

# CAN THIS RACE BE JUSTIFIED?

A CORRESPONDENT to the London Observer which sponsored the transatlantic race, writes:

The dramatic rescue of a competitor has emphasised just how dangerous the Observer Transatlantic Race is. Many people think multi-hulled yachts are quite unsuitable for ocean racing.

Surely more precautions should have been taken before the race began to discourage them from entering, thereby reducing the risk of loss of life and the possibility that large sums of public money might have to be spent on rescue

operations. How can such a race be justified?

The Observer replies:

It has always been obvious that a race of this sort is dangerous. But serious precautions are taken by its highly expert organisers, the Royal Western Yacht Club. Before anyone is allowed to enter, he must have sailed 500 miles singlehanded. He is required to have safety equipment on board, including an inflatable

dinghy. His boat is rigorously inspected before the start.

No inducement in the form of money prizes is offered. The sole trophy is a silver dish.

Where other yacht races lay down rigid specifications, for this race there is no limitation on design—a major objective being to encourage experimental design; but the RWYC rejects any yacht that it considers unsafe.

It is made absolutely clear

to all competitors before they start that they must be able and willing to look after themselves. But it is, of course, in the tradition of the sea that, when anyone is known to be in danger, others will go to his aid—as they have done so magnificently on this occasion.

We believe this transatlantic race to be justified by the bravery and the skills in seamanship and design it encourages. It has tested the Hasler self-steering gear, which has transformed single-handed sailing. And it helped to discover Sir Francis Chichester, the first winner of this race across the Atlantic.



★ Key members of the Race Committee on the week-end they chose Dalling to sail Voortrekker:

From left, standing: Mr. Gordon Graham, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the SA Yacht Racing Association; Mr. Fred Smithers, of Wynberg; Mr. Elkan Green, of Mobil, S. Africa; Col. Don Ord, President of the Federation of Aquatic Sports, and of the Transvaal Sailing Association; Dr. Hamish Campbell, of Durban; Mr. Gordon Webb, Stormvogel's first skipper; Mr. Justice Louis van Winsen; and Mr. J. J. Piek, of the Rembrandt Group, one of the trustees.

From left, sitting: Mr. Brian Lello, Editor of "SA Yachting"; Mr. Victor Norton, Editor of the "Cape Times" and Chairman of the Organizing Committee; and Commander Dick Prior, Chairman of Durban's Offshore Sailing Committee.



★ Voortrekker beating against the wind in the same way as she did for 3,000 miles across the North Atlantic—but not in this ideal weather.

## The hell of the sea...

★ Continued from facing page, column 9.

stove as if they were filled with jumping beans. Imagine trying to clean a gooey stew or mess of oatmeal from a spray-soaked cabin floor.

In consistently bad weather a yacht being raced to the limits remains wet down below for days on end—bedding, clothes, books, charts, delicate instruments and packeted food. Outside, the cockpit seats stream with driven spray and the skipper's own "situpon" soon develops a painful wet rash from the constant damp chafing.

Pyjamas, taken for granted ashore, would be a fatuous luxury in Voortrekker. Body odour reigns supreme. Luckily deadly fatigue blunts the sensibilities, and rest and sleep are the only meaningful focal points of the 24-hour day.

Under conditions like these ocean seafarers have known a bitter, blind detestation of the sea come welling up. A determination to get to hell off it at the earliest possible moment... and never come back.

The next stage is fear.

Real fear. Not just the tremulous misgivings which beset most of us now and again. A real deep, animal-like

condition hardly known to ordinary humanity outside of warfare.

And then there is seasickness.

Hairy-chested week-end sailors hate to admit to it. But it plagued circumnavigator Chichester and was a curse, as well, to historic heroes like Lord Nelson. It is a crippling source of inefficiency in small craft sailing. Its earliest symptom is a deadly disinclination to get on briskly with the ship's work.

The man who can triumph over seasickness and get on with his work is a minor hero on this count alone.

## WAS WILLIAMS REALLY

### SOLO?

A CORRESPONDENT to the London Observer (a naval officer) wrote last week:

Geoffrey Williams in Sir Thomas Lipton is certainly making good progress in the

Transatlantic Solo Race, but can he be truly regarded as a solo sailor, aided as he is by English Electric's computer?

The computer is said to be directing him from the shore into favourable wind areas

and he must surely have a considerable advantage.

It is reasonable enough to make all possible use of the 'passive aids,' such as DF bearings, echo-soundings, etc., but remote guidance by a computer should carry a heavy handicap.