



Perfect start: competitors in the BT Global Challenge make their final reach for the start in a 30-knot south-easter

Local hopes: Boris Webber's yacht Courtaulds under full spinnaker

Bless these boats: and all who sail in them. Archbishop Desmond Tutu conducts the Blessing of the Waves ceremony

# Boris Webber sneaks Courtaulds ahead as Global Challenge fleet sets off

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Springbok sailor Boris Webber, skippering Courtaulds, delighted his home crowd when he stole the lead at the start of the Atlantic leg of the BT Global Challenge in blustery Table Bay. Courtaulds was across the line in yesterday's start just seconds after Nuclear

Electric and Ocean Rover: As the fleet powered close inshore past the crowds on the Waterfront to Mouille Point in the stiff 30 knot breeze en route to Boston, Boris jockeyed Courtaulds into position to round the first mark nicely ahead of his competitors to take a clear 100m lead. But for an agonising 10 minutes, the Challenge fleet came to a halt, caught in the wind shadow of the mountain. Courtaulds,

with spinnaker hoisted ready to use the breeze clearly visible further out, was also stalled. The local entry lost its early advantage when, just 20m away, Heath Insured 11 managed to keep going to steal past and was the first to get clear of the hectic flotilla of Cape yachts and spectator boats. But perhaps the most memorable moment of the day came from an ebullient

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in a Blessing of the Waves ceremony at the Waterfront before the fleet set out. It was only the advent of a new South Africa, he said, which had finally allowed him and South Africa to take part properly in the event. His eloquent service left the yachtsmen visibly moved. After the two Southern Ocean legs, the 7 000 mile leg to Boston could well prove

the toughest tactically, and one where Group 4, winner of three of the four legs to date and with an overall 24 hour lead, could easily lose her top placing. The boats face potentially fickle winds off the South African coast before they skirt the shifting South Atlantic high to catch the south-east trades to near the equator. Speaking via Cape Town Radio early today, the skipper of Global Teamwork

Merfyn Owen said his yacht and the three others in the lead had benefited by staying close to the coast and were enjoying a 20-knot breeze that was speeding them on their way and none of the calms that they had expected up the South African West Coast were as yet making an appearance. ■ Yesterday evening Nuclear Electric headed the fleet ahead of Global Teamwork and Courtaulds International.