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Barbette could still snatch Rio victory

From NEIL LURSEN, Argus Staff Reporter

RIO DE JANEIRO, Monday.

BARBETTE, the tiny British sloop skippered by civil engineer Adam Clackson, could still beat John Goodwin's Albatros II for overall victory in the Cape-to-Rio race. To do this, the 9.1 m yacht has to cross the finish line off Rasa Island by 7 p.m. (S.A. time) today.

But yachtsmen who have arrived here from Cape Town feel the battle will be too big for her. She is believed to be in an area of light winds, too light to push her slim blue hull through the water fast enough to beat the deadline.

Only when she passes Cape Frio, about 60 miles from Rio, is she likely to pick up a reasonable blow.

POSITION UNCERTAIN

No-one here is certain of Barbette's position. On February 10 she was reported 540 miles away. Since then there have been two reports that have put her in areas so far apart that neither is acceptable.

But working on the figure of 540 miles and the weather since then, it seems most likely that Clackson and his crew are still chasing wind puffs in the baking heat off the coast of Brazil.

Still, Goodwin and his crew are peering out to sea for signs of Barbette.

PLOTTINGS

According to the plottings on our charts here, there is no other yacht that can topple Albatross's overall lead.

After 7 p.m. the big prize of the race should be firmly in the pocket of South Africa—specifically Knysna.

Meanwhile, the yachts continue to cruise into Rio, their crews

grilled brown and black by the ferocious sun.

The False Bay sloop Breezand has crossed the line 29 days, one hour, 14 minutes and 49 seconds—the 19th of the yachts to finish.

At one stage Breezand, a new Sparkman Stephens yacht built in Finland, was considered a threat to Albatross, but her corrected time of 22 days, 18 hours, 5 minutes and 2 seconds put her way behind Albatross's corrected time of 22 days, 1 hour, 33 minutes and 34 seconds.

OTHER ARRIVALS

Other week-end arrivals here included the German sloop Baleia (actual time 28-03-45-08 and corrected time 23-10-41-56), the American Yawyanadu II (28-10-08-34 and 23-21-20-28) and the Durban sloop Mercury (28-10-34-38 and 23-21-20-28).

Their stories were similar—endless muggy days on a sultry sea, looking for suitable clouds under which if you were lucky a squall would push you for about 30 miles.

Skipper Bobby Nuttall and the crew of Mercury had an added frustration, a Norwegian tanker closed on their yacht and offered beer, but Mercury had to decline the offer—regretfully—because of the race rules which allow no outside assistance.

It was this rule that knocked the Durban ketch Three Bears out of the race, according to

reports here, when she took water from the guardship S.A.S. Tafelberg.

SKIPPER'S PRAISE

Tafelberg came in for special praise from Skipper Simon Kramer of Breezand. 'The radio operators were on the ball and were always polite and helpful,' he said. 'The yachts in the race owe them a big thanks.'

Most of the crews took a special interest in whales after the sinking of Pionier. Mercury was visited by a killer whale and its calf, both of which swam alongside for a while. Before closing on the yacht, the mother whale leapt from the water for a closer look.

Yachts here now include Ocean Spirit, Graybeard, Fortuna, Pen Duick II, Stormy, Albatross II, Golden City, Janpott, Hamburg VII, Omuramba, Outburst, Guia, Raph, Baleia, Howard Davis, Mercury, Zanadu and Breezand.