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## **Jets Chief Runs NFL Team by Day, Moonlights as Yacht Designer**

By Aaron Kuriloff

July 6 (Bloomberg) -- Jay Cross steered what looked like an antique yacht up to the starting line off Stamford, Connecticut, last month and bested some of the fastest, costliest and most modern racing sailboats on Long Island Sound.

Cross's 48-foot (15-meter) ``WaterWitch'' is no relic. Disguised beneath teak and mahogany decks favored in the 1930s is an ultramodern carbon-fiber hull and high-tech keel, much like those used by America's Cup yachts.

Cross intended the contrast. The former Canadian Olympic team sailor, whose day job is president of the National Football League's New York Jets, gathered New York investors and launched WaterWitch Yachts last summer. Now, the man responsible for building three big-league sports arenas in Canada and the U.S. is also aiming to take orders for copies of his prototype.

Tam Matthews, Cross's Olympics partner and now a prep school headmaster in Ottawa, says his former teammate has come up with a modern racer that looks like it sailed out of the Jazz Age.

``It's a classic concept from the early 1900s put into the state-of-the-art 21st Century'' Matthews said.

That might be an advantage in a market where sailors are looking for multipurpose boats, said Ellen Hopkins, a spokeswoman for the National Marine Manufacturers Association. While the number of new sailboats sold in the U.S. declined to 12,900 in 2006 from 14,300 in 2004, spending rose to about \$652 million from about \$603 million. She credits high-end, multiuse boats like Cross's with driving the increase.

Before becoming an executive, Cross was a good enough sailor to make three Olympic teams for his native Canada: 1976, 1980 and 1984. He combined his knowledge of the sport and know-how from his undergraduate engineering degree to design racing sailboats. He pioneered the use of a new type of asymmetrical forward sail, or spinnaker, on small racing boats in the 1980s.

### **Cutting-Edge Skiff**

That design, a 14-foot skiff, was cutting-edge; the WaterWitch is a throwback, Cross said. While growing up in Toronto, he raced small sailboats on Lake Ontario that were designed by the late Uffa Fox. Local rivalries helped propel him onto Canada's national team.

Cross, in a two-man boat, finished 16th in the 1976 Olympics, then third in the European championship in advance of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. That's when Canada, along with the U.S., refused to attend in protest of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

``He would have won a medal in the Olympics had we not boycotted Moscow that year,'' said Paul Henderson, former president of the International Sailing Federation.

### **Cross III**

Cross was an alternate in the 1984 games, before giving up on about 10 years chasing an Olympic medal. By then, he'd already established himself as a designer with the third generation of his 14-footer -- the Cross III -- in production.

Boatbuilding faded as Cross earned a master's degree in architectural technology from Columbia University in New York and became a real estate developer. That job led to a position with the National Basketball Association's Toronto Raptors, where he helped build the Air Canada Centre for the NBA team and the National Hockey League's Toronto Maple Leafs. He then became president of business operations for the Miami Heat, where he helped build that NBA team's American Airlines Arena.

Cross came to the Jets in 2000 and led the team's effort to build a stadium in Manhattan. The plan collapsed, and the Jets joined the New York Giants in building a \$1.4 billion replacement for Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, that's due to open in 2010.

#### Scandinavian Model

He also began looking to replace his one-man, 20-foot racing boat with something he could sail with his two daughters. He turned to the books of Fox, who died in 1972, and found drawings of a sleek antique Scandinavian boat.

"I could remember them growing up," Cross said. "We had, like, one in Toronto. And they were radical boats. Uffa just adored them. He thought they were the thoroughbreds of the day."

Too busy running the Jets to spend evenings poring over computer-assisted design programs, Cross hired the Spanish firm Botin Carkeek Yacht Design -- the partnership responsible for engineering Team New Zealand's boat in this year's America's Cup -- to work out some of the details.

He also put in mechanical systems to replace the dozens of crew members who once were needed to maneuver a boat like WaterWitch. The 48-footer can race with as few as two people.

Sail Magazine called the boat's performance "breathtaking." Sailing Magazine said it looked "sexy" and asked "How can you not love a boat like this?" They estimated that buying one, rigging it and having it delivered would cost about \$890,000.

Cross said that's "too expensive" and that he hopes to reduce the cost. He and his partners have begun work on an 88-foot version.

"It's important, to me at least, that each boat is based on a real historical antecedent," Cross said. "The idea is to give it lineage and pedigree. And at the same time, really try to work on performance."

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