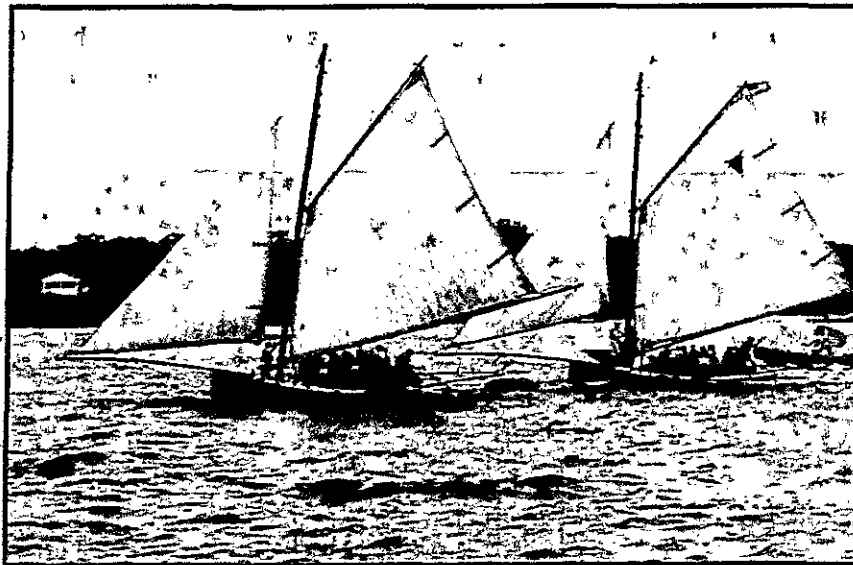


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(MARI)TIME WARP! 1998: RARE SANDBAGGERS DUEL ON TOMS RIVER



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by Ed Asay

The first race ever between the BULL and BEAR Sandbagger replicas was held in the Toms River, on Sunday, July 19, 1998. The Lobster Shanty of Toms River sponsored the BULL and the Asay Family sponsored the BEAR in a WIN-WIN situation for the Maritime Museum of the Toms River Seaport Society. Each sponsor donated \$1250.00 which was matched by an anonymous donor to total \$5000.00 as PRIZE money for the race.

The race was started as the two Sandbaggers gracefully soared by the starting line off the Toms River Yacht Club dock by a Toms River Race Committee. With both boats under double reefed sail, BULL ran ahead off Island Heights and the BEAR momentarily ran into a shoal, beating to windward. With BULL holding a six boat lead

strategist on the BEAR, ordered the dousing of the BEAR's Jib as a precaution against the strengthening wind. Under the main, BEAR, readily rounded the mark off Ocean Gate and crossed the finish line as winner while the game crew of the BULL righted their boat and returned to the Toms River Yacht Club. Both crews withdrew to an "after race" party hosted at the Lobster Shanty, where tall tales were traded about the "Great Race" of the day.

Raced from the Civil War until the turn of the century, sandbaggers were the extreme racing machines of their day. The BULL and BEAR were built recently to be 27' long with a bowsprit two thirds that length, and a ladder-like structure aft to attend the long boom of the mainsail. In all 61' long, a sandbagger raised 1133 square ft of sail, and its 30-40 pound bags of sand were tossed from port rail to starboard by a professional crew of 10 to 14 as the boat tacked to windward. Once the boat rounded the mark and began running with the wind, the crew would throw the sandbags overboard and literally jump off to lighten ship to win the race.

Though not the 1998 race, area professional photographer and videographer Peter Slack, of Island Heights, did capture the 2005 race at Lake Hopatcong Yacht Club, which can be watched below, with thanks and credit to Mr. Slack:



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*Barnegat Bay Maritime Museum received funding
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