



The Ditty Bag

The Junior Sailing Association of Long Island Sound Newsletter

SPECIAL EDITION

JSA Selects the Pixel as New Double-handed Boat

The JSA published the following news release after its October 19 Annual Meeting held at Larchmont Yacht Club.

We are mailing this special edition of the Ditty Bag to all JSA family members so you may be aware of the details behind this announcement.

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LARCHMONT, NY - October 20, 2005 - The Junior Sailing Association of Long Island Sound (JSA) announced today that it has chosen the 14-foot Pixel as its new double-handed training and racing sailboat. The decision was made after a three-year process that included extensive research, boat testing and feedback from JSA members.

The Pixel is a new one-design boat by Bruce Kirby, who also designed the Laser and Sonar. It will be used within the JSA as a transition boat between Optimists and Lasers or Club 420s, primarily by junior sailors who are 12 to 15 years old.

"We think it's very important to have a boat that bridges this gap," said Amy Kellogg, JSA chairman. "Not every junior sailor fits into an Optimist or Laser, and not everyone wants to sail by themselves." Pixels will be used for both recreational sailing and racing, with a full schedule of seminars and regattas planned by the JSA for the summer of 2006.

The Pixel will eventually replace the venerable Blue Jay, which has served as a training and racing boat for generations of Long Island Sound junior sailors since the 1950s. "For many reasons we felt it was time for a change," said Fran MeVay, former JSA chairman. "We were looking for a boat that is safer, easier to sail and more fun. The Pixel fit our requirements almost perfectly."

Pixels are 13 feet nine inches long and weigh 185 pounds. They have a mainsail and jib with a sail area of 94 square feet, plus a symmetrical spinnaker. The boats are built in China using epoxy resin, and they come with carbon fiber masts. Pixels have a simple layout with a self-bailing cockpit, and can be sailed by two or three sailors. "I tried to give the Pixel an optimal combination of stability and performance," said designer Bruce Kirby. "So it can handle a wide range of crew weights and skill levels."

The JSA of LIS was founded in 1924 and currently supports junior sailors at nearly 50 member programs in western Long Island Sound. Each summer it sponsors an extensive schedule of junior regattas and clinics. Among its many activities, the JSA of LIS fosters ethical behavior, safety on the water, coach training and big boat sailing.

For more information about the JSA of LIS or the Pixel, go to the JSA website www.jsalis.org or contact Bob Whittredge, JSA Executive Director, at info@jsalis.org or 914-834-4202.

Frequently Asked Questions about JSA's selection of the Pixel

JSA of LIS October 2005

What's a Pixel?

The Pixel is a new 14-foot sailboat created by Bruce Kirby (designer of the Laser, Sonar and Ideal 18) in response to the JSA's search for a new training boat. It is a simple one-design with a current look and modern construction. For more information and photos of the boat, go to <http://www.brucekirbymarine.com/pixel.html>

What's good about the Pixel?

The Pixel is designed to be fast, fun, safe and easy to sail, so it's a good training boat for the two or three transition years between Optimists and Lasers or 420s. It will appeal to both racing and recreational sailors who are too heavy for an Opti, don't like singlehanded sailing, or just want to practice sailing with a jib and spinnaker. The Pixel is light enough to car-top, but also stable. If it capsizes it won't turtle very easily and it's easy to right, plus the hull is self-bailing. Pixels can easily accommodate two or three sailors of varying weights and skill levels.

Who should sail the Pixel?

The Pixel is designed to be an all-around boat. For recreational sailors, it is fun and a good learning platform. For racers, it offers performance across all sailing conditions. It is appropriate for sailors who are too big for an Optimist, don't like sailing singlehanded, or want to learn more about sailing a boat with a jib and spinnaker.

Are there any age or weight limits for Pixel racing?

The Pixel class rules will not specify any age or weight requirements for sailing the boat. However, for reasons of safety and fairness, there will be limitations for sailors participating in JSA open events (just as there are for Laser, Radial and Club 420 events). For these events, Pixel sailors must be at least 12 and no older than 15 (both are their "JSA age" on December 31 of that year). For a two-person Pixel crew, the helmsperson and crew must weigh a minimum of 190 pounds fully dressed for sailing and there will be no waiver of this minimum weight. For a three-person Pixel crew, there is no minimum weight.

How did JSA select the Pixel?

Three years ago the JSA formed a Boat Review Committee (BRC) to evaluate all the JSA-endorsed boats. The BRC ended up focusing on the Blue Jay and the question of whether we might find a boat that could better meet the needs of our sailors. For three years the BRC gathered information and opinions. During the past year they organized six or seven boat testing sessions and solicited feedback from JSA members. The result of all this was a recommendation by the BRC, in early fall 2005, that the JSA endorse the Pixel. The JSA Board then voted unanimously to select the Pixel as the new JSA multiperson training boat.

What criteria did you use for picking a new boat?

The very first job for the Boat Review Committee was to identify the qualities that were desirable for JSA's double-handed trainer. We wanted a boat that was safe, fun, stable, simple, comfortable, durable, transportable, self-rescuing and a good performer. It needed to be reasonably priced with a good supply of boats and parts. Most importantly, the boat had to accommodate two or three sailors from 10 to 15 years old with a variety of crew weights and sailing skills. In almost all these categories, the Pixel earned the highest marks, especially from those who had a chance to sail it.

