



MARGOT BUTCHER picks over the wreckage of the third Atlantic Rowing Race and, despite New Zealand teams finishing one and two, reveals how dedication to a sporting dream and the characters of driven men can lead to

Blood On The Water

MARGOT BUTCHER IS NORTH & SOUTH SPORTS EDITOR.



This is a tale of how two New Zealand boat crews rowed for 40 days and 40 nights, finished a trans-Atlantic race within nine hours of each other and came to despise their fellows. In one corner there's Team CRC — rowers Steve Westlake and Matt Goodman. In the other there's Holiday Shoppe Challenge — Kevin Biggar, Jamie Fitzgerald and campaign manager Rob Hamill. It's a densely complicated story, so first, a little history.

Tenth in his first Coast To Coast, second at the world dragon boating champs, Australasian "Police Olympics" winner, outstanding at the World Police and Fire games, built like *Baywatch* beefcake, driven and a full-on fitness junkie, 33-year-old constable Steve Westlake would seem a born athlete. He's bitten off some meaty challenges in his life, not the least of which has been the 2900 nautical mile rowing race across the Atlantic Ocean.

Sergeant Phil Stubbs was the man who inspired him to do it. Stubbs had won the inaugural Atlantic race in 1997 with Olympic rower Rob Hamill. Stubbs had also been Westlake's instructor at police college and got to know him through surf lifesaving.

Stubbs and Westlake became training buddies, travelling companions and, towards the end of 1998, a novice pairs crew on the 2000m flat water rowing scene — real rowing — in preparation for a new assault on the Atlantic in 2001.

Stubbs told media he wouldn't have considered rowing the Atlantic again with anyone but Westlake. He and former rowing partner Hamill were chalk and cheese personalities: although victors, their relationship had buckled under the intense pressure of 40 days locked together in a very small boat. But Stubbs never got the chance to row again. He died, aged 37, in December 1998 when his light plane nosedived into Karekare beach.

From then on Westlake was doing it for "Stubbsy". On he rowed. In his first go at the national rowing championships (1999), he was fourth in the pairs. Given it was a weak field beyond the top two boats, he wasn't picked to prepare for the 2000 Sydney Olympics. But when coxless fours star Toni Dunlop developed back problems near year's end, New Zealand Rowing decided to hold a trial to select reserves for the fours.

Having lost fitness and heart after they'd missed original selection, some leading candidates weren't ready for that unexpected second chance. But Westlake was fit as a buck rat and coated in a bulletproof optimism. He and pairs partner Bryce Mael won a fair but soft contest to become numbers five and six in the pre-Olympic training squad.

From this point on top-four rower Scott Brownlee got to know Westlake well. He feels "Some of the things [Westlake] did were just bizarre." Olympic coach Brian Hawthorne and Brownlee's three Olympian colleagues agree.

Over six months the training squad broke into three pairs and worked hard on Lake Karapiro. Hawthorne: "Each two-seater boat had a speed-measuring device: training involved keeping the speed at a certain level. Steve and Bryce weren't able to hold the others' speed, but Steve would come back from the rows and say he had. But we were all there and could see it was wrong — otherwise they would have kept up. My experience is he has an ability to convince himself of something that's not the case."

Hawthorne's top rowers were annoyed to hear Westlake had been talking up his prowess to Rowing New Zealand, complaining he wasn't being paired with the top guys.

This caused tension in the camp. Brownlee: "Over five kilometres' training, we were beating Steve by 500 to 800 metres. If it had just been two lengths, sure, we'd have been happy to give him a run — but we're talking a long, long way behind".

All the rowers marvelled at Westlake's buxom confidence. "You couldn't knock his enthusiasm or goals," says Brownlee. "[Just] never underestimate the mind power of Steve Westlake."

Coach Hawthorne found Westlake "impervious to the fact there was a pecking order and that he was at the bottom of it". He ignored Westlake come the Olympics because he was "nowhere near the required standard".

Meantime, Westlake and Mael had tried to qualify for the Olympic pairs event, but failed miserably.

