

Shosholoza blows French boats away

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HENRI du PLESSIS
in Marseilles



TEAM Shosholoza might have come to Marseilles to learn about America's Cup racing, but they have ended up teaching some of the best in the world a few tricks.

If computerised boat performance figures were anything to go by, Shosholoza has already won the Louis Vuitton Act 1 trophy here in the tepid waters off this French holiday port city.

Yesterday, the team had the race of their lives, "a race to remember", as they raced, challenged and beat a boat that was known to be faster than theirs.

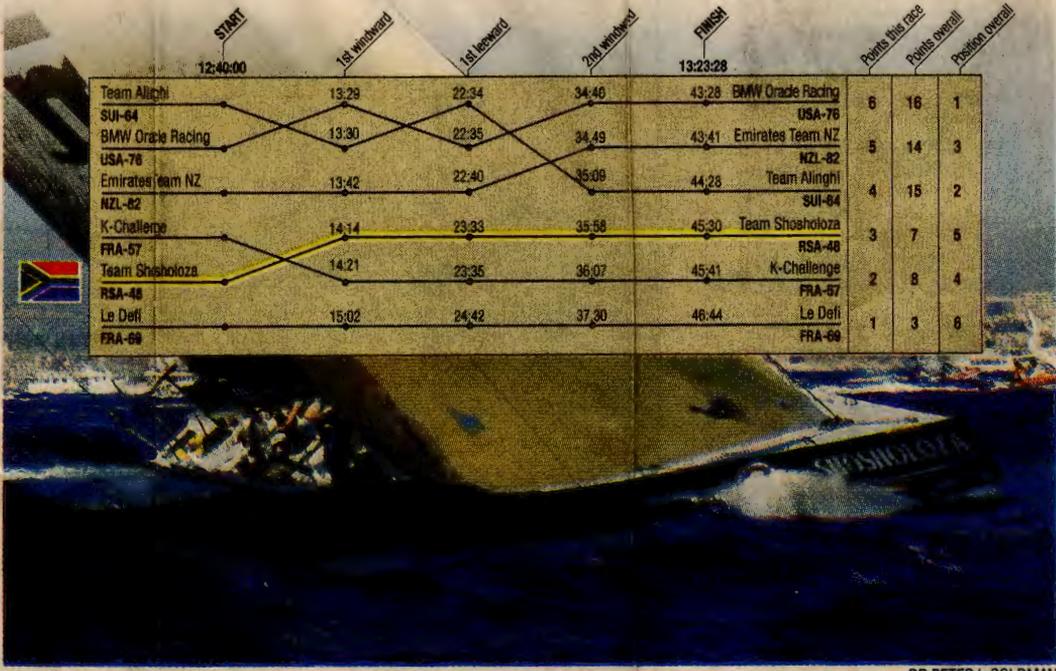
In the first of two races on the day, the South African team gave the French teams the fright of their lives and made those ahead of them sit up and take notice as they recorded a brilliant fourth place.

In the second race, the "Zulu" boat and her "Japie" crew took things easy, finishing sixth and last - where everybody expected them to finish all week.

The difference was that for this last race, they actually wanted to take it easy.

"It was my decision to tell the crew to ease off and to not raise the spinnaker on the downwind legs," said sailing manager Paul Standbridge.

"The fact is, we decided to finish and gain the point, instead of maybe breaking something and being forced



to retire," he said.

Standbridge, who jokingly refers to his crew as the "Japies", was flushed with pride as he described what he believed to be one of the races of their lives.

It was a wise move. Even while taking it easy, the bracket connecting the boat's boom vang to the mast broke because of fatigue.

Had the rig been heavily loaded by full pressure racing, disaster might have struck.

As it was, the South Africans were quite happy to sit back after sailing excellently during the first race, tactically out-

shining both French boats - Le Defi and K-Challenge.

During that race, the South Africans started in fifth place after being held out at the start by the San Francisco boat BMW Oracle.

"Of course, it was their right to do it, that is part of this kind of racing and we should expect it," Standbridge said.

"But we were comfortable with our start and gained good height (upwind advantage) over the rest.

"Le Defi lost their jib (headsail) and we left them behind and also managed to get past and stay ahead of K-Challenge. It was great sailing, especially

when we luffed K-Challenge near the finish, by forcing them upwind so much, they lost control of their spinnaker. It was very exciting!" Standbridge said.

Today, all the teams have a rest day, time to recover from a rigorous three days of sailing in winds that were actually a bit too much for the tender make-up of an America's Cup yacht.

Tomorrow, the exciting rounds of match racing start. This type of racing is the tradition for America's Cup challenges, and centres on duels between two boats over a upwind/downwind course.

DR PETER L GOLDMAN