



FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

USA, 30/01/1882, New York (USA) - 12/04/1945, Warm Springs (USA)

35th President of the United States, 1933/1945

"Of all the series for the Cup at which I have been present, I have never followed two such well run and hotly disputed heats!"

So claimed Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the President of the United States, on the evening of September 18th, 1934.

It was as a pure and passionate amateur that he had taken four days out of his very busy schedule to be able to follow the first races of the 15th America's Cup challenge race in the J Class yachts at Newport. T.O.M. Sopwith's challenger **Endeavour** and the defender skippered by Harold Vanderbilt **Rainbow**, did not disappoint. President Roosevelt followed the opening races aboard Vincent Astor's motor yacht **Nourmahal**. On returning to the White House, he was informed about the latest results of the races.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first 'yachtsman' to become President of the United States. As it did for many of his family members, *"the sea coursed through his veins"*. He was a member of the New York Yacht Club since 1904. Born in the city, he spent most of his summer holidays with his parents at Campobello island off the coast of Maine in Canadian waters. There, he learned how to sail; at first aboard small sailboats which he cruised amongst the neighbouring islands.

President Roosevelt would later acquire a 12.2-meter schooner **Half-Moon** which he sailed along the New England coast. This experience of the sea was profitable to him when he was named Assistant Secretary of the Navy by President Woodrow Wilson in 1921. Regrettably, he had to part from the yacht in 1921, when he was affected by polio. Through dedication and strength of will, Franklin Roosevelt was able to regain partial usage of his legs through an intensive swimming programme, and he resumed sailing. He chartered a small yawl **Amberjack II** which he sailed with his sons until the summer 1933.

After being elected President in 1932, Roosevelt ordered the fit out of **Electra** in 1936. The 50-metre long power-driven coastguard ship was renamed **USS POTOMAC**. As Roosevelt didn't like travelling by plane, he would often move by train or aboard the presidential yacht. In fact, he spent so much time on the **USS POTOMAC** that it was nicknamed the "Floating White House."

When first elected President of the United States, Roosevelt's main mission was to restore an economy battered by the Great Depression through his famous 'New Deal'. Aside from his personal passion for yachting, his presence at the America's Cup in Newport in 1934 was also seen as a mark of support for the American marine industry. American trade unions were appealing to the wealthy ship-owners to re-work their boats ahead of each season to give some work to the shipyards and their workers. It was in this context that Roosevelt was able to support America's Cup racing in the extravagant J-Class. In 1937, the President again threw his support, without reserve, behind the defence of the 16th America's Cup, which was dominated by the 'Super J' **Ranger**.

J.T. / pr

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