



To the Commodore

We would like to give your Club an opportunity to express an opinion on the best way forward for the annual Lipton Challenge.

Looking for ways of making it possible and reasonably affordable for sailing clubs around SA to challenge for the Lipton Cup has been uppermost in the minds of the Lipton Trustees for many years.



The last time the Lipton Challenge was held L26s in Cape Town's Table Bay was in 2017. In that contest, 10 of the 11 clubs competing were from the Western Cape, and the team below led by Roger Hudson won the Cup for Royal Cape Yacht Club without having to sail the final race. As strong as that team was, this shouldn't happen in a no-discard regatta, and it highlighted the need for the Trustees to focus on ways of attracting more clubs with teams strong enough to challenge the holders of the Cup.

As a first step the Trustees asked RCYC to consider forfeiting their right to defend the Cup on their home waters, and to offer the 2018 contest to Durban. Royal Cape sportingly agreed, and Point Yacht Club accepted the responsibility of hosting the 2018 event.

A total of 18 clubs challenged RCYC for the Cup and, as always, Durban delivered excellent sailing conditions. Once again, however, the competition was dominated by the RCYC team, pictured below with a nod to the winning team of a century earlier. They retained the Cup with a scoreline of 2, 1, 1, 1, 1.



The Trustees' next step in our effort to broaden the contest and to encourage more of SA's top sailors to compete was to propose a trial year in the fast-growing Cape 31 Class followed by a trial year in the J22 Class. As an alternative to our proposal we offered clubs two further options, the first alternative being two trial years in the Cape 31 and the second being to stay with the L26.

Of the 21 Clubs that voted 14 opted for a trial year in the Cape 31, including all 7 of the voting clubs that had won the Cup in the past. Opinions on the second trial year - Cape 31 or J22 - were evenly divided.

The 2019 Challenge in the Cape 31 achieved much of what the Lipton Trustees had hoped for. It turned out to be an outstanding contest, attracting the majority of SA's most competitive sailors. In fact, if one looks at the track records - both international and national - of the 75 competitors it is clear that there has never before been a stronger concentration of SA racing talent and experience in one fleet at one time. This was a step change for the Lipton Challenge. And fortunately three of the Cape 31 owners had been longstanding members of clubs outside of the Western Cape - Walvis Bay, Witbank and Aeolians - so there was at least a measure of geographical spread amongst the challenging clubs. Finally, in a down-to-the-wire finish it was Mike Hayton & David Rae's team who wrested the Cup from RCYC, making Witbank Yacht & Aquatic Club the second inland club to win a Lipton Challenge in this event's 113 year history. (The first was Transvaal Yacht Club in 1984)

After the success of this Lipton Challenge, and in the light of the fact that neither the main clubs that race J22s nor the J22 Class Association had supported the proposal of a J22 trial year, the Trustees decided on a further Cape 31-based Challenge in 2020. Sadly COVID 19 then struck, and the 2020 contest was cancelled.

By the time active racing resumed post-COVID, it had become clear that hopes of the Cape 31 Class becoming more broadly established around SA were unrealistic. Instead it took off internationally, with some 80 boats now racing in the UK, Europe, Australia, the USA and SA. This meant that while the Cape 31 provided excellent racing, challenging for the Lipton Cup in a Cape 31 remained beyond the resources of most clubs in SA.

To make the Lipton Challenge more accessible to clubs around our country another change was needed. With the success of the ORC Rating System, internationally and in SA, in providing a sound platform for handicap racing, and with the large number of boats in the roughly 30 ft range with ORC certificates in this country, an ORC-based Lipton seemed worth trying.

Racing under ORC for past three years has certainly opened the Lipton Challenge to clubs that couldn't possibly have put up a Cape 31 campaign, but it hasn't really broadened the base of non-Cape challengers. And, equally importantly, handicap racing simply doesn't provide the interest and excitement of one-design racing.

For these two reasons we would like to revisit our J22 trial year proposal.

The Lipton Trustees are recommending that the 2025 Lipton Challenge be open to boats of the J22 Class only and, depending on the success of this trial and other relevant developments, the same might apply in 2026.

We would appreciate it if you would let us know by 31 January whether your Club supports this proposal or, alternatively, supports a continuation of the Lipton Challenge being held under the ORC Rating system.

Kindly reply to Kerry Pryde, Lipton Contest Secretary, sailadmin@rcyc.co.za no later than 31 January 2025.

With our appreciation and best wishes for the year ahead,

David Hudson
Chair - Lipton Trustees
3 Jan 2025