers instead of six-foot models. People cheered, whistles screeched and pan-

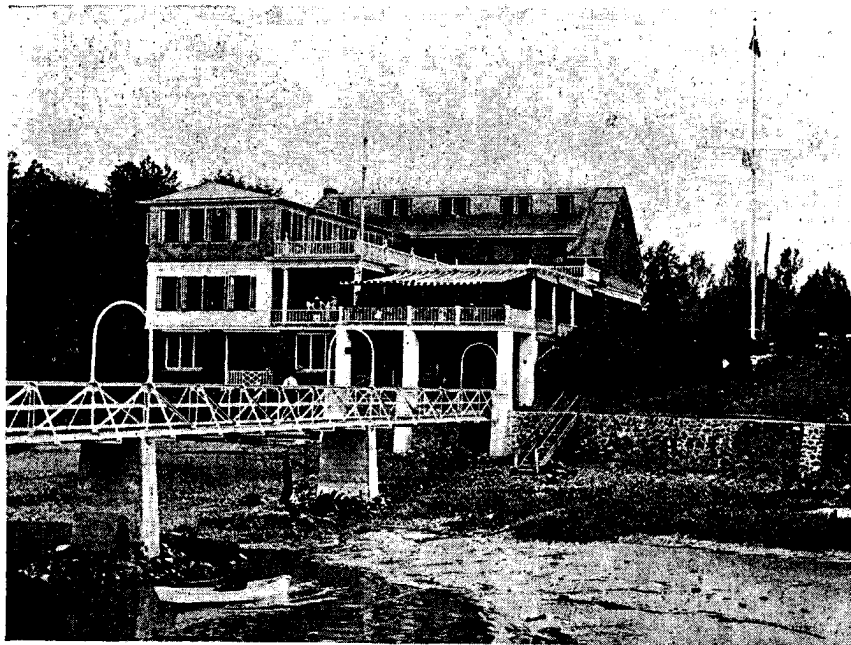
demonium reigned for a moment, while *Polka Dot*, with head sheets let fly, lay bobbing head up into the wind and Bull mopped the perspiration off his face; a tired but happy man.

*Endeavor* had made one long port tack, and then one to starboard but was a hundred yards still to leeward of the weather mark when *Polka Dot* finished at 6:33:03.

We on the judges' boat saw *Polka Dot* finish and then hurried across the bay and arrived just as *Endeavor* fetched the mark, but instead of rounding, Mr. Daniels, hearing the boom of the gun, thought the time limit was up and started *Endeavor* for home, not finishing the race.

### The Second Race

This race was over a triangular course, three miles in length, a mile to each leg of the triangle. Starting from the Bayside Yacht Club regatta boat anchored off the Douglaston shore, the course was a



The Bayside Yacht Club played host to the contestants and all those who came to see the races.

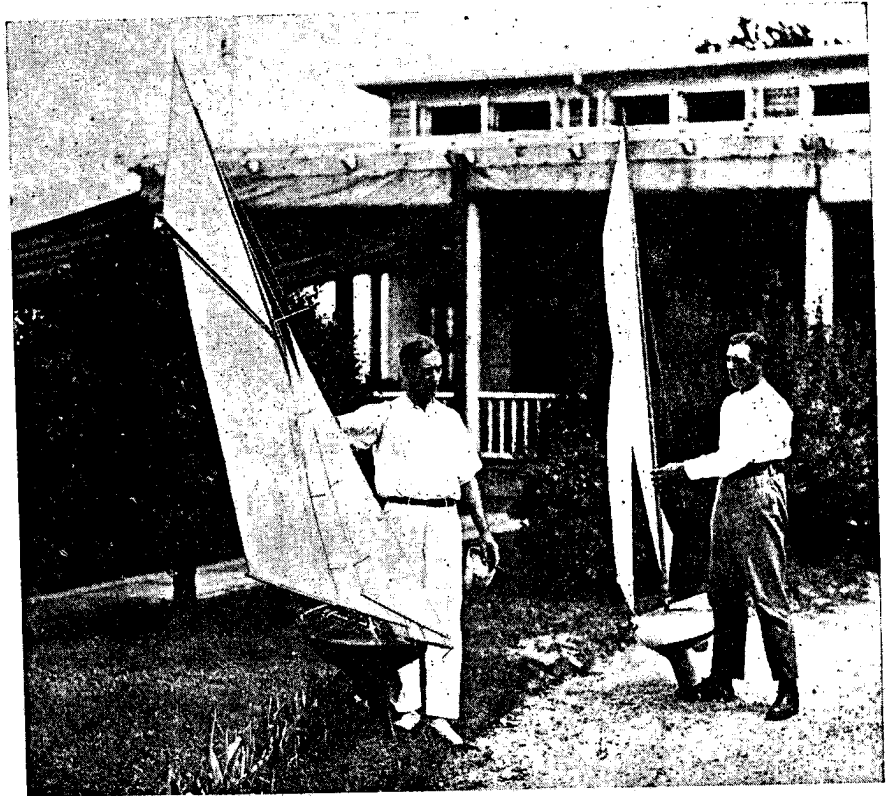
little west of north to a spar buoy off Elm Point, then about southwest, across the mouth of the bay to a spar buoy off Willets Point, and back to the starting point up in the bay.

