

RIO DUEL IS SHAPING AS HIGHLIGHT

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22-1-71 Shipping Correspondent
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TAFELBERG'S yacht-watchers, rather starved of sightings yesterday, are looking forward today to a look at front-runners Ocean Spirit and Graybeard, presently engaged in a mid-South Atlantic duel which promises to be the highlight of the Race to Rio.

A terse message, from Ocean Spirit's skipper Robin Knox-Johnston during last night's position reporting schedule, sums up the drama: 'Graybeard is in sight on the horizon, just astern of us.'

The big Canadian ketch was in fact only 12 sea miles behind Knox-Johnston's crack racer. Overnight they crossed the Greenwich meridian and Tafelberg should close on them today after spending the past two days patrolling the centre of the fleet.

It is amazing to see how closely contested the race lead is after a week's sailing.

FAR NORTH

But watch out for an improvement in the position of the Argentine Navy's Fortuna. In the last day or two she has forged as far north as anyone, but is today getting behind winds estimated at five knots stronger than those pushing the leading pair.

An alleged near miss incident involving the Cape Town sloop Applemist the other night did not cause great alarm among her crew, according to a reply last night to an inquiry from Tafelberg's captain (Capt. R. C. Cousins).

It appears Applemist, unlit at the time because of a failure through storm damage of her navigation light, came on the air to identify herself to a cargo ship, the 11,300-ton African Comet, which passed within a mile of her.

BROKEN

Port Rex, the Port Elizabeth sloop, has reported that the French ketch Striana's mizzen mast broke in the race's early stages, but the Frenchman, who usually reports his position daily, has not confirmed this.

We sighted Stormy yesterday afternoon under a striking red-white-blue spinnaker, mainsail, jib and mizzen, about 100 sea miles from Cape Town.

Dawn rolled in under an overcast sky again today, but the days are definitely warming.

Winds have slightly dropped in the area where the yachts are fighting it out, according to today's weather bulletin issued by the Maritime Headquarters at Youngsfield.

The winds appeared to be mainly southerly and blowing at 10 knots in the north of the area, and at the same speed but in an easterly direction in the south.

According to the weathermen the winds should become more favourable during the day, but weather reports from the South Atlantic were not complete today.

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