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Harry C. "Buddy" Melges, Jr.



January 26, 1930 -
Birthplace: Zenda, Wisconsin

“The best helmsmen are the ones who can keep the most channels open.”

The little town of Zenda, Wisconsin (population: 100), is famous for two things: an eight pound meteorite that was once found there, and Buddy Melges, who has long been known as “The Wizard of Zenda.” From his home waters on nearby Lake Geneva, where he has been equally adept in both scows and ice boats, Melges has become one of the more successful and acclaimed racing skippers in the world. He has two Olympic medals; world championships in

Stars (2), 5.5 Meters (3), E-Scows (5), and Skeeter Ice Boats (7); and an America's Cup win as co-helmsman. He is a three-time Rolex Yachtsman of the Year. Those are just the highlights of a stunning career on the water.

The gregarious, self-effacing Melges has attracted the world's best sailors to Zenda to sail his beloved scows and be thrilled by 100 mph dashes across the frozen lake in the big ice boats, to hunt ducks (his other passion), and to discuss the shapes of hulls, sails, and appendages in colloquial turns of phrase that are all his own. He'll often speak of the need to sail "a little bit quicker." On board, he discourages "chin music," non race-related chatter.

Thanks to a reliable set of sound, basic observations, Melges is one of the few seat-of-the-pants skippers who flourished beyond sailing's high tech revolution. "Instruments are great," he once remarked, "but you have to look at the water, present the boat for Mother Nature."

In 2010, at the age of 80, Melges won the A-Scow Inland Yachting Association Championship.

- *Roger Vaughan*

Links of Interest:

["Super Sailor And A Soup Tureen" - Aug. 27, 1962 Sports Illustrated](#)

[Bio of Buddy Melges on Melges.com](#)

["The Buddy Melges Story" - published in Starlights, Feb., 1983 \(starclass.org\)](#)

[Buddy Melges Wikipedia page "](#)

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