Unfortunately during all three days' races the weather was exceedingly sultry and calm, ending, the day after the last race, in one of the worst and most destructive thunderstorms that has visited this section in years. But at the starting time of this race the bay was like a sheet of glass and the race after being postponed for an hour, waiting for a breeze, was started at 4:05:00 P.M. What air there was was dead astern, and *Endeavor* led over the line followed closely by *Polka Dot*. There had been some comment in the first race on the number of times the American boat had been touched by her owner in trimming sail and conning her through the calm streaks, so during the second and third race I kept accurate tabs on each touch, which, with each tack, is recorded in the accompanying charts.

Mr. Bull had touched *Polka Dot* 43 times by the time she had started on the second leg of the course, while Mr. Daniels arrived at the buoy having touched *Endeavor* but 35 times. To keep the models from drifting north in the baffling airs many touches were required and when, finally, a little after five o'clock, a nice stiff, steady westerly air did strike in the score of touches was about even up, 50 for each.

The 55th time Mr. Bull trimmed *Polka Dot* the breeze caught her and away she romped, deck edge to, as fast as he could row in the skiff, steering a course as steady and true as if she were being guided by human hands.

While the *Endeavor* was coming up it soon became evident that she was doing it at a loss in eating out to windward, as she was fetching considerably to leeward of *Polka Dot*. *Polka Dot* came about to port first to get far enough to windward to weather the second mark and then the excitement started—for each race seemed to be seasoned with a bit of this spice. Bull, in endeavoring to keep pace with his yacht, broke an oar lock and went heels up on his back. Scrambling to his feet he made the model yachtsman's signal of distress, an oar held vertically in the air. Then he tried to stand up and paddle but soon saw *Polka Dot* would cross the Sound ahead of him at that rate, and gave up disgusted. The regatta committee's launch came



The challenger and defender. W. J. Daniels, (right) with *Endeavor*, E. A. Bull with *Polka Dot*.

quickly to his rescue, took his skiff in tow and went full speed ahead until it overtook the *Polka Dot*.

Daniels, in the meantime came about on the same tack and the race was undoubtedly his. About the time Bull was ranged up and close enough to swing his yacht about the *Endeavor* tacked for the buoy.

running in a strong ebb, and both skiff and model were swept to leeward of the buoy. So, trimming in sheets, he started on the port tack to beat up again to windward of the buoy. *Polka Dot*, in the meantime, had been caught, and with sheets broad off to go well around the buoy went scudding for the home mark with wind and tide helping her. *Endeavor* still had a good chance as *Polka Dot* had overstood the mark in her runaway career, and the former was just passing the buoy when Mr. Daniels let her go, after slacking off sheets, and everyone was on tiptoe of expectancy. It looked as if it were going to be a neck and neck race to the finish. Off scudded *Endeavor* with all eyes focused upon her, when actually one could hear a groan of horror throughout the fleet as she was seen to pass the buoy again on the wrong side. She had not gone around it. That settled it, she had lost her chance for good and all. Daniels rowed like mad, caught her again and flatted her in once more for the buoy but the three judges who had glasses watching her saw her miss it and pass again to leeward instead of to windward of the buoy.



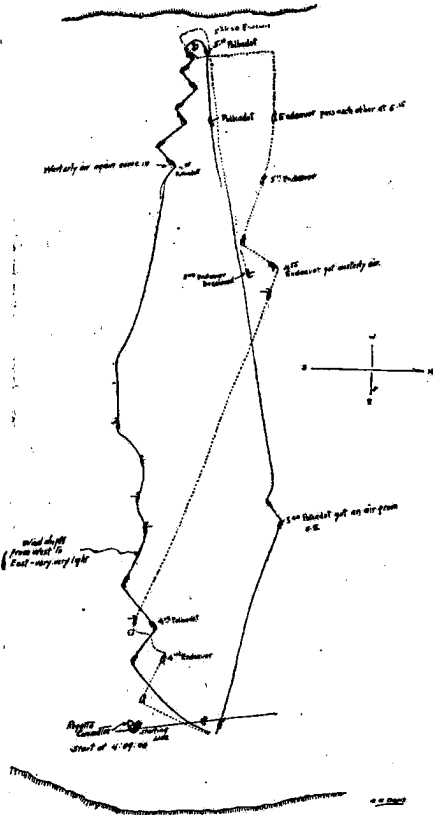
Commodore W. H. Johns of the Bay-side Y. C., who helped make the series a success.

