



US VINTAGE MODEL
YACHT GROUP

May 17, 2026



Marblehead “Classic” Rule Committee Report

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Marblehead “Classic” Rule Committee Report

Objective

Goal: Reconsider this time period and the developmental work that ensued and develop a rule that reflects the Classic Marblehead.

Objectives:

1. Using the current rule as a baseline write a rule appropriate for the Classic Marblehead.
2. Conduct thorough research including both literature and appropriate images (photos and plans).
3. Develop a first draft of the rule that reflects the period in question.
4. Support proposed rule, where appropriate, with explanation of pros/cons that will inform the final decision making.
5. Remove any ambiguity that might allow exploitation of the rule.
6. Conduct internal test of this rule.
7. Provide copy to the board.

The following two statements from the US VMYG VM rule were always part of our discussion and focus.

- It is the intent of the class that any potential changes not disqualify existing boats.
- This is meant to encourage new designs that fall within the spirit of Vintage Marblehead design types and also to encourage reproductions of earlier designs.

Literature History Trends

Marblehead 50/800 Rule History (1970s – 1990s)

The committee conducted extensive research into the history of the Marblehead rule evolution from 1932 to the current rule. This included dimensional data, copies of actual rule documents, proposed rule changes, written discussions, and comments along with talking to several class secretaries and skippers active during the 1970 to 1990 time period. The committee decided this time period was too broad for a single rule to cover, so the committee is proposing a Classic 1 and Classic 2 subclasses.

Turbulent Transition

The early 1970s started a time period of significant change and transition.

- MYRAA to AMYA Organizations
- Free-sailing to R/C sailing
- Straight line speed to maneuverability and acceleration
- Home built wood to professional built fiberglass and other new materials
- MYRAA rule to AMYA rule to eventually adoption of the IMYRU rule

MYRAA to AMYA

In the early 1970s, as AMYA was forming, they adopted the MYRAA Marblehead or 50/800 rule, however they removed several restrictions. There was a general attitude that a development or experimental class should have fewer restrictions to encourage innovation. For a short period:

- No mast height restriction (although limited by fin stiffness)
- No jib hoist restrictions (One design had 60% of sail area in the jib)
- No mast diameter or material restrictions
- Permanently bent masts and spars, floating and bipod masts are allowed

By 1973, the Marblehead class was the largest AMYA class with 142 boats registered while also having the broadest geographic representations. The number of M boats exploded at this point. By the end of 1974 there were 300 registered.

Those Radical Soling 50s

Then the Soling 50 started dominating nationals for a few years in the early 70s. The Soling 50 jib “thingy,” a flexible fiberglass rib from the luff to clew instead of a traditional jib boom was challenged. The jib “thingy” was eventually approved in 1974; however, the controversy led to the Soling 50 owners voting in 1976 to form a new Soling 50 one-design class separate from the AMYA 50/800 class. The Soling 50s were no longer competitive by this time when compared to newer lighter yachts with high-aspect rigs.

This led to the creation of an 50/800 rule technical committee in 1975, their proposed changes were much more in line with the old MYRAA and IMYRU rules, but the motion was defeated. During this time, adoption of the IMYRU M class rule was proposed several times and defeated. It should be noted that AMYA was not a member of the IMYRU, which only allowed one member organization per country. MYRAA was still the US representative in the IMYRU. Much of the difference was around sail measurement methods, mast diameter, and boat certification, but this would require modification to US boats to race in international regattas. Many US skippers felt the IMYRU rule was behind the R/C times and was still more a free-sailed rule than an R/C rule.

As a side note, Roy Clough passed away in the summer of 1975.

Taller, Lighter, Deeper

Design trends continue toward lighter boats, deeper keels, and taller rigs, but it should be noted:

- Technology drove design, which drove rule changes
- Designs trended toward local conditions: coastal designs for more wind, inland designs for lighter winds

In 1977, the Epic design dominated nationals driven by the design trends of lighter, deeper and taller. They made up $\frac{1}{3}$ of all entries and garnered 50% of the top ten positions. In addition, the majority of top finishers used paneled sails.

Bob Stern – Thank you! At the 1978 Canadian Nationals, Bob Stern measured all boats to compare design trends via dimensional data. This allowed us to build a database to graphically determine the optimal division points between High Flyer and Classic 1, Classic 1 and Classic 2, and from Classic 2 to Modern Ms. We added as much dimensional data as we could find or measure to the database started by Bob Stern. The resulting graphs that supported our decisions are included in the supporting material.

In 1980 a member suggested that the M class become a one-design, due to the increasing cost and challenge of building or buying new boats to remain competitive. Several members pointed out there already was an M one-design, the Soling 50, that was now stagnate but still a fun boat to sail and race. The best comment about a one-design was “A good one-design must be planned rather than just happen.”

IMYRU M Class Rule Adopted (we think)

After probably half a dozen attempts, the IMYRU M class rules were approved late in 1980, peace at last! Well, not so fast, the AMYA reserved the right for US members to approve all IMYRU changes prior to adoption in the US.

And then came the Bone syndicate, probably the most focused and technical analysis and design effort in model yachting history (our guess). Actually, the name is "B-One." but was commonly referred to as "Bone." The syndicate set out to win nationals and they accomplished this task in 1981; however, this level of effort was way beyond the means of most model yacht skippers.

Taking a closer look at the 1981 regatta results, John Black sailing the eleventh version of B-One sailed a great regatta; he was always starting in the right position, keeping up with the leaders, and finishing near the top. He won the regatta without winning a heat on the second day. After 40 heats over two days, there were only 8 points separating first and fifth places: the closest Nationals ever.

Phoenix Class Proposal

Predating the creation of the US VMYG, the Phoenix M Class was proposed in the summer of 1982. “Looking for an easy to start class for beginners and a way to get older 50/800 class boats back on the water, members of the Copperstate Model Boat Club have created a new class within their membership with hopes of going AMYA wide.” The Phoenix class rule was modified soon after introduction but was never adopted across AMYA, but they were early adopters of keeping old boats on the water!

