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Mysterious foreigner joins the fight

THE battle for line honours in the **Crystic Beachcomber** yacht race from Mauritius to Durban in September, may not be an all-South African affair.

A former Whitbread Round the World maxi racer could well upset the South African calculations.

Although the identity of the yacht, entered by a Mauritian syndicate, remains a secret, it has been

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revealed that it is a Bruce Farr design that competed in the last Whitbread race, in 1989/90. That narrows the field to seven yachts — Farr designs took first three places in the latest round the world marathon.

The most famous Farr design is the yacht that took overall and line honours, Steinlager II. Fisher

and Paykel finished second, and in third spot was Merit sailed by Pierre Fehlman, who won the 1985/6 event aboard UBS Switzerland, another Farr design. Both Steinlager II and Fisher and Paykel raised eyebrows because they were ketch-rigged, while the rest of the fleet were sloop-rigged.

Heading the syndicate is Mauritian yachting and shipping personality Cap-

tain Yves Betuel. He was highly instrumental in establishing the first Beachcomber Crossing in 1985. His entry this year, is the first official Mauritian entry in the race — and at 80-84 feet, it is the biggest.

Time alone will reveal which of the Whitbread racers will make the start line in Grande Baie in September, but whichever it is, it will add plenty of needle to the race.

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