

## WHY WE LOST

By Lieut. Commander Graham Mann R.N.

*Author Graham Mann, Sceptre's skipper, is sailing master of the Royal Dragon Class sloop Bluebottle, in which he won the Bronze medal (for third place) at the 1956 Olympics.*



Photograph by Morris Rosenfeld

LIEUT. COMM. GRAHAM MANN R.N.

**T**HERE seems little doubt that we lost to a better boat. Columbia's hull form proved to be more sea kindly when it was rough and at all times she outpointed Sceptre to windward. I had always considered that the 17th challenger was a very fast boat and it was not until the third race that I really felt that we were beaten.

Before the start of the first race I tacked for the line about two minutes before the gun and the wind seemed to desert us. Briggs Cunningham, who had borne away ahead of us before the gun was therefore able to sail straight away from us on the gun. At the start of the abortive race on September 22 the wind headed us, so that I had to pinch round the committee boat, allowing Columbia to sail through my weather. We were heartened by a private breeze and the way in which the red, white and blue Herbulot spinnaker kept Sceptre in front on that long run to the first mark. I was really unwilling to blame the boat until the second proper race when in a breeze of 8 to 10 knots Columbia outpointed us on the beat.

At the start in light weather I was reluctant to start trying to chase Columbia for fear of stopping dead.

It was a bit shattering to find how wide Columbia went to windward in a blow. In the third race she started abeam to leeward and ate up to lee bow us in an astonishing manner. In the last race it was a bit stupid of me to be over the line by 3 feet after I had done to Briggs more or less what he did to Bus Mosbacher in the final race of the trials.

As we were usually behind on the reaches and runs we had to try something different, but so often Columbia was well enough ahead not to have to worry about us. We placed our faith in the Herbulot spinnakers, which may have been a bit too big for the reaches in a good breeze. However, provided there was any wind they were excellent when running.

As for the other sails Columbia's light weather mainsail (the Purple People Eater) seemed better than ours, but in medium and heavy there seemed to be little difference. The mainsails we used were from Ratsey & Lapthorn's Cowes & Gosport lofts. Our City Island triple mitre jib was a beauty in a good blow and in light weather our Watts genoa was good. After the abortive race, G. Colin Ratsey made us two new light genoas; one very full and very light which was to be set flying and which was never used. The other was a light one with

hanks, which we used on the last reach in the second and fourth races.

We copied Columbia's technique for changing jibs and Vim's spinnaker gybe. The luff rope groove on the U.S. boat's mast was a good refinement as were the reels for mainsheet and runner tails. The compasses were good and well situated. I thought our coffee grinders were probably better than Columbia's.

We had some gear failures. Two jib sheets parted just outside the genoa sheet lead blocks. The spinnaker guy parted on the second leg in the last race and started a chain of gear failures. The spinnaker sheet was caught under the mainboom. As we tried to clear it the boat lurched and the weight of wind in the spinnaker lifted it and the mainboom end, breaking it just near the vang. The spinnaker boom end fitting broke off, probably strained when the guy parted and we used the boom to fish the main boom just before we gybed at the second mark.

I have nothing but praise for my crew during these incidents and, for that matter, during the whole series. We found the tows out to the start rather tedious and sometimes slightly wet. The spectator fleet was astonishingly well handled and the Coast Guard

can be congratulated on their fine work.

The basic cause of our defeat may have been our using the test tank at Saunders-Roe purely as a referee and not as an aid to development of the best model. I am told that the time factor made it more or less imperative. There was a theory that the twelve metres were virtually a one-design class which may be erroneous.

It was a great pity that we could not give Columbia and her fine skipper and crew a better race. Sceptre's real crushing defeat, far from depressing the syndicate who owns her, seems to have stimulated them. It seems probable that her model will be tested again and also that steps will be taken to try to entice American twelve metre owners to bring their boats to England next summer. Then, maybe, we shall see another challenge before long. I certainly hope so.

## A TALE FOR THE LADIES

By NORRIS D. HOYT

**O**N a peaceable morning in early September, Anna Wright Baker, daughter of Sceptre's American hostess, was as relaxed as the mother of two red-headed children ever gets. Stretched warily in the sun, she watched her busy offspring in the shallows, and dug holes into the beach with her bare toes. Beside her, nosed into the sand, was her venerable launch Stormy, 11 feet wide and 20 feet long. It had been a hard summer for Stormy, frequently pressed into emergency service to convey Sceptre's crew members from Jamestown across the bay to Newport. Its ancient engine, matronly beam, and pompous pace had earned Anna the name of "Tugboat Annie," a title of affection and amusement.

A little after eleven, when all good Britons have lunched ('levenses) and Americans are getting liverish, Joe Brooks, Sceptre's navigator, and his wife appeared in a state of emergency. Joe had to get aboard the British Destroyer H.M.S. Troubridge, and thence to some nameless rendezvous with destiny. His wife had to convey a cordiality to Troubridge's skipper and come back to base. Could Anna? She wasn't formally attired (bare feet, surfers, shirt, sand in hair), but her protests were mere formalities, and shortly all hands were embarked on Stormy's shuddering de-