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With the current fleet of brand new 50 footers dominating racing in New Zealand in recent months, it was perhaps no surprise that numbers were down for the second Round North Island race held in February.

After the inaugural race in 2000 was affected by severe storm conditions, several prospective entries for this race also examined themselves and their state of preparation and decided they wouldn't compete this year. Unfortunately the prospective Australian entry was damaged during the Sydney Hobart and subsequently stayed at home.

This left the following competitors on the start line.

Jive Talkin'	Ray Haslar
Outsider	Tilmar Hansen
Prawn Broker	Kevin Murphy
Pussy Galore	Anatole Masfen
Ran Tan II	John Meade
V5	Simon Hull
Wired	Rob Bassett & Brett Russell

Of the two smaller boats, Ray and his crew on *Jive Talkin'* had dominated offshore sailing in recent years, and Kevin Murphy on *Prawn Broker* was an entry in the first race and had since done another lap two-handed.

Within the fleet, the crews boasted any number of Whitbread, Volvo and America's Cup Campaigns on their resumé's lending particular credence to the term 'a small but quality fleet'.

After a light start to the first leg, racing was very close around North Cape, with the two smaller yachts hanging on well. Off the Northland coast, V5 struck an unidentified object shearing a pin on its canting keel. *Wired* responded to their emergency flare and stood by as she limped into Opononi.

After Cape Egmont the breeze freshened with boats close hauled down the coast. *Ran Tan II* successfully anticipated a new

Overall winner, Elliott 52 Outsider, slides out of Auckland



Fast track round the North Island

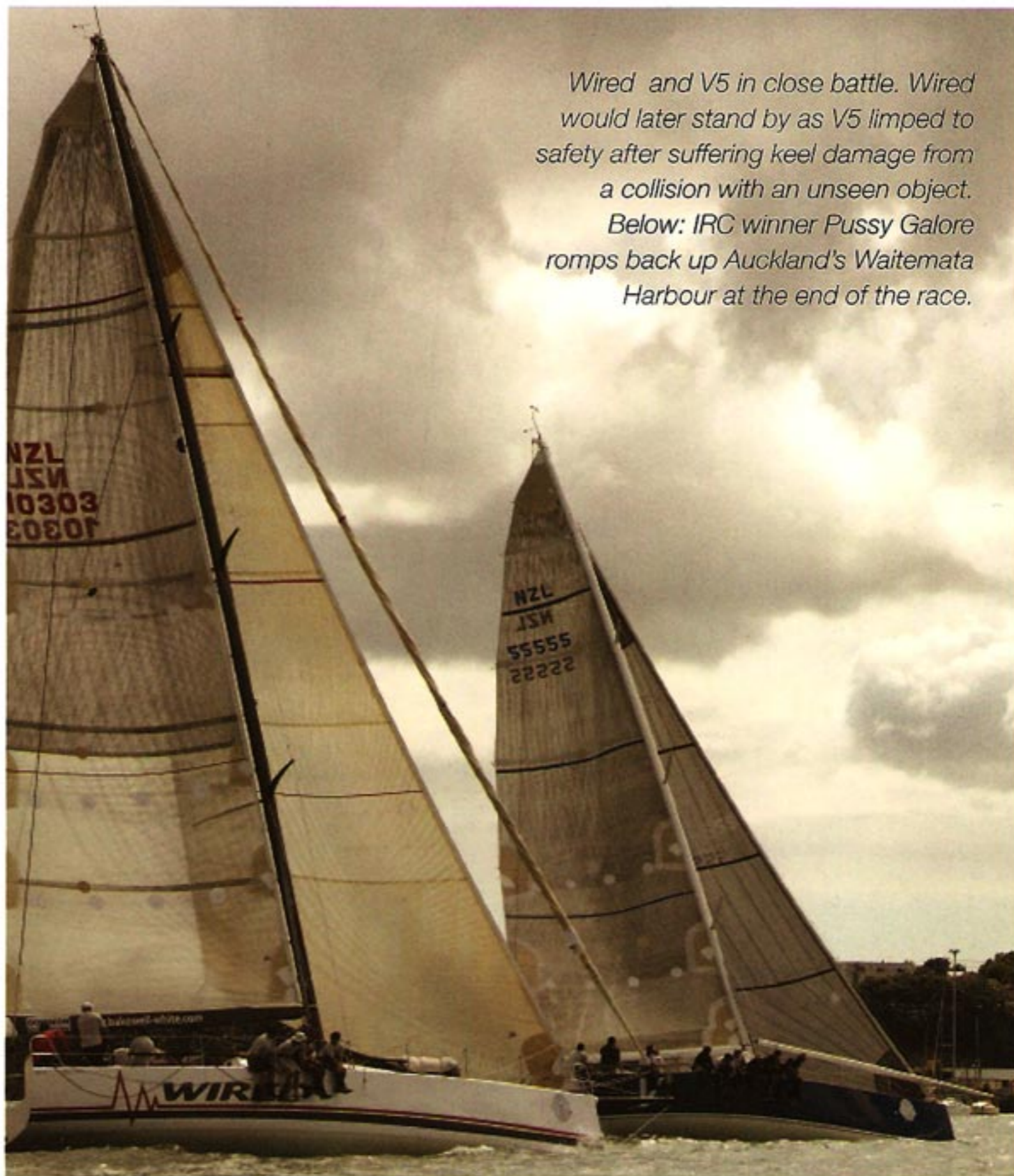
weather pattern and made good gains above the rhumb line to keep in contact with her larger sistership.