A New Year, A New Rule

Once again in 1983 several rule changes were proposed by the IMYRU, especially around the sail roach. AMYA took a wait and see approach. The approved IMYRU rule mostly changed how a sail and especially the roach was measured. It did not change specifications. However, nothing is easy. Do you measure with a straight mast? On the mast or off? Paneled sails won’t lay flat! So of course, the AMYA proposes their own way to measure sails, for all classes to be consistent.

A member’s letter “My goodness! What a fuss over how to measure 50/800 sails, or any sails.” The measurement instructions are longer than the rule! So, in 1984, a motion to use the new AMYA sail measurement process for all AMYA classes was approved, and the motion to adopt the new IMYRU M class rule was defeated. The chasm remains and debate on how to interpret the measurement instructions continues.

In the autumn of 1986, the AMYA class secretary wrote to IMYRU and confirmed that from the inception of AMYA until 1981, the AMYA M class rule was very simple and had little similarity to any other version of the rule. He stated that the AMYA members' attitude (not necessarily his attitude) was keeping old boats sailing and to keep the rule simple. He then warned any changes that would obsolete old sails would not pass an AMYA member vote, and once again there would be division between the two rules. Then in the summer of 1987, IMYRU distributed a “draft” of their proposed rule change, and the class secretary asked for quick comments.

Side Note: In 1987 Jon Eimaleh won the European M championship and made interesting observations on regional design trends (evolving from local conditions) and the beginning of swing rigs. (See observations on page 12 at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Oyd_8xKXB_MaLRIWRegDnJsw5rRpXyWW/view?usp=drive_link)

AMYA Defines Own Rule

So, in the Spring of 1988, AMYA chose to make a motion to modify their rule around the headboard measurement and roach measurement. Backlash was received as the proposed rule would require the removal of about ¼ inch from the top of some existing jibs, such a fuss! The motion was appended, and both motions passed by the autumn of 1988. It was noted that the by-laws allowed boats that were certified in their home country to sail in AMYA events. So IMYRU boats are allowed in AMYA regattas. However, the class secretary would not give up until there was international unity!

At a regional regatta in the spring of 1989, a set of Mylar® sails was observed and immediately questioned as legal or not. The existing rule did not restrict the material used in a sail body, so Mylar was legal.

The design trend to deeper keels, lighter boats, and swing rigs with Mylar sails became much more prevalent in the US (they were common in Europe throughout the 1980s) in the very late 1980s and into the 1990s. The Modern M started about 1990.

VM “Classic” Rule History

As mentioned previously, the desire to keep older M class boats sailing was proposed in 1982 as the “Phoenix” M class. Nothing substantial materialized until a Rod Carr article in 1992 pretty much outlined the US VMYG as a similar organization to the VMYG in the United Kingdom. So, in 1994 at the Marblehead Model Yacht Club’s 100th anniversary regatta, the US VMYG emerged with John Snow as President.

In the fall of 1995, AMYA and VMYG began to develop a Classic M rule, but at the time this was focused on what became the original VM rule for pre-1970 boats and was published in the summer of 1998. Later that fall, both organizations announced the intent to develop a C50 class rule for the 1971–1991 era. Some initial C50 regattas were announced, but interest seemed to die out.

By 1999 there were two articles in AMYA about the increasing cost and elite status of the M class. “Time to Tack?” and “To Spend or Not to Spend, That is the Question?”

Meanwhile in 2001, the US VMYG scored the High-Flyer class into two sub-subclasses: high aspect rigs and low aspect rigs. Did this re-ignite the need for a C50 class for the 1971–1991 era and the thousands of boats built during this time period. Nothing materialized, then in 2007 the US VMYG began discussing exploring a Classic M again. Nothing happened until 2012 and AMYA announced a C50 M class effort. Then in 2017

AMYA fractured the M class again (remember the Soling 50?) and approved the American Marblehead class.

