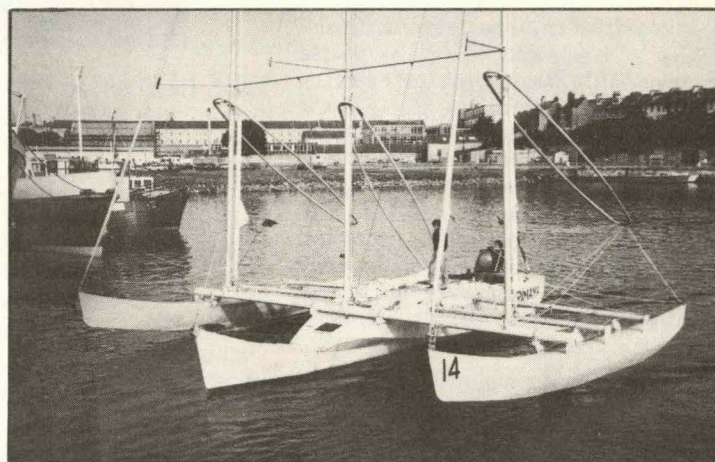


BINATONE ROUND BRITAIN RACE

Voortrekker II, The South African yacht that broke the Monohull Record.

by BARRY PICKTHALL



This wierd machine is a triple rigged Trimamma which eventually retired to France.

The fact that Multihulls led by Rob and Naomi James 60 ft. Holland designed Colt Cars GB took the first 11 places in this Binatone sponsored two handed end race marathon speaks for the advances made in Trimaran construction and design since the last race three years ago. The first Monohull to finish almost two days behind the leaders was Bertie Reed's 60ft South African entered Voortrekker II.

The three leading Monohulls, Colts cars, Brittany Ferries GB skippered by Chay Blyth, and Mark Gatehouse's Exmouth Challenge had it all their own way, breaking four of the five course records between them on this 2,000 mile circumnavigation which took the 82 strong fleet from Plymouth to Crosshaven in Ireland, then on to Lerwick Shetland via Castlebay in the Hebrides, with a final stop at Lowestoft before the last 305 mile dash back along Britain's South Coast to Plymouth and dash was the operative word for with just 19 minutes dividing Blyth's 65 ft. Trans-Atlantic race winner from the challenge of Colt cars, it was obvious from the start that this final leg would be a close run affair. Blyth and his crewman, Hood sailmaker Peter Bateman were first away at 4.33 a.m. after their compulsory 48 hour stopover at this East coast fishing port only to lose ground before anchoring in the early morning windless conditions. By the time the tide had turned at 8.00 a.m. Rob and his wife had slipped by and the 53 ft. Exmouth Challenge, the smallest of the three, which had shown superior speed earlier in the race when the going got heavy, was also drawing level.

By Dover Strait, Colt Cars led Exmouth Challenge by a mile with Blyth trailing

third, though he was later to pull level again by the time the three had reached the Isle of Wight. The final 200 miles through the still night was as nerve-racking for the competitors as those waiting at the finish, for with no further reliable sightings one could only speculate. Finally at 2 a.m. the TV arc lights picked out the distinctive sign of Colt Cars as she slipped effortlessly across the line to be followed 43 minutes later by Brittany Ferries with Exmouth Challenge trailing a further 56 minutes astern.

Colt Cars, a state of the art design developed jointly by James and Ron Holland, utilising extensive amounts of carbon fibre in her construction, broke the record for the race set three years ago by Blyth and James in Great Britain IV, by a staggering 1 day 13 hour 23 minute margin. The craft with its enormous rig was designed to perform best in light and moderate winds but thereafter tended to hobby-horse more than the larger Shuttleworth designed Brittany Ferries which still seems to have the best performance. Exmouth Challenge, the first Multihull from the Board of Int. 14 Designer Phil Morrison, was at its best in the heavy going, especially to windward. Horses for courses, all three had their share of success, and had conditions been different from the predominantly light/moderate reaching winds that prevailed (one of the yachts made only nine tacks throughout the race) the final order might have been reversed.

