

# 'Spirit' wins Dias despite sail protest

By Dave Beattie

LISBON — Twenty-four hours of post-race drama and tension ended here on Saturday when the Cruising Association of SA confirmed that Jerry Harrison and his Durban yacht *Jasco Spirit* of St Gerard were the overall winners in the **Portnet Dias** race.

Harrison's narrow victory, by 84 minutes over almost 7 000 miles, had been protested by Walon, skippered by Cape Town's Dave Abromowitz, in the belief that *Jasco's* International Measurement System (IMS) rating

had been miscalculated in terms of mainsail area.

The CASA race committee ruled that since the IMS ratings had been posted well before the race, and the deadline for objections had expired two days before the start, there was little ground for protest.

After hearing Abromowitz's case, they also ruled against him because of insufficient evidence to warrant further investigation.

Abromowitz had told the protest committee: "It's the first time I've protested after a result. But I think I speak for most

of the other skippers, too, when I say we were all surprised at *Jasco's* speed. It did not relate to her rating.

"We thought there must be a glaring mistake in her rating, a miscalculation of figures. I don't enjoy winning a race in the committee room and I am the first to say they sailed outstandingly. But it was also apparent that she couldn't be that fast.

"We contacted a top South African designer and he suggested that we investigate the area of the mainsail. She could have been incorrectly rated on a

smaller area than what she was actually carrying."

Harrison merely said: "Why wasn't the protest lodged in Ponta Delgado when we were lying second to Walon, instead of Lisbon, when we were ahead?"

When the CASA decision — a popular one by all accounts — was made known, Abromowitz was the first to congratulate Harrison with "Well sailed."

So the official IMS handicap result is: 1 *Jasco Spirit* of St Gerard, 2 *Natfish Touchwood*, 3 *Walon*.



Skipper Jerry Harrison (centre) and his crew aboard the victorious *Spirit* of St Gerard in Lisbon.