

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

The 2005–07 Blue Water Round the World Cruising Rally left Gibraltar in October for a 20-month circumnavigation. Maintaining a cruising-only ethos, boats from eight nations will follow the trade winds through some of the world's most interesting and beautiful cruising grounds, including the Galápagos and South Pacific islands. Although the rally follows a set route, independent cruising is encouraged and boats can join the rally at various ports of call. Many, for instance, will join in Australia as part of the Oz-Med Rally, attracted by the safety of sailing as a group through dangerous regions, such as Indonesia and the Red Sea, where anti-piracy procedures are implemented. You can track the rally's progress and read participants' logs at www.yachtrallies.co.uk.

UP NEXT

BE IN THE KEYS



If you race (even occasionally), Key West should be on your mind this month, if not on your calendar. Few would dispute that Acura Key West Race Week, January 16–20, is the top inshore regatta in North America. Count the reasons why: dependable (and warm) winds, top competition, winter respite. Highlights this year are the Swan 45 class's Gold Cup and the inaugural IRC National Championship. See you there.



The Pixel is a pistol

The Pixel's Place

» THE TIME HAS COME FOR a change on Long Island Sound. For decades the Blue Jay, a hard-chinned double-handed junior trainer, has served as a bridge boat to the performance-oriented 420. A Jay teaches kids how to fly a spinnaker, sail with others, and race around the buoys. But its de-

sign—Sparkman & Stephens, circa 1947—is dated. For kids, this isn't cool.

Along came the Pixel, the latest creation from designer Bruce Kirby of Laser fame. The Pixel was targeted as a replacement for the Blue Jay. The Junior Sailing Association of Long Island was looking for a boat with Blue

Jay-like stability and a lot more performance. Weighing in at 185 pounds, the 14-foot Pixel has an open transom (self-bailing), a carbon-fiber mast, and a symmetric spinnaker. Kirby could have gone with an asymmetric chute, but the JSA prefers a symmetric for training purposes.

The boat is built by Flying Eagle Boatworks outside of Shanghai, China. Money talked on this decision. It was the only affordable way to build an epoxy hull and 7-pound carbon spar to sell for \$5,995, roughly \$1,000 less than the Blue Jay.

When he designed the Pixel, Kirby had in mind two 120-pounders on board, probably coming out of an Optimist dinghy. The official decision to replace the Jay with the Pixel was made by JSA in late October. Now, Kirby says, "the lid is off." **Josh Adams**

SAILS AND MARKETING

Picture This

» AS THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY continues to reinvent itself, ads are popping up in all kinds of new places—a product placement in a movie, a pop-up video on a Web site, a tattoo on a man's body. For years competitive sailors have sold signage on their sails, but with limited success. That might be because they treat the sail as a vehicle that carries the ad. There's one sailor who is proving that the sail is the advertisement.

In the early 1990s, with his Fort Lauderdale, Florida, charter business struggling, Aaron Kiss took an aggressive step to generate business by putting advertisements on his sails. It worked. Tourists were introduced to his business, revenue increased, and serendipity led to Kiss's new business in outdoor advertising. Using

a patented four-layer laminate, Photo Sails builds full-sail advertisements. A 300-dpi photograph on a PVC laminate, which is built to withstand exposure to sunlight, forms the sail's outer layer (on both sides). Then the sail, which is designed by the local Doyle loft or Nance and Underwood Rigging and Sails, is finished using familiar sail-making techniques, with reinforcements in high-load areas.



Trimming the ad

Kiss's sails include a catamaran's full-sailplan ad for Tequila beer. Speaking as the only expert in his field, Kiss promises bigger things to come. In the works is a close-to-shore racing series styled after NASCAR. "Until now sailing sponsorship has been addressed from the sailor's point of view—getting someone to pay for a record attempt, for example," he says. "We're coming at it from the sponsor's point of view." **J.A.**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREG GEIGER, MILFORD YACHT CLUB (TOP); PETER MCGOWAN (LEFT); COURTESY OF PHOTO SAILS (BOTTOM)