

## Locals guide boat to a record run

By Bill Wagner, The Capital Gazette

June 19, 2001 - Put an America's Cup helmsman and a pair of Volvo Ocean Race veterans aboard a well-designed boat in gale-force winds and you might get something special.

That was the case this weekend as Annapolis resident Chris Larson led *Carrera* to a record run in the Annapolis-to-Newport Race.

*Carrera*, a Farr-designed 60-footer owned by Joseph Dockery of Stamford, Conn., completed the 473-mile race in 42 hours, 58 minutes, 12 seconds. That's nearly five hours faster than the previous standard, set in 1999 by the former *Chessie* Racing.

*Chessie*, a Santa Cruz 70 owned by Gibson Island resident George Collins, had beaten a 12-year-old record held by *Starlight Express*.

Chip Thayer, race committee chairman for host Annapolis Yacht Club, was flabbergasted by *Carrera*'s performance.

"Wow!. That's an absolutely fantastic time," Thayer said from the race committee room at the New York Yacht Club's harbor court. "I would never have imagined we would see the record drop five hours in consecutive races. You wonder where this is headed."

*Carrera* came across the finish line at Castle Hill Lighthouse on the Narragansett Bay at 6:58 a.m. yesterday. *Blue Yankee*, a Reichel-Pugh 66 owned by Robert Towse, finished 23 minutes later. Two other big boats -- *Trader* (Andrews 70, Fred Detwiler) and *Chessie* Racing (Farr 52, George Collins) -- came in at 8:02 and 9:26, respectively.

All four boats beat the previous race record. *Donnybrook*, Jim Muldoon's Custom 72 that figured to challenge *Blue Yankee* for line honor, was forced to retire after losing its mainsail.

Larson, a professional helmsman who works for North Sails, organized the *Carrera* campaign for Dockery. He pulled a coup by landing Roy Heiner and Mark Rudiger, members of the Assa Abloy syndicate that will compete in the Volvo Ocean Race.

Heiner and Rudiger, who both did the last Whitbread Round The World Race, were looking to gain experience going out of the Chesapeake Bay and up the East Coast since that's the way Leg 7 of the Volvo Ocean Race will start.

Annapolis residents Andrew Scott (trimmer) and Pat Shaughnessy (foredeck) were also part of the 16-man crew. And sailing ability proved crucial in this Annapolis-Newport as remnants of Tropical Storm Allison produced heavy storms and high winds.

The five big boats ran into a squall on the Atlantic Ocean around noon Sunday that



*Photo by John Gillis, The Capital Gazette*  
The crew of *Carrera* maneuvers during the Annapolis-to-Newport Race over the weekend.

produced gale force winds. Carrera clocked sustained winds between 45-53 knots for over an hour.

"It was no picnic out there. I think having such an experienced crew in those conditions was key," Larson said. "Roy and Mark have thousands of ocean miles under their belts, and were a major reason why we did so well. They knew when to reduce sail and how best to handle the boat in rough weather."

Blue Yankee, which was favored to finish first, slowed to a crawl after running into a heavy rainstorm on the Chesapeake Bay. That enabled Carrera to make up a six-mile deficit and she passed Blue Yankee just before both boats rounded Chesapeake Light and headed into the Atlantic Ocean around midnight.

"We made it out of the bay in less than 12 hours, which is pretty good," Larson said. "Then we made real good time going up along the coast flying the asymmetrical spinnaker for about six hours."

When the nastiest squall hit around midday, Carrera went to a storm trysail and storm jib and made forward progress at about 10 knots -- no small feat.

"When the wind is 50 knots and you're slugging into 15-foot seas the first priority is to not break the boat," Larson said. "We were able to continue racing in those conditions because we had a crew and a boat that could handle it."

Larson called the Farr 60, built by Carroll-Marine, a "real strong, beefy boat." Double swept-back spreaders provide tremendous mast stability, which was also important in the gale-force winds.

"We blew up some sails, tore up some blocks and suffered some other damage, but we were never worried that we would drop the rig," Larson said. "I thought the crew did a fantastic job in really hairy conditions."

Carrera could have lost its main if not for yeoman work by bowman Mac Manion. Larson turned the boat directly downwind and sent Manion up the mast to secure the top of the sail, which was pulling out of the track.

Carrera's ability to keep moving while the competition was merely maintaining proved decisive. Blue Yankee sailed without a mainsail for about five hours Sunday. Donnybrook, the other candidate for line honors, blew out its mainsail.

Race committee personnel on duty at the finish line were no doubt stunned that Carrera was first boat to arrive.

"We were as surprised as anyone that we were able to beat the sleds and Blue Yankee," Larson said. "It really was a great accomplishment to be able to weather the storm and set a very notable record."

And it's an impressive time that could stand for quite a while, although that was said in 1999 after Chessie Racing's performance.

"This race is nearly a half-century old and a lot of great sailboats have participated," Larson said. "So it's an honor for Mr. Dockery and our entire team to have Carrera now listed as the fastest boat in Annapolis-Newport history."