

J J goes to second

By DALE GRANGER

SOUTH AFRICAN J J Provoyeur stunned the BOC Challenge fleet yesterday as he flew into second position behind Frenchwoman Isabelle Autissier, who had extended her overall lead on her radical, high-tech yacht.

Autissier, on the superlight, brand-new and fast multimillion-rand yacht *Ecureuil Poitou Charantes 2*, and Provoyeur, on the unsponsored *Ben Vio*, have found consistent winds on their northeasterly course while the other Class One entrants are still languishing in a high-pressure system and light airs on their southerly route.

With 5 704 miles left to sail to Cape Town, Autissier was 93 miles ahead of the South African, who was not expected to be at the front of the race on the outdated 1989 Rodger Martin design. The two leaders were sailing in a steady breeze at nine and eight knots respectively yesterday.

Provoyeur held an astonishing 93-mile advantage over third-placed Steve Pettengill, on *Hunter's Child*. The American had been in second position on Wednesday as Provoyeur began his charge through the fleet from eighth to sixth and now second within just 48 hours.

Prior to the start, Provoyeur said that he was not expecting to do well during the first week of the race as he sailed east and was hoping to hit the jackpot when he turned south. His flyer has come much quicker than he could have hoped for.

At 29 22 N and 58 55 W, he was still sailing east on a heading of 105.

Lying fourth and also struggling in light wind was defending champion Christophe Auguin of France, on the radical and fast *Sceta Calberson*.

Sceta Calberson, as fast new and light as Autissier's yacht, has picked

up the pace, however, to eight knots, and the Frenchman was 135 miles astern of his compatriot.

The determined Provoyeur, who had been written off as a contender by observers before the start of the race in Charleston, North Carolina, said: "On paper, the other boats must be faster, but I know there will be times when I am faster — though not all the time. I've got a racing mentality, and I have to think that will be an advantage in a race such as this one."

Sailing on a shoestring budget (a fraction of what the top French and American entries have spent) and an overdraft, Provoyeur is on a boat he had built for Bertie Reed to compete in the last race. However, he has optimised her to be over a ton lighter.

The South African sailor vowed before the race that his rivals "will know that I have been there".

In Class Two, Italian Giovanni Soldini, on *Kodak*, yesterday overhauled David Adams of Australia, on *True Blue*, with the former the most easterly sailor in his class and reaping the same benefits as Provoyeur and Autissier. *Kodak*, which has 5 856 miles left to reach the end of the first leg, was 59 miles ahead of *True Blue*.

South African Class Two entry Neal Petersen, on *100 Reserve*, was making good progress to Bermuda to repair his broken forestay with 190 miles left to sail in a steady 15-20 knot beat.

"I wish it was Cape Town which was only 190 miles away. I'm hoping for a windshift," the South African said.