

# Meet the PIXEL

*A Bright Future for LIS Sailors*

*By Tuck Northrop and Matt Gurney (Matt's comments are italicized)\**

Many a year has the Blue Jay been the workhorse of Long Island Sound sailing programs. The 13'6 "J" represented a rite of passage for junior sailors, marking the first opportunity to sail with a crew and fly a spinnaker. For those of you who don't know, the Blue Jay was born in 1947 at the hand of Drake H. Sparkman, and has sailed faithfully under every color and every name imaginable since then.

There comes a time, however, when every legend must step down and allow the future to take hold. The JSA of LIS had been looking for a more "sailable" boat to replace the Blue Jay, setting their sights on a vessel that would be faster and more exciting while maintaining a standard of safety and stability suitable for intermediate sailors.

Enter sailing legend Bruce Kirby, an Olympian and the man who gave the world the Laser, the Sonar, Ideal 18, two America's Cup 12-meters and a host of other one designs. After careful speculation and design, Kirby has unveiled another masterpiece, the PIXEL. Coming in at 13'9, the epoxy-hulled boat boasts a carbon fiber mast, a sleek hull design, and a slew of features that are safe *and* fast; in short, it's just what the doctor ordered.

I was recently given the opportunity to sail a PIXEL at Norwalk Yacht Club, and was absolutely floored by its performance. As Kirby and Wes Oliver of Nearwater Boats walked Matt and me through the rigging process, I grew doubtful, wondering if a boat that was so simple and user-friendly could possibly perform well on the water. *I was excited that I would be testing a new boat, but even though it was designed by Bruce Kirby, I was not sure what to expect. I was thinking 'this is a replacement for the Blue Jay', which is not one of my favorite boats.*

Setting off from the beach, all of my skepticism was washed away. The PIXEL responded extremely well, and after a few seconds, we were cruising upwind. Remarkably, the PIXEL was able to point almost as high as a 420

and cut through chop without losing too much speed. Ex-Blue Jay sailors certainly will not miss the days of starting races below the starting line because their boats didn't have enough upwind power to fight current and waves.

*When we began to point up wind we noticed how surprisingly high the boat could point which was something we did not suspect and, although there was not a lot of wind, the boat really had some speed.* The next feature to impress me was the boat's stability and resiliency to shifts in weight. At one point in our sail, Matt walked to the bow of the boat to adjust the jib, and the boat remained steady, hardly experiencing a loss in speed. Junior sailors often find the 420's sensitivity to weight discouraging, but in a PIXEL, sailors will learn to manage weight with confidence.

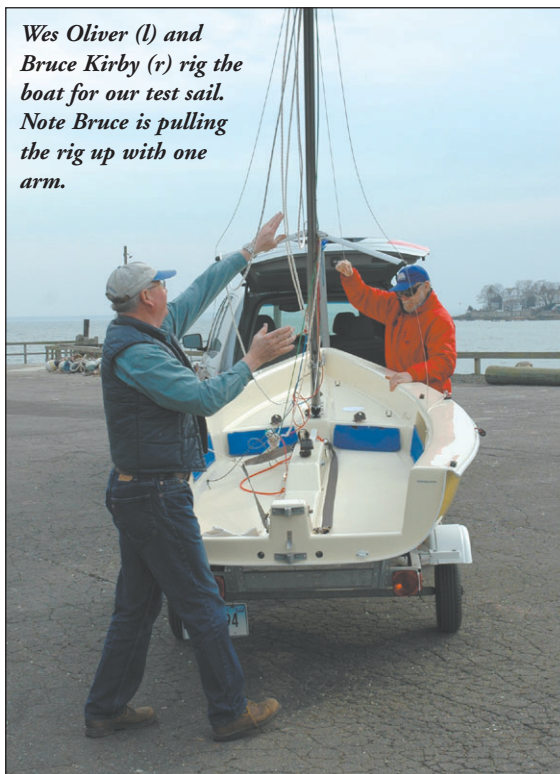
*When we hoisted the spinnaker we noticed that it really powered up the boat and, the way it was rigged for the spinnaker, it was very manageable and easily done. The way all of the lines were setup the spinnakers ran freely and was easily controlled.* The PIXEL's spinnaker is stowed in a turtle on the deck, so sailors don't have to worry about the tangles and confusion of spinnaker buckets. There's a set of clips on the foredeck for the spinnaker pole to lock into, because junior sailors (and parents!) know that the only thing spinnaker poles like better than sailing is diving.

