

MOSSEL BAY RACE

# A Classic is Revived

By Matthew Thomas



The Mossel Bay Race saw the fleet leave downwind. pic by Matthew Thomas

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Over time, yacht racing in South Africa has started focusing on day races, generally sailed around laid marks with offshore racing having been put on the back burner. South African yachties have a long history of both offshore and ocean racing. The very first offshore race in Southern Africa was conceived by Frank Morgan and Ivor Jamieson in 1955, and was sailed between Simonstown and Mossel Bay.

Over the years, there have been various variations made to the course and it's fair to say that nearly all of South Africa's top offshore sailors have cut their teeth on this race. Sadly, over the last few years, there has been no offshore ocean racing in the Cape.

After initial meetings, race veterans Teddy Kuttel, Dale Kushner and a host of other sailors started to put together a team to revive this classic race.

A senior sailor and doyen of ocean racing, Teddy Kuttel is the Race Patron and has thankfully put this race back on the SA sailing calendar. Additionally, the race is back to its original format and will once again become one of the country's premier offshore events.

Revered for the possibility of harsh weather conditions with high wind speeds and ferocious seas, the Mossel Bay race is a 210nm sprint to the finish, where a variety of conditions will be faced and crews will be tried and tested.

To keep the public informed, all boats were fitted with race transponders supplied by Xtra-Link who is one of the event's lead sponsors, together with North Sails and Central Boating, no strangers to ocean racing. The trackers were 'pinging' the yachts every five minutes.

Initially it was envisioned that 10 to 15 yachts would take part and that the race would cater for both the die-hard racing yachts as well as owners and crew who were simply interested in completing, possibly, their very first offshore race. Additionally, sailing in the race was a great opportunity for yachts competing in the upcoming Cape to Rio race to build miles and check systems. Not only was the race enthusiastically embraced by sailors, 29 owners entered their boats!

As part of the safety requirements, yachts were thoroughly inspected prior to the race to ensure that they complied fully with the safety requirements and on race day, every competing yacht had to parade





Fast 40s, First 40 and Maker's Mark fighting it out at the start. pic by Matthew Thomas



Nitro took line honours in Mossel Bay. pic by Matthew Thomas

past the race committee with a reef in their mainsails and their storm jibs set and flying. All the crew had to have their safety harnesses on and be tethered to the safety jack lines.

This was the first time that this has been done in a South African offshore event, but it echoes what has become common place in the rest of the world and sets a great precedence for all offshore racing.

Race day dawned calm and clear and as the sailors had breakfast they readied themselves for the 09h00 start. All eyes were on the weather forecasts which had changed two days earlier to show an initial period of good SW winds, but a windless hole developing on Friday morning between Struisbaai and Mossel Bay. Naturally the big concern was that the fastest boats would sail into it early in the morning, only to have to then fight their way to cross the finish line.

With more and more weather routing apps available either free from the different App stores, or for a small fee, skippers and navigators were constantly checking the weather as the yachts left Simonstown Marina and paraded past the Race Officer on the start boat.

Weather routing before the race showed that the best initial course would be to exit False Bay closer to Bellow's Rock, and immediately head offshore to take advantage of the wind, even though there would be some adverse current. Once offshore, the wind was expected to move more southerly which would have the yachts reach back towards the coast where there was a possibility of some beating near Cape Agulhas, before some light wind reaching towards the finish line.

Depending on which GRIB files you used, the course varied between staying offshore and staying close inshore. Most of the boats would download new weather data each time they closed the coast and were in cell range.

At the start, the wind was still SW and the entire fleet started downwind, with spinnakers flying and led by the youngsters on *Cryphon*. Quickly *Nitro*, *Vulcan* and *Café Gannet A-L* crossed the line, followed by *Voortrekker 2*, *Voodoo*, *Maker's Mark*, *First 40* and Teddy Kuttel's *Spilhaus*. First to gybe onto port was *Nitro*, followed by *Vulcan* and *Café Gannet A-L*, followed by the trimarans, *Banjo* and *Smart Tri 40*.

From here it was out of the bay, under spinnaker and on to Mossel Bay.

As morning turned into afternoon and turned into night, the fleet moved offshore as predicted and while there was a battle going on at the



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## Results

### Line Honours (days; hours; minutes; seconds)

1 Nitro	Mike Heyton	1; 10; 2; 4
2 Vulcan	Hylton Hale	1; 10; 44; 15
3 Warrior	Phil Gutsche	1; 13; 2; 12
4 Gryphon	Theo Yon	1; 14; 38; 14
5 Banjo	Kevin Webb	1; 15; 20; 56
6 Rocket	Herbert Karolius	1; 15; 51; 2
7 Set Sea	Greg Davis	1; 16; 36; 48
8 Ray of Light	Michael Kavanagh	1; 18; 18; 17
9 Spilhaus	Teddy Kuttell	1; 20; 6; 18
10 Voortrekker 2	Mark Wannenberg	1; 20; 11; 16

