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Headline News




Heartbreaker for French Team

Sill Dismasts After Start

A Cruel Game Indeed!



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Norfolk, Virg. -- 6 Aug 2001 20:15 GMT In a moment it was over. The mast of race leader *Sill Plein Fruit* bowed above the spreader, then collapsed onto the deck leaving a tangle of rigging and crushed dreams of victory.


About a half hour after the start the team was sailing in 15 knots of wind in calm seas. They were sailing to weather when suddenly the mast appeared to buckle at or near the first spreader.

After a portion of the mast and rigging fell, some into the water and some on deck the crew could be seen gathering up the rigging. No one was reported injured. Race committee boats surrounded the wounded yacht and a

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rescue helicopter was circling, but its assistance did not appear to be necessary.

As work on deck continued a couple of the crew went into the water with knives and wire cutters to cut the sail and mast away from the hull before it damaged the boat further.

It is unclear what caused the accident. In the last leg the same boat broke a key titanium clamp that holds the forestay to the deck. In that incident the crew reported they narrowly escaped a dismasting. Whether the same part failed again will not be known until the boat returns to Norfolk later today.

Meanwhile the rest of the fleet is on its way. As the remaining four boats headed out to sea *Kingfisher* held a narrow lead followed by *ECOVER*, *Gartmore* and *AlphaGraphics*, in that order.

We will continue to report on the Sill accident as additional details become available.

You can listen to Susan Colby's live report from the water by clicking on the audio links below. There are additional photos in the Gallery.

- >
- [Sill Dismasts!-- Audio Coverage, Part 2](#)
- [Fleet crosses the line -- Audio Coverage, Part 1](#)

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