



This gives an idea of the scale of the M with the big rigs, and these are big tall guys. Gary Boell (L) is holding his 2016 Mantra design from Jeff Byerley in Tasmania. Bruce Andersen (R) is holding his almost finished all carbon Vickers design, a thoroughly modern M built in 2016 that needs time on the water and something more than primer paint. A long skinny modern bulb would be nice too. Bruce generously brought three Marbleheads and all sailed – that how to promote a class. Chris Sullivan photo.

2017 M Midwinters Friendly (Feb 10, 2017)
Mission Bay Model Yacht Pond in San Diego, CA

Bob Wells reporting

It is nice to have a preliminary before the main event, and for the second time we had a Friday Marblehead class friendly regatta as the prelim for the IOM 2-day Midwinters regatta. If you sailed in both regattas you got three days of winter sailing in bucket list balmy conditions hosted by the San Diego Argonauts. Ten Ms joined the fray and the event was a success. I'll bet they do it again next year. It is just talk now, but that's how this event happened and we now have momentum. There is also talk to try and get the M's sailing as a class again in California, and maybe to continue to sail it as a prelim to IOM multi-day regattas.

The fleet was mostly a collection of boats that have been stored for decades and need some love desperately, but there were three modern boats. Gary Boell sailed his sweet 2016 Mantra by Jeff Byerley of Mirage Radio Yachts. This has sailed once before - the 2016 Worlds on Lake Garda, where Gary had an impressive mid-fleet finish as a noob to Ms. Then that boat went back in the box until this regatta. Clearly Gary didn't figure out the light air tune, because he was the heavy favorite with my bookie. Gary, don't you rake "back" in light air?

Bruce Andersen and Mike Eldred were sailing a recent Ian Vickers design that looked like a stretched slightly skinny IOM V9 to me. They built them over a weekend in 2016 and were never quite completed. In Eldred's case, it is like the carpenter that never quite finds the time to work on his own home. Mike had water intrusion issues, so he pulled his boat out early. Bruce actually worked on his over the year at home, and he was frustrated he couldn't make it go like he wanted. It just looks like it needs a finish coat of paint to me, but what do I know?

The prettiest boats in the fleet to my eye were the two black carbon ones from SAILSetc with white deck patch. They have been sitting in storage for a decade or more, and they look flawless, if a little dated, with the shorter thicker fin and bulb. The shorter fin was a plus I think in the light air that we sailed in. George Pedrick was sailing the RAD, the very boat that Graham Bantock won the WC with in 1998 in Viry-Châtillon, France. So, this beauty is 18-19 years old. His wife, Gene Harris, sailed a Paradox that apparently is from the early 1990s. Both are lightly used and the Mylar sails and everything look new. This was an easy win for George I think, who is one of our best left coast skippers.

Jerry Brower showed up with a 30-year-old Viper+ by Bob Sterne in Canada with clear Kevlar hull with Coverite style film deck on balsa beams, plus lots of dust and cobwebs. The Viper is optimized for light air and flat water, so that was a plus. As always Jerry was competitive and he sailed better than his

equipment suggested he should to 2nd place. He won the first race to show he was in it to win it, but the more modern foils and rigs were hard for him to stay with.



No sailing photos were available from our event, so to show what Ms look like in big rigs on flat water I grabbed this from the UK Marblehead Sailing Class website [here](#). It is a good place to visit for Ms. Most of our boats were more vintage and few of our sails were this quality, but it gives an idea of the scale, proportions and grace of the Marblehead.

Joe Damico sailed an older Scapel that he borrowed from Bruce Andersen. From the funky swept back fin I'll say it was an earlier version that was ridden hard and put away wet. Joe was quick upwind and doggy downwind, until the RMG mount broke and the boat retired.

