

# Bartolomew Dias yachters already in fear of the doldrums

CAPE TOWN — Skippers, with only six weeks to go to the start of the Bartolomew Dias Trophy race from Cape Town to Lisbon, are already talking about the most crucial factor — the dreaded doldrums.

Most agree this vast “windless” triangle near the equator — where becalmed yachts face periods of intense frustration often punctuated by violent squalls — is where tactics and seamanship count most.

The prestige 6 000 nautical mile race, one of the longest ocean races in the world, starts on March 31 and already a record number of 21 boats have entered.

Crews will be at sea for at least six weeks, with one stopover at the Azores Islands. The race is consequently known as the “Comrades marathon” of South African yachting.

Several leading skippers — including Ted

Kuttel, who won the 1987 Crystic Beachcomber Crossing, and Lieutenant-Commander Hanno Teuteberg of the red-hot favourite Voortrekker II — believe the Doldrums is where the race will be won or lost.

The tactics will probably be to go as far west as feasible, beating to windward into the trades and thus overtaking the yachts that keep more east through the heart of the windless area. — Sapa.

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