

~ Williams Bay ~  
Ice Boat Capital of the World



Jane Wiswell Pegel circa 1950



Harry Melges circa 1936

Traditional iceboats from before the late 19th century were used for transportation of goods and racing. These boats reached lengths of 30 to 50 feet (15 m) and were sometimes transported between sites on rail cars. Ice sailing was first developed in Europe. In America, it was done in several locations where the sport also continues today. Many active ice sailing clubs are thriving in the northern States and Canadian Provinces.. Some of the older large "stern steerer" iceboats can seat several in their "baskets." Several of these boats are maintained and raced today. The Northwest Ice Yacht Association sponsors an annual regatta that includes classes for these boats.

The first iceboats were adaptations of regular sailing boats, with a wooden plank fastened cross-wise at the front having a fixed runner at each end, and a steering runner attached to the bottom of the rudder at the stern (back). These early ice sailing vessels led to the development of boats designed strictly for racing on ice. These "stern-steerer" iceboats were generally rigged as sloops, with a jib sail forward of the mast, although the catboat style with a single sail was also used.

The traditional stern-steerer boats were largely replaced by front steering boats in the 1930s, following the development of this style by Walter Beauvois of Williams Bay, Wisconsin in a boat named the *Beau Skeeter*. This boat led

to the "Skeeter" class, and the *Skeeter Ice Boat Club* formed on Geneva Lake, Wisconsin. The Skeeter class adopted the logo of a mosquito on their sail, and has evolved into a very efficient aerodynamically clean machine. While the large stern-steerers could have up to 600 square feet (56 m<sup>2</sup>) of sail, the Skeeter class is limited to just 75 square feet (7.0 m<sup>2</sup>) of sail.

The Skeeter class is divided into sub-classes (A, B and C) all of which are limited to 75 square feet (7.0 m<sup>2</sup>) of sail area. A class boats are single seat, have mast heights in excess of 26 ft and include bubble boats and rumble seaters. These boats are the fastest skeeters around and are on the cutting edge of technology using carbon fiber in their construction. B class skeeters are two seat boats (side by side seating) with 23 to 25 ft masts, examples of B skeeters are the eastern Yankee and western Boe-Craft skeeters ([www.boecraft.com](http://www.boecraft.com)). C class skeeters are single seat and are limited to a mast height of 20 ft 3in or less. Some one-design classes have evolved within the C Skeeter class as well. These include the Nite, Renegade and J14 (C class), which have a wide and enthusiastic following, and several locally popular classes at iceboating locations.

The International DN class is the most popular class in both North America and Europe. It is a one-person wood boat twelve feet long with a cross "plank" eight feet long and carries a mast 16 feet (4.9 m) high. Modern competitive DNs use flexible masts commonly made of composite materials. The DN 60 name came as a result of a request published in the late 1930s by the Detroit News newspaper for a design to build a relatively inexpensive one-person iceboat that showed excellent performance yet could be quickly built and sailed easily. The high-performance, modern DN is a far cry in materials and construction from the original design selected by the Detroit News. Yet, many of its one-design features are exactly the same as the original boat, including the basic aerodynamic fuselage design, runner configurations and 60 square feet (5.6 m<sup>2</sup>) of high-performance sail.

*Citation: Wikipedia contributors. Ice boat [Internet]. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia; 2016 Jan 26, 00:41 UTC [cited 2016 Feb 3]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ice\\_boat&oldid=701693365](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ice_boat&oldid=701693365).*