

17/7/1993

EL DAILY DESPATCH

Broomstick breaks the record

LONDON — The South African yacht, Broomstick, was confirmed as a record-breaking class winner last night in the Gold Cup trans-Atlantic race from New York to Southampton.

The owner, Dr Michael Kast, the skipper, Geoff Meek, and the exhausted crew of the Cape Town-built yacht were celebrating putting South African yacht racing firmly on the international map last night.

"We surfed the Atlantic like a comet. It was the most exhilarating experience of our lives," the navigator, Patrick Holloway, a Cape Town maritime lawyer, said.

Broomstick, an IMS standard 70-footer, covered the 3 300 nautical miles in 11 days, eight hours line-to-line. The Royal Ocean Racing club is expected to declare it an all-time class best.

Over the last two days Broomstick, which led the fleet for the first five days before hitting a horrendous mid-Atlantic storm, was surfing to Southampton at an incredible 42 km/h on strong westerly winds.

Broomstick missed overall first and line honours by just 161 minutes to the much more formidable Whitbread 60 class yacht Winston, skippered by the Americas Cup victor, Dennis Conner.

Winston, specially designed for the next round-the-world race, had the huge advantage of water ballast — illegal in the EMS class — which allows the yacht to lie low in the water during headwind sailing.

Holloway said: "In coming second, we beat two of the other Whitebread class yachts, and that puts us right on the yachting map. The crew was astonishing. I have never seen sailing of that standard and I think even Dennis Conner will agree with that."

Holloway said they blew two R20 000 spinnakers in the space of 10 minutes during the isolated storm they hit and the crew had to endure the unpleasant consequences of a diesel tank rupturing and flooding the bilges.

"That was rough and lost us time. We also lost time because we hit more side and headwinds than we expected. To have crossed in the time we did after all that is unbelievable."

The rest of the crew were the American watch captain, Greg Davis; Richard Mayhew; Joseph and Barry de Kock; Eric Soper; the Frenchmen, Jean-Jacques Provoyeur and Claude Thelier; and the Australians, Damien Foxhall and Brian Wallis.