Colt Cars won the first leg to Crosshaven, shaving more than five hours off Rogue Wave's record set back in 1978, followed 46 minutes later by Brittany Ferries. Exmouth Challenge was 6th after blowing out a Genoa, but made up for this initial setback by being first into the next port ahead of Colt Cars and Brittany Ferries. The third leg to Shetland, arguably the toughest stage, which takes the fleet around Muckle Flugga, further north

than the notorious Cape Horn is south, was captured by Blyth who smashed the record for the 420 mile voyage by a 16 hour margin. By the time the trio had reached Lowestoft, however Colt Cars had established a new record for this voyage south and pulled back to within 19 minutes from the leader — Enough to give them the advantage in the light airs that prevailed at the finish.

But if the front of the fleet was dominated by the latest in carbon fibre and Kevlar Technology, the rest of the fleet, reduced to around 60 by the finish, were mostly well proven Monohull Designs, their crews competing for the pleasure rather than the prize. There were exceptions of course. The aptly named passing wind which looked more like a carnival float strapped together with steel lattiswork from one of Brunel's Bridge sections, thankfully lost its mast on the first leg, before lives were of lost, and another equally wierd machine, Trimamma sporting what are best described as three outsize sailboard rigs set in parallel, retired hurt but unbowed to her home port in France.

The race also had its casualties, the most serious affecting the Australian pair Ian Johnston and Kathy Hawkins whose 31 ft Trimaran Twiggly flipped over on the third leg to Lerwick. After the Yacht had pitchpoled Johnson 29 was trapped inside the hull and had to be cut free with an axe by his young crew mate. Then they sat on the upturned hull for 18 hours waiting for rescue effected by the two crew from Pepsie who were attracted by the sight of a bright orange sleeping bag held aloft. For Johnston, all seemed lost, for Twiggly which represented his life savings, was uninsured but much to his relief, the upturned hull was later salvaged and towed into port by a fishing boat.

Another casualty was Naomi James, who has decided to retire from yachting after this success. Plagued by sea-sickness for much of the voyage she is now going to take up the more stable hobby of golf.

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT BY JOHN MARTIN ABOARD VOORTREKKER II

When he was 13 Springbok yachtsman John Martin "stole" his father's 25 ft gaff cutter in Simonstown, and headed out to sea. Spotted as he passed the outer mole, he was chased by his very worried naval tugmaster father — unnecessarily, as it turned out, because already at that age John was showing the form that would make him one of South Africa's premier yachtsman.

Since that morning 15 years ago John has climbed slowly and steadily to the pinnacle of South African and international competition, and with 1982 only two-thirds gone he has already sailed 13,000 miles, notching up a class win in Voortrekker 1 in the race to Punta del Este, a creditable 1000-mile solo qualifying run as reserve for the BOC Challenge and, to the delight of all South Africa, a record-breaking overall win in the Round Britain and Ireland Race, sailing Voortrekker 2 with Bertie Reed.

This race was a triumph for South African yachting, but it was also the highest

Colt Cars won the race by a 43 minute margin from Brittany Ferries.



point in a partnership which began when John Martin first sailed in a big ocean race, and first sailed with Bertie. The event was the 1974 Agulhas race, which Bertie won by driving Voortrekker through one of the worst gales in the history of the race while the rest of the fleet fled to shelter.

John Martin describes that race as "the coldest few days of my life" (one suspects he means more than just the temperature!) but it marked the start of one of the warmest and firmest yachting partnerships in South African yachting, one which has notched up wins or superb performances in

races throughout the world, notably in Chile, in the "Two-Star" transatlantic race last year, and the Round Britain this year.

Very obviously "chuffed" with both the race and Voortrekker 2, John said it was one of the best races he'd ever done, a demanding "sprint race" in which it was possible to really push both the yacht and the crew, with plenty of time for both to recover during the 48 hour stopovers between legs.

"We were very lucky — the high pressure centre sat smack in the middle of England throughout the race, so we had following winds up the west coast and down the east coast. Sail changes were most often a matter of changing the spinnaker than anything else.

"And on occasion this took us up to 20 minutes because we had only one fitting for the heel end of the pole, so when we gybed we had to drop the "chute, drop the pole, transfer the fitting from the one mast track to the other, then raise the pole again and re-set the bag."

