



# SAILING ICON GEOFFREY PIDDUCK

by Tim De Gavre

Some names in the Caribbean are synonymous with sailing; Antigua's Geoffrey Pidduck is one of them. Although a latecomer to the sport, his accomplishments will long be recognized while his skills are still a force to reckon with on the race course. Born in Dominica, Geoffrey arrived in Antigua as a grade-schooler but his real start in sailing came in 1967 at about 30 years old when he was transferred by IBM to Montreal, Canada.

'In Montreal, I learned to race in a Laser, Shark 24, Lightening, C&C 30, and Soling. We had a very active sailing program with 13 classes racing three evenings a week and on weekends whenever the weather allowed. In the winter, I raced my DN Ice Boat.' For many years, Geoffrey was the Club's Fleet Captain and was actively campaigning for the 1976 Olympic Soling class, but

it was cut short when he was transferred to New Brunswick.

Geoffrey's first taste of Caribbean racing was in 1972 at Antigua Sailing Week where he has competed almost every year. Racing on Roy Disney's *Pyewacket* in 2002 is a highlight he remembers fondly. Since returning to Antigua in 1982 Geoffrey has acquired many boats. 'Over the past 27 years, I have bought, raced and passed on over 20 Lasers, helping to develop the Laser fleet. I have owned a Melges 24, a Humphries 22 sport boat and several different Beneteaus including my current First 51. I have also owned a Ron Holland 40 and ex-Abracadabra, *Mermaid II* – both serious racers. I prefer one-design and match racing with Lasers and sport boats being my preference – they are close to the water and achieve exciting speeds.'



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In 1993 Geoffrey represented Antigua at the Pan American Games in Argentina, match racing J24's. Other achievements include winning his class in ASW 2009 with his Performance Cruiser *BiWi Magic*, the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, the St. Thomas International Rolex Regatta, the BVI Spring Regatta, Triskell Cup and the Le Genois in Guadeloupe. 'From 1989 to 1991, I was South American Master Laser Champion. My best memory, however, is finishing 7th of 185 in the North American Laser Championships in the late 70s.'

Although a racer at heart, Geoffrey has also cruised extensively. 'I sailed the Pacific Northwest when based in Vancouver and have cruised the Eastern Caribbean from the Virgins to Trinidad. In 1999, we spent three months crossing from Panama to the Galapagos and Tahiti. The highlight was staying in Pitcairn Island for eight days with Tom and Betty Christian, direct descendants of Fletcher Christian, the head mutineer aboard the 'Bounty'.

Giving back to his sport, Geoffrey is an active International Judge, has been Commodore of the Antigua Yacht Club, president of the Caribbean Sailing Association, founding Commodore of the Jolly Harbour Yacht Club, and is currently President of the Antigua Sailing Association. He is a Distinguished Honourary Life member of the Antigua Barbuda Olympic Association, an honour bestowed on him for his contribution to sailing locally.

Geoffrey is particularly proud of the development of youth sailing in Antigua. 'We have produced seven sailing Olympians of whom we are very proud'. In 1992 he was Manager/Coach of Antigua's Olympic sailing team in Spain. Many of our local sailors are today pillars of our community. You cannot ask for any better reward than knowing that you had some small part in that achievement.

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