

Years later, a classic maxiboat sees a competitive comeback thanks to the K3 foundation and its dedicated sailors.

PHOTO: PAUL WYETH /
ANTIGUA SAILING WEEK



Former Glory

After years of restoration and care, an American titan of the maxiboat era returns to connect generations.

● Experiencing *Kialoa III* power through waves with a grace and beauty rarely found in modern sailboats today is a sensation not lost on Roland Pieper. The 61-year-old Dutch entrepreneur helmed the 43-year-old Sparkman & Stephens classic to a first in class, with seven race wins, at the most recent Antigua Sailing Week.

"It was a tough competition — we had plenty of waves right over the boat in the early part of the week," says Pieper, "plus a young, new crew who were initially very inexperienced in racing such a big boat with so much power."

The regatta was the second time *Kialoa III* had been back in true racing form since being purchased in 2013 by the K3 Foundation and restored for two years. The foundation first displayed the fruit of its labors at the Rolex Big Boat Series in 2015, an event during which

Pieper recalls dealing with many failures and issues that triggered another phase of restoration. In 2016, Pieper raced Antigua Sailing Week and finished second overall.

"We did pretty well, given a number of breakages and failures, which hurt our end result," he says. "Antigua Sailing Week 2017, however, marked the completion of her restoration with no breakages."

The K3 Foundation was created to manage the preservation and ongoing maintenance of the classic beauty. The foundation has a number of goals, foremost among them to make the boat available to young people for sail training and ensuring the boat continues to fly Old Glory off its transom.

"You cannot take the flag off *Kialoa III* — it's impossible," says Pieper.

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RECOVERING FROM AN OCS



When you find yourself heading back to the line to restart, don't despair, there's a whole racecourse ahead to get back in the race.

Quickly acknowledge the mistake, take a deep breath, and keep these tips in mind.

STICK TO THE GAME PLAN: The frustration of being OCS often causes teams to completely abandon their pre-start game plan. Instead, try to find a way to utilize your pre-race research.

WORK TO GET A CLEAR LANE: For example, your best opportunity might be to get to the left to clear yourself around the pin and tack back to starboard. You'll be second row — or worse — but the separation from the boats that started properly may allow you to still execute your plan.

GET OUT OF PHASE: If neither side is favored, look to find clean air by going against the grain. Remember, groups of boats always tend to slow one another down.

MINIMIZE TACKS: Hitting a corner is one way to reduce the number of tacks. But, it's a risky call. If you decide to be more conservative, make sure to limit your tacks.

BOATSPEED: It's easy to get discouraged or distracted when looking at so many transoms. Redouble your efforts to maintain boatspeed.

FOCUS ON SHORT-TERM GOALS: Look one mark ahead and identify boats that can be picked off or closed in on. Maintain a constant dialogue about your progress and keep the team's frame of mind as positive as possible.

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The idea behind the K3 Foundation, he explains, is to bring the four-decades-old maxi back to life and make big-boat sailing more available to young people. "There's a lot of small-boat sailing, but big-boat sailing — practicing and feeling the boat and how that works — well, there are just not enough big boats," says Pieper. "So, it's one of our goals to take young people along; the average age on board [in Antigua] was about 23. We had a couple of training days before racing, and it's amazing how maneuvering went by the end of the week. It was impressive to see the kids move this big boat around."

A father of six boys, Pieper's youngest son, Daniel, 21, was on board for his first ever regatta. "He's worked his butt off, but he also enjoyed it, so I am happy with that," says Pieper. "He's now in the camp of [thinking] this is pretty cool."

Getting *Kialoa III* race-ready is a big part of boat captain Stephen Stewart's job. Stewart says the recent focus has been working on winch systems, which are under constant maintenance because they are so old. Next up, he'd like to see a full boom and mast refit so it's adequately prepared for big-wave conditions. He was impressed with how the boat performed during Sailing Week, hard work aside.

"*Kialoa III* was really built as an ocean racer, so around the cans is intensive," says Stewart. "It requires a lot of people because we have no self-tailing winches, and getting the sails up and down requires a lot of manpower."

At 79 feet long, with 2,733 square feet

From left to right: Arnold Tas, Roland Pieper, Arend van Bergijk and Eric van Vuuren bring the prestige back to *Kialoa III*, sailing her in Antigua Race Week.

PHOTO: MICHELLE SLADE

of sail, the boat is physically taxing on short courses, he adds, but it's immense fun on long courses: "a hugely powerful boat and such a lovely ride, smooth and comfortable."

Over the course of Antigua Sailing Week, *Kialoa III* proved it still has pace upwind, but like any big boat, it will have a tough time when the breeze is light and waves are high.

"No boat likes [those conditions], and of course we are heavier, which means we go into the waves," says Pieper, "but downwind is our favorite spot, and perhaps we have the advantage because most of our competition uses asymmetric spinnakers, and thus were unable to sail the angles we could."

Pieper, a familiar face on the international racing scene, having owned and raced various Swans (he helmed *Favonius*, the Swan 82, to victory in the 2008 Swan World Cup), confesses that sailing *Kialoa III* is no walk in the park.

"Someone jokingly referred to her as a 'man's boat,'" says Pieper, laughing. "And that's true — I feel it everywhere in my body, and I think a lot of my crew feels the same. Nonetheless, she is fantastic to sail and she is historic. The 1974 design is just amazing and still works today. Now I think she is back, and at the least, we have preserved her for another 10 years." ■