

Court battle over America's Cup starts today

SAN DIEGO. — The just concluded America's Cup was filled to the brim with nastiness and the bickering continues past the race.

today

Today, Michael Fay, the New Zealand challenger called "a corporate raider" by one representative of the San Diego Yacht Club, will go to court in New York city to try and win what his 40,2m yacht couldn't do on the race course.

paced, how many races the elimination process will require and the type of courses. Should the challengers disagree, the agreement creates a committee of Cup tribal elders. These will be representatives from the New York Yacht Club, which first won the Cup and held it 132 years, the Royal Perth Yacht Club of Australia, which won it in 1983, and the San Diego Yacht Club, which won it in 1987.

Bruce Farr, designer of New Zealand, called some of supporters of the victorious Stars and Stripes "liars" for saying he created a "slow boat."

This committee will mediate any disagreements or impasses among the challengers.

That came at a post-race news conference on Friday. Dennis Conner, the winning skipper who had just finished a 2-0 whitewash of New Zealand, had to be separated from Farr offstage after a harsh exchange.

Alan Bond, the Australian billionaire who sailed the cup away from the New York in 1983, said "business-like procedures" must be returned. "The America's Cup history needs to be preserved."

In an accusation that challenged logic, New Zealand's tactician, Peter Lester, said Conner "made a mockery" of the match by not winning by much greater margins. Conner won the first race by 18 minutes, 15 seconds and race two by 21:10, the yachting equivalent of first-round knockouts.

San Diego Club Commodore Bruce Alford told a news conference on Saturday that, pending the outcome of Fay's litigation, his club plans to start the next cup series on May 1, 1991 in San Diego. He said the club has received eight challenges so far, the first from the Costa Smeralda Yacht Club of Italy delivered aboard his yacht in person by a representative "about 30 seconds after the finishing gun."

Fay says racing Stars and Stripes, a swift 18,2 metre catamaran, against his monster monohull yacht, violates the America's Cup rules and produced a mismatch. That, at least, is for sure. But whether New York Supreme Court Judge Carmen Ciparik, trustee of the trophy, agrees it was illegal remains to be seen.

The Cup waterfront was filled with apologies on Saturday after the bitter news conference, the second post-race Donnybrook.

In any case, help is on the way.

Tokyo's Nippon Ocean Racing Club made its first bid for an America's Cup while Sydney businessman Paul Ramsay, with his Australian Endeavour, submitted a challenge through the Cruising Yacht Club.

In response to all the suing and mud-slinging, the elders of the Cup have agreed there must be a better way. To keep the 137-year-old trophy shining brightly, the three Yacht Clubs that have held the Cup since its inception in 1851 set up a challenge Formula last week.

Most challengers said they would prefer to sail either in 12 metre class yachts or a new agreed class of yachts but another challenger, the French Yacht Club Du Rhone, said it preferred a 21 metre catamaran.

It will not take effect, however, until at least 24 months have elapsed from the end of any legal proceedings.

If Fay's court cast succeeds, San Diego could be forced to forfeit the cup to his Mercury Bay Yacht Club and, with it, the multi-billion dollar bonanza that goes with a full international cup regatta. — Sapa-Reuter.

The agreement provides that all challenging yacht clubs concur among themselves as to the type of yachts to be raced, when they are to be