Bertie and John started each leg with the chute up, except the first start from Plymouth Sound, when they had to weave through 84 competitors and hundreds of spectator boats flying main and No 1 Genny, and then raised the 1.5 'chute, accelerating to 12.5-knots and 5th position by the time they reached the Scillies — and already by this time Challenger was behind and to leeward, and Tuesday's Child was beneath the horizon.

"We could carry the 'chute with the wind 55-60 degrees off the bow, which meant we

continued overleaf

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were well heeled, but screaming along.

We overtook and passed Challenger, and there was no way she could catch us. At the Scillies we went west, with the wind dead aft, and got to Crosshaven that afternoon, just 28 hours out of Plymouth."

John had hurt his arm during the first leg, so scooted from doctor to doctor in cork, hometown of British match-racing champion Harold Cudmore. The doctors recommended that John have the arm bound up and keep it in a sling for three weeks.

He took the pain killers and boarded his ship!

During the stopover the South African team was also given a ringside look-in on the "unwritten rules" of big money, sponsored ocean racing — which is that there are really no rules at all. Chay Blyth, frustrated by a stubborn spinnaker on Brittany Ferries, simply rode over it and radioed for another to be flown up to Castlebay, in the Barra Islands.

At the pre-race briefing there was also a discussion of penalties for infringing the commercial shipping separation zone laws. Again Blyth made it clear that he would take the fastest route regardless. "I'll pay the (STL) 1000 fine," he said. "You mean your sponsors will pay!" a voice interjected from the back.

One of the most impressive sights of the whole race, John said, was after they cracked the sheets off the northern tip of Ireland, and were doing 12,5 knots when they saw Robin Knox Johnston's 70 ft catamaran Sea Falcon appear over the horizon and bear down on them like a runaway train. The massive catamaran

shot past Voortrekker 2 at between 18 and 20 knots, the crew wearing goggles against the cascading welter of spray.

"This was the first time in the race that we'd had to beat," John said, but still the multis took about six hours off us, and it was at that point that we realised we hadn't a hope in hell of beating them. The trimarans appear flimsy, their almas (the term for outrigger used in Europe) vibrate when they're struck, but they no longer break up, and I've seen them sailed on just one alma, the centre hull and other alma way out of the water, screaming along at 25 knots — hull speed, not just spurts or surfing!"

Castlebay is a very tricky port to enter, particularly for deep draught racers like Voortrekker 2 and Challenger. Bertie and John got in, again in the afternoon, but chose to be guided to a mooring by a pilot. Leslie Williams and crewman/journalist Bob Fisher lost their chart overboard, arrived 12 hours behind the South Africans, and then had to languish outside the bay for five hours before it was light enough for them to enter — much to the amusement of those already home!

On the third leg "Trekka 2 rounded the northernmost point of the race, at 58 degrees north, and later hit something which smashed the log impeller and left them with no dead reckoning, but less inclination to slow down. With the bit really between her teeth, Voortrekker 2 did a 24-hour run of 240 miles.

"The wind was up to 35-40 knots," John said, "but we kept the bag flying and reached Lerwick, the third stopover, 26 hours ahead of Tuesday's Child and 30 ahead of Challenger. It was on that leg that the trimaran Twiggys capsized, fortunately without casualties, but it demonstrated

very clearly that however fast the multis may be, they will never be as safe as monos.

"It also demonstrates the wisdom of the race organisers, who insist that multis have their names painted on their bottoms, the bottoms painted bright orange, and liferafts accessible from a capsized position."

John says Voortrekker, which smashed the existing monohull record by more than 26 hours, could have reached Plymouth at least 24 hours earlier — but they ran out of wind. Racing "to get to the pubs before they closed", the two South Africans only tied up at 3 am after the wind soured for them off Portland Bill.

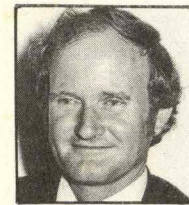
"There is no doubt that it is one of the most innovative and demanding races in the world," he said. "With multis and monos sailing in the same race, although in different classes, there is ample opportunity for comparison, and terrific potential for development of yachts. Warren Luhrs, owner of Tuesday's Child, believes monohulls have not been fully exploited, and is building a 60 footer for the 1984 Ostar.

"Voortrekker 2 is one of the fastest monos in the world right now, and although she roused little interest when we arrived in Plymouth, we couldn't keep people off her when we'd won."

