

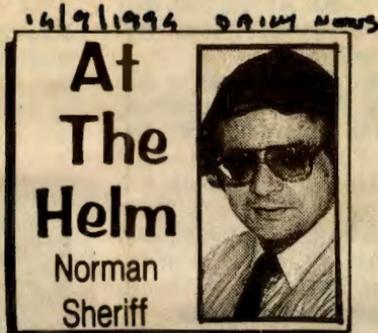
Durban's Bowman most impressive

ROBBIE Bowman, skipper of Southern Floe, the oldest and smallest yacht in the Point Yacht Club's Mauritius Crossing Race, is emerging as the favourite for handicap honours after a record passage from Durban.

The irrepressible Bowman made the voyage in 11 and a half days of wet, cold and generally miserable conditions, certainly a great achievement for a crew which had never met each other, never mind sailed together before.

"We never had less than 25 knots," said Bowman on his arrival at the Grand Baie Yacht Club this week, "and at times it went up to 70 knots with big seas running all the time. Luckily the only mishap was that the masthead light fell off but that will be replaced before the start."

Bowman, a veteran of four Mauritius races, was surprised at the time Southern Floe took to get to Mauritius. "The big trick," he said, "is not to turn north too soon, otherwise



you end up with the wind on the nose all the way. I also organised races between the two watches to see who could get the better mileage in a four hour period."

Yes Yes NBYes delivery skipper Neil Schwegman said he and the passage crew deliberately didn't sail the yacht hard on the passage from Durban, so as to avoid undue breakages.

"But," said Schwegman, "even sailing like that it's evident Yes Yes NBYes is a very competitive boat —

especially beating to windward."

And he should know after eight days of uncomfortable tacking after Madagascar. The yacht also had an unnerving experience with a school of whales off that coast, when Schwegman found whales alongside — one on each side of the yacht and two just ahead. "If they hadn't parted just then, we would have hit them," he said.

Another arrival early this week was the Durban-based yacht Kiga, skippered by the only woman skipper in the fleet, Rossana Larey.

Kiga also had wind on the nose most of the way but Rossana took it pretty easy on the voyage surfing behind the yacht and catching tuna!

Rossana however has high hopes for Kiga. "She's had two thirds on handicap in the Da Gama Race and won the Madagascar race outright," she said. "If we have the wind on the nose on the way back or if it's a strong reach, we'll be in with a strong chance for at least third place if not better."

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