

RLs ROLL ON

By Bob Ross

After a night of howling wind and heavy rain that certainly did not feature on the Gold Coast brochures, the campers sleepily emerge. One by one they drift into the small but functional club-rooms of the sailing squadron division of the Southport Yacht Club and scan the wind gauge.

It is varying, minute by minute, between five and 20 knots, but the rain is easing. There is a marked lack of enthusiasm for the day's sailing — heats five and six of the tenth Australian championship for the RL24 class.

The previous day was the lay day; the day before that a hard, tiring but exhilarating long-distance race in fresh wind and the rain over a tortuous 36km course through the channels linking The Broadwater to Moreton Bay.

The winner of that race, Dump Truck, skippered by Peter Yeomans of Sydney, covered the course, half of it against a strong tidal flow, in the quick time of two hours 50 minutes. Dump Truck, with superior speed and excellent crew-work, has convincingly won all the other races as well and the championship is rapidly becoming a foregone conclusion, accounting for some of that early-morning lethargy.

The mood is blasted apart with the entry of June Legg, blonde and vibrant wife of the RL designer Rob Legg. She has been up since five to give her daily voice report on the progress of the championship to the Gold Coast radio station, and she deals out 4GG safe-boating stickers all round.

"It will come in handy to stick over the hole in the tent," says Bruce Castles from Victoria, one of several competitors camping in the club's grounds.

There is a new diversion when a photographer from the Gold Coast Bulletin arrives — to take a picture of a yacht race at 8am. June lectures him briefly on this score and he retreats saying his editor would be happy with a picture of the RLs being launched from their trailers. The competitors begin to rig for the 10 o'clock start.

We climb aboard the committee boat which is the Leggs' own RL34, moored to the jetty at the back door of their home on a nearby arm of Runaway Bay. This tenth championship on the home



Speed on the shy reaches was important on the confined Broadwater courses. RIGHT: Happiness for many was just finishing a national championship heat.

waters of the class is a sentimental occasion for Rob and June Legg. They are running the racing to be certain it goes off well instead of competing in their own boat, as they usually do.

Rob has difficulty laying the course as the wind clocks 90 degrees. The Broadwater is not ideal for a championship, with a triangle difficult to lay within its confines, especially with the wind in the eastern sector as it is now. But the competitors don't seem to mind. For most, the championship is a family holiday and the venue is certainly ideal for that.

The fleet of 29 gets away in a fairly passive start against the tide, which has three-quarters of an hour to run. Yeomans' Dump Truck is in its familiar leading position by the first mark and stays there.

An interesting race for second place creates special interest aboard the committee boat. With us is Christina, wife of Michael Shannon, a doctor from Victoria, who is sailing Lowana V with daughters Christina (17), Anita (16) and Jaqueline (14) crewing.

The Shannons have seven children.



All who are old enough sail, from Rhyll on Phillip Island. Dr Shannon has recently bought a Tasar dinghy which he sails with his wife. The two elder daughters crew together on a Laser II, Jaqueline sails a Mirror and two of the boys a Fairy Penguin.

Says Mrs Shannon: "We still need a few things for the house, but we are right for boats, I think."

The Shannons are second, drop back to third, then finally sew up second place when the boat ahead of them, Safari (John Berry, Qld) hits the last mark and has to re-round.