

# Favourite out of Rothmans?

By DALE GRANGER

ROTHMANS Week has been dealt a late blow with outright race favourite Orion Express — the most radical IMS racing yacht built in South Africa — outlawed from the local showpiece regatta in Table Bay for having a carbon-fibre rudder.

The R1.5 million hi-tech, super-light 40 foot yacht, which is due to be launched next Thursday may now never be seen racing in local waters if she is not at the start of the regatta on December 13, a disappointed co-skipper, Bruce Savage said yesterday.

At the international Ocean Racing Council meeting in Toronto recently, the IMS rules were amended making provision for ultra-light carbon-fibre on rudders, hulls and decks, but these changes will only come into effect in South Africa for next year's racing calendar on January 1.

Savage, who represented South Africa at the Barcelona Olympics, said he had pre-empted the decision of the new IMS regulations and they went ahead with construction of the 20 kg carbon-fibre rudder, which was almost half the weight of a conventional metal stock rudder.

"But we were counting on the new rules becoming immediately effective in South Africa," Savage said.

In a last-minute effort to save Orion Express' Rothman's Week campaign, Savage said he had negotiated with the Cruising Association of South Africa, who said they would be happy to allow her participation with corrector weights to compensate for the immense weight advantage.

"We were more than happy with that and saw it as a fair solution with no added advantage," Savage said.

The race committee, however, stuck to the rules and on Friday said they would not allow the carbon-fibre rudder with or without corrector weights as they could not change the notice of the race at this late stage.

"We can't have another rudder made up in time," Savage said.

Co-skippered by Savage and Howard Edwards and crewed by South Africans, Orion Express is set to campaign overseas at the Key West and Key Biscayne regattas in Florida, USA, early next year, Antigua Week in the Caribbean, Cowes Week in Britain and at the Level rating 40 worlds in Sweden.

"It looks like we will now not be able to do the race unless some sort of compromise can be reached," Savage said.

He said if the Rothman's Week campaign floundered, Orion Express would probably be shipped out to America on January 12.