US VMYG Re-Vamps

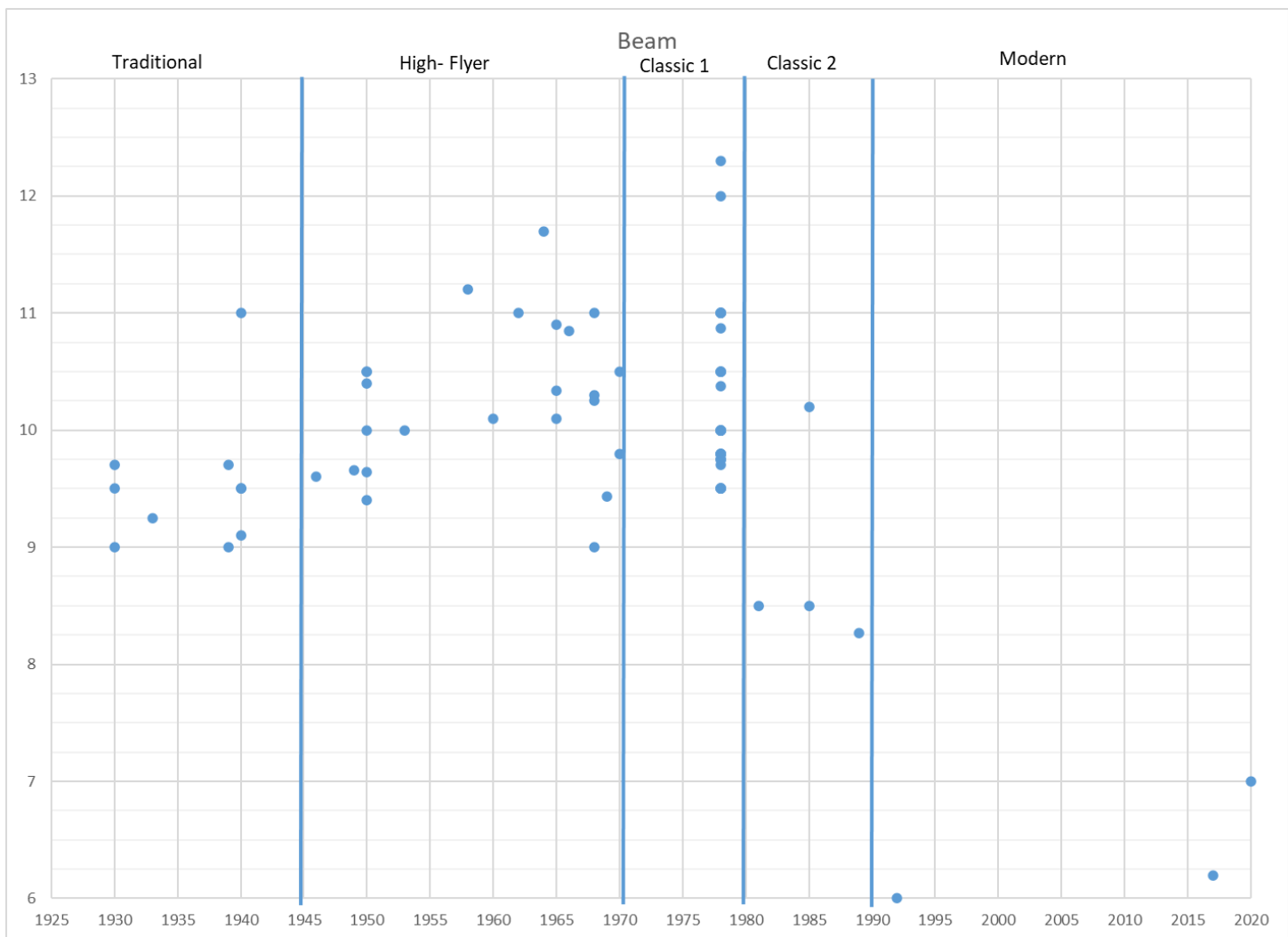
In 2018 the VMYG re-vamps and re-invigorates an effort to support the Classic M boats of the 1971–1980s time period. Ken Young researched this time period and wrote two articles that defined the addition of the Classic M to the existing VM rule. COVID shut down 2020 activities, but at the 2021 US VMYG NCR, Classic M boats were sailed and scored separately.

In 2024 the US VMYG received questions and proposed VM rule changes and made some rule modifications to better define the Classic M subclass. However, it became apparent these were not sufficient to understand this period of rapid development. So, this committee was formed to research and re-define the classic M rule as a separate rule from the original VM rule.

Design Trend Data Analysis

Dimensional History

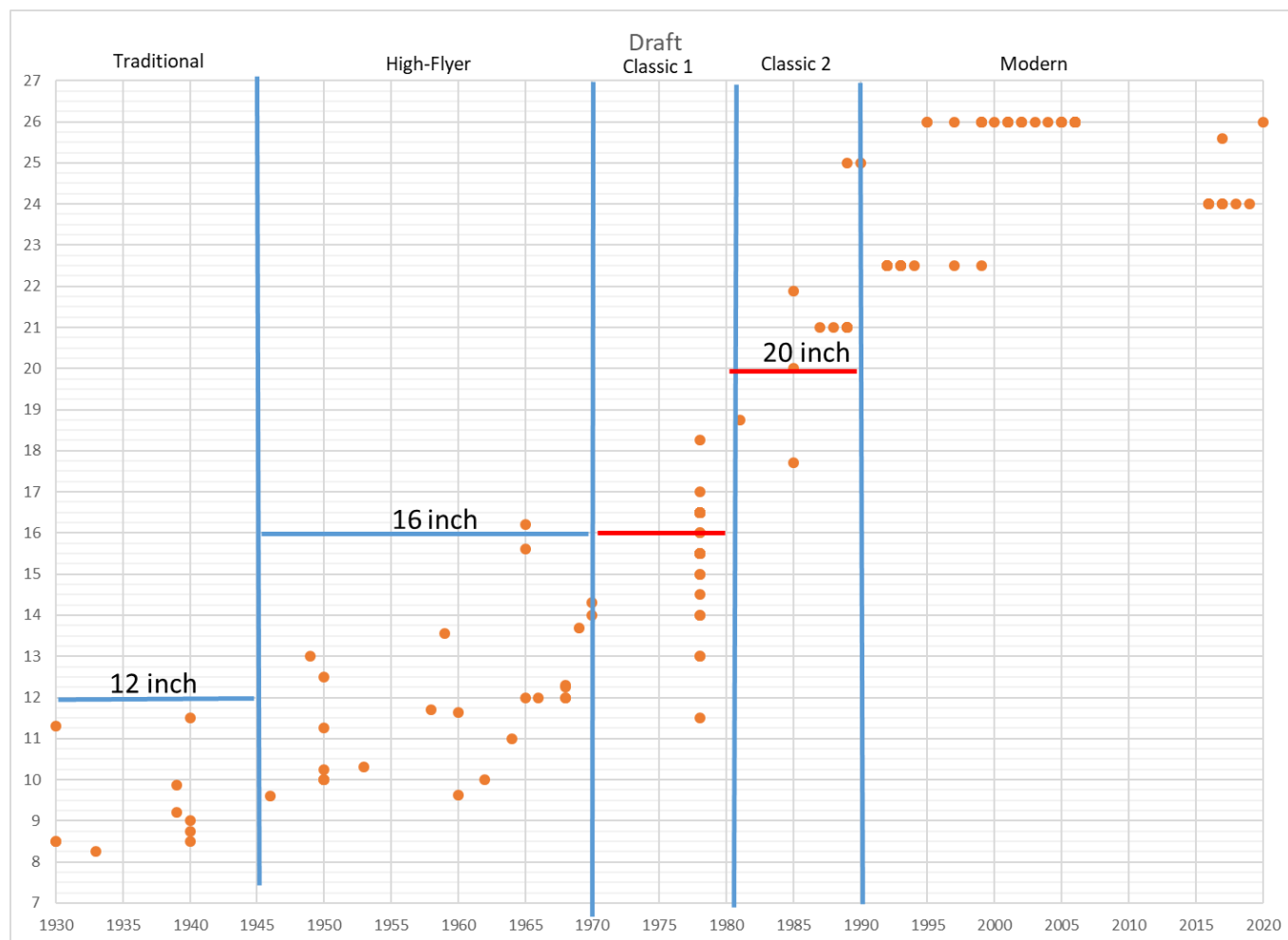
Our research found data on over 170 Marblehead designs across the almost 100- year history of the Marblehead class. These dimensional charts were used to determine the correct time-periods and dimensional limits.



