

LIPTON CUP CONTEST

FIRST RACE A FAILURE

Confusion, Uncertainty and an Accident

Erica Retires: Skebenga Disqualified

Confusion, uncertainty and an accident contributed yesterday towards making the first race between the Skebenga (defender) and the Erica (challenger) for the Lipton Challenge Cup a failure. It is doubtful whether better conditions than prevailed yesterday for deep-sea racing will again be obtainable outside the next few weeks, and consequently the series of events which the reduction of what promised to be a race to a farce are to be greatly retarded.

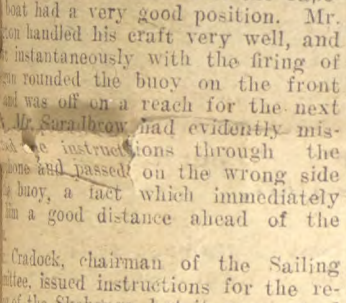
The interest displayed by the public in the event surprised the yachting enthusiasts themselves. The tug Sir John, had been chartered by the Point Yacht Club, carried a good load of passengers over the bar to the scene of the race, the bridge being occupied by the Sailing Committee and the officers of the club.

A fresh south-westerly blew and kept steadily throughout the day, apparently increasing nor decreasing in strength. The Erica, flying the flag of the Cape Yacht Club, was the first of the eight-metre boats to cross the starting line (Mr. B. Upington) evidently anticipated stronger weather than prevailing, for it was noticed that two reefs had been made in the mainsail, while the other sail in use was a small fore-sail. The Skebenga, flying Mr. Wilfred Leuchar's flag, although she was sailing about three quarters of an hour later, had only one reef in her mainsail, and was also using her store and jib.

The crews of the boats were as follows: Skebenga: Mr. "Harby" Spradbrow, Commodore of the P.Y.C. (skipper), and J. Mundy, J. Roberts, J. Burden and J. Stead.

Erica: Mr. Upington, Commodore of the P.Y.C. (skipper), and Messrs V. A. Putnam, J. C. F. Hartford, A. A. Moir, and J. Eastman.

The course which it had been arranged to be sailed was as under:



Equilateral Triangular Course.

It had previously been decided that the boats should set off on the north-easterly in view of the fact that with a westerly wind blowing this would be sailing with the wind ahead, the Sailing Committee decided to reverse the course, making the first leg east by south, thereby ensuring a stiff breeze on the last leg. These instructions were verbally given to the skippers of the five yachts. The

REVERSAL OF THE COURSE

Detailed alterations in connection with the manner in which the yachts were to round the buoys at the starting line, the alteration apparently as far as could be ascertained, being bawled out to the boats through a megaphone. A few minutes before the firing of the gun signalling the start, the Skebenga and Erica began manoeuvring for places at the starting line, and it was noticed that the Cape boat had a very good position. Mr. Upington handled his craft very well, and at the same time with the firing of the gun rounded the buoy on the front and was off on a reach for the next buoy. Mr. Spradbrow had evidently misheard the instructions through the megaphone and passed on the wrong side of the buoy, a fact which immediately put him a good distance ahead of the Erica.

Mr. Craddock, chairman of the Sailing Committee, issued instructions for the re-rounding of the Skebenga, but it was a good five minutes before those on the Durban boat realised that the signals were meant for her, and she was well on her way, the Erica coming up behind. In response to the Sailing Committee's request to start the skipper of the Skebenga replied that he would go on as he was, and without further delay the Skebenga's course was shaped for the objective buoy.

In the meantime those on board the Erica came to the conclusion that they had been at fault. Mr. Upington put about to rectify the error, and the Erica returned to the starting line and passed the buoy on the other—and wrong—side. The Cape boat then raced gamely after the defender of the trophy, now a considerable distance ahead but before she had made much distance her mainsail began to flap despairingly, and she practically came to a standstill, and a second later her mast was hauled in.

The position now was that the Skebenga was sailing smartly round the course, but her mistake at the outset could only result in her disqualification; and the Erica retired! The Cape boat was towed home by Wilfred Leuchar's smart little boat, while the Sir John followed the Erica. The Skebenga, Mr. Spradbrow handled the boat skilfully; not a breath of wind was wasted and she raced merrily now high up on top of the swell, the next minute almost hidden from view. The first buoy was rounded at 12.10 (the start was punctually at 12.00 a.m.) and she eased off for the run to the next buoy, the course being north by west. This buoy was rounded at 12.19.42 and

A STIFF BEAT

The starting post to complete the triangular course commenced. The Skebenga made long tacks, and covered the distance in well judged legs and a sixth short of the gun signalling the finish sounding at 12.30.42—the Skebenga having covered the twelve mile course in just under 2½ hours.

The Sailing Committee sat long yesterday afternoon to come to some decision on the race, but not longer than one would have expected considering the problem presented by it. It came to the only conclusion possible—to disqualify the Skebenga for sailing wrongly. Consequently neither the Erica nor the Cape boat gained any points by the race.

The remaining two races will have to wait for the winning of the Lipton trophy, as they have been postponed indefinitely on account of the damage to the Erica's mast, which is being repaired. There is a possibility that this will be done by tomorrow, and if such is the case it is understood that the next race will be held tomorrow.

The following are the courses yet to be sailed:

DEATH OF THE SKEBENGA