

RIO COMMENTARY

SETBACK FOR S.A. YACHT RACING

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IN spite of more public interest and support than ever before South African yachting has just been dealt one of the toughest setbacks possible.

Off-shore racing has grown healthy on prestige trophies like the Lipton Cup and National Championship titles sailed for by fleets gathered together in various coastal centres. These matches have been the targets which have attracted the talents of keen youngsters and experienced deep-sea men and led finally to the Rio race.

The graceful 30-square-metre yachts which compete for the Lipton Cup are day racers only and there is no question of them sailing coastwise to a regatta. Royal Cape One Designs and the thriving 7.6-metre Buccaneers can make coastal passages but several problems make such trips far from practical for amateur crews.

Recognizing this till now the coastal freighting services have helped most generously with a nominal charge for freighting yachts between ports for these competitions but have, quite recently, withdrawn the concession.

Inter-club

Club matches at individual centres can continue as they do all the year round, but inter-club challenges will decline. National titles, the ambition of every youngster, will become meaningless if competition is limited to the host club members.

Dinghy club experience in the past few years has proved the essential need for inter-club,



inter-class and inter-provincial competition if sailing standards are to be raised and kept high.

Off-shore racing has the same need if South African boats are to feature in international competition.

Co-operation from the coaster services in the past has been deeply appreciated and recognized as a very generous concession liable to be withdrawn as it has been at last. Yachting now faces freight charges which, for boats of more than 7 metres, are far beyond the means of crews sailing yachts as club or provincial representatives.

For a sport already staggering under sales tax crippling the boat-building industry and trying to keep the country in contact with international sport the situation is sad.