

500 miles . . . then came the tension

Minna by minute in West Coaster

AFTER 500 miles of ocean racing, only one minute 12 seconds separated first and second at the finish of the Melbourne-Hobart race yesterday.

The 43ft sloop Minna, the first South Australian to compete in the three years that the race has been sailed, drifted over the line just ahead of the 59ft Victorian sloop Banjo Paterson.

The two yachts, after a lightning run down the West Coast, battled tack for tack from the Iron Pot, at the mouth of the Derwent, to the finish line at Wrest Point.

Banjo Paterson was the first into the river but Minna, which had led the fleet for most of the race, caught her again at Opossum Bay.

Minna, skippered by Jack Williams, of Adelaide, cut 1h 17m 13s off the record set in the inaugural race by Mary Blair. Minna's time for the journey was 63h 1m 54s.

The provisional winner on handicap was the Alan Payne - designed 37ft sloop Pagan, skippered by Reg Hare, of Victoria.

She finished in a corrected time of 49h 30m 15s.

Hobart skipper Bob Gear sailed Astrolabe into second place on handicap and the Victorian entry Pajen, a 30ft sloop, was third.

The skipper of Banjo Paterson, John Jarrett, said the last few miles "was a typical Derwent situation."

"First there was wind . . . then there was none at all. No-one could say how the race was going to go.

"I've been in quite a few tight finishes in my

time but this one was quite extraordinary.

"We were only 10 seconds from the line when I knew we were beaten."

The Banjo Paterson has raced in all the major ocean classics and has won line honours in the Melbourne - Sydney, Melbourne - Port Fairy, Melbourne - Portland and Sydney-Noumea races.