Matt and I sailed downwind back to shore, where we easily de-rigged and carried it up the beach to the trailer. Four people lifted the PIXEL, with the mast stepped, and carried it up the beach. With its epoxy hull and carbon fiber mast, the PIXEL weighs almost 100 pounds less than the Blue Jay, a sure relief for parents and sailors. The PIXEL is meant to make life easier for sailors; in fact, the boat has a variety of features to help sailors just in case things go wrong on the water. The PIXEL's first safety feature is its open transom design, which gives sailors a hassle-free way to re-enter the boat, which should come up dry from a capsize. Knowing that isn't unusual for junior sailors to capsize, Kirby specified a flotation device in the top panel of the mainsail, making the boat virtually impossible to turtle.

As a member of the Long Island Sound sailing community and a sailing instructor, I couldn't be more excited about the advent of the PIXEL. This boat's attractive design and efficient performance will attract more kids to double-handed boats, and keep sailors on the water on days when the

|                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Length:</b>                     | <b>13' 9"</b>            |
| <b>Beam:</b>                       | <b>5' 6"</b>             |
| <b>Sail Area (Main &amp; Jib):</b> | <b>94 sq. ft.</b>        |
| <b>Hull Weight:</b>                | <b>185 lbs.</b>          |
| <b>Hull:</b>                       | <b>Epoxy Fiberglass</b>  |
| <b>Mast:</b>                       | <b>Carbon Fiber</b>      |
| <b>Boom:</b>                       | <b>Anodized Aluminum</b> |
| <b>Main &amp; Jib:</b>             | <b>Polyester</b>         |
| <b>Spinnaker:</b>                  | <b>Nylon</b>             |

*Wes Oliver (l) and Bruce Kirby (r) rig the boat for our test sail. Note Bruce is pulling the rig up with one arm.*

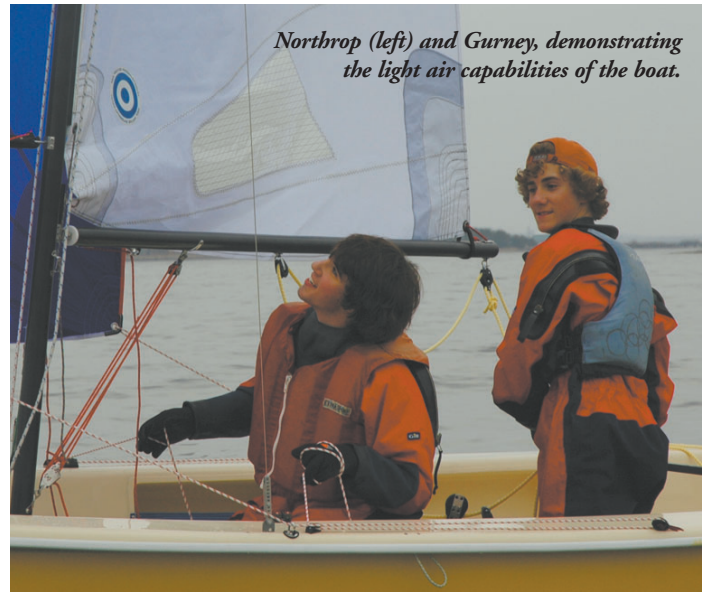


*The piXEL is easily launched from the beach and is stable enough for both crew to move about while rigging without fear of capsizing.*



wind wouldn't be strong enough to move a Blue Jay. *I feel that the piXel is an excellent boat for intermediate sailors. It was 100 times better than I expected and is the perfect replacement for the Blue Jay, It's Safe, Fun and Fast.* ♦

*Tuck Northrop is on the Varsity Sailing Team at Fairfield Prep (where he's a senior) and he coaches at Black Rock Yacht Club in Bridgeport, CT. Matt Gurney, a Freshman sails out of Stamford Yacht Club.*



*Northrop (left) and Gurney, demonstrating the light air capabilities of the boat.*



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Sunday, April 9th @ 10am sharp!

★ *New/Used Optimists & Pixels*

Sunday, April 23rd @ 10am sharp!

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**Sunday, April 9th 10AM sharp!**  
**Sunday, April 23rd 10AM sharp!**

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