

Martin brothers still leading race

Own Correspondent
Cape Town

JOHN MARTIN and his brother Ian are still leading narrowly in the Two-man Trans-Atlantic race from Plymouth to Newport, but expect to increase their lead because stronger wind has been predicted by British weathermen.

Since the start of the race on Sunday, the yachtsmen have experienced light and variable wind, forcing them to do regular sail changes and sail tuning.

These conditions were expected to be to the advantage of the Martins' American rivals Warren Luhrs and Nitish Iyengar in Hunter's Child.

The Martin brothers have so far been able to ward off the Hunter's Child challenge and their lead of about 18 miles is slim enough to make for an exciting race.

John Martin yesterday reported his yacht, Allied Bank, had not been affected by a collision with a log and was maintaining her speed.

Bertie Reed and Greg Prescott in Grinaker, the other 18 m entrant in the race, are 35 miles behind Martin.

Even though Reed is struggling with a problematic rudder system, he is known as a sly tactician and could be cause for surprise because he is still within striking distance.

Reed's rudder problem may, however, have put him in a catch-22 situation — the rudders start giving trouble at speeds above 12 knots, while Grinaker is more suited for strong wind and therefore higher speed.

The much faster 18 m trimarans are led by Mike Birch and his crewman in Fujicolor. Racing in their class has also been close, with the trimaran Elf Aquitaine close on Fujicolor's transom.

French Globe Challenge hero Loick Peyron and his crewman in Lada Poch have chosen a northerly route and are close to latitude 50 North.

Still a long, long way to go . . .

JOHN MARTIN today writes about a log, sharing his bunk and a hot race between the filly and the stallion. Sailing the yacht Allied Bank with his brother Ian in the Two-Man Trans-Atlantic Race (Two-Star) from Plymouth to Newport, Martin writes exclusively for The Pretoria News every two days.

WE are match racing with Hunter's Child, the brand new boat of my long-time rival Warren Luhrs and the lead is changing continually.

We have, however, found the time to rearrange all our stores and clothes so as to be more organised after the hectic start — including opening numerous cards and letters from well-wishers.

We hit a log during daylight hours at eight knots — it was the size of a railway sleeper and twice as long. The log broke in half when it hit the starboard rudder, throwing Ian and me forward on impact.

The damage was inspected by Ian who hung over the side while I held his ankles.



Filler material and some of the carbon fibre of the outer layer of the hull was damaged. It was quite a rude awakening at that speed, as we remembered that the outer skin of the boat is only 0,5 mm thick and the possibility of icebergs loomed ahead.

It is not very cold by comparison, but this could be because we're both using the one and only bunk on board. It is always warm and we have quite a fight to see who can stay in there the longest.

We heard the tragic news about the late Colin Kuiper, It always seems to knock one more at sea. Somehow it seems

the margin between life and death is very narrow.

Together, we are coping with the physical demands very well — today we made six sail changes, including taking the spinnaker out four times as we tried to keep Allied Bank ahead of Hunter's Child in light reaching conditions.

In Plymouth, the terms stallion (Allied Bank) versus the filly (Hunter's Child) were being bandied about and it still is a long, long way to the finishing post for these two thoroughbreds.

So far so good, the family feud has not happened yet, because the feud is with the boat (Hunter's Child) three miles abeam of us. The race is more than keeping the mind occupied.

By midnight on Tuesday, we had covered 524 miles of the 2 900-mile race at an average speed of 8,8 knots.

At the present rate, we might easily set a record!

And we are about 14 miles ahead of Hunter's Child now.