Notes:

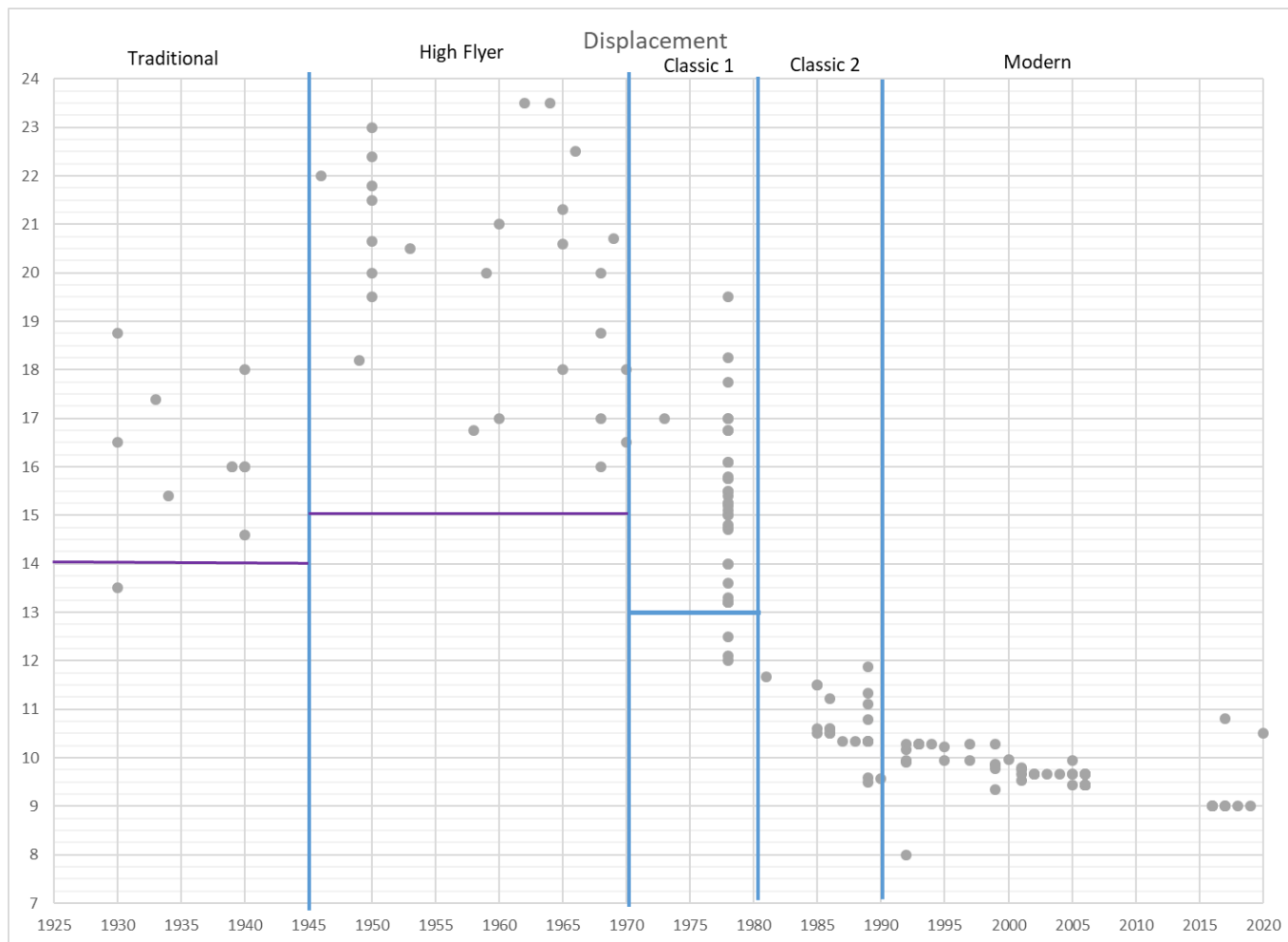
1. No clear trend in beam until 1980 onwards.

2. Beam decreased once into the 1980s when fins became stiffer with the introduction of carbon fiber and increased draft.



Notes:

