

Dinghy Specialist Hudson Awarded Yachtsman of the Year Trophy . . .

DAVE Hudson, the *Aeolians* skipper who has been capped more times for his country than any other South African sailor, has been made Yachtsman of the Year for 1981.

The 35-year-old dinghy specialist, who holds three national titles in the *Sprog*, *Fireball* and *FD* classes, received his award at the annual meeting of the South African Yacht Racing Association at the Victoria Lake Club on March 5.

Last year, Hudson established two firsts when he was awarded his Colours for the *FD* World Championships in Spain. It was the second time he had received Colours that year. In doing so

he became the first South African yachtsman to achieve the distinction of being capped twice in one year.

With five caps to his credit, he has been awarded Springbok Colours more times than any other South African helmsman; in 1971, '78, '80 and twice last year.

Hudson, a yachtsman of undoubted distinction, still says he faces his biggest challenge in the next 18 months.

Don Marshall, SA Yachting's Transvaal correspondent, interviewed him in Johannesburg . . .

How did you become involved in sailing?

I started sailing when 11 or 12 years old, as a junior member of Point Yacht Club. A friend of my father's belonged to PYC and he asked whether my brother, Alan, and myself wanted to sail. PYC had a fleet of Cadets which they used to train juniors. Beginners had to crew for the more experienced juniors, till they were judged proficient to take the helm themselves. The training programme was well organised – and that is how I got started on a sound footing.

You were fortunate in the sense that you were introduced to a club that offered junior training. This seems to be the exception more than the rule in South Africa?

Junior training seems to be sporadic. It is cyclical, really. Clubs seem to develop their junior programmes, often to have them fold after a while. This is unfortunate because I believe that we miss a crop of good sailors by allowing the training programmes to lapse.

You are the first South African yachtsman to achieve the honour of being capped for his country five times. To do this you had to become a specialist in more than one class. How did you graduate through the classes?

I sailed Cadets for about four seasons as a junior. The prime event at that time was what was known as the Point Yacht Club Cadet Junior Championship and the trophy was donated by Ritchie MacDonald, honorary life president of PYC. It was an incredible silver trophy which captured everybody's imagination. I did not know of a junior who did not want to win it. The trophy was hand-made and cost one hundred guineas in those days – imagine what it is worth today. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

If ever there was an incentive to sail well, it was the thought of winning that trophy?

Definitely, and everything that went with it. One of the conditions in the Deed of Gift was that it was to be a floating trophy till won by the son of a previous winner. These days I am certain that the wording has been altered to read the child of a previous winner. Although the Cadet Class has folded at PYC, I am certain that the juniors are still competing for it in a different class.

Several previous winners have children who are approaching the age where they will be able to compete for that trophy. One of the early winners became a Roman Catholic priest, so he is probably out of the running. Another remained a bachelor so he, too, has dropped out of the contest. But there is a bunch of us who have children, any of whom could be in a position to take that trophy home for the last time.

You obviously did not spend the rest of the time sailing Cadets?

No, after graduating from the Cadet Class I crewed in Sprogs and used to sail PYC members' dinghies occasionally on cruise days. I think it was in 1965 that I built an Andy, there were a couple in Durban at the time, and sailed it for about a season-and-a-half. It wasn't much in the way of competition, but it was a lively little boat.

Surely, after your early successes in the Cadets you could not stay out of racing for long?

Correct. In 1965 I bought an oldish Sprog and started racing that with Alan. We decided

to trailer it to our first national contest at Saldanha Bay. In those days the big names in Sprogs were Köper, Midlane, Colin Foster and Albert Bruins. We ended tenth and learnt a fortune's worth in tactics. It made us really keen on racing at that competitive level.

You did not restrict yourselves to Sprogs?

No. I bought a 505 which we sailed for a couple of seasons before winning our first national title, in 1968.

Who was the better all-round sailor, you or Alan?

Alan was a good helmsman in his own right, but he was also a far better crew than I was, and that is why matters worked out the way they did, with me on the helm. We once got into an argument about who was the better yachtsman because of the way I had been sailing. At that time we had already won a couple of Nationals, so I thought I knew what I was doing. Alan did not agree with me, so we decided to stage a competition to settle the issue. Two identical boats were chosen and a 12-match mini series was arranged. Alan beat me 11 out of 12 races, so I dropped the issue smartly.

