

OCEAN SPIRIT'S ROBIN HAPPY — AND HE PUT ON WEIGHT

From Staff Reporter Neil Lurssen

9.2.71

RIO DE JANEIRO, Tuesday.

LOOKING tanned and happy, skipper Robin Knox-Johnston patted his waist and said: 'I have gained weight. I have never eaten so well in my life.'

From the archives of Richard Crockett & Sailing Publications.
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Knox-Johnston, co-skipper with Leslie Williams of Ocean Spirit, first to cross the finish in the Cape-to-Rio yacht race, was referring to the cooking of crewman Clement Freud, the noted British food expert.

But Knox-Johnston, Williams and their 15-man crew were more interested in a cold beer and mail when they came ashore at Rio's yacht club.

Shortly before, their sleek-hulled ketch had crossed the finish line between Rasa and Redonda Island, south of Guanabara Bay 12 minutes and 59 seconds after noon Rio time (5.12 p.m. S.A. time).

HISTORIC

It was an historic occasion — first ship across the line in the first Cape-to-Rio race.

Ocean Spirit was a great sight as she cruised easily under the mass of the Sugarloaf Mountain.

A handful of small boats, a trimaran from Cape Town and a pair of helicopters with Pressmen aboard provided an escort.

About a mile from his mooring, Knox-Johnston downed sails and went overboard in mask and flippers to bolt the yacht's propeller in place.

It had been removed in Cape Town and Knox-Johnston had informed the race committee in Cape Town he had done this.

FOUND WIND

Knox-Johnston summed up the journey thus: 'A good blow at the start, lots of calm periods in between and a nice blow at the finish.'

Ocean Spirit overcame the gloomy predictions of local yachtsmen as she passed down the Brazilian coast from Cale Frio to Guanabara Bay. They had said she would run into a calm and come in limping.

But the Van de Stadt-designed yacht found wind and galloped home, taking the race organisers by surprise.

The first they heard of her was when she was eight miles from the line and going well.

In fact, the 21.6 metre glass-fibre boat had been going like a thoroughbred for days, several times reaching more than 12 knots.

'CHUFFED'

When they stepped ashore, her crew exchanged congratulations with the crew of the American ketch Ondine which some hours before had crossed the same line to be first home in the race from Buenos Aires.

Several wives and girl friends were at the club to meet Ocean Spirit, including Mrs. Jill Freud who said she was 'chuffed' at the yacht's performance.

Knox-Johnston has no immediate racing plans.

'I have got to get home soon — I have work to do,' he said today.

Asked when he intended getting married, he grinned and said: 'No woman would put up with me. She would get upset by all the sailing.'