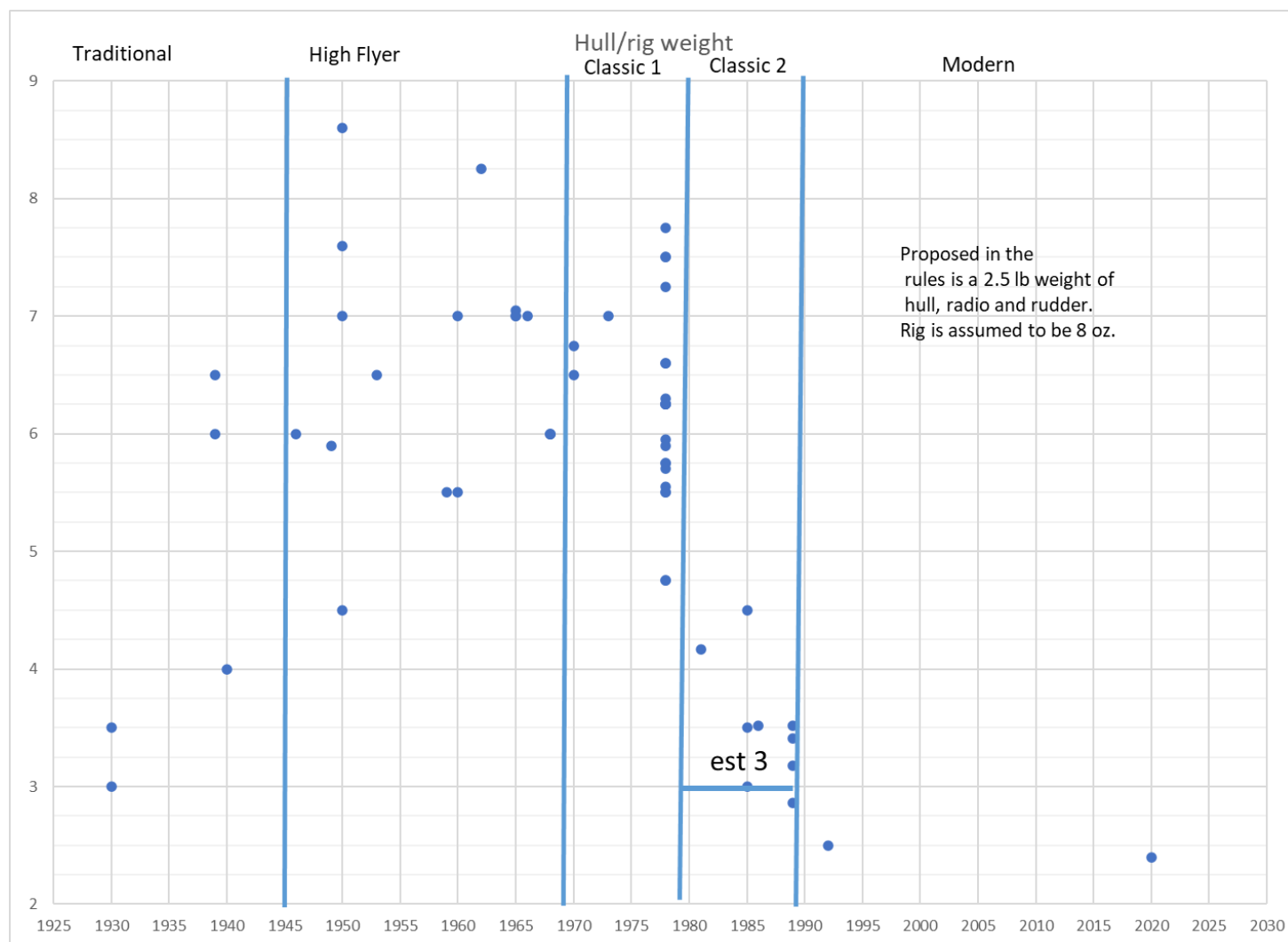
1. While boats were deeper in the late 70s the 16" draft limit was chosen to match the current high flyer to allow boats to sail both classes.
2. If no regard was given to note 1, the suggested draft for C1 would be slightly deeper at 16.5 or 17".
3. Suggested draft for high flyer based on data would be 15". 16" is deeper than the majority of designs of that time period.
4. SFMYC has a 15" limit for vane M's.
5. C2 limit is left at 20" per current Classic rules. If from scratch would suggest 22"
6. Note some modern boats are less than maximum. This is due to local draft restrictions.



Notes:

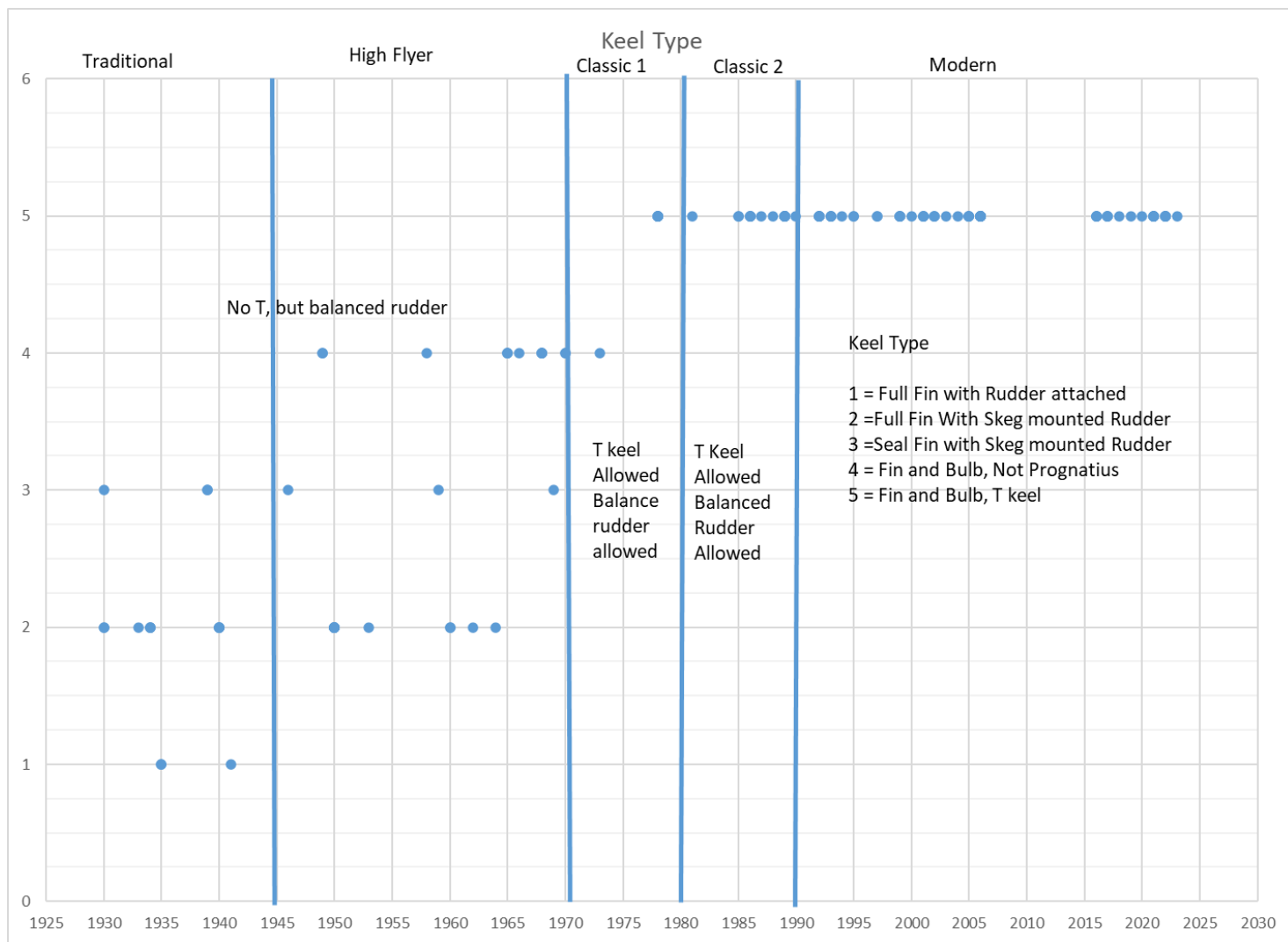
1. Blue line for C1 is the suggested limit at 13 lbs. While there were a few boats less than this, the suggested displacement per the 1978 Bob Sterne article was 14-15 lbs.
2. There is no clear step in displacements after the 1980s. Displacements settled at 9-10 lbs depending on venue once into the 80s. Not a clear delineation between C2 and Modern.
3. Purple lines are suggested limits for Traditional and High Flyer, 14 and 15 lb respectively.
4. High Flyer design period is typically a higher displacement to handle a taller rig.

