

# The R500 000 Lipton Cup battle is on again

Own Correspondent  
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A MAGNIFICENT silver-gilt cup, donated by Sir Thomas Lipton in 1909 and valued at over R500 000, is the prize in a battle of the boats to be fought out on Table Bay this month.

The 26 yachts involved are contestants in the Joko Lipton Challenge Cup Regatta which takes place between August 1-25 with challenging round-the-bouys races scheduled for each day.

The regatta — a fiercely contested inter-club test of yachting skills — is regarded by yachtsmen as the most important and competitive event of its kind in South Africa.

Zeekoevlei Yacht Club, present holders of the coveted trophy, will be defending it in SX Stainless Steel, co-skippered by Chris King and Rick Nankin, against stiff competition from top yachts and leading skippers from clubs around the country.

Zeekoevlei built a special cabinet in 1988 to house the prestigious trophy and will be going all out to secure it for another year.

The Lipton Cup is the legacy of Sir Thomas Lipton, an Irish tea merchant, who presented it to the Table Bay Yacht Club (now known as the Royal Cape Yacht Club) in 1909.

Sir Thomas' is a rags to riches story.

Born in 1850 of humble Irish parents, he left school at the age of 10. His first business venture was a modest general dealer's shop which he opened in Glasgow in 1871.

By the age of 40 he was a millionaire with a vast trading empire in Britain, tea and coffee

plantations in Ceylon and extensive trading interests in South Africa and the United States.

He had a passion for the sea and sailing and competed five times for the America's Cup in a series of yachts, all named Shamrock — the last at the ripe age of 80!

Although all five challenges ended in failure, his gracious behaviour so endeared him to the Americans that after his fifth defeat, a public fund was set up which resulted in an eight thousand guinea gold loving cup being presented to him as a consolation gift from the American people.

This flamboyant, popular and generous man, a close friend of King Edward VII, was equally at home with king and commoner. He was knighted in 1889 and made a baronet in 1902.

His long-term wish to join the elite Royal Yacht Squadron and fly the prestigious red duster from his masthead was, however, fulfilled only in 1930 — a year before he died. Perhaps it was felt that a former grocer would be out of place in such blue-blooded company.

Sir Thomas presented trophies to many clubs and individuals for sailing as well as a number of other sports. The magnificent silver-gilt two-handled Joko Lipton Challenge Cup is 1,06 m high and weighs about 19 kg. A victorious winged angel adorns the cover.

It was manufactured by Elkington and Co of Birmingham — one of the largest and most significant metal-working companies in the U.K. in the 19th and early 20th Centuries.