

Victorious Nimrod heads home

Nimrod, skippered by Jim Howell, vice-commodore of the Royal SA Yacht Squadron, is slicing her way back from Hobart after taking nine honors and third on handicap in the Westcoaster yacht race.

Chris Howell, co-skipper and crewman, flew back to Adelaide to be on the job. Nimrod is not due here until next week.

It's a 1000 sea mile haul from Hobart, beam-on to the prevailing southwesterlies. On the return trip Nimrod is expected to sail to Cape Sorell, halfway up the west coast of Tasmania before heading for Portland, Victoria and then to Adelaide.

Nimrod is a Farr design 116 metre three-quarter rigged sloop built by David Binks of Somerton. Her chief opponent in the Westcoaster was Relentless, skippered by experienced Victorian Jim Searle to a handicap win. Searle had

BOATING
with
Eric Franklin



three Westcoaster wins to his credit in another yacht, Hot Prospect.

The annual race is sailed from Portsea in Port Phillip Bay through the heads and down the west coast of Tasmania to Hobart. It can be a rough ride with a lee shore and limited opportunities for shelter.

Chris Howell says the wind picked up to 50 knots on the first night out. Half way down the Tasmanian coast the wind died close in but Nimrod was far enough offshore to make most of the wind and build a 20 mile lead on the fleet.

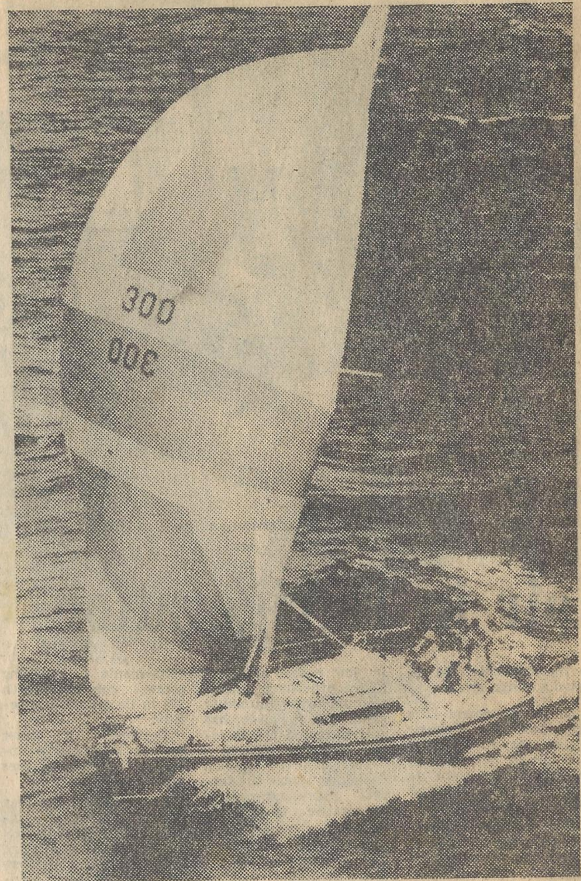
Relentless stayed close on their heels until a strong blow filled Nimrod's spinnaker off Southwest Cape. A 50-mile stretch south of

Maatsyker light took only five hours.

With darkness falling, Nimrod turned into Storm Bay taking three hours to sail 11 miles into the Derwent estuary with a lookout to the rear for the navigation lights of Relentless. Nimrod finished two hours and 22 minutes ahead.

When Nimrod returns, the crew will start preparing the yacht for the 250-mile Neptune Island race from North Haven, starting on January 23. Departing on Friday night the fastest yachts are usually back at North Haven on the Sunday morning.

Nimrod's crew members were Mervyn Butterfield, John Brenston, Vern Hembrow, Bruce Whetherall and Harry Davis.



Nimrod shooting through off Tasmania's rock-strewn south coast to outrun Relentless.