5. The 13.5 lbs is from Cheerio 1 and per the plans has a 10.5 lb ballast. This data point is not typical of designs from this time period.



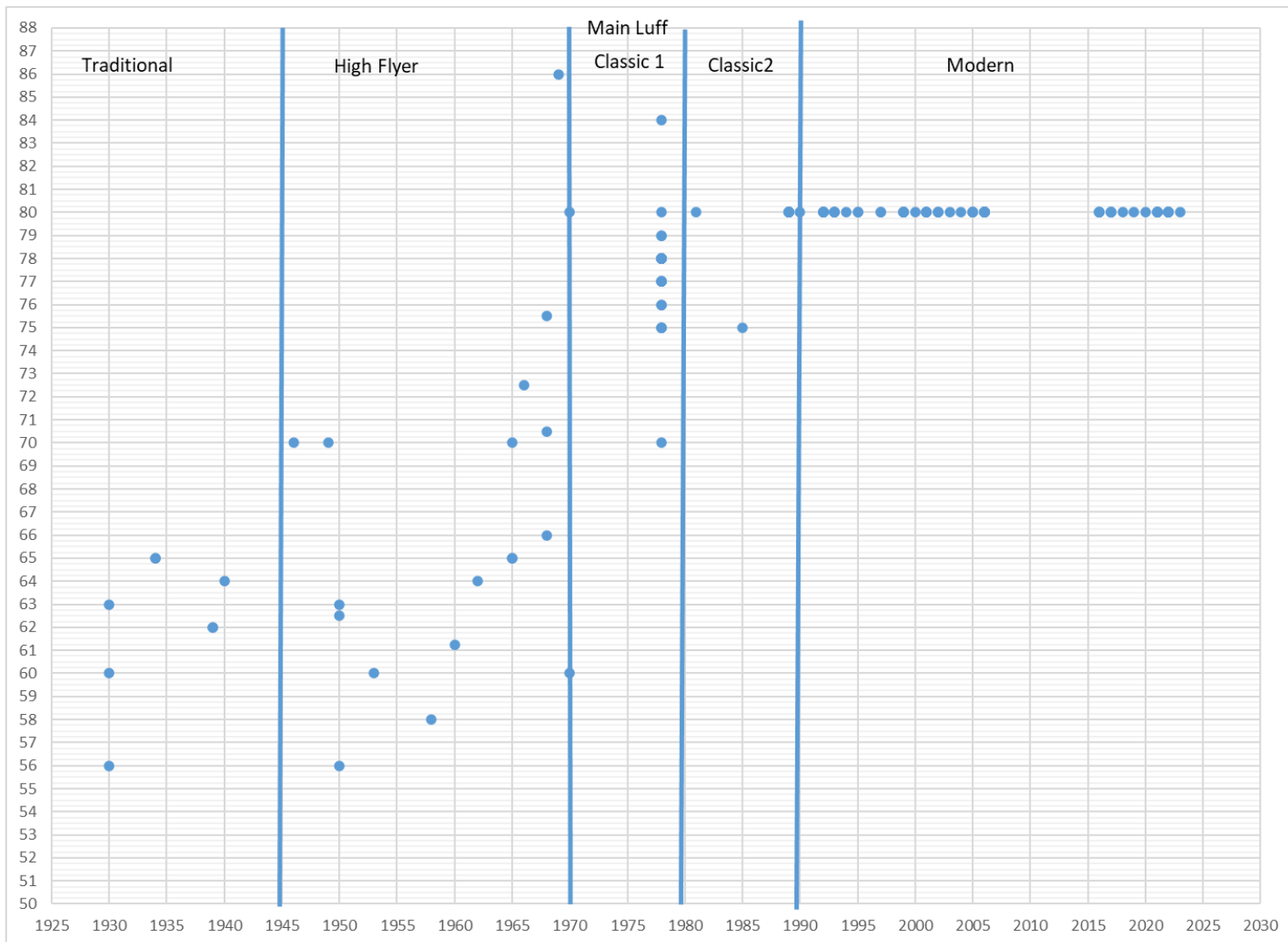
Notes:

1. This chart is Measured Weight and rig weight combined. It is assumed one into the 80s a typical carbon rig is about 8 oz.
2. The measured weight is one clear difference from C2 to Modern. Modern are significantly lighter as building methods and materials improved.
3. The two low weights 3 and 3.5 lbs are from Cheerio 1 and 2. Both are suspect. Typical weights from all other designs in that period are 6 lbs +.



