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Peter Jones Barrett

February 20, 1935 – December 17, 2000
Birthplace: Madison, Wisconsin

"In any competitive endeavor, success goes to those who most want to succeed."

In the 1964 Olympics in Japan, Peter Barrett started the final Finn race with a gold medal virtually assured. After the start, he took the stern of a starboard tack boat. Hiking flat out, he thought he felt a little "tick" as the boats passed, indicating his shoulder might have touched the other boat's rudder. The other skipper didn't react. But the knowledge that he might have committed a foul was enough to make Barrett drop out (no penalty turns in those days). "That was Barrett," says Peter Harken, of Harken, Inc., a close friend who took mechanical engineering courses from Barrett at the University of Wisconsin. "He was the greatest sailing sportsman ever."

Despite his thick glasses, and lack of an athletic build, Barrett played quarterback in high school. He was known for his strength and determination. He was a brilliant student who earned a law degree on the side. As a Finn sailor, he was known for his willingness to share his go-fast secrets with his nearest competitors, even during the Olympic trials.

In the 1968 Olympics, Barrett crewed for Lowell North on a Star. On the way to the start of the last race, the main halyard broke. Barrett unstepped the mast, laid it in the water, swam out, pulled up the sail and tied it in place, got back in the boat, and somehow lifted the mast with the sail attached out of the water and stepped it. North and Barrett went on to win the gold medal.

When North started making sails, he recruited Barrett as his first sailor-salesman, or “Tiger.” Barrett went on to be president of North Sails.

Throughout his competitive career, Peter Barrett won national championships in 470s and Finns, as well as C- and A-Scows. He was a contributing editor to *Yacht Racing Cruising* (now *S ailing World*
). He also designed a number of sailboats.

Barrett died of cancer in 2000. The University of Wisconsin’s sailing program annually awards a trophy in Barrett’s name “for excellence in sportsmanship during competition.”

- Roger Vaughan

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Links of Interest:

Wikipedia entry for Peter J. Barrett (sailor)

Article about Barrett written by Donald P. Sanford for the Mendota Yacht Club

US Sailing Peter J. Barrett Sportsmanship Trophy

Patent for a Mounting Device for a Boat Sail - filed by Barrett

Peter J. Barrett Sailing Alliance at Delavan Lake Sailing School

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