



DULUX

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Double Cape Race

by JOHN FENSHAM



WHEN they left moorings the wind was a gentle 15 knots south-east, perfect for a colourful spinnaker start to the second Dulux Double Cape Race. By the time they got out to the start line, however, the wind was already 20-25, and rapidly building to a raging 45-knot gale, gusting to 50-knots off Cape Point. The start was chaotic as crews battled to reef, change foresails and keep their heading. Less than six hours later Dr John Battersby's Miura Tamarin was smashed onto the rocks in Gordons Bay during a floundering search for the turning light. Dumped repeatedly across the Harmony Reef, the boat was a write-off, heavily holed. The crew and wet-suited divers spent most of Saturday helping to salvage whatever gear they could.

Shipwrecks and snapped sticks, bruises and broken gear, storms, retirements, seas whipped to white fury, strange unexpected calms and for just 8 of the 64 starters, a gusty refusal to give up. This year's Dulux-Double Cape Race had it all, and will be remembered for a very long time as one of the toughest races ever staged in Cape Waters.

With last year's wallowing beer swilling, airless hot milk — run as the only precedent, the 1982 Dulux fleet watched the start day weather closely, and indications were that dark glasses and suntan lotions had better be packed. But as Moorings were dropped at the RCYC and the other three starting points round the Peninsula, a threatening haze could be seen far to the South East, and by the time the 26 RCYC entries got to the start line the 15 knot breeze had breezed up to 30, then 35, and

finally a full howling 40 knot gale that whipped the seas up into an uncontrollably short, confused chop as the cruisers battled to shorten sail, maintain balance (both their own and that of their boats) and still maintain a good starting position.

By the next morning, one yacht had been wrecked on the Rocks at Gordons Bay, two had been dismasted and retirements were rapidly climbing to the closing figure of 56 out of the total 64 starters! an astonishing 88%.

Many skippers have described the gale as one of the worst they have ever experienced. Gusting up to 65 knots in False Bay and off Cape Point, the wind churned the bay into a madstorm of white water, yet paradoxically leaving windless "holes" here and there into which skippers' "fell" — unexpected, one feels, thankfully.

And, again paradoxically, two of the first three yachts across the finishing line were among the smallest boats in the race — L26s which just refused to bow out.

The race was won by Steve Wilkinson's L26 Hors d'Oeuvres, skippered by Rick Nankin, Second was Halali with Rob Meek as skipper and third was another L26, Equation skippered by John Levin. All were sailed under the RCYC Burgee, and they were the only RCYC finishers.

Of the 12 False Bay Yacht Club starters (this includes the Cup Defence entries) only 3 finished; 11 Gordons Bay Yacht Club starter finished the course, also out of 12 starters and 2 of the 6 from Hout Bay finished the Race.

Near tragedy struck when Dr John Battersby's Miura Tamarin (FBYC) ran aground on Harmony Reef, near Gordons Bay, while wallowing about in the dark, looking for the light marking the turning vessels.

Tamarin hit hard just before mid-night, bouncing across the rocks on a receding tide while her crew tried desperately both to turn around and to signal for help. Conditions made it impossible for them either to back up themselves or for NSRI Rescue Launch to get close enough to be of any help.

Eventually, Tamarin's keel lodged between the rocks and the decision was taken to abandon ship.

Residents close by had seen their flares and while the NSRI abandoned their seaward attempt, a 16-year-old boy and his parents, wet-suited and gusty, swam out to the stricken yacht with a rope and managed to get the very shaken crew ashore.

Tamarin, by this time was badly holed, lying on her port side and still being heavily battered by the consistent white waters.

Among the crew was Dr Battersby's son Rodger, Mike Attwood, Lars Hedfors and Louis Quinot. They returned home to Hout Bay, changed their clothing, and while Dr Battersby got some much needed rest, they returned to the yacht to being the salvage job which was to last through most of Saturday.

Dr Battersby has indicated that he does not intend replacing Tamarin.

His plight was almost repeated when Mike Munnik's newly launched Sadler 32, Morning Glory also ran aground on Harmony Reef but managed to pull off and retire from the race. Derek Lourens, skipper of Windswept, was also reported to have grounded and sprung a leak, but he later radioed that it was under control and he was continuing the race.

Another Sadler 32, Arthur Stehli's Letigo 2, was dismasted in very heavy winds off Steenbras Point, and Teddy Kuttell's Impulse lost the top of its mast beating in to the Hout Bay turn mark.

Skippers described the race as a gruelling endurance test, "One of the toughest ever", and race secretary Gordon Webb remarked drily: "They don't call this Cape of Storms for nothing!"

Aside from the 2 dismastings, gear damage — failure was minimal and minor leaving little bar bruises and shaken disbelief to remind crews of one hellish weekend.

But they will remember it all the same.