

# SPORTS



< Matt Patricia, ex-defensive coordinator of the Patriots, is introduced as new head coach of the Detroit Lions on Wednesday. C5

Dunn eager to return to Bulls, but still waiting to be cleared Page C2



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## Becoming the 'Biggest Loser' is no easy task

It is always easier to write about other people. Seems lately, though, that writing about more personal issues has become tres chic, evidenced by the inspiring number of readers reaching out. One woman even sent me a Garfield comic strip and identified him as my spirit animal.

I think she's right.

Right down to the shared love of lasagna.

But I digress.

Two things have happened recently. I joined a Biggest Loser competition with some friends; and agreed to participate in "Dancing With The Stars" March 23 at Waterford High for the benefit of mental health services and suicide prevention programs. More on dancing in another installment, although admittedly, the visual isn't pretty.

Back to the Biggest Loser. Now I can point to several social commentators who believe I've already retired the trophy. Hmmm. Perhaps. This endeavor, however, is about taking some of the concepts of sports — working together for a goal and moving around — to drop some weight.

I'm in week four.

I approached the scale for the first time with a roll of quarters in my pocket. This was to guard against pure fright. Remove the quarters and the number on the scale goes from Kurtz at the end of Heart of Darkness ("The horror! The horror!") to a more palatable, "eh." But then we agreed to an impartial third party do weigh-ins, thus preventing Patriots-like cheating. Scales nonetheless scare me more than my doctor coming

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## NATIONAL GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORTS DAY

# A GOLDEN MOMENT

Old Lyme's Breault first female winner of Yachtsman of Year honor by St. Francis Yacht Club



Nicole Breault, a 1990 Old Lyme High School graduate, was recently named the first female winner of the prestigious Jerome B. White Yachtsman of the Year award by the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco, a club founded in 1927 and cast in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge.

By VICKIE FULKERSON  
Day Sports Writer

The St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco was founded in 1927 and cast in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge. In the 91 years since its inception, St. Francis members have included Olympians, America's Cup competitors and members of the National Sailing Hall of Fame.

But never, never before in the storied history of the club has this happened.

On Tuesday, Jan. 9, Nicole Breault was attending the club's annual general membership meeting when she was named its Jerome B. White Yachtsman of the Year, awarded to "the member who has made the greatest contribution to the sport of yachting during the preceding year." A graduate of Old Lyme High School and a former All-American at Yale University, Breault is the first woman in St. Francis history to earn the esteemed honor.

"I was curious who was going to win it," Breault, who lives in San Francisco with her husband and fellow sailor Bruce Stone, said this week in a telephone interview, one day prior to Wednesday's celebration of the 32nd annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day. "I was completely shocked. In all the 91 years, no woman had won the yachtsman of the year ... there were places in the club where women weren't allowed to go."

"What's really special is what it means, what the club was trying to say. Personally, I felt honored to get an award like that. That's a pretty loud statement. ... I stammered for a while. I got a little emotional. (My) peers are showing I'm worthy of their respect. How much that means to me,

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NICOLE BREault

## Breault becomes first female winner of St. Francis YC award

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not just as a sailor but as a woman, is pretty special."

In 2017, Breault won 10 major regattas, alternating between skipper and main trimmer/tactician for Stone on the couple's J/105, Arbitrage — a 10.5-meter one-design — while also continuing her strong performance in team and match racing on the heels of women's match racing national championships in 2015 (Balboa, Calif.) and 2016 (Annapolis, Md.)

At St. Francis, she created and coached a successful Women's Learn-to-Sail program last year, as well as bringing women's match racing to the San Francisco Bay. She also serves the sport as the national grading secretary for U.S. Match Racing and as a member of the U.S. Match Racing Committee.

In collecting her thoughts following the victory Breault, 45, put together a statement which read, in part:

"I am deeply moved by this acknowledgement of my racing and contributions to the club, even more so by the symbolic gesture to grant a woman the rank of yachtsman.

"... Over time, the courage of female sailors and their male advocates has eroded the rules of exclusivity, and using me as an example, the StFYC has made a bold move naming me their 2017 Yachtsman of the Year.

Were that merely for a successful racing record, it would be significant enough. However, the club also focused attention on my efforts to bring more women into sailing and create opportunities to advance their skills, thus amplifying the message and mission of inclusiveness going forward."

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Breault was a history teacher and department chair at Old Lyme High School, when, while visiting her brother Michael in New York City, was introduced to Stone. They sailed together first, dated second. And, eventually, he proposed to Breault during a race.

"I told him to focus on the race," said Breault, who married Stone, the 2009 J/105 North American champion, in 2014 on the beach in Mexico. "I told him if we won the race, I'd marry him. We won the race and we won the regatta."

That's how Breault went from being at home on the East Coast, a lifelong member of the Niantic Bay Yacht Club — and assistant coach of the Old Lyme High girls' soccer team — to discovering the beauty of the San Francisco Bay and regularly sailing past Alcatraz.

The Golden Gate, spanned by the famous bridge, is a strait which connects the bay to the Pacific Ocean, creating a cool breeze which Breault said is regularly in the "high teens, low 20s" in knots.

"It's spectacular. It's so beautiful, kind of like large, immense beauty," Breault said. "The California Valley is hot and it sucks the ocean air in through the Golden Gate and it makes this beautiful, windy venue. ... It's been a great adventure. I never really thought I'd live in California. I'm very happy."

She and Stone live in San Francisco's Marina District, close by the club. In addition to her volunteer coaching at St. Francis, Breault is a volunteer sailing coach at Cal.

Breault, who grew up racing International 420s and is a former national champion in the class, graduated from Old Lyme in 1990 as class valedictorian. She was an all-state selection in girls' soccer, as well as captain Old Lyme's sailing team on the way to a state championship her senior season. She graduated from Yale in 1994 with a degree in American studies.

Breault said she misses the East Coast, but is fortunate enough to have her family, including parents Ron and Chris, still living here, in case she's in need of a visit.

"I have to give a tremendous amount of credit to growing up in Niantic," Breault said. "I learned so much from my brother, Bill and Tim Healy, Theresa Parker, all of whom have gone on to do amazing things. St. Francis is world-renowned. Not many people know where Niantic



Nicole Breault and husband Bruce Stone share a smile while sailing together on their J/105 yacht during the 2017 Block Island Race Week. Breault, who now lives on the West Coast, was recently named the first female Yachtsman of the Year in the 91 year history of the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco.

is, but some of the greatest sailors I know are from Niantic Bay."

Following her second straight women's match racing national championship in 2016 and an eighth-place finish at the women's match racing worlds, Breault was named the St. Francis co-Yachtswoman of the Year.

Now, she considers it an extraordinary honor to be chosen as 2017 Yachtsman of the Year for that world-renowned club on the San Francisco Bay.

"Not for some politically correct reason," Breault said, "but for how good I can be."

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