At the other side of the spectrum the recently retired Bob Dustin showed up from Washington state with a big smile and not knowing anybody. He sailed a Swede Johnson ORCO Skinny designed in San Diego. It is an earlier garage built boat sans the exotic carbon and sophisticated foils and rigs. Still it predicted the M move to going skinny and was designed for the local waters, but it has had a hard life. Bob lucked out because he borrowed Bruce Andersen's Pikanto so he also sailed two days with the IOMs and he has a bunch of new friends. I'm afraid he is hopelessly hooked on radio sailing now. (Update – three days after Midwinters Bob has purchased a V9. Hopelessly hooked indeed!)

Fred Rocha showed up in his West Marine work cloths to be PRO, so you know it was well run.

M Results after 8 Races with one throw-out:

Place	Skipper	Sail	Hull	City, State	Score
1	George Pedrick	71	Rad (SAILSetc)	Richmond, CA	8.0
2	Jerry Brower	42	Viper+ (Bob Sterne)	Lake Stevens, WA	14.0
3	Gary Boell	171	Mantra (Mirage Radio Yachts)	Richmond, CA	15.0
4	Bob Wells	16Pink	Martin Firebrace design	Mercer Island, WA	18.0
5	Jon Dough	1	Own design	San Diego, CA	28.0
6	Gene Harris	79	Paradox (SAILSetc)	Richmond, CA	34.0
7	Bruce Andersen	16Red	Ian Vickers Design	Boise, ID	35.0
8	Bob Dustin	18	ORCO Skinny (Swede Johnson)	Washington State	37.0
9	Joe Damico	38	Skapel (Walicki)	Sequim, WA	53.0
10	Mike Eldred	39	Ian Vickers Design	San Diego, CA	65.0

This was my first experience sailing an M in a regatta as well as sailing a swing rig. Adapting to the swing rig took no time at all. My steed was evidently the last M that the legendary Martin Firebrace designed, and Bruce Andersen loaned it to me. Bruce and Mike Eldred built one each of these together too. It looks like a slightly beamy modern M to my eye with a long skinny fin and all carbon construction. The carbon rigs and Amen sails are much older, and I noticed a stamp for the "1998 US Nationals". Bruce thought they were at least ten years older than that. Mostly I used the A+ rig in a clear scrim Mylar, and when it got lighter the full hoist A rig with a light jib in Test 505 fabric, which Bruce said is for 3-5 knots in Central Park. Swing rigs are fun to tune as you just hold the butt in your hand and swing back and forth to test shape. You can adjust everything on it, which is a danger for a rookie like me.

There's always some dread when you sail borrowed kit that has been in storage for years. I started with the A+ rig to suit the wind and struggled early to no surprise. For downwind there was some End Point adjustment to resolve and the swing rig was sticky so McLube was applied a few times to resolve. The performance issue was that mainsail was really tired and I lacked the beans to stay with the top guys. But I was having a great time and my finishes were improving as the boat was getting sorted: 9th (grounded twice!), 6th, 6th, 4th, 3rd, and 3rd. When have you ever been in a regatta and your finishes never regressed?

That last race was getting light so I switched to the full hoist light rig, and immediately wished I had done this the race before. I'd say the wind was maybe 2 knots and the water was flat, and it was so light the woolly telltales just hung. This rig looked a lot better though and that Test 505 jib was so soft it told me when I was pinching. I was fast, and I knew it! I won the next race with a healthy gap to the next finisher. The last race I sailed into some holes early and George Pedrick jumped to a big lead on the fleet. I start slowly reeling him in, but at the last leeward gate he still enjoys a sizeable lead. But I'm faster and higher because my soft jib lets me keep finding the elusive groove. George can only guess if he is footing or pinching with his Mylar jib that is too heavy for the conditions. John Ebey bet on me at the last leeward mark, but it didn't look like smart money at the time (thanks for the support!). I make steady gains on each shift the whole leg, and it was in doubt right to the end. I pipped George by a boat length by catching the last few shifts a little quicker. That was fun finishing with two bullets after such low expectations. I'm hooked...



The author holding his borrowed Firebrace M after the last race. Love that Test 505 jib, and I don't care how old it is! Note we wet launch and the water is almost up to my pockets. The cell phone moved to my jacket. Chris Sullivan photo.