



MISLEADING CALM: Four of the competitors in the national dinghy championships at Saldanha Bay were among those that battled winds of up to 35 knots at the weekend.

Dinghies make light of heavy weather

Staff Reporter

A SAGA of mishaps failed to put a dampener on a dinghy regatta at Saldanha.

The littlest boats with the biggest hearts had to take on heavy weather to decide the outcome of the 1993 Mirror National Championships.

But they came through safely. Not so the mark-laying boat which sank leaving the official photographer trapped and having to be rescued by the outgoing national chairman of the Mirror Class Association, Gordon Wishart.

The five-day regatta, which ended at the weekend, attracted 31 entries from around the country and Swaziland as top contenders battled in fierce competition for the points which will earn six skippers and crews a place in the national side which will compete at the four-yearly Mirror Worlds at Pembroke, Wales, in July 1995.

There were 18 entries from Natal, three from Transvaal, two from Swaziland and the balance from Western Cape. All except one of the Western Cape en-

tries came from Zeekoevlei Yacht Club.

The popular and diminutive craft — at 3,3m they are the smallest two-man class — fought winds of up to 35 knots and breaking white water during the regatta — but no craft was lost and there were no injuries.

But the mark-laying boat, a cabin cruiser with two engines, sank while retrieving a buoy and all three officials, including Mr Wishart, landed in the water.

The official photographer, who was also on board, found his legs entwined in ropes as the boat went down and Mr Wishart, notwithstanding the fact that his one arm was in a cast, had to dive to free him. They were all brought to shore by the NSRI.

While the Mirror skippers contested six deciding races for top honours, the big keel boats on the West Coast Cruise found the weather made it impossible for them to complete their races.

Overall winner was present national champion Mark Gunning with crew Robin Windell Of Royal Natal Yacht Club who won all six races. Runner-up was

Trygve Roberts and daughter Mandy from Cape Town's Zeekoevlei Yacht Club who came second in all six races.

Taking bronze medals were Trevor Gibb and crew Mandy Corlett (Island Sailing Club, Durban), fourth was Jonathan Norton and crew Jina Bromley-Gans (Natal University Sailing Club), and fifth Sieraj Jacobs and crew Gareth Blanckenberg (Zeekoevlei). Sieraj was also awarded honours as the top junior skipper. He and Blanckenberg are also the reigning national Optimist champion and runner up respectively..

The competition was marked by the high number of lady skippers - they made up a third of the fleet. Top lady skipper was Kathrin Udall of Point Yacht Club in Durban at 12th overall.

Just proving that the Mirror — a dinghy class with international popularity — is a boat for all ages is the fact that the skipper who walked off with three overall honours, Trevor Gibb, is 52. And youngest skipper was Skye Middleton the 12-year-old son of the well known keelboat skipper Craig Middleton of Cape Town.