Now John Martin, a qualified general duty officer, watchkeeping and weapons officer trained on missile boats, has been transferred to the Navy's Simon's Town training squad, and for the foreseeable future at least will be based there, where he will be able to pay some attention to his wife and eight-month old daughter, with whom he has only spent 5 weeks.

But if he is asked again to sail, anywhere in the world, he will go! Immediately!

Comments



by
David Cox



South African yachting lost one of its most colourful characters with the death of the Bob Nuttall during August. A life long sailor, Bob made his name in dinghies, then in the mid sixties moved into keel boats, campaigning his RCOD "Columbine" for many years. In fact, with "Columbine" Bob took part in most, if not all, the Vasco da Gama races which were held between Durban and Maputo (then Lourenco Marques). He also took part in two Rio races, in 1971 as skipper of "Mercury" and in 1976 as skipper of his own boat "Scorpio". He later campaigned "Scorpio" in England and the Mediterranean. Just this year, Bob sailed the Impact "Charisma" to second

place in Vasco da Gama race. Bob did his fair share of yachting administration as well which included several terms of office as Royal Natal Yacht Clubs Commodore. A controversial character in some ways, one of Bob's outstanding attributes to my mind was the fact that he stood by his friends when the chips were down. Several yachtsman will confirm this fact and are grateful for Bob's support in times of crisis, not necessarily of a nautical nature! The RNYC held a well attended memorial service for Bob, followed by a sail past during which his ashes were scattered at sea.

SOUTH AFRICANS ABROAD

With the pressures on our country these days, its nice when some of our sportsmen manage to compete overseas. Its even nicer when they do well! Congratulations to Blaine Dodds who managed 2nd in the World Hobie 16 Championships being beaten by 1 point by none other than Hobie Alter Jnr, son of the designer. Next, we must doff our caps to Rick Nankin and crew Alec Stone. Rick jetted off to Europe shortly after sailing "Royal Flush" in the Lipton Cup, and back in dinghies, took a Fourth in the European Fireball Championships, and followed this up with a seventh in the British Championships. This is no mean achievement with well over 100 competitors. Also Rick did not sail his own boats, but arranged two different local boats for each event.

VOORTREKKER 2

Again in the International forum Bertie "Biltong" Reed lived up to his reputation ably assisted by John Martin, when he brought Voortrekker 2 home the first

monohull in the Round Britain Race. Voortrekker 2 broke the existing record for monohulls in three of the legs of the race, and broke the monohull record for the entire course by 36 hours. 40 Monohulls took part, among them Les Williams with "Challenger" (crewed by Bob Fischer incidently) and the light displacement American Sloop "Tuesdays Child" sailed by Warren Luhrs. As is becoming usual in this type of race, the multihulls set the pace, eleven of them finishing ahead of "Voortrekker".

More good news is that "Voortrekker" (The original fourteen year old one) is a definite starter in the round the world race due to start off Newport, Rhode Island on Saturday the 28th August. By the time this column appears in print, "Trekker" and Bertie should be approaching Cape Town at the end of the first leg. The race, known as the BOC challenge is for singlehanders only, and has been sponsored by the BOC Groups British Parent company. (They have many interests in SA) "Voortrekker 2" is over the maximum length for this race (56 Feet) hence the return of the old faithful "Voortrekker".

Campaigning a boat like "Voortrekker" is an expensive business, and while she is owned by the Defence Force, they don't supply all the money needed for a venture such as this. The fact that she is a starter in this race is due largely to very generous sponsorship by Altech, and the boat will be known as "Altech Voortrekker" for this race. Altechs Managing Director, Bill Venter deserves our thanks for this contribution to our sport. Sponsorships don't just happen, and this one was the result of hard work put in by CASA's Transvaal chairman Roley Hide, and Lt. General Ivan Lemmer of the Defence Force. However, while this sponsorship covers the bulk of the expenses, more money is required and the South African Ocean Racing Trust, P.O. Box 5036, Cape Town, 8000 will be handling donations. A National fund raising drive is to be launched soon.

