

Tasman Yachts Well Out to Sea

Leda and Solveig Ahead

With a light easterly breeze behind them, the yachts in the Tasman race were about 100 miles clear of New Zealand last evening, moving out into the Tasman along a 30-mile arc south-west of the Three Kings Islands. At 5 o'clock the Tauranga cutter Leda and the Sydney sloop Solveig appeared to be leading, just out of sight of one another.

The last New Zealander to see the yachts was Mr S. Schofield, the light-housekeeper at Cape Reinga, west of North Cape. He said last night they disappeared into a smoky haze about 10 a.m., but they were still in radio range in the evening.

Smaller Ships Favoured

The crew of the Leda told Mr Schofield by radio last night that the light winds appeared to be favouring the smaller vessels. Their 54-footer was being "joggled" in an annoying tidal rip, spilling the little wind there was out of the sails.

"They say they are quite happy, but they have nothing to do but sit around and growl," Mr Schofield said. "They did not expect this kind of weather at all."

Mr Schofield said the presence of women on the Leda. Mrs. Kit Wilson and Mrs. Erica Wilson, wives of the brothers who own the vessel, seemed to be bringing a touch of home to the Tasman race. They had already proved their worth. When the Leda split two spinnakers running down the brisk breeze to North Cape, the girls turned to with sewing machines and repaired them.

"It was a lot faster than doing it by hand," Mr T. Hammond, the radio operator and navigator, told Mr Schofield.

The women are good cooks and are inventing special Tasman race courses. Sweets at last night's meal were "port and starboard jellies"—done in green and red.

The Radio Man

Mr Hammond and Mr Schofield have almost become old friends through the radio-telephone. A competitor in three races, Mr Hammond has spoken to Mr Schofield a number of times before and, although they have never met, they are on Christian-name terms.

"They're keeping Terry very busy," Mr Schofield said. "Twice a day he has to call up the four boats with radios and transmit anything they want to send. Then he has long press messages to send and weather reports as well. He seems to be on the air all the time, and we only have time to chat at the end of it."

Mr Schofield expects to be able to talk to the Leda until the boat is almost to Sydney.

LIGHT FOLLOWING WINDS

DISPOSITION OF THE BOATS

(P.A.) Yacht LEDA (at Sea), Monday
Light following winds persisted all day on the Tasman, and seven of the nine ocean racers are still within a few miles of each other. The three big boats are at a definite disadvantage, as the wind is not strong enough to fill their sails. In the awkward cross sea they are unable to travel any faster than the smaller craft.

At sunset today Solveig reported she was almost parallel with the Leda a hundred miles west of Cape Reinga, although the boats are unable to see each other. The navigator, Mr T. Hammond, and the skipper, Mr Wilson, have both been up to the top of the Leda's mast today, but neither could see any sails.

The Tara has been running in company with the Hope all day, the Solveig and Rangitiki were sighted ahead, and the White Squall was coming up from the south-east. The Southern Maid was about 20 miles behind the Leda.

There was little prospect tonight of any change of wind from the south-east or an increase in velocity, and the small boats are piling up good handicap leads. The speed of all the yachts is four or five knots. They made a hundred miles in the second 24 hours.

Tasman Race Crews "Whistle For The Wind"

The Tauranga cutter, Leda, is still apparently leading the fleet of trans-Tasman yacht race entrants, according to a message received this morning from the N.Z.P.A. correspondent, W. A. Wilson, aboard the yacht. He says the yachts spent another quiet but irritating night with all possible canvas set to catch the tantalizing following wind. Leda was over 100 miles west of Cape Reinga.

The Australian sloop Solveig, the big Auckland wishboned cutter Tara, and the two short-enders, Hope and White Squall, are not far behind Leda, although they are not in sight. The Auckland gaff-rigged cutter Rangitiki has not been heard of, but Mr Wilson thinks she must be up with the leaders. She has not maintained radio contact since the start of the race. Her radio may be out of order, or too weak, or she may just be "playing possum" in weather that suits her admirably.

The light weather is likely to be hailed with some glee by crews of the smaller yachts. Every hour they are steadily gaining on the larger craft. The big Australian steel cutter Southern Maid was becalmed this morning, and dreadfully predicted by radio that they would still be there in a week. There is no news of Sea Wolf or Ghost.

Superstition

"We're whistling for wind but our whistles are getting more tuneless every hour," says Mr Wilson. In accordance with good British seafaring superstition, a knife has been stuck in the boom for two days—but with no result so far.

The weather forecast for that area to 9 p.m. today is for continuing east winds of 12 to 15 knots, weather fine, and a slight sea.

Under these light conditions, the situation aboard a small yacht can become most irritating. Ocean swells and tidal "joggles" make life aboard uncomfortably mobile. Without the steadying pressure of wind in the sails, a yacht will pitch about madly, spilling what few odd puffs come her way. The continual pitching also imposes a great strain on standing and running rigging, and crew members have to step warily on deck as a heavy block, swinging pendulum-like, can cause injuries.

Tara had trouble with her spinnaker during the night with chafe. The sail dropped in the water, but did not foul the propeller, which is being used to charge batteries.

Two minor mishaps aboard the Leda were the smashing of the ship's one and only tin opener, and the loss of the sewing machine needles. This means that the spinnakers, which are constantly in need of minor repairs, will have to be mended by hand.

Leda Under Storm Canvas

HARD BLOW IN TASMAN

(P.A.) Yacht LEDA (at Sea), Monday
It has been a hectic day on board the yacht Leda in the Tasman race today. Tonight she is shouldering her way through extraordinarily confused seas and racing toward Sydney under trysail and spinnaker.

An hour ago, when we were supposed to be calling other yachts on the radio, all hands were changing sails, so there is no word of the other competitors. However, Leda sighted Southern Maid abeam to leeward this morning, but slowly dropped her astern. Leda and Southern Maid appear to be fighting out the lead with 375 miles to go.

Most of the yachts are probably now heading through the same storm as Leda. It is really a spectacular affair, complete with terrific lightning flashes and rolling thunder which drowns the bowl of the wind through the rigging, and vicious gusts up to 50 knots.

The wind steadily increased after midnight last night. Leda thrashed on through the day close-hauled on the starboard tack. The forecast was for winds up to 20 knots, so she hung on to the Genoa jib until noon and then tried a Yankee, then the No. 2 jib and stay-sail.

At 6 o'clock a terrific rain squall hit her. The crew changed to storm sails. Leda then sailed through a calm patch before the wind chopped round 90 degrees and blew even harder, so she went about and laid the course for Sydney close-hauled on the port tack.

The yacht is behaving magnificently, standing up to the wind and charging through the awkward sea with no trouble. The women cooks, clambering over mountains of wet canvas in the galley, rattled about like peas in a pod, but prepared two hot meals—the first being ruined—and the crew, well fed, are settling down to routine night watches.