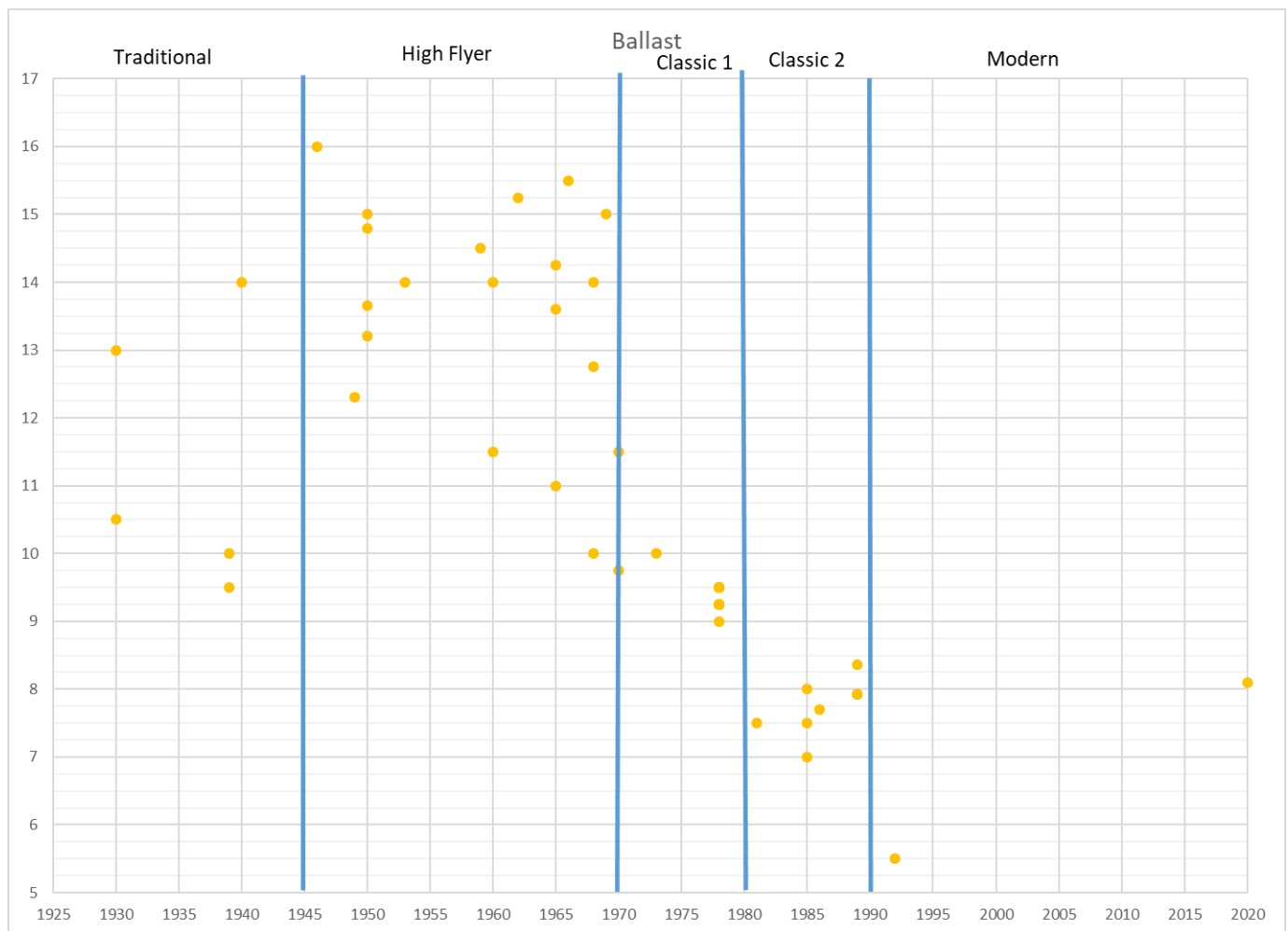
Notes:

1. Data suggests fin and bulb keels were not used in the Traditional time period.
2. The trend is to move from full keel to fin and bulb.
3. Rule changes in 1971/72 allow the introduction of T or prognathous keels.
4. If rudder type was included, no designs prior to 1970 showed balanced rudders.



Notes:

1. The trend over time is longer luff length until limited by 85" hoist (1970s) or 80" luff (current).
2. There was no hoist limit until 1971/72.
3. Traditional design period is typically shorter than all other time periods.
4. High Flyer started to approach modern luff lengths, but only at the extremes.



Notes:

1. Ballast increased slightly for High Flyers along with displacement, then decreases as fins get deeper.
2. This chart does not account for multiple ballasts on boats with removable keels. This is common for many boats now as lighter ballast is faster in light air. Skalpel is one that offered a lighter ballast for light air.
3. No clear changes that align with technology changes.

