

Double trouble as Meek stakes claim

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THERE'S double trouble afoot in sailing this weekend, and if you have a view of the sea, chances are at some point you'll be seeing the livewire start of the Cape's yacht racing season, the Orion Double Cape Race.

It's an unusual race in that it has four starting points, usually the yacht's home base, whether it is Royal Cape, Hout Bay, Simon's Town or Gordon's Bay, all doing an anti-clockwise circuit of all the yacht clubs and then back again to home base, so each boat passes Cape Point twice, hence the name.

You could call it a kind of yachting musical chairs.

It's attracted a big fleet, 50 boats in all, and multiply this by the crew numbers, between five and 14, and you have a lot of competitors.

If you see a set of sails zipping well ahead of all the others it is likely to be Geoff Meek's Formula 40, a racing catamaran with rather an apt name given to the event, Double Trouble.

The other multi-hull in the fleet is also a 40-footer, J Peacock's Kwulu, although its handicap rating suggests it won't have to travel as fast as Double Trouble.

Meek and his crew of five will have to go at least 60 per cent faster than the L34s for instance, in order to take the race on handicap. Which means that in a 10-knot breeze they'll have to be averaging about nine knots.

Given that there are inevitable patches without wind —



Picture: OBED ZILWA, The Argus

READY TO SAIL: Skipper Geoff Meek, right, and Rob Sharp check the equipment on their catamaran at Royal Cape Yacht Club before today's Double Cape Race.

"holes" as the sailors call them — Double Trouble will be looking to be doing speeds in excess of 20 knots which, if there's a big sea off Cape Point, could be a sight to see.

It's the first time Double Trouble has done the race, and since it just has a net platform between the hulls, crew members Martin Lamprechts, Johan van Rooyen, Rob Sharpe, Anthony Spillebeem and Jonathan Paarmann will have to be dressed to take the wet.

In order to meet the regulations for the race, they also have to carry a liferaft, rockets and other safety paraphernalia.

Meek is hoping for a westerly wind in order to sail on a fast reach the 35 miles down to Cape Point from the Royal Cape start line, but if a southeaster comes through, he'll have to watch the gusts carefully to avoid a capsizing.

They'll be racing hard to stay ahead of the big monohulls, which include two Sov-

reign 54's, Barbie Doll, skippered by World Hobie champion Shaun Ferryk, and Ray Alexander's Picasso, while Teddy Kuttle's Spilhaus, a classical Swede 55, and Rhett Goldswain's Thunderchild and Brent Sender's Indigo will also be in the running. But with the handicap system any of the 50 boats, if well sailed, could take the race.

Starting time at all the clubs is 18h00 today.