

Yeah, why not. Let's go win the Southstar!

The surprise winners who nearly didn't make the race

by HENRI du PLESSIS
Yachting Reporter



Farrow at the helm on an easy day.

— such as when you see the other guy is extremely tired, you continue to steer until he feels ready to take over, even if its way past the time you were supposed to go below," Patrick said.

Why did they do it?

Patrick: "I'm a student! I have nothing to do except taking part in crazy races."

Gary: "I could not let the chance pass me by." It may sound simple.

"For the first five days, we had no sleep. We worked on a schedule of three hours on, three hours off, throughout the race, with Gary and I taking turns at the tiller.

"We could have used the self-steering gear, but we did not. A human being can steer at least one knot faster than self-steering gear if he concentrates and knows what he's doing."

"You get so tired, you fall asleep without realising it. I came on deck once and saw Patrick lying over the tiller to leeward (the side of the boat away from the wind) fast asleep.

"I woke him up and he just fell asleep again — bang, over the tiller."

"You go off watch after three hours, but you don't just fall into your bunk and crash — you have to do navigation, study the weather, decide whether to keep to your course or change it, as well as make your food.

The toughest adversary is the wind.

"On the way back, we just had to stay between Bertie and the finish. The South Atlantic high pressure had to be read carefully — and we did it! The trick is to sail as close to the high as possible with-



Pictures: GARY FARROW and PATRICK HOLLOWAY.

Life's a gas when you can still find the time to wash, Holloway finds out.

SITTING naked at the tiller in a blistering gale at night, and waging a mental battle with weather patterns every day, are only part of the story of two young men's victory in a tough yacht race.

The victors were Cape sailors Patrick Holloway, 26, and Gary Farrow, 19; and the challenge was to cross an ocean in a small boat at top speed in mostly adverse conditions.

Patrick, a student of law at the University of Cape Town, and Farrow, who had just completed his national service in the South African Navy, upset predictions for the Stannic South Short-handed Trans Atlantic Race (Southstar) for small but tough matched 10m Miura yachts when they beat professional sailor Bertie Reed and experienced Miura sailor Tony Abbott by a large margin.

And they only just made the starting line with a last-minute sponsorship from the city office furniture concern Form Furniture, on the boat of Farrow's father, Herb, which they prepared themselves.

Motivation

But the battle was not so much against their fellow yachtsmen as against their own limitations.

The two young men put their success down to a strong motivation to win.

"We were really psyched up to win — we decided this is it, we're going to push hard throughout and it paid off," said skipper Patrick.

"People did not believe us when we sailed our qualifying 500 miles in only three days and two hours.

"The weather (during the qualifier) was extremely rough — we had to get a weekend like that — with the wind up to 50 knots and sailing at a speed of seven knots only under a number four Genoa (small foresail)."

"Maybe that was a sign of things to come," interjected Gary.

"I don't think the other guys expected us to push that hard — we flew from the start and just battled to stay ahead of Bertie (Reed)," said Patrick.

"We studied the weather patterns for a long time before the race and planned our strategy to the finest detail.

"On the way there, we kept further to the west and on the way back further to the east."

out getting caught in the windless centre.

"It was very tense. Gary called me, saying the water was becoming flatter and the barometer looked as if it had taken a sniff of cocaine (on a high). That was when we turned away and left Bertie and Ashley (Stoner) stuck without wind."

"I had weird dreams — they started during the qualifying voyage when I dreamed there were two other people on board — a man and a woman," Gary said.

"I kept on telling Patrick to tell them to be quieter on deck because I could not sleep.

"At one stage during the race I dreamed I was steering the boat with the tiller extension from my bunk through the porthole — that was funny."

Patrick said: "Gary woke me up with his screaming while we were lying at anchor off St Helena. As I rushed on deck, I saw him fighting with the tiller. He thought we were going to run aground on the island, but we were actually safe at anchor!"

"The second last night of the race, I thought I was going moggy.

"I went below to sleep and all of a sudden I felt I could not breathe!

"I sometimes feel claustrophobic and I thought this was hitting me again, so I ran up top naked and took over the tiller from Gary.

"The night was pitch black, the wind was gale-force and the white water was blowing over the deck, but I thought the cold would shock me out of it.

Poisoned

"When I went down again later, the same thing happened. There and then I decided I'd steer the whole night. I dressed and went back up.

"Only the next day we discovered I was actually being poisoned. A battery had fallen over and the acid mixed with salt water, releasing sulphuric acid right up my nose."

"I did not even smell it, because I had a porthole between me and the battery — I was only too glad Patrick volunteered to steer," Gary laughed.

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Bag up and cruising, Form Flyer takes an early lead at the start of the race.