



FIRST AMONG EQUALS: ICAP Leopard arrives in Bahia Salvador, as the first yacht across the finish line in the Heineken Cape to Bahia yacht race yesterday. The US yacht Rambler is likely to take the race on handicap. *Picture: BRENTON GEACH*

CAPE TIMES

US 90-footer crosses finish line as Cape yacht falls behind

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THE international crew on the US 90-foot yacht Rambler punched the air and waved buoyantly at the media in the accompanying rubber ducks as the sleek racing machine finally crossed the Heineken Cape to Bahia finish line at 2.55pm in a sultry Salvador yesterday.

But in the light conditions, a stark strong contrast to the breezy Table Bay start, Rambler had to be content with a sedate six knots as she approached the shore, and

slowed to three knots as it zig-zagged down the Salvador coastline, gybing to get the best wind angles, and sending a man up the mast to look for the tell-tale catspaws of wind on the flat sea.

Her crossing time of 11 days, two hours and 55 minutes, although nearly a day short of the time set by ICAP Leopard, does however put Rambler in a formidable position to take the race on handicap, and thus the coveted South Atlantic Trophy, a key aim of the yacht's New York owner George David.

Race officer Eric Wells yes-

terday calculated that for Cape yacht Hi-Fidelity, the only likely contender to beat Rambler's time on handicap, Hi-Fidelity would have to cross the line by mid-morning on Friday.

But sadly at her current progress, she is only likely to reach Salvador by this coming Monday.

It would seem that the wind gods are not being too helpful. Hi-Fidelity yesterday notched up just 173 miles in its 24-hour run, when she needed to have clocked up at least 320 miles. Though she is capable of chasing down this target, the right

breezes are simply not there.

Even Voortrekker, with a considerable age handicap, appears no longer in contention, although earlier yesterday it was running at 14 knots, this as skipper Marcello Burricks reported that a leak, probably around the propeller, meant some exercise on the bilge pumps.

In the cruising fleet en route from St Helena, Avanti was in the handicap lead with a run of 165 miles, Strega second after a 172-mile run, while in third place Extasea had a 150-mile run.