### Handicap (Club Handicap System)

1 Vulcan	Hylton Hale
2 Nitro	Mike Heyton
3 Gryphon	Theo Yon
4 Nuthur Witch	Dave Garrard
5 Yolo	Dale Kushner
6 Regardless	William Brooks
7 Ray of Light	Michael Kavanagh
8 Spilhaus	Teddy Kuttell
9 Banjo	Kevin Webb
10 Rocket	Herbert Karolius
11 Warrior	Phil Gutsche
12 Set Sea	Greg Davis
13 Café Gannet A-L	Johann van Rooyen
14 Dark Matter	Dave Elcock
15 Sea Oyster	Jimmy Eugster
16 First 40	Dave Arnott
17 Marie Galante	Paul van Tellinghen
18 Makers Mark	Peter Rice
19 Strumpet	Justin Spreckley
20 Voodoo	Wayne Hennings
21 Fleur	Patrick Dyer
22 Iechyd Da	Stefan Hundt
23 Malulani	Grant Saunders
24 Izimoyo	Jasper van der Westhuizen
25 Sophie B	Tom Moultrie
26 Voortrekker 2	Mark Wannenberg
27 Love Affair	Mike Boon
28 Aquila	Peter Loram
29 Radiance	Jannie de Goede



Vulcan, the overall winner on handicap as well as second boat across the finish line. pic by Matthew Thomas



After a full refurbishment and looking good, Voortrekker 2 is back to racing. pic by Matthew Thomas



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front of the fleet, at the back, the crews on *Sophie B*, *Malulani*, *Iechyd Da*, *Love Affair*, *Izimoyo*, *Aquila* and *Radiance* were also locked in a battle against each other.

Now clear of the confines of False Bay, the crews settled down into their watches as the top navigators downloaded updated weather files to see if there had been any changes.

Chatting with William Crockett who navigated *Nitro* into the first boat home, he had this to say: "Based on Thursday morning's forecast, we thought that we needed to be at Cape Agulhas by sunset or risk losing the wind as it looked like the wind would die away in the dark. Staying ahead of the wind hole was obviously going to be crucial if we were to do well.

"The forecast suggested that the wind would die inshore first from some time between 18h00 and 20h00 and that there would be a westerly shift while in False Bay, once we had passed Miller's Point. Dave Hudson and Paul Allardice, are in charge of tactics and based on both their experience and the weather modelling, the decision was made to sail directly to Cape Agulhas as quickly as possible.

"For us to maximise our speed down the course, we had to ensure that our VMG (velocity made good) remained as high as possible on the way to Cape Agulhas and this meant that we sailed offshore a little further than originally intended. The 18h00 weather forecast suggested that the feared wind dying away was unlikely, so we stayed offshore a bit longer and maximised our speed.

"We gybed back towards the coast only to find that as we neared the coast the wind started to die, so we gybed back and spent the rest of the night reaching on starboard.

"Races like this are most certainly not won by any one group on board, but, are a culmination of a well-practiced and dedicated team. This race tested us hard with multiple spinnaker peels, tough helming conditions and the need for constant tactical and weather decisions."

Pushing hard, the team on *Nitro* crossed the finish line off Mossel Bay at 10:02:04 on Friday morning, followed by *Vulcan*, 42 minutes later. *Vulcan's* transponder had not been sending signals for most of the race and was very much a 'dark horse' and a definite threat to *Nitro* in the prevailing conditions.





Every competing yacht had to sailpast the Committee Boat with storm sails hoisted and crew in their safety harnesses. pic by Matthew Thomas



Up on the bow and keen to get racing, this bowman looks pleased to be doing a coastal passage. pic by Trevor Wilkins/Ashleigh de Villiers

With two finishers home, all eyes were on *Warrior*, *Gryphon* and the trimaran *Banjo*, who were still all a threat on handicap and all capable of podium finishes. First of the three to cross the finish line was *Warrior*, then *Gryphon* and *Banjo*.

Further back in the fleet, *Voortrekker 2* and *Regardless* were having a good battle that saw *Voortrekker* finish only a minute ahead of *Regardless*. This was definitely exciting racing to watch, and the satellite tracking units updating positions every 5 minutes allowed those watching at home to see the entire race unfold on their computer screens.

Another close finish was between *Café Gannet A-L*, *Dark Matter* and *Voodoo*, who all crossed the line just ahead of each other, to the joy of the spectators watching from the Mossel Bay Yacht Club.

Chatting with the various crews at the Mossel Bay Yacht Club after they finished, it was clear that they had all had a fantastic time. Clearly the competition at the head of the fleet was tough, but more importantly, the many normal cruising yachties who had competed, all expressed their enjoyment and were clear that it was a race they would do again and recommend it to their friends.

With it starting on Thursday Morning and the last boat finishing on Saturday, crews were able to have some time off before sailing their boats back to their home yacht clubs. For the boats further up the East coast, this meant leaving promptly as the wind was favourable, whereas the Cape Town boats started their passages back on Saturday morning to take advantage of the inbound South Easterlies, with many of them reporting fast passages home. ⚓

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