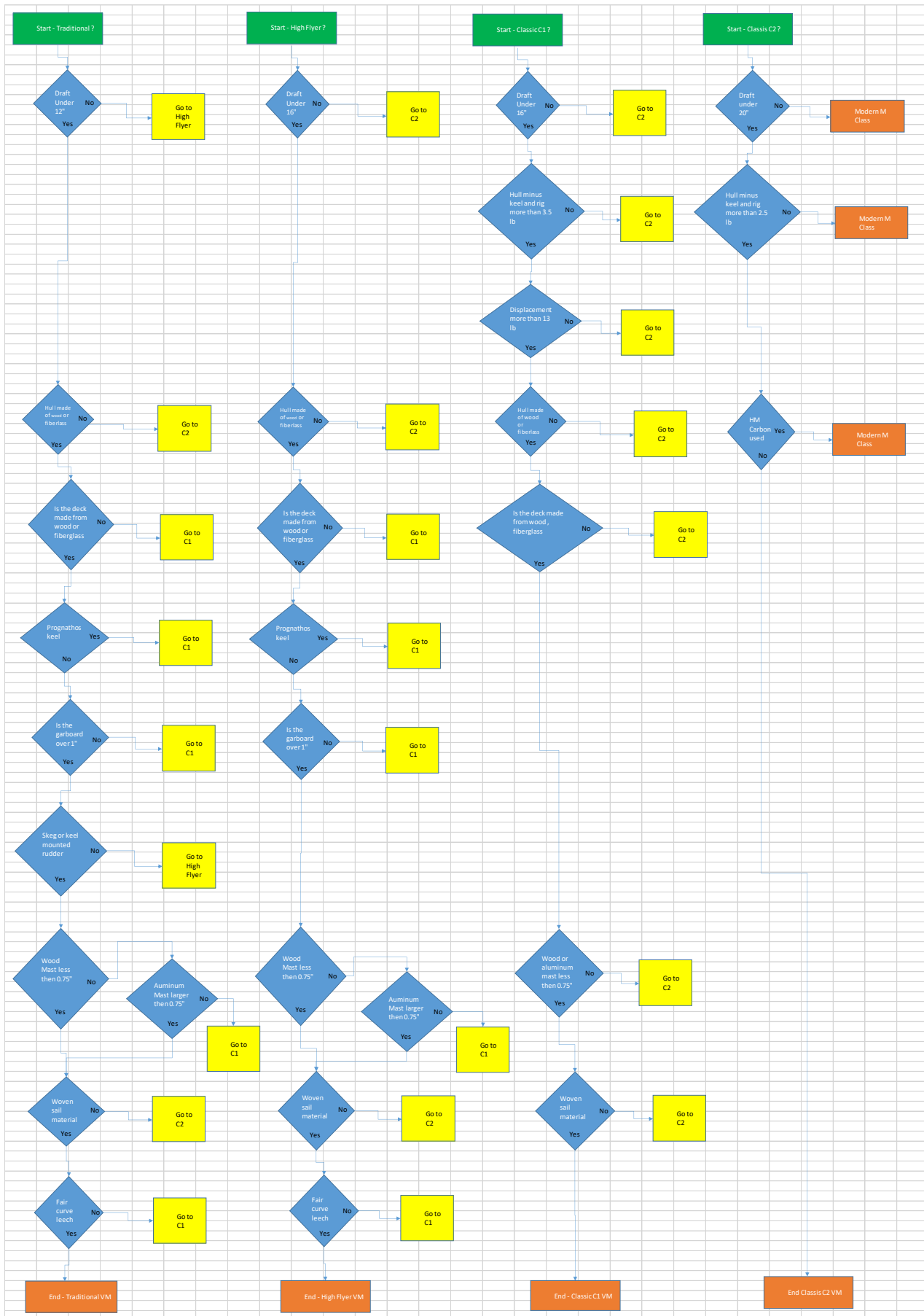
Comparison Table

The actual time-period years are less important than the design trends of each era that obsoleted the previous era. The key design trends that shaped our decision are shown in the table below. This table is not comprehensive, the dimensions shown are used just to differentiate the sub-classes.

Vintage Marblehead Sub-Class Distinctions (US VMYG)					
Design Parameters	Traditional M	High Flyer M	Classic 1	Classic 2	Modern M
Aproximate Design Eras	1930 to 1945	1945 to 1970	1971 to 1980	1981 to 1990	1990 and Beyond
Hull					
Minimum Hull weight composite hull	2 lb.	2 lb.	2 lb.	1 lb.	less than 1lb
Deck construction	Wood	Wood	Wood, fiberglass	Open	open
Prohibited hull materials	Carbon, Kevlar, balsa	Carbon, Kevlar, balsa	Carbon, Kevlar, balsa	none	none
Minimum measured weight (Hull, Radio, Rudder)	none	none	3.5 lbs	2.5	none
Hull Appendages					
Prognathous keel permitted	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prohibited Keel materials	Metal fin, Carbon, Kevlar	Metal fin, Carbon, Kevlar	carbon, Kevlar	none	none
Minimum Garboard radius	1"	1"	none	none	none
Minimum fin Chord	5"	none	none	none	none
Rudder type	Skeg only	Balanced or skeg	Balanced or skeg	Balanced or skeg	Balanced or skeg
Depth	12	16	16	20	approximately 26
Rig					
Mast material	Wood less than 3/4, Aluminum over 3/4	Wood less than 3/4, Aluminum over 3/4	Wood, Aluminum, Steel less than or equal to 3/4"	Material is open, less than or equal to 3/4"	Material is open, less than or equal to 3/4"
Maximum sail height or luff	85" hoist	85" hoist	85" hoist	85" hoist	80" luff and 85" hoist
Additional prohibitions	No swing rigs	No swing rigs	No swing rigs or rotating masts	No swing rigs or rotating masts	none
Sails					
sail material	Woven	Woven	Woven	Open	Open
Sail plan	Smooth curve from Head to Clew	Smooth curve from Head to Clew	Parallel roach with rounded ends, 35.5" radius or smooth radius	Parallel roach with rounded ends, 35.5" radius	Parallel roach with rounded ends, 35.5" radius
Displacement (Ready to Sail)					
Minimum Weight	none	none	13	none	none

Class Determination Flowchart

Here is a flowchart that outlines how to determine what era a boat should sail within. Start in the upper right corner and proceed down. It will direct you to the next class based on the answers or determine the correct sub-class at the bottom.



Committee Conclusions

We now better understand and have documented the large amounts of transitions that happened in the early 1970s along with the rapid change in design and development trends that generated an explosion of interest in the M class as evidenced by the registration of 3,000 Marblehead boats. The data analysis (shown below) and history clearly support separating the Traditional and High-Flyer VM rule from a new Classic VM rule. The data also identified the need to divide the time period from 1971 – 1990 into two classes, the Classic 1 and Classic 2 eras and to include dimensional constraints that support the two eras.