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# Any which way to the Rio finish

"NORTH or south — that is the question," proffered the old Irishman propping up the corner of the bar in the Royal Cape Yacht Club lounge.

I knew what the question was — I had asked it only moments before — but as a rookie navigator responsible for getting a yacht across the South Atlantic as quickly as possible, I was getting remarkably few answers from the normally well-informed and always less than sober panel of "experts" at the bar.

It was two weeks before the 1993 Cape to Rio race and, although most of the bar boys sailed about as regularly as the monsoon hits Cape Town, what they lacked in sobriety and a willingness to buy drinks, they more than made up for with their generosity in offering ad-

vice on the finer points of sailing. But they wouldn't (or couldn't) tell me the best way to get to Rio.

Obviously there is no correct route to sail to the island of Trinidade, 600 miles off the Brazilian coast, before rounding it and heading south to the "River January" or Rio de Janeiro — it all depends on the prevailing weather and where the South Atlantic high is located.

The serious competitors on Broomstick, Parker Pen and Namsea Challenger were keeping their cards close their chests, and the weather experts on Morning Glory were too busy to offer advice as they struggled to make sense of their computers, which the inclement Cape Town weather seemed determined to confound.

**As the time for the next Cape-to-Rio race draws nearer, yachting reporter BARRY TYSON takes a nostalgic look at his own trip across the Atlantic.**

As it turned out the fleet headed north-west on the conventional trade routes for the first four days with Broomstick and Parker Pen fighting for the lead, both regularly experiencing good runs of over 300 miles per day.

However instead of staying on the regular arch towards Rio, Broomstick headed more west to "cut the corner" and skirt the mid-Atlantic high pressure cell.

Parker Pen was comforted by the fact that Morning Glory, with ace weather router Jean Yves Bernot and hi-tech forecasting equipment on board,

with veteran Bertie Reed on Harbour Island, chose the more northerly route.

However, Broomstick's gamble payed off and at one stage she led by 200 miles, although Bruce Tedder on Parker Pen managed to cut Hanno Teuteberg's lead down to 90 miles by the time the two boats approached Trinidade.

In spite of a determined attempt by Parker Pen's crew, Broomstick was not to be caught and broke Ondine's 17-day record by nearly two days with Parker Pen just five hours behind. The crew of third-placed Namsea Challenger were ecstatic when they heard they had beaten Broomstick on handicap, and had a good chance of taking handicap honours.

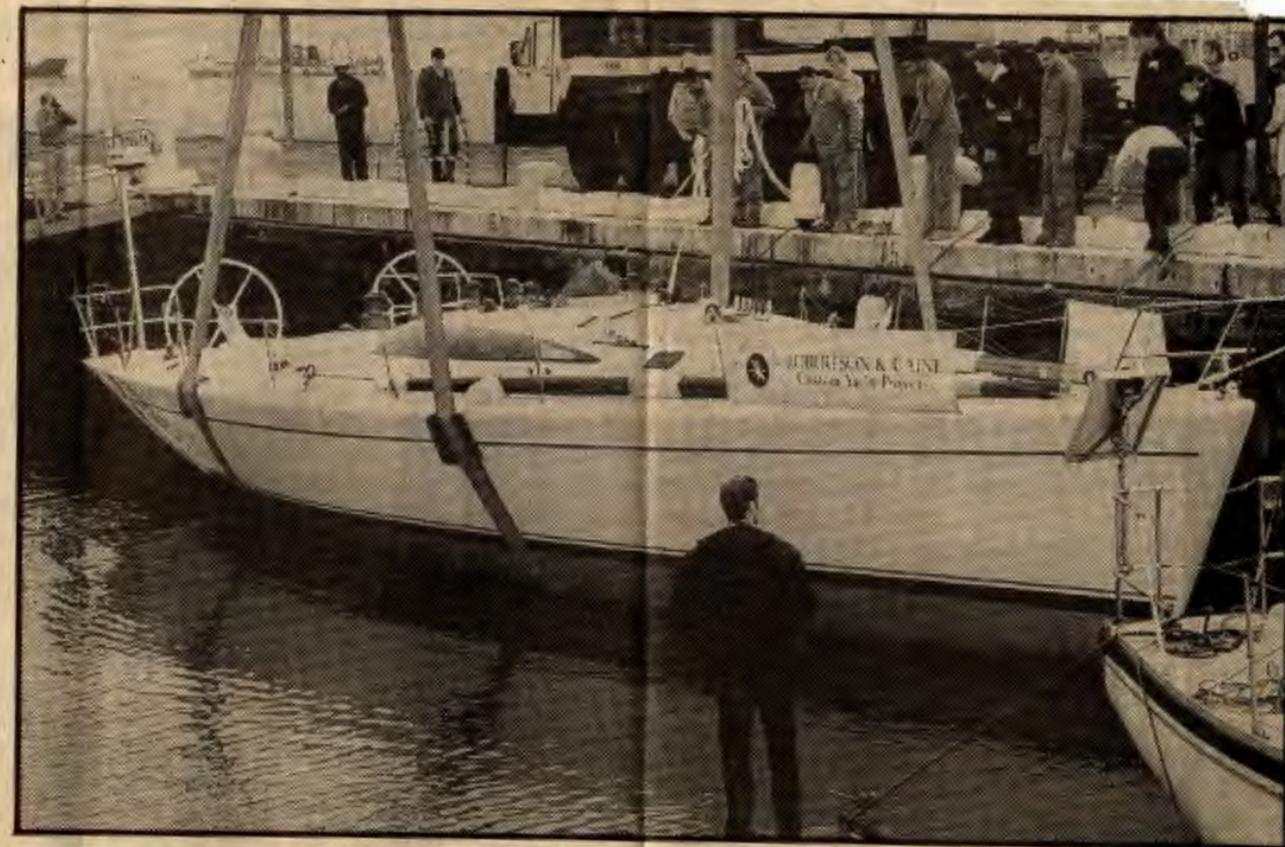
However their hopes were dashed when Hasso Plattner on

Morning Glory managed to escape the light airs his boat had been trapped in just 24 hours from the finish to end fourth overall and winner on handicap.

Meanwhile, light years away towards the back of the fleet my 'weather routing' on a 10-metre Miura had all come together using some sophisticated intelligence methods.

Bowing to the superior knowledge of the bigger boats with experienced weather specialists and hi-tech equipment on board, I headed in a generally north-west direction and then followed a course gleaned from taking the average positions of leaders' daily position reports.

Not very daring or original but we did make it Rio in time for some good parties.



□ **MIGHTY WARRIOR:** South Africa's strongest challenger for line honours and in next year's Cape to Rio race is the 20-metre Port Elizabeth-based yacht Warrior. Veteran Rick Nankin will be at the helm.