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Lighter winds slow down big Rio pack

From ROGER WILLIAMS
in the guardship Tafelberg

THE LEADING YACHTS in the Cape-to-Rio race have already reached the halfway mark, but the main pack through which we are now passing about 1 600 miles from Cape Town has been slowed considerably by lighter winds than have been experienced so far.

The American yawl Xanadu II and the East London sloop Port Rex which we passed early yesterday morning were barely moving across an almost dead-calm sea; similar conditions apparently prevail over a wide area.

Tafelberg herself has covered 3 400 miles in 10 days since the start of the race and has been travelling at a steady 15 knots or more as she weaves from one side of the pack to the other.

The longest diversion so far has been to aid Stormkaap—from whom we heard by radio yesterday morning that she continues to make good progress to St. Helena from where she is to be reshipped to Cape Town.

There was considerable relief on board when a six-day radio silence was broken by little Sprinter, the only all-women yacht in the race.

TOO WEAK

It appears that Sprinter has been able to hear us all along but her transmitter is too weak to reach Tafelberg with her position reports. She now lies about 500 miles astern of the leaders but is apparently making steady progress and all on board are well.

Yachts in the race have been informed that four Brazilian warships are expected to take over guardship duties in the next few days. They will be under command of Commander Francis Coreis in the 1 500-ton survey vessel Sirius.

Other guardships will be the corvettes Purus, Ipiranga and Imperial Marinheiro. These are converted fleet tugs, all displacing just over 900 tons.

PLEASANT SAILING

Skippers and crew whom we have spoken to by radio during the past few days have all commented on the excellent and pleasant sailing conditions so far; our own experience has been that the weather could not have been more delightful out here in mid-South Atlantic.

Bobby Nuttall, skipper of the Durban yacht Mercury, remarked on the amount of sea life seen in the past week, including flying fish, whales and porpoises—with now and then a squid landing on deck. Nuttall and crew sent greetings to families and friends and to the people of Durban, with the assurance that they are doing well so far and intend to remain up front among the leading group.

No position reports have been received by Tafelberg so far from Jakaranda and we are not aware whether she is still in the race or has withdrawn.

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