At the entrance to Wellington Harbour, *Outsider* had a small lead, but the 50s then had a seven hour drift to the finish off the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club. With positions changing with each puff and crews becoming very tired after a long day and night, tempers were fraying as they tried to reach the finish in the inner harbour.

Eventually local sailor John Meade and *Ran Tan II* snuck across ahead of *Outsider* with *Pussy Galore* close behind. After a redress hearing *Wired* was awarded the same time as *Outsider*. Although at this stage the two smaller boats were in with a great chance on handicap, they too ran out of wind. This meant leg honours were taken on PHRF by *Ran Tan II* and IRC by *Pussy Galore* with *Jive Talkin'* 2nd in both divisions.

Most of the yachts then competed in the RPNYC Line 7 regatta with *Pussy Galore* dominating the IRC fleet and *Prawn Broker* winning the PHRF inshore fleet.

Leg two saw a fast reach off the start line with spinnakers being tried by several boats with mixed success. *Jive Talkin'* was early and had to return with *Wired* also



Wired and V5 in close battle. Wired would later stand by as V5 limped to safety after suffering keel damage from a collision with an unseen object. Below: IRC winner Pussy Galore romps back up Auckland's Waitemata Harbour at the end of the race.



going back unnecessarily. This left the way clear for *Outsider* to power into the lead, which she never relinquished.

As the yachts progressed up the East Coast, the breeze filled in giving the fleet an exciting spinnaker ride with the 50s reporting speeds in excess of 20 knots. The breeze shut down as the boats approached the Hauraki Gulf, with a slow beat in from Channel Island.

Outsider maintained her comfortable lead to finish 6 hours in front, with *Wired*, *RanTan II* and *Pussy Galore* in sight of each other to finish in that order.

In the overall results, German entry *Outsider*, a brand new Elliott 52 was line honours victor establishing a new race record of just over 6 ½ days. *Pussy Galore* (Cookson 50) won overall on IRC from *Outsider* and *Ran Tan II* (Elliott 50) was the victor on PHRF.

The Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron remains committed to the Round North Island race. However with such a small fleet, it will be examining the timing and frequency of the race in an attempt to improve its popularity in the future.

FOR RESULTS, SEE PAGE 12.

Celebration aboard Wired at the conclusion of the marathon. Pictures below: The fleet's two smaller yachts, Jive Talkin' and Prawn Broker performed with distinction.

Sara Roberts photo

