

A new challenge for able seamen Hudson and Davis in the Lipton Cup

The Royal Cape Yacht Club's MBS Challenger has to put up with invasions from bunnies as well as from several other strong boats in the Table Bay races this week

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BY PAUL MARTIN
IN CAPE TOWN

All bets are on the Royal Cape Yacht Club's MBS Challenger to successfully defend its title when the week-long Lipton Challenge Cup gets under way in Table Bay today, but the boat's experienced co-skipper Dave Hudson has warned that this year's event could be one of the closest in the history of the regatta.

Being the oldest yachtsman in the event at 50, Hudson should know. The experienced seaman was quick to mention the fact that he and his co-skipper Greg Davis have just returned from Atlanta, where they were the respective team manager and coach for the SA Olympic yachting squad.

"In the past, the Lipton event has been dominated by three or four boats, but this year there are at least eight boats from which the winner could come," he commented.

Investech, the Waterskloof vessel under the guidance of George Amoils; Hermanus Yacht Club's Africa Glass, skippered by the highly experienced Geoff Meek; Dalys Insurance of the False Bay Yacht Club under the co-leadership of six-times winner Chris King and Rick Nankin; John Shepard's East London entry Thomare-Daiken which ended second last year; Port Elizabeth's ECL Challenger under Michael Giles; Fish Hoek's Mike Collier in charge of Super Diamond; and Hout Bay's MaxTech, under Jan Reuvers, could all play their respective parts making it a difficult week on the waters for Hudson and company.

"We usually train as a team for about three to four months for the Lipton Challenge event, but the fact that Greg and I were at the Olympics meant that we missed out on five weeks of training with our fellow crew members," said Hudson.

But Point Yacht Club's Bruce Sav-

age, who won the 1985 event aboard Element, refused to buy Hudson's comments.

"Dave and Greg know the L26 class boating scene extremely well," said Savage, who will be the skipper of the Natal yacht, Ford Falcon.

"They know the Table Bay water conditions very well, have done the Lipton year after year and know their boatspeed. My last outing in the Lipton, was nine years' back."

Savage, like two of his fellow crew members in Clynton Wade-Lehman and Ian Anslie, were part of the Olympic team which took part in Atlanta.

The fact that the total weight of the boat's crew members may not exceed 420kg is also of interest. So is the fact that the regatta does not include the discard rule among its

The event does not have a discard rule – all races have to be taken into account. Bonuses are awarded for top standings

clauses. All six one-day races are taken into account.

In some yachting events, the yachtsmen can eliminate their worst performance of the week from the final standings, but not in the Lipton.

While time is not taken into account, bonus points are awarded for the top places taken at the end of a day.

"In fact," commented Hudson, "In 1990, I won three stages of the Lipton and that was still not enough to win the title."

Superstition also seems to play its role in the lives of some of the sailors. None more so than Davis, who refused to touch the coveted Lipton Challenge trophy at a photo session a week before the event.

"I touched the trophy a few years

back and was quite frustrated when the wind died down completely when I was leading a stage," he said.

"The organisers abandoned the stage and the race was started over. On another occasion after I had touched the trophy, my boat rammed into an opponent's vessel. After that, I decided to stay far away from the trophy, and will only touch it after the Lipton competition."

The trophy, insured for R500 000, stood in the sunny Cape conditions, while the defending champions posed for their photo session.

With a hand firmly on top of the Lipton Cup, which stood on board the MBS Challenger, another crew member in Duncan McKechnie, cousin of Davis, explained that it was not that he particularly wanted to hold the trophy, but that he did not want to be responsible should the prize accidentally topple over the side of the boat into Table Bay.

The presence or pictures of rabbits, also seem to upset Davis.

"In the 1800's, rabbits were much hated creatures on board cargo vessels," said the winner of the 1991 Lipton. "The French sailors said rabbits chewed through the ropes which held the cargo in place below deck."

"Oh well," replied Ford Falcon's Olympic crewman Clynton Wade-Lehman, "we will just have to put a picture of a bunny right next to Greg Davis' bed," in an effort to find a weakness in the preparation pattern of the defending champions.

Jokes aside, the Lipton Challenge Cup is a serious business. While there is no prize money up for grabs, the interclub rivalry is ever-present.

"The Point Yacht Club contributed a lot of cash towards the boats that Ian, Clynton and I used in Atlanta," said Savage.

"Now it is payback time and we would love to win the Lipton Challenge Cup for our club."

Attempting to reduce the deficit



The MBS Challenger crew from Royal Cape who are defending the Lipton Challenge Cup in and around Table Bay this week. Back row, from left, Andy Mitchell, Joe de Kock, Greg Davis (co-skipper). Front row, Duncan McKechnie, Dave Hudson (co-skipper), Stuart Heggenstrom (team manager)

for women's lib is the Ernst & Young CSI/HiPerformance Systems entry from the Langebaan Yacht Club, skippered by Marion Cole.

The boat being used by Cole and her fellow crewmates in Inga Sch-

abort (helmswoman), Anne Pile (halliards), Gayle McArthur (cockpit), and Fiona Ross and Dianne Feltcher (foredeck), was the same vessel which took main line honours in the 1986 and 1987 Lipton. The re-fitted

vessel is valued at about R60 000, with a sail of Dacron and Kevlar, with standard nylon spinnakers.

Sailing takes place each day this week from the Royal Cape Yacht Club in Table Bay, starting at 11am.