

RIO YACHT IN STORM DRAMA

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FOUR DISTRESS flares, fired in the teeth of yesterday's storm from a yacht being driven perilously close to shore, caused Natal's official Cape-to-Rio race entry, the Mercury, to break away from a warm-up exercise and speed to the rescue.

The Mercury was on the final lap of a minor off-shore race when the crew sighted the distress signals. They sped to the rescue but, once having taken the other yacht — the Foxhound — in tow, they returned to course and finished the race.

The Foxhound, crewed by the owner, Mr. Vernon Howell, his sons Barry and Garth (7), and Mr. Rob Wilson, was also taking part in the race when the storm broke. According to members of the Mercury's crew, she was on the point of drifting into the breakers when they arrived. There were no sails and the small motor was useless in the heavy swell. The wind was gusting to nearly 90 km/h.

RESCUE VESSEL

Mr. Howell's distress flares were sighted from shore as well, and numerous telephone calls to the Port Captain's office sent the pilot tug, Horner, and a National Sea Rescue Institute vessel racing to the scene as well.

Another Rio race entry, the Tub, was also at sea but was officiating in the race. Mr. Bob Tudehope, who was aboard, said later they also went to the rescue but saw that Mercury had Foxhound in tow.

Despite the wind and swell and the added burden of Foxhound, Mercury regained course and finished the race, arriving back at the yacht basin about an hour and a half later. She was the only yacht out of eight which apparently did so.

BOY SEASICK

Two other Rio yachts were in the race — the City of Germiston, and the Diana K. The former had spinnaker trouble and returned to port, as did the other yachts which, Mr. Tudehope said later probably all had trouble of some sort during the heavy winds.

The Foxhound's crew denied that anything was wrong with the yacht itself. Mr. Howell said that they signalled for help as Garth was badly seasick and they wanted to get him back as soon as possible.

Once back in harbour, however, young Garth was himself again, to the relief of a worried Mrs. Howell who, when she had heard of the drama, rushed to the yacht basin to await the Foxhound's arrival.