

Yachting

DURBAN — The Durban boat *Jasco Spirit* of St Gerard regained her handicap lead in the **Portnet Dias** race yesterday, nosing ahead of archrival *Natfish Touchwood*.

It is the second time in 24 hours that the handicap lead has changed hands in the Cape Town to Lisbon race.

Jasco skipper Jerry Harrison and his largely inexperienced crew crossed the Equator early yesterday holding a 28-mile lead on handicap ratings over the Dutch-registered *Natfish Touchwood*, skippered by Gerie Hegie, a deep-sea diver based in Cape Town.

Hegie lost valuable time diverting to Ascension last week to drop off an injured crewman. By Monday he had regained his lead, only to lose it once more overnight.

The contest is equally fierce in the open class with *IGI Insurance Gilana*, skippered by veteran Portuguese seaman Emilio de Sousa, keeping just ahead of this highly motivated fleet.

In a radio interview yesterday, De Sousa said that even though they were slap in the middle of the doldrums they were still managing to squeeze four knots out of the heavy, steel-hulled 15 m ketch.

He is being chased by the only catamaran in the fleet, *Spirit of Sunpack*,

Jasco crosses Equator in the lead

skippered by Tubby Gericke, and the heavy-displacement navy sloop *Corcoleum Shelley Anne*, skippered by Lieutenant-Commander Gus Mostert.

Meanwhile up front the battle is on to see who will get to the Azores first, with Bertie Reed on *Grinaker* just three nautical miles ahead of Hanno Teuteberg, skipper of *SAA Voortrekker II*.

The two boats have been neck and neck for the past week and emerged from the doldrums early on Monday for the sprint to the first-leg finishing line at Ponta Delgado.

However, if they have to beat upwind, the ageing *SAA Voortrekker II* will have the edge on *Grinaker*, which was specifically designed as a high-speed downwind surfer for Reed's swansong race, the single-handed BOC at the end of the year.

Hard luck story of the day came from *Kings Transport*, skippered by Bobby Bongers, who had to throw all their fresh meat overboard when their deep freeze packed up. It's now tinned food for the rest of the journey to the Azores.