

ROYAL NATAL YACHT CLUB ENTRY CLAIMS SECOND PLACE ON DAY FOUR

# Orion flies the flag for KZN

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ALEX PETERSEN 26/8/2010

**B**ALMY sunny weather in the Cape winter does not bode well for sailors. A windless haze hung over Table Bay until well past noon yesterday as the sailors kicked their heels ashore before setting out in the hope of a race.

Even heading out past Sea Point, Robben Island hung in a mirage on the horizon, the distortion giving it tall cliffs at either end. A five-knot south-wester off the end of Sea Point set the fleet off just after 2.30pm towards a mark well off Clifton.

The fleet split with about eight boats heading offshore, and the rest heading inshore to gain a lift from the bend in the wind as it brushed the slopes of Lion's Head.

Getting boat speed in very light winds is a talent born of concentration and experience. Knysna Yacht Club helmsman Gareth Blanckenberg clearly has it in abundance, and with co-skipper Greg Davis calling tactics, the team was untouchable and led from from start to finish.

Yesterday it was not False Bay but the Royal Natal yacht Orion, skippered by Ricky Robinson sailing his first Lipton regatta, which claimed second place.

"We stayed inshore and found more wind near the

mountain, and we were able to work up from seventh," he said.

Although new to L26 sailing, Robinson and three crew-mates have developed their skills at three Youth Worlds regattas, and also on the J22 keelboats.

UCT entry Maverick, skippered by Oliver Hobson, sailed well to third place.

But False Bay's Team Intasure, with three second places to their credit, had to be content with fourth place, with Theewater Sports Club, skippered by James Largier, fifth, and veteran Ewald Sternagel and crew taking sixth place for Transvaal Yacht Club.

"On the final beat we were playing the wind shifts, but got knocked by the current," said False Bay co-skipper Andrea Giovannini. Although they remain in second place overall, there is now a tough six-point gap between them and Knysna.

"We are going to have to do some very aggressive sailing to bridge that gap," Giovannini said.

For defenders Royal Cape it was also a disappointing day. Skipper Dale Kushner said: "The breeze was very light and fluky on the last leg, and we fell into a hole."

With just two races remaining, the chances of unseating the Davis/Blanckenberg team look increasingly unlikely.

But then the game could get decidedly tougher over the next two days.



The start line on day four of the Lipton Cup Challenge, which was sailed in light winds, flat seas and blue skies in Table Bay off Cape Town yesterday. PICTURE: TREVOR WILKINS