"Bryce was just beside himself, as you're supposed to be," recalls Hawthorne. But Westlake "was walking round saying, 'Where's the next race?' He does have this ability to ignore reality."

Meanwhile, at the 2000 nationals regatta, Waikato's Rob Hamill had mentioned to other rowers he was going to do the second Atlantic Rowing Race with Westlake, post-Stubbs.

Given their experiences with Westlake, Brownlee and fellow fours star Toni Dunlop warned him against it. "Rob was like, 'Oh no no, he's a good guy'," says Brownlee. "I tell Rob to this day he should have listened to us."

At the same time Hamill and Westlake were gearing up to stiff-arm the Atlantic Ocean, Kevin Biggar was having a personal crisis.

Biggar was an accomplished Auckland business consultant, a straight-A type of guy with a Master's degree from Cambridge University who'd worked for Treasury. Tall and striking, his life was seemingly fantastic: perfect girlfriend, desirable city pad, Alessi kettle, the works.

All his friends were settling down: the next step for Biggar seemed marriage and

Rob Hamill (left) and Phil Stubbs started a New Zealand tradition when they won the inaugural 1997 race.



kids. But while house hunting, something began gnawing at him. As a seventh former he'd been picked to help Sir Edmund Hillary build a school in Nepal and was deeply inspired by the great mountaineer. Now, as the picket fence marched closer, Biggar realised he might never get the chance to realise a Hillaryesque adventure of his own. So he broke up with the perfect girl, quit his well-paid job and boarded with his mother in the suburbs to figure out what to do with his life.

Months floated past. He travelled overseas and was contemplating trekking the Antarctic when he caught the end of the 2001 Atlantic Rowing Race on television.

Steve Westlake and Auckland Rowing Club mate Matt Goodman — a fellow police constable and good all-round club sportsman — had done it for Stubbsy, winning comfortably (Rob Hamill was left on shore after breaking his hand 10 days before the race — more on this later).

Biggar's sense of adventure was piqued. His only formal rowing experience was in a Cambridge University club years before, and now he was in his 30s, flabby and unfit. But he was also one determined high achiever.

He tracked down Hamill and Westlake. Westlake wasn't interested in a second crossing (he later changed his mind, teaming again with Goodman), but Hamill became Biggar's campaign manager. Biggar set about training like a bastard to convert himself from couch potato to endurance athlete in 18 months, enlisting accomplished all-round sportsman Scott Donaldson as his crew.

Donaldson put in a year of sweat before pulling out six weeks before the Canary Islands race start. He'd been experiencing dizziness in training simulations of the anticipated 40 degree heatwaves, but says the prime reason he couldn't row on was he just didn't feel he could go to sea with Biggar.

Donaldson: "We had personality differences — but it wasn't conflict. Jamie Fitzgerald was a back-up option and I felt he'd be a better fit with Kevin."

Hamilton-based Fitzgerald was 23 and had rowed in New Zealand youth crews. A second cousin of Rob Waddell, he came to the boat supremely fit after a winter's serious rowing training.

And so it was that two New Zealand crews, rival campaigns, set off to contest the third Atlantic Rowing Race late last year. Defending champions (Team CRC) versus unheralded first-timers (Holiday Shoppe Challenge).

It's clear the defending champs didn't rate their opposition — Westlake told *North & South* pre-race that other crews had even pulled out on hearing he and Goodman were going again.

We have been unable to substantiate this, but 16 crews started the 2003 race, down from 30 in 1997. Few approached the relatively unimportant event as highly competitive sport, most taking part for charity fundraising or the sheer personal challenge.



SCOTT VENNING

Kevin Biggar “trained like a bastard” to convert himself from a flabby corporate warrior into an endurance athlete, but his achievement was overshadowed by a “sour grapes” protest.

Not so the New Zealanders, whose highly organised campaigns were well-funded by sponsorship. Team CRC's gleaming white boat looked impressive and at the five-minute gun the rower cops stood on deck stamping their authority in the form of a haka.

Forty days and 14 hours later they docked at Barbados — second. Biggar and Fitzgerald had beaten them by nine hours in a new race record.