Mr. Bull changed boats and then started a stern chase after *Polka Dot*, which was heading full speed for Willets Point unattended.

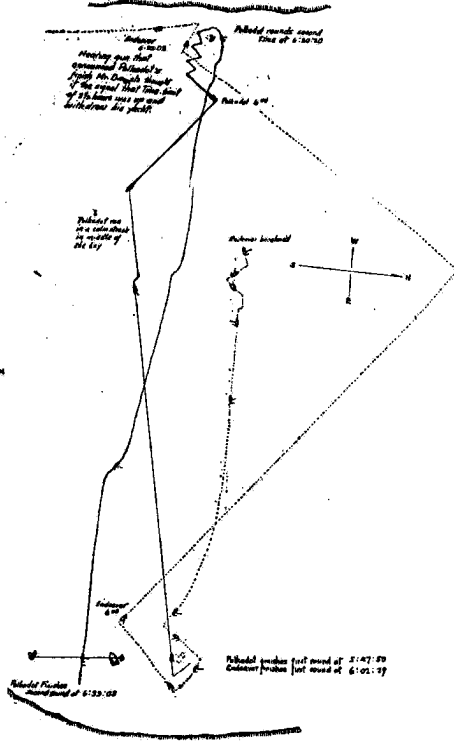
Then things happened with *Endeavor*. Mr. Daniels caught her just to windward of the buoy and started to slack off her sheets for a run home, but he didn't calculate on the strength of the tide, now

*Polka Dot* ran half way home without being touched. A few adjustments were made as she neared the finish line and with a noisy welcome greeting her, swept across the finish line, winner of the second race, at 6:09:19, a miniature cup defender in looks and actions.

FIRST RACE - First Round  
BAYSIDE L.I. JUNE 8-1922.  
Winds West 1/2 NW



FIRST RACE - Second Round  
BAYSIDE L.I. JUNE 8 1922  
Winds West 1/2 NW



Charts of courses sailed.

ward of the mark and Mr. Daniels had slacked sheets and let her go for home when the main boom jibed and, like a child that had been punished for doing wrong and warned not to do so again, *Endeavor*, just to show she could do as she pleased, deliberately luffed clear up into the wind and sailed back until she was on the same side of the mark-boat on which she had approached it.

"Poor Daniels!" was all one could hear. If one man said it a dozen did and I did for one. He chased that contrary critter, caught her and made her round the mark-boat a second time, which is the time the official figures show.

Both boats made a quick, straight run to the turn at the home mark.

*Polka Dot* rounded the weather mark the second time at 4:36:25, *Endeavor* at 4:47:35.

*Polka Dot* won by a wide margin, finishing at 4:56:09 amid great applause and *Endeavor* finished at 5:05:54 and was given the same reception. *Endeavor* had gained 1 minute and 25 seconds on the run home.

**The Third Race**

There was a breeze at the start of this race for the first time during the series and the start was made at 3:22 P.M. with *Endeavor* first by a few lengths, which Mr. Bull preferred. *Endeavor* footed and pointed higher and everyone seemed pleased that she did. Daniels was a good sport and had won the hearts of the yachtsmen and all hoped he'd win some races at least.

Mr. Bull made three or four changes in trim but Daniels just let his boat go about her own business and she surely was licking the Yankee fair and square. She took long tacks and few of them while *Polka Dot* made one or two extra hitches. When half way to the weather mark the latter managed to split tacks with *Endeavor*, whose owner seemed content to let her do so; but this proved disastrous, for Bull took advantage of a slight shift of wind and when up near the weather mark walked out to windward of *Endeavor* and rounded with a comfortable lead.

*Polka Dot*, first mark, 3:49:00

*Endeavor*, first mark, 3:54:12

But these official times don't tell the story. It should have been only about a minute between the two yachts but for the persistency of hard luck that seemed to attend *Endeavor* every time she rounded a windward mark.

She had passed clear to wind-

SECOND RACE  
BAYSIDE L.I. JUNE 9 1922.

