

Crack Natal crew threatens Cape monopoly of Lipton

NATAL'S Point Yacht Club and its Olympic-loaded team is likely to be the Cape's biggest threat to retaining the magnificent R500 000 Lipton Cup when the inter-club regatta gets underway in Table Bay next Sunday.

"The Natal clubs were noticeably absent last year and with a potent team from Point back the competition is once again wide open," said Greg Davis, co-skipper of defending champions Royal Cape Yacht Club's MBS Challenger.

Davis said Cape clubs were also not discounting a major upset from other clubs - notably the East London Yacht Club, who with John Sheppard as skipper of Thomair/Daikin, cracked a second last year and Algoa Bay's Michael Giles, who as skipper of ECL Challenger was relegated to fourth after a disqualification in the last race.

"Gauteng's Aeolians Club with veteran Lipton skipper Paul

Thompson at the helm of Hollard Insurance could also be in with a chance while Pretoria Sailing Club's Mark Sadler on Le Roux Delta is an unknown," said Davis.

The Lipton Cup presented to South African yachting by international tea magnate Sir Thomas Lipton in 1909, has been won by Cape clubs for the past 10 years - six times by Zeekoevlei, three by Royal Cape and once by Hout Bay in 1991 with Davis as skipper.

Davis was the SA sailing squad coach at the Atlantic Olympics.

The last Natal skipper to win the event in 1985 for the University of Natal was Point Yacht Club's elected skipper this year - top South African and Olympic sailor, Bruce Savage.

Savage, who races the international circuit, went straight from skippering South Africa's Soling class entry at the Atlanta

Olympics to Hawaii to race the South African 40-footer Orion Express in the Kenwood Cup.

Earlier this year he won the premier Nations Cup regatta in the United States.

Crewing with him is another Olympic sailor from Natal, Iain Ainslie, who finished an unlucky eighth in the Finn class in Atlanta after being just two points off the bronze after eight races.

Ainslie crewed with Savage in the Nations Cup and also races the European and US Circuits.

Other crew members include Clinton Wade-Leghman, who crewed with Savage in the Soling class at the Olympics and at the Nations Cup and top South African yachtsman William Voerman, Joe Boy and Gavin Smith.

Point's team manager is Jimmy Mellville who crewed on Fuel Free when Point Yacht Club last won Lipton in 1982.