



PICTURE: PETER DUFFY

**IN A CLASS OF HER OWN:** Yachtswoman Frances Park-Ross, Point Yacht Club's Yachtsman of the Year, in action.

# Frances outsails the men

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**YACHTSWOMAN** Frances Park-Ross has beaten the men this year – and has just made history by being named the Point Yacht Club's Yachtsman of the Year.

"I'm the first woman to take the honour in the 20 years since it has been awarded and the committee had a dilemma about whether to change it to yachtswoman, or keep the old title. But I don't really mind, so we've kept it as yachtsman," said Ms Park-Ross, who has been sailing

since she was 11.

Her older brother, Mr Ian Park-Ross, also won the award six years ago, making this year the first time a brother and sister have won the top honour.

Ms Park-Ross who beat several Point Yacht Club members who had competed in the Olympics to take the title received it for "improving tremendously" over the past two years, she said.

"It was a bit odd getting the award over Olympic yachtsmen, but when I spoke to them, they were great and said I deserved it."

Her performance at two world class championships in Simonstown earlier this year, also helped her clinch the crown.

She was the first South African and the first woman to cross the finishing line in the BP Laser Masters World Championships for competitors aged 35 and over.

And in the BP Laser Women's Open Championship, Ms Park-Ross and another competitor were the first South Africans home in a field of 150.

Ms Park-Ross, who owns her own public relations and marketing con-

sultancy, says being at sea on her own and facing danger and death, has helped her in her business.

"It's freezing, there are 30-knot winds, sharks, whales in the distance, everything is out of control, you have a lot to worry about.

"After that, handling crises in the boardroom when you are in control is not that much of a problem," she said.

"I don't plan to hang up my sailing boots just yet. In fact, I can see myself doing it well into my 60's. It's a great sport, physically challenging and you get to use your brain."