The race will be an extremely testing one, the route being from Newport to Cape Town, Cape Town to Sydney, Sydney to Rio de Janeiro, and Rio back to Newport. The race is different to all other similar races held thus far, in that the start is in America, all the others started in Europe. It is different too, in that highly sophisticated, modern ocean racing boats, at least four of them near the 56 foot upper limit will be sailed single handed in the waters of the Southern Ocean. This has of course been done before. Robin Knox Johnson won in 1968 with "Suhali". However, "Suhali" was a cruising boat, not one of the sophisticated "State of art" ocean racers we see today. However, Bertie Reed is a singlehander with many thousands of miles under his keel, and he did not earn the nickname "Biltong" for nothing! Since her launch in 1968 "Voortrekker" has covered an incredible mileage in hard racing and passage making, and to say she is well shaken down is an understatement.

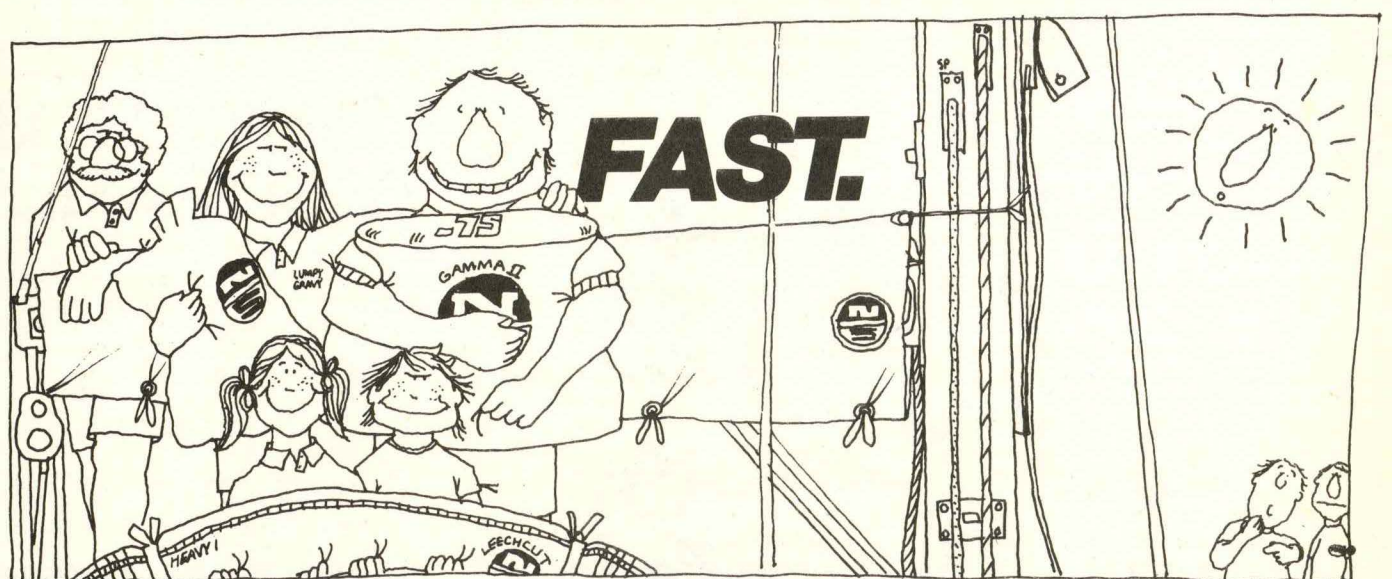
Interesting too, is the fact that the rules of the race permit sponsors, to get a certain amount of publicity and logos, plus a certain amount of advertising will be allowed on both the boat and the sails. It just remains to wish "Altech Voortrekker" and Bertie good luck. I won't add "fair winds" because one thing is for sure, there will be plenty of upwind work in various parts of this race!

ROTHMANS WEEK

It seems almost certain that following the example of the sponsors of Mainstay Week, Rothmans will provide some assistance to yachtsman from other areas who would like to take part. This is certainly good news for those of us who like to get down to the Cape for this event.

NEW FLASH

As I was handing this article over to the Editor, I received another piece of good news concerning South Africans overseas. "Rampant 2" Alan Tuckers maxi has just finished fifth in Hawaii's Clipper Series. It will be interesting to get the details, as this event is usually well attended by top boats from Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the USA and included the maxis "Kialoa" and "Condor" this year. For a maxi to finish this high is a series which has some short races is good indeed.



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