

# Cape yacht clubs vie to stage race finish

□ Local stop for round-the-world boats 'certain'

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THE first leg of the BOC Challenge round-the-world yacht race will definitely end in Cape Town next year, but whether Royal Cape or Hout Bay will be the host club will not be decided until the end of the month.

BOC corporate relations chief executive Nigel Rowe confirmed this from London after the Cape Town 2004 Olympic Bid Committee stepped in yesterday and guaranteed the R60 000-R65 000 needed by Royal Cape to upgrade facilities for the event.

But Hout Bay Yacht Club commodore Alan Batley said: "Maybe the Olympic Bid Committee didn't know we were bidding (to host the BOC). I would like to think this was the case."

Olympic Bid Committee spokesman Kevin Kevany said he was indeed unaware of the Hout Bay bid.

"Be assured, we will support either Cape club," he said.

Mr Rowe said: "We have always enjoyed an outstanding welcome for the event in Cape Town. It's a very hospitable place and has always been extremely hospitable to the BOC Challenge.

"But as the race has grown we've had to upgrade it in many ways, including infrastructure.

"More than a year ago we decided to set some common minimum standards for stopover ports.

"We laid down the rules to Cape Town, expecting they'd probably be met, but because of uncertainty we were forced to start thinking of alternatives.

"If Cape Town can meet all our needs there is no question of taking it anywhere else," Mr Rowe said.

He would be in Cape Town with race officials in the next couple of weeks and would discuss the situation with the rival yacht clubs "and presumably the Cape Town 2004 Olympic Bid Committee".

While Royal Cape had the experience of hosting the BOC fleet for the past three races, Hout Bay had submitted "a very considered and aggressive bid".

Mr Batley said "the flag of the Cape Peninsula is flown high at Hout Bay, not only at Royal Cape".

He said Hout Bay believed the issue was not financial but environmental.

"During the last event we hosted several of the skippers for a fun day on our boats and in our bay. They confirmed what we'd been reading in the press, they were upset about the filth," he said.

"Our bid stands. We don't re-

quire the same infrastructural upgrades as Royal Cape and our bid is therefore financially more viable."

Royal Cape Commodore John Levin said the club had consistently indicated its desire to act as stopover host since first approached early last month.

"We met on October 5 and said we'd love to host the event but it would have to be on the basis of what we had they could have," he said. "This was followed up with a letter on October 7 informing BOC we would be able to accommodate all the boats in the yacht basin, would not charge mooring fees, would make all competitors and support crew honorary members to give them full use of our facilities, would make the flag officer's room available for the race director and staff and would open all club facilities, barring the clubhouse itself, to the public.

"We added the rider: To the extent we have to create mooring spaces, possibly move fences to make space to place containers next to boats and build a bridge across the slipway to allow easy access to the clubhouse from M Berth, any costs involved would be for BOC's expense."

BOC replied that it was sympathetic to the club's financial constraints but the company wanted to run the event at the lowest possible cost.