

Martins lead fleet away

"SO far so good — no fights!" says Springbok solo sailor John Martin of himself and his brother Ian as the two men tackle the two-man transatlantic yacht race from Plymouth in the UK to Newport in the US. The two men confess to being short tempered and enjoying frying eggs in a pot in this first delivery by Martin as he writes about the trials and tribulations of ocean racing. His column will appear every second day in The Daily News. **NATAL DAILY NEWS 12-6-90**

WITH a 3 000 nautical mile race due to start at noon, Ian and I climbed on board Allied Bank at 10am, oblivious to the thousands of people lining the dock to see everybody off.

We left the dock at 10,30am, towed by our rubber duck with a few of the support crew on board. After hoisting the mainsail and feeling the boat under sail once more, the adrenalin started flowing like the beer in the yacht club.

Half an hour later the support crew jumped ship and left Ian and I to mentally prepare ourselves for the start, which entailed a seven mile triangular course before heading out into the open sea.

We hit the startline on starboard tack in light flukey conditions to weather of Bertie Reed on Grinaker and Warren Luhrs on Hunter's Child with a fairly evenly matched start. After close reaching with genoas up, we gybed onto port after rounding the buoy and started another close reach up the leeward side of the breakwater for another 212 miles.

We were still very evenly matched going up the last beat, Bertie being the most leeward, Warren in the middle and us to weather, when Bertie and Warren both elected to tack.

Bertie went first and passed be-

hind our transom by about 30m and with us still on starboard and Warren now on port, it was so close that Warren had to duck our stern.

We carried on straight, waiting for a header, and planned that Bertie and Warren would be lifted so that when they tack back, they would be headed away from the mark. At the same time, we would get lifted when we tack.

Our decision not to cover them paid off when our header came through and when we finally went around the mark, Warren was 200m behind us and Bertie 500m.

As we led the monohull fleet out of the bay, Ian and I knew that all the months of thought and preparation put into this project had paid off.

Allied Bank is an extremely demanding boat physically. In spite of all our physical preparation before the race — gym and cycling — Ian and I find ourselves stiff in the most unexpected places. But then we did choose a sail wardrobe bigger than those of Grinaker or Hunter's Child to gain maximum benefit.

Ian says working the boat is like being in a rugby test match for 12 hours instead of 90 minutes!

It is actually a pleasure having Ian on board — a change from solo sailing. So far so good — no fights!



We both have a reputation for being quite volatile, but all we've argued about was who was to do the cooking last night. We both enjoy playing in the kitchen.

Ian won the first war however, but we decided to ditch the washing up! It was rewarding to be ahead of Warren long before sunset on Sunday and to hear from Jeanne van Rooyen, our PRO in Plymouth, the comments of the Race Committee. They obviously enjoyed the start and we were proud to hear that our, and I quote: "Inspired manoeuvres were worthy of the America's Cup".

We are now on top of our position — happy with our weather routing system and prepared to match and beat Hunter's Child on her best point of sailing with hard work and determination.

The morale on board is very high — the boat is going OK, but we need to keep on working hard. After all, that is what winning is all about.