

Drama on high seas for Sunday Star yacht

By Peter Sullivan
aboard the Sunday Star

The yacht Sunday Star was heading like a dream for Rio on Saturday, its spinnaker filled with 25 knots of south-easter, when a welded plate snapped and the steering went.

Hours before, it had been part of the flotilla of 82 yachts to cross the starting line in the 1993 Rothmans Cape to Rio race for the 3 600 mile trans-Atlantic crossing.

Then disaster struck. On the helm, crewman Ian Statham said he felt something give and the yacht immediately went out of control with the big bag pulling it along.

While the emergency tiller was rigged and skipper Gerrie Boshoff went to examine the damage, the crew tried to drop the spinnaker. Then it hit the water, acting like a sea anchor. Tons of South Atlantic stopped the yacht. We managed to regain the spinnaker, take three reefs in the mainsail and set course for Saldanha.

The bad news was that the break could not be fixed at sea. It needed welding. Saldanha Port Control suggested Mykonos Marina manager Francois Stemmet, who came to the rescue with marine mechanic Dalton Poole and his welder.

But it would take until morning to fix, followed by more bad news — the cabling was now too short.

These delays added a day to the Sunday Star's expected time to Rio of nearly 23 days. The crew is resigned to being out of the honours, but still competing.

Much-fancied Broomstick took the lead and at Robben Island — as far as could be seen from the press boat Z — the navy's entry was pulling away steadily. Then came Namsea Challenger, a boat tipped as one to watch, followed by the 22,8 m Aegis Insurance, skippered by Springbok Rob Meek.

The Star's Own Correspondent reports that Springbok yachtsman Ian Martin may reach Saldanha tonight to repair a broken rudder before re-joining the Cape to Rio race.

Martin's yachtsman brother John heard of the broken rudder about 11 am yesterday, less than a day after the start. "He was really down," he said.

Martin said the forced return had spoilt any chance his brother could have had in the handicap stakes. He was 150 miles away when the rudder gave in and was lying fifth when it happened.



Transatlantic crossing . . . the yacht Sunday Star, part of a flotilla of 82 vessels, at the start of the 1993 Rothmans Cape to Rio race on Saturday.