

A SPINNAKER START

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Cape Times Reporters

A MID CHEERS from about 35 000 people who packed Granger Bay and the breakwater from early Saturday morning, 58 sleek yachts crossed the starting line at 4.30 in the afternoon on their 3 500-mile journey to Rio.

With white sails billowing in a strong south-easter, the yachts immediately swung to starboard and headed out north between Robben Island and the mainland. The Canadian ketch Graybeard sailed serenely into the lead,

followed closely by Voortrekker, Stormkaap and the all-woman crew on Sprinter.

The stiff south-easter made it a spinnaker start which added more colour to the race when the red, orange and blue spinnakers were unfurled. Voortrekker's spinnaker was first up, and several of the smaller yachts had trouble hoisting theirs.

The 12.8 m (42-ft.) sloop Albatros II, with *Cape Times* correspondent Brian Lello on board, had to put in to Robben Island for brief repairs, after she had broached, damaging her mast.

The Italian sloop Guia had to put back into Cape Town on Saturday night. After repairs to her steering gear she left early yesterday.

From a helicopter above Table Bay, the flotilla of yachts presented a beautiful sight.

STARTING GUN

The roar of the helicopter's engine drowned the sound of the starting gun fired from SAS Mosselbaai, but it immediately became clear that the event had started. After jockeying for position for some time, the craft all pointed in one direction, away from Cape Town and heading for the open sea.

There was frantic activity on the decks, as reefed mainsails were unfurled and hoisted, and bright spinnakers were broken out.