Why didn't JSA choose the Club 420 with cut-down sails?

There are several reasons why we favored the Pixel:

- 1) We feel the Pixel is a significantly better design for this age group because it is easier to sail, more fun, easier to rig and launch, and more stable. Most importantly, it is safer because after a capsize it's less likely to turn turtle and much easier to right than a 420.
- 2) We were concerned about losing older sailors to boredom if they stayed in the same boat for four or five years.
- 3) We spent a lot of time discussing the economics of boat selection. In the end, we were not convinced that there would be much of an economic advantage to using the C420. Even if there was a slight economic benefit, we did not feel it was worth anywhere near enough to put our junior sailors in the wrong boat.

Now that the JSA has endorsed the Pixel, what will happen with the Blue Jay?

Though the Pixel will eventually replace the Blue Jay, the JSA intends to support Blue Jay sailing and racing as long as there is a critical mass of Blue Jays.

Will JSA schedule Blue Jay regattas next summer?

Yes. The 2006 JSA schedule of Blue Jay racing will be similar to what it has been during the last few years. As long as there are enough entries, we will continue to schedule Blue Jay regattas. It is also likely that clubs will schedule Blue Jay novice regattas in 2006, though we hope that younger sailors will begin sailing the Pixel.

Can we continue to use the Blue Jay for instruction?

Sure. Each club can choose whichever boats they want for their junior sailing program. In the long run, we encourage all member clubs to switch to the Pixel, if possible, because we think they are better boats for learning and racing.

Should we put Pixels and Blue Jays in the same class during our sailing program?

Yes. In fact, the JSA recommends this for several reasons. First, you won't need any additional instructors or coach boats. Second, the Pixel and Blue Jay sailors should be fairly similar in age and skill level. And third, it's a good way to get a critical mass of boats together for practice drills and fun! (Keep in mind, though, that the Pixel will outperform the Blue Jay, so don't focus on race results.)

What can we do with our current Blue Jay(s)?

Some clubs that own Blue Jays are planning to keep using them in their programs for the next year or longer. Other clubs and owners may be selling their boats to individuals or organizations outside of Long Island Sound. The JSA will research available options and may post suggestions on our website (www.jsalis.org),

Does our club need to hire a new instructor for Pixels?

No. The Pixel is easy to rig and sail, so almost any instructor can learn how to teach in this boat. The JSA will be organizing Pixel seminars for instructors next year before the summer sailing season, and the Pixel distributor has offered to run clinics during the summer for any club with Pixels. Since Pixels and Blue Jays will go to the same regattas, one instructor should be able to handle both.

Will there be Pixel regattas in 2006?

Yes. The JSA will be organizing a full schedule of Pixel racing for the summer of 2006. These will likely include Districts, Larchmont Race Week, Blue Jay/Pixel Race Week, the Pequot Regatta and a new JSA Pixel Champs. Most JSA Pixel regattas will be held in conjunction with Blue Jay events to simplify logistics for participating clubs. Depending on the number of boats, there may also be some novice Pixel races in 2006. In addition, the Pixel Class will be organizing regattas for Pixel sailors of all ages and from outside JSA.

Frequently Asked Questions about how to get a Pixel

Nearwater Boats October 2005

These questions were answered by Wes Oliver, the owner of Nearwater Boats, which imports and distributes the Pixel.

Where can I buy a Pixel?

Pixels are available from:

Nearwater Boats

10 Nearwater Road

Rowayton, CT 06853-1711

Phone: (203) 855-8923

E-Mail: wwoliver@optonline.net

During the next few months, Nearwater Boats will be setting up dealers in New York and Connecticut to handle new boat sales and stock parts.

How much does a new Pixel cost?

The price for a new Pixel, including sails but excluding a trailer or dolly, is just under \$6000. If you make a group purchase of five or more boats, the price is \$5650.

Can I join with other clubs or people to get the group price?

Yes. The only requirements are that all the boats must be delivered to one destination, and there must be one person who represents the group during the purchase. You may contact Nearwater Boats to learn about buying groups that may be forming.

Are there any used Pixels available for purchase?

Pixels have been sailing for less than a year, so there are not many used boats around yet. The good news is that if you buy a new Pixel now it will probably maintain a high resale value, especially for the next couple of years until there are more used boats available.

Will I be able to find spare parts for a Pixel?

The Pixel is delivered with everything you need to go sailing right away and it seems to be durable, so you shouldn't need too many parts. If you do, most of the fittings on the boat are "off-the-shelf" items that can be purchased from your local marine store or Pixel dealer. Nearwater Boats and Pixel dealers will also carry boat-specific parts such as masts, rudders, tillers and so on.

Is the Pixel a one-design boat?

Definitely. The Pixel Class will have very strict one-design rules. The intent will be to keep the cost of the boat low and to make sure that everyone is sailing exactly the same boat. Even the Pixel's sails will be one-design, like the Laser. Bruce Kirby has been closely involved with the Laser Class for over 30 years and will ensure that the Pixel Class rules are similar.