

FLYING FIFTEEN WORLD CHAMPS

Durban

Race 1

DAILY NEWS

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Off to flying start

IN A day of drama on and off the water, the Flying Fifteen World Championships got under way offshore from Durban yesterday.

Race officer Gavin Smith not only had to endure the nervous tension of 51 on-edge crews, but also a light and switching south-westerly breeze. This made course-laying difficult, and starting the yachts proved to be almost impossible.

After three general recalls because of yachts having their bows over the line when the starting gun went, Smith hoisted the black flag. This signals that any yacht having its bows over the line at the next start would be disqualified.

And so it was that eight Flying Fifteens, including three-time defending champion Steve Goacher and World No 2 Mike Hart, both from Britain, were disqualified and took no further part in the race.

Back on the course, and Smith's problems were not over. The wind continued to switch, forcing him to move the marks of the course.

The race was eventually won by the husband-and-wife team of Barry and Sue Parkin of Britain, by about 50 metres.

Both are Olympic yachties with Barry in the Soling class and Sue having competed in three Olympics in the 470 class.

Second place went to the Durban team of Patrick Harris and Joe Boy, an impressive performance as they had not sailed together before and only received their yacht about 10 days ago.

Third place went to Geoff and Tom Bayliss from Britain, while another British yacht, sailed by Pre-Worlds winners Charles Apthorp and Andy Weatherspoon, was fourth.

Several yachts later formally protested because of the movement of the course marks during the race.

Apthorp's protest was upheld and he was awarded zero points, effectively putting him in joint first place.

The Championships continue until Saturday.