

# Crewman tells tale of victory

13.2.71

From BRIAN LELLO

cabbling from Rio de Janeiro this morning

**WE ARE HERE AT LAST**, off the high seas—and they tell us we have won the first race from Cape Town to Rio de Janeiro.

However, we the crew cannot take this in—we are still out there on that wide rather windless expanse called the South Atlantic. We should be jubilant, but right now all we can take in is that the sea is so much bigger than us, and our little 42 ft. Knysna-built sloop Albatros II. We feel very matter-of-fact.

This is no city for the matter-of-fact. It is a fabulous, dream-like fairyland of wonderful scenery with a great fleet of splendid, gleaming luxury yachts from our own race and the classic 1200-mile Buenos Aires-Rio race which is finishing simultaneously.

We have to shake ourselves to realize that a South African yacht and a South African crew have won on handicap from an international field. This, however, is a simple matter of fact.

## OTHERS STILL OUT THERE

The late Clube do Rio de Janeiro is seething with activity and with reunions from deepsea men who last met, perhaps, in Sydney or Los Angeles, Kiel or Cowes. And they are gadding about and gossiping and grooming their craft and drinking and eating in this small city within a city with the great Sugarloaf Mountain and the 120-ft. statue of Christ on the Corcovado looming over the half-mile of coconut palms, huge boatsheds, swimming pool and living cabanas rigidly guarded and kept exclusive to the wealthy boating community.

All the big boats—Ocean Spirit, Graybeard, Fortuna, Raph, Pen Duick III and Striana—are here ahead of us and we are first of the smaller racers—so out there on the wide blue yonder there are still several score ocean racers homing on Guanabara Bay.

At this moment the effervescent French yacht Striana is lying second on handicap with the Stellenbosch tycoon Kees Bruynzeel's Stormy in third position. In Stormy's crew is my own son Jan Lello, coming back to the high seas after a five-year lay-off in Zululand and Johannesburg.

## ON STAND-BY NOW

It was terrific to come in through the night fog after more than 26 days at sea and find the white and red Rasa Island lighthouse gleaming ahead and in the shadow of the island a big Brazilian Navy launch waiting with my son and other South Africans calling out through the dark—with them our owner, Stanley Thesen, of Knysna, Jan Piek, Gerhard Roux and Wilhelm Kuhne—the Malmesbury burr in their voices unmistakable in the exotic South American night.

Their cheers were a moving experience. Strain and tension dropped away as they towed us in to the yacht club and Botafogo Bay.

A chic hostess was waiting to escort us ashore, where the chilled beer and champagne were waiting.

We are on stand-by now to welcome in another two South

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African yachts, both direct rivals of ourselves in the same size group—Johannesburg's Gold City, skippered by David Butler, and Zeekoevlei's favourite, Bobby Bongers's home-built and designed Outburst.

We had our misfortunes, but so did they.

While they were still wooing the fickle catspaws yesterday and the day before, we were romping into Rio through the moonlight flying 3100 sq. ft. of sail in the two best night watches of the voyage. Now we know that two years of effort are worthwhile.

From the archives of Richard Crockett &  
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