

Cudmore's cunning saves Crusader

FREMANTLE — British yacht White Crusader beat Canada II by less than a second in the America's Cup yesterday to record the narrowest victory in the history of 12 m match racing.

White Crusader crossed the line just 0,295 sec ahead of its rival to stay third overall after three days of racing in the second challenger elimination series.

Organisers awarded the race to the British by a full second because timings below a second are not officially recognised.

The race was a tough lesson for White Crusader's skipper Harold Cudmore, one of the world's most experienced match racers, as he trailed Canadian Terry Neilson

around every mark. Neilson read the three to 17-knot winds more thoroughly than Cudmore.

Officials had shortened the course to six legs and 18 nautical miles fearing that light winds would persist, but the wind returned late in the day.

Cudmore won the race in the last few hundred metres with a stunning luffing manoeuvre, stalling both yachts by turning in to the wind.

The Canadians fell for the tactic of the old master, were forced to tack away and lost the lead, having been neck and neck along the windward beat.

French Kiss dealt the second upset of the day, beating San Francis-

co's Tom Blackaller and USA by 44 seconds after leading at every mark.

The loss cost the ebullient Californian three places to lie seventh overall while the French moved up three to be fifth.

Dennis Conner and Stars and Stripes snapped a two-race losing streak with an easy, four minute, 51-second victory over Challenge France. The win moved Stars and Stripes up one notch to fifth place with 16 points, one behind Italia.

USA, highly regarded going into the second round, suffered its second straight defeat. French Kiss, with Marc Pajot at the helm, humbled the Tom Blackaller-skippered, San Francisco-based boat by 44 seconds. — Sapa-Reuter.