And that's when it all started to get ugly. The following day, the winners' bliss was shattered when British race organisers Challenge Business arrived to inspect Holiday Shoppe's boat, with Westlake and Goodman in tow. Team CRC was lodging a protest, alleging their rivals had cheated.

What Biggar and Fitzgerald didn't know then was that a campaign against them had already begun, two weeks earlier — the



Steve and Steph Westlake sided against Rob Hamill both on and off the water.

day they began steadily gaining on CRC (CRC at this point had been in the lead for all but five days).

Enter Mrs Steph Westlake, née Brown. She'd rowed in 2001 with Jude Ellis, outperforming most male crews to claim a triumphant fourth. The women's crew and that of Goodman and Steve Westlake (Steph's boyfriend then) belonged to the same, Rob Hamill-managed campaign. As we'll see, there would be a bitter dispute between these rowers and Hamill that would roll on backstage throughout the 2003 race won by the new Hamill-managed crew, Holiday Shoppe.

Following that race via the internet, Steph says she saw a "massive mileage increase" by Holiday Shoppe on the race website on November 15 2003, which continued the following week. She claims Holiday Shoppe was pulling ahead on days there were strong tailwinds; conversely dropping back on a day with supposedly no wind.

Suspicious, she emailed the race organisers urging them to send their support yacht to shadow Holiday Shoppe. Steph: "I [then] sent an email to TV3 and TVNZ. I was trying to alert [them] to the fact something was about to be played out over the next few days... I would have sailed as close to the wind as I possibly could without at that point accusing [Holiday Shoppe] of cheating."

Steph says she wasn't doing this on behalf of her husband and his best mate Goodman.

Steph's father Dr Ray Brown is a British retired physicist and

keen orthodox rowing aficionado who claims to have developed a lifetime "nose for cheats and crooks". Despite scornfully referring to his daughter's 2001 adventure race as the "Transatlantic Fartlighting Competition", he now vigorously analysed the website data in support of his daughter.

The Westlakes provided to *North & South* a thick folder which held, among other documents, Dr Brown's analyses. These seem to have been used to underpin Team CRC's formal protest case.

Brown assumed a "sudden increase in speed" by Holiday Shoppe as they gained on CRC. In a letter dated 10 days before the New Zealand boats reached the finish line and written around the time Steph contacted race organisers, he calculated: "A speed increase of 8nm/day for a boat travelling through the water at 40nm/day requires a power increase of more than 70 per cent ... so we are being asked to believe the sudden increase in speed of Holiday Shoppe is due to a 70 per cent increase in effort... What supermen they must be to have almost matched the speed of Team CRC who were rowing flat out! Come off it. When Holiday Shoppe realised they were going to be beaten by fair means they must have resorted to foul means. In strong tailwinds even a small sail makes an enormous difference to boat speed..."

The letter goes on to further disparage his son-in-law's rivals, likening them to "thieves" with the ruddy tones of a conspiracy theorist in full cry.

Our investigations uncovered a smear campaign. Before Holiday Shoppe had even finished the race, their chief sponsor in Auckland received an anonymous letter entitled "And Still There's No

GARETH EYRES

Honour Without Integrity” from “a keen follower of the trans-Atlantic rowing race.” It asserted a detailed theory that Holiday Shoppe must have sailed in order to catch up with CRC, concluding there was “no honour among thieves”.

Steph Westlake confirmed to *North & South* her red flag to TV3 and TVNZ was headed “There’s No Honour Without Integrity” and says others also read a paper copy of it. She has used the phrase “there is no honour among thieves” in correspondence with *North & South* during this story’s preparation. However, she is adamant she did not send the dastardly anonymous letter of the same title to travel company Holiday Shoppe.

Did she know who did? “No, but I’d say it’d likely be one of our group of friends... quite a few were following the race and that was a statement bandied about by all of them.”

It’s apparent Dr Ray Brown’s letter was the source from which the disparaging, unsigned letter was drawn — it matched his letter word for word, bar a little shaping at the start and end.

Rob Hamill is fed up with the Westlakes “rewriting history”, painting him as a loose cannon and casting aspersions on his integrity.