You once entered two national regattas at the same time. How did you cope?

With difficulty. The 1968 Nationals for Sprogs and 505's were sailed at the same venue, with one class racing in the morning and the other in the afternoon. We had scored a first and a third in both classes when a resail was ordered and the programmes clashed. I was keen to win the Sprogs because Nicky Korving was our big competition at the time. On the other hand, there was an overseas trip at stake in the 505's, so it was almost understandable that we should drop out of the Sprog Nationals. We won the 505 Nationals and earned a ticket to the World Championships in Kiel, West Germany, later that year.

Was Kiel your first international regatta?

Yes. Looking back I would say it was quite a naive effort. We got a new boat, received much help from Bruce McCurrach, because he knew quite a lot about 505 hulls, sails and that sort of thing. But we went straight over to West Germany, sailed the regatta and that was it. It was only after we got to Kiel that we began to learn about international racing. We finished midway down the 80-boat fleet, which was probably a little better than we expected, but we did improve with every race. We started by coming stone last in the first race, after a bit of a blunder on the final beat, but had worked ourselves up to a fifth position in the second-last race.

You withdrew from all competitive racing after Kiel?

Yes, I got involved in university work, but not before winning the 1969 505 Nationals.

You next appeared as an FD skipper?

Alan and I borrowed an old FD that had not been sailed for some time. It had belonged to Neil McInnes, a well-known Natal sailor. We decided to strip it and rebuild it, knowing that it was a bit of a madcap idea because the Nationals were only three weeks away. We virtually worked around the clock those last four days before leaving Durban, yet a still-unfinished boat was loaded on a trailer for the journey to Saldanha Bay.

We were exhausted when we left Durban and both Alan and I fell asleep in the car at Maritzburg, with the result that we missed the first day of the Nationals.

What about your sponsors?

Point Yacht Club had given us something like R50 towards travelling expenses and they were furious when they discovered that we had not arrived in time for the regatta. We pressed on for Saldanha, feeling depressed about the whole episode. Then as we came over the top of Du Toit's Kloof Pass that evening our hopes soared. A frightful southeaster was blowing and we realised that there was a possibility, just a possibility, mind you, that the day's racing had been cancelled.

We arrived at the Saldanha venue at 10 p.m. to find a notice pinned to the board that the first day's sailing had been postponed. We



At the recent Zeekoe Vlei Yacht Club fiftieth anniversary dinner, fifteen of the club's seventeen living Commodores were present. Standing, left to right: Geoff Paterson, Dennis

Woodward, Dave Bruce, Eric Bongers, Robin Mackellar, Louis van Winsen, Geoff Myburgh, Herb Mackenzie, Jimmy Simpson and Tony Kershaw. Seated: Gordon Graham, 'Stevie'

Stephens, 'Hoogie' van Hoogstraaten and Elkan Green. Stephen Flesch, the present Commodore is in front. Unable to be present were Jimmy Duncan and Paul Anstee-Bennett.

Hudson Interview

were still in the Nationals!

We had nowhere to stay that night and still had so much tuning to do that we carried on working right through. By the next morning the boat was still not ready, but the southeaster was blowing as hard as it had been the previous day, so racing was again postponed.

We slept next to the boat that night and the next day the wind blew out the racing again - so we just kept on working.

The wind finally abated and the Nationals

were held over two days, two races on the first and three on the last day. With our boat falling apart all the time, we finished fourth.

Not bad for your first FD national competition. Would you have done better with a trouble-free boat?

Alan and I were complete novices in FD sailing and did not know what we were doing. In two of the races we had nice leads at the weather mark and then our boat fell apart. A real student effort, you might say, although a lot of fun. We learnt a lot at that regatta and it was an eye-opener to us. The late Don Ord was not competing that year and he generously

helped us a lot.

An eye-opener in what sense?

We were not by any stretch of the imagination the most experienced pair on the water and competing against the likes of John Sully, Alan Tucker, Gerhard Köper and the late Bryan Metcalfe, you are bound to learn a lot. It was a really strong regatta and, with all the mishaps along the way, we were really thrilled to catch fourth place.

You were competing in national regattas again. Did your luck hold?

An incredible thing happened. John Sully telephoned me a few months later and said he

would not be able to make the 1971 Nationals and would I like to make use of his boat and crew. Immediately before this happened, I had bought another second-hand Sprog (it had a bad reputation, so I got it for next to nothing). Neil and I did a little work on it and set off for the 1971 Nationals at Swartvlei, which we won with a race in hand.

What about the Sully offer?

It was like being struck by a thunderbolt, because at that time you hardly spoke to John Sully. He was the god of South African sailing, and Durban sailing in particular. There he was offering me his boat and crew for the Nationals in Port Elizabeth. I was bowled over by his offer...

How did you make out?

I was introduced to Sully's crew, Alec Hardie, and the drift of the offer was that if we did well at the Nationals we would go to the FD World Championships in France in August, 1971.

You said that you were ill-prepared for Kiel. Did you repeat your mistake for the French Worlds?

This time I planned a pre-Worlds campaign. Alec Hardie and I kicked off in January, 1971, and we took it all very seriously. I had done a lot of reading about international campaigns, so we contacted a prominent Natal physical education specialist who

SAYRA sponsors Laser World entry

THIS year the SAYRA decided to sponsor a junior yachtsman to the Laser World Championships to be held in Alghero Sardinia as it was unlikely that we would be sending a team to the IYRU youth championships.

There were 13 trialists from each province with the SADFSA being able to nominate 2 competitors.

The selection committee consisted of G Myburgh, J Howard, G Klöhn, J Samuel and R de Vlieg. The championship event of six races with two triangles and a windward leeward course being sailed for each course. The first day of the trials was held in winds not exceeding 12 knots, four races being sailed. During the second race the wind did some funny variations but the leaders still remained the leaders.

On the second day of the trials the first

race was held in 18 knot wind and by the end of the second race the wind was gusting up to 25 knots. We can all be proud of the juniors who all sailed magnificently and it was a very keenly contested event indeed. It was unfortunate that on the second day Stewart Hegerstrom suffered from seasickness. The tussle at that stage was between Gary Holliday and Rowan Clark. The overall winner was Gary Holliday. Gary is to represent the South African juniors at the Laser World Championships and will compete against 250 of the top world skippers. He will join the official nominations of the Laser class, Christopher King, Roy Heine and Colin Dibb.

Geoff Myburgh will also be there on the international jury to help see that justice and fair sailing are carried out. He will then stay on and compete in the Laser world masters event.

worked out a training programme to get us both physically prepared for the event. We tried to sail four times a week after work and again at weekends.

Your name disappeared from the racing honours lists for several years after that?

Yes, I got involved in my career and did not sail for a couple of years. Terry bought himself a Finn and later a Fireball, which he sailed with Geoff Meek. We got together again early in 1978, in a Fireball.

That is another class in which you have excelled?

Well, we won the Nationals in 1978 and again in '79, and we were second to Rick Nankin in 1980. We won the title again last year - and this year's event comes up at Easter.

What is the competition like in Fireball racing?

It seems to be the class closest to the world pace. South Africans have done consistently well at the Fireball Worlds during the past seven years.

Why is the standard in the Fireballs closest to the world standard?

My own view is because of the attitude of those who compete in the class. There is a tremendous sharing and pooling of ideas. You do not seem to get yachtsmen trying to do well at the expense of others, which I have experienced in some of the other classes. In the Cape, where the strength lay a couple of years ago, we trained together and organised informal sailing weekends. We tried to do well and the strongest competition lay between the best of friends.

What is the co-operation like today?

It is still characteristic of the class and I really believe that this is the reason why the standard has rocketed in Fireballs in South Africa. We have had some formal training, but I think that the biggest benefit is gained from the good yachtsmen spurring the efforts of those who are placed in the middle of the

fleet. We either crew for them or helm, or perhaps go out in another boat to watch them perform, and then offer advice. There are currently two pockets of Fireball sailing in South Africa, one in the Cape and the other in the Transvaal. The Cape chaps do just as we do. People like Rick Nankin or J.J. Provoyeur spend a lot of time with the less-experienced Fireball sailors and this gives competition in the class a tremendous boost. We are already planning our strategy for the next Worlds - not the one in Australia but the one after that, in Switzerland.

Lake sailing in Switzerland will present you with conditions to which you are not accustomed?

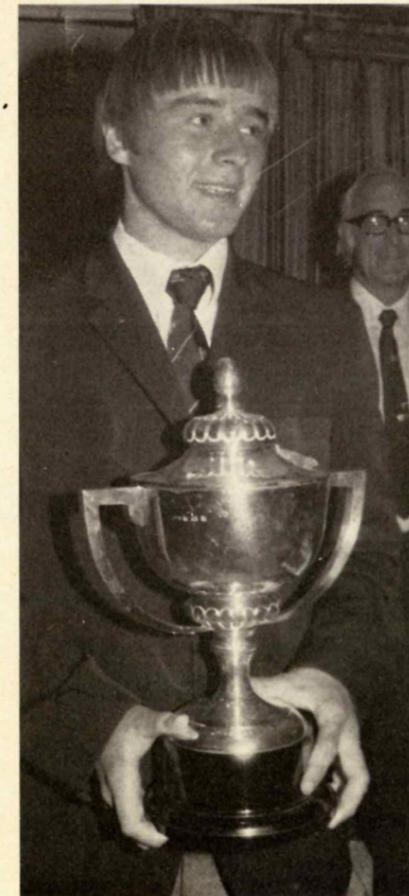
We will certainly have to adapt to lake sailing. South Africans perform best in windy conditions and, in the past, we have held all of our trials at sea. This year we intend to hold our trials at an inland venue in preparation for the Worlds in Switzerland, so I think different people will be selected.

Does this mean that you have started to tailor your trials to match as closely as possible the conditions at the Worlds?

We have got to do that. We have got to get away from the practice of selecting people who perform best in windy conditions. Of the three world championship events I have been to there have been only five races in which conditions were favourable for full trapezing. In those five races, Terry and I got three firsts and two seconds, so we were obviously competitive once the wind topped 15 knots. We struggled when the wind dropped below 15 knots.

It surprises me that you and Terry Reynolds managed to stay together as a team after you moved to Johannesburg 2½ years ago?

Our separation was not a problem because I used to go to Cape Town on business and we would put in practice in my spare time. In the meantime, I have been sailing FD's with Grant Davidge-Pitts. We had an 18-month



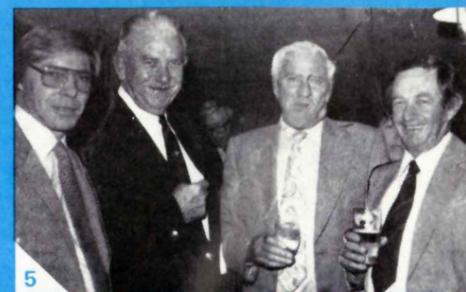
The David Butler Trophy for junior yachtsman of the year went to 17 year old Murray Spiers who was a member of the team which participated in the Windsurfer World Team Sailing Championships in Sardinia during May. He was also a member of the South African team which competed in the IYRU World Youth Championships where he crewed for B Clark in a Laser II.

He then competed in the Windsurfer World Championships where he finished 14th in his weight group - the best position achieved by any of the South Africans. He was one of the few South Africans to finish a race in typhoon wind conditions where only 60 out of 365 finalists finished.

Personalities at SAYRA Annual General Meeting



1. Geoff Myburgh, newly elected President of SAYRA presents the 1981 Owen Aisher Yachtsman of the Year Trophy to Dave Hudson at the end of the SAYRA AGM held at VLC recently.
2. (l to r) Ernie Morrison, Vaughn Giles and Prof 'Wog' Hawkesworth.
3. Stephen Flesch, MD of SA Yachting, congratulates Dave Hudson at the cocktail party after the SAYRA AGM.
4. Maureen Barry and Mrs Gold.
5. Johan Kohl, Jim Gold, Paddy Peel-Pearce and Cavan Rankin.



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Hudson Interview

41 campaign aimed at the Worlds in Spain last year, which was most enjoyable. Although Grant is a helmsman, he has the quickest reactions of anyone I have sailed with. A fortnight before we were due to leave for Spain I got tied up with a business problem which forced my withdrawal. Then Grant got caught in a veld fire and suffered serious burns, but he managed to make the world event. With my withdrawal and Grant's injuries it was a great disappointment after all the effort he and I had made. But you first had to win the Nationals before setting off for France?

We did, so the next stop was France. That was probably the peak of my sailing career because Rodney Pattinson was there. He had won the '68 Olympics and had also won the World Championship title after that. All the big names in FD racing were at La Rochelle and it turned out to be an incredible regatta.

How did you go this time?

We finished eleventh, but what was significant was that we were up front whenever the wind blew. We got a first and a third on the two days when there was trapezing weather and, in both of these races, we had a really good dice with Rodney Pattinson all the way round the course.

Was this your best result at a world event?

No, but it was my most significant racing achievement. To beat a sailor of Pattinson's calibre in two out of six races was a real eye-opener to us.

It made you realise that you could get through to the top in international racing?

Till then, and even today, most people thought that South Africa was at a big disadvantage in international sailing. I would agree with them from one point of view, because geographically we are away from all the action. On the other hand, the good weather conditions all the year round are a big advantage. While we do not have easy access to top competition, we do get a lot more sailing opportunities than people in Europe, for example. Our trip to the World Championships in La Rochelle showed that even a fairly naive campaign such as the one we had embarked on, could put us within striking distance of a result.

You describe it as a naive campaign. In what sense naive?

Well, we went in not knowing anything about FD's. John Sully obviously helped a lot, but I had done little top class sailing at that stage. I think Alex Hardie and I handled things pretty well against the international field.

Did your performance at the Worlds change your attitude towards sailing when you returned to South Africa?

I did not do much sailing for about two years after returning from the FD Worlds, but I did buy an old FD with financial help from Wilfred Hancock, who was the doyen of Natal sailing. I started collaborating with a chap who was going to crew for me, but he left the project out of frustration after we had spent a year working on it.

At that stage a young fellow called Terry Reynolds began pestering me, saying that he wanted to crew for me. I did not know him and was not taken with him at first, so turned him down. But he persisted for about three months and eventually said he would help to rebuild the FD. That, in a sense, was the key to me finishing my project, so I decided to have him on board.

This was of course the start of another race-winning combination?

Terry had built himself a Spearhead at that stage and he suggested we enter the National Games in 1973. The end result was that we started sailing in the Spearhead Class in a boat that was about 20 kg overweight and one that could, at best, be described as crude, although well laid out. Looking back, I would say that it was a good boat, considering that we won all the races in the Western Province Championships, the Natal Championships and

then the Games. But to answer your question, yes, we were a good combination. We combined well and he was an outstanding crew. Also, we became close friends. How long did the Hudson-Reynolds partnership last?

It has lasted till today.

What about the FD you were supposed to be rebuilding?

We finally finished it. We calculated that if we had driven a taxi or done some other kind of work in our spare time to make extra money during the period we had spent rebuilding the FD, we could have bought three or four FD's in its place. We took this FD to the 1975 Nationals, which we won. This qualified us to go to the Worlds in Canada, I think it was, but Terry and I felt that it would be a waste of time because we believed that we were not sailing that well. By this time I had moved to Cape Town and Terry had joined me there.

Will you be staying with Grant Davidge-Pitts in FD's?

No, I have reassessed my position since the Fireball Worlds in the UK, where we had a disappointing result in finishing fourteenth. Our mediocre showing in the light conditions - we won the only event that was held in good wind - was the final pointer to me that Terry and myself were wasting our time in Fireballs. He is much heavier than the average crew and I am slightly heavier than the average helmsman. We were overall about 50 kg heavier than the average British lightweight crews and about 30 kg heavier than their top crews. We realised that we were wasting our time in anything but windy conditions.

Does this mean that you will be appearing at the next Nationals with a new crew?

Yes, I have decided to go for a really light setup, just as the British have done. I will be sailing with Alex Stone, who was J.J. Provoyeur's crew. With J.J. living in Cape Town and Alex living in Johannesburg it seemed the proper thing to do. Alex is 15 kg lighter than Terry and I have lost 7 kilos myself. I am also building a lighter boat. I am aiming for the weight range that the British are into.

So the champion goes back to school?

You could say that. It means that everything I have learnt about Fireballs which is geared to a heavy setup, has to be thrown out of the window. I am starting virtually from scratch and I reckon it will take me at least a full season to get organised with a lighter crew, lighter boat and softer rig. You could say that I am starting from the beginning with no real idea of what I am going to do.

That takes care of your achievements in Fireballs, FD's, Spearheads, Sprogs. What else?

My wife, Jane, and I won the Sprog Nationals in 1980 and 1981. I borrowed a Sprog when we arrived in Johannesburg to compete in the Nationals at Vaal Dam, which we won. Then last year, we sailed the nationals at Saldanha, and for that we must blame J.J. Provoyeur. We were not going to enter, but he boasted that he would drill us out of sight. So we borrowed a boat and made the trip at great expense - and J.J. did not turn up. But Rick Nankin was there and so was Harry Ellens and we had a super regatta.

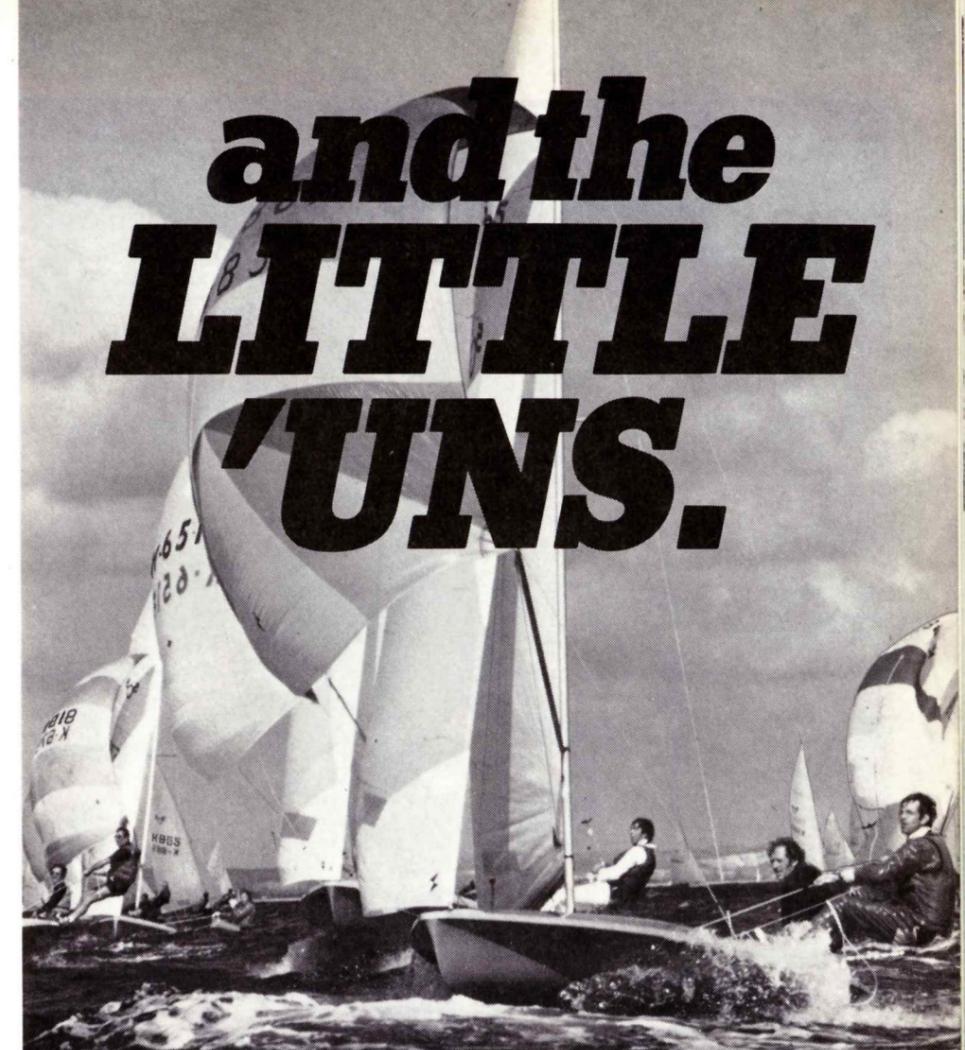
What did J.J. say afterwards?

Sorry!

What about your future in sailing?

I am 35 and do not intend wasting my chances at future FD Worlds, so I have decided to make an all-out effort for a world championship in Fireballs. We have drawn up an 18-month programme to prepare for the Worlds in Switzerland. The coming Nationals will be the first stepping stone towards that goal, although I doubt whether we will be ready in time. It is a bit ironic that I will be making my biggest effort for a world event which probably will be contested in conditions about which I know very little. But living in the Transvaal means that I will be getting a lot of experience in light wind conditions, similar to the pattern that we can expect in Switzerland.

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