

Yachts in the doldrums

By BARRY LAMPRECHT

THE St Francis Bay race again generated its crop of colourful yarns for the clubhouse.

Twice cancelled in recent years due to gale force winds, last weekend's race was a doldrum of fickle zephyrs and sly eddies reducing skippers to despair.

The race started in windless conditions, and of the nine boats at the start last Friday night at 10pm, five eventually chose to retire under the frustrating conditions.

The first hurdle was clearing the harbour. Crew on Margaret Ann and Bellatrix used broomsticks to push the sails out to catch every breath of wind. Bellatrix took four hours to reach the open sea.

Chinook and Richard's Car Care were the first to clear the harbour.

The breeze remained fickle during the night but a fresh south-easterly began to fill in from mid-morning.

Delta Wings and Car Care had a thrilling fight for the lead in the racing class.

In the cruising class Tikalox consolidated her lead when she experimented by running under two headsails without the main.

After rounding the mark a half-mile off St Francis Bay, the breeze gradually weakened as the boats kept inshore to benefit from the current. As night fell the frustrating conditions present at the race's start returned. Tactics then came into play.

First in the racing class was Wings, skippered by Rod van der Weele. Then came Car Care (Robin White) and Gringo (Mike McAdam). Chinook (Bill Lee) and Crackerjack (Rob Hamilton) both retired.

In the cruising class the only boat to finish was Tikalox (Rob Smith). The retired boats were Margaret Ann (Dave Stobie), Bellatrix (Barry Jones) and Gaia (Graham Emberson).