GRANT MAIDEN

North & South noticed one other small but curious change from Dr Brown’s letter. ‘And what supermen [Biggar and Fitzgerald] must be to have almost matched the speed of Team CRC who were rowing flat out!’ had now been altered to: ‘And what supermen they must be to have increased their daily mileage by 10 to 20 per cent.’”

As we’ll see, the protest jury found CRC in fact slowed down during the last two weeks of the race, which suggests they weren’t rowing flat out. Holiday Shoppe meanwhile simply maintained their usual speed to gain on CRC and beat them home.

Meanwhile, in Barbados, beaten CRC captain Steve Westlake says it wasn’t until finishing the race that he and Goodman were moved to officially protest the result — triggered, he says, when they saw “new” washer marks around a non-standard hole on Holiday Shoppe’s solar panel support frame. Westlake: “It was like, ‘You bastards.’”

Soon after lodging their hastily scrawled protest request, Team CRC learned from organisers that Holiday Shoppe had also docked without a life raft (mandatory equipment in the rules with transgressions punishable by disqualification) and that a 100-litre ballast tank containing fresh water at race outset now contained salt water. Holiday Shoppe said it had encountered problems at sea. They had volunteered all this to the organisers.

Team CRC included this new information in their formal, December 2 protest. Organisers initially planned to hold the official hearing in Barbados, but decided in fairness to move it to late January at their England headquarters.

Team CRC alleged Holiday Shoppe’s solar panel had been “specifically designed” to be elevated above the 15 degree tilt permitted to help it catch the sun and that the “new” washer marks indicated this was done during the race. They say the bolts taken from the standard holes “were not encrusted with sea salt” suggesting they’d been taken out in order to lift the panel; and allege a photo taken at sea from the organisers’ support yacht indicated a bolt still sitting in one of the suspect holes (this is disputed by Holiday Shoppe).

The protest jury found washer marks were present before the race started and saw photos of the supposedly unencrusted bolts which clearly showed a build-up of corrosion — these photos were taken at the post-race boat inspection, with an official presiding.

We contacted marine suppliers — Holiday Shoppe’s boat builder Gordon Robinson, solar panel supplier and electrician.

Robinson confirmed his company originally mismounted the solar panel for the southern rather than northern hemisphere — hence the odd bolt holes.

Team CRC also alleged Holiday Shoppe deliberately misrepresented their position at sea by sometimes using a satellite phone to report this instead of an on-board GPS unit. Team CRC say this would have masked the use of a sail.





Holiday Shoppe responded they couldn't use their GPS unit when their battery power was low — this happened aboard all the boats. Team CRC itself failed to register by GPS on occasion.

CRC argues that with extra solar panels innovatively embedded in the hull, Holiday Shoppe had plenty of power. But their solar panel supplier and electrician (who installed their batteries) say this would not have been the case after race organisers covered solar cells with official advertising stickers, reducing the available power.

As for the ballast water, Team CRC believes this was dumped early in the race. Holiday Shoppe's boat builder says there was a sealant problem in the main tank which could have fouled this emergency drinking supply. Holiday Shoppe says they tried to flush it using fresh water from their watermaker before the weather turned: in the interests of boat stability sea water was used instead. Biggar stressed the tank was never empty.

And the life raft? Holiday Shoppe says it was lost at sea when the steering jammed and a series of waves hit the boat at a bad angle, the boat surfing sideways up a wave and tossing both rowers into the ocean. They admit the life raft should have been tied down, but provided the jury with explanations as to why it wasn't. The "capsize" also cost them one of their all-important rowing seats, their toilet bucket and Fitzgerald's only pair of shorts.

Team CRC doesn't believe any of this and engaged supporter Michael Smyth to marshal their protest case. Smyth, an Auckland Rowing Club coach and lawyer who practises as a "sports counsel", had worked for Team CRC helping raise tens of thousands in sponsorship.

Smyth's protest document includes evidence from Matt Goodman's father Michael, a retired radiologist who taught himself to predict Atlantic weather and swell patterns over the internet to provide CRC's daily forecasts. Goodman senior wrote, "After November 15, I was very surprised at the sudden increