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Another Rio yacht hit a whale

From NEIL LURSEN, Argus Staff Reporter

RIO DE JANEIRO, Thursday.

THE CREW of Corsair spent days looking for signs of damage and possible leaks after the 16 metre Cape Town cruising yacht rammed a whale a few days after setting sail from Cape Town.

But the whale was the sufferer in this collision and Corsair arrived here yesterday afternoon after 32 days 42 minutes and 42 seconds of racing without any apparent damage.

Crewman Cliff Smit gave this account of the incident: It was about 6.45 a.m. and I was standing on the foredeck. Suddenly there was a bump and I had to grab the rail to stay upright.

'We were moving fast — about eight or nine knots. I looked astern and saw a whale surfacing. It is difficult to say how big the whale was because it was wallowing around and only part of its body emerged.

'BLOOD ALL OVER'

There was blood all over the sea, a huge patch of red on the blue surface.

'My guess is that the whale was sleeping just below the surface and that we hit it with our keel. Had it been on the surface, I would have seen it and Corsair would have ridden up over it. But we just sliced through.

'Gradually the whale disappeared astern of us. I don't know if we killed it or not.

'We spent days searching the boat for leaks. We checked everything, but it does not seem there was any damage.

'When we heard what had happened to Pionier we counted ourselves very lucky.'

Many of the yachts in the race reported seeing whales, but there was never an attack on

any yacht, supporting the theory of Pionier skipper Gordon Webb that the whale that sank the sloop was sleeping at the time of the collision.

Corsair encountered a school of at least 20 porpoises near Cape Frio during her final run to the finish line.

'For 15 minutes they swam around us, leaping in and out of the water — a magnificent sight,' said Cliff Smit.

'Off Trindade Island we hooked a 30 to 40 pound yellowfin tunny. We had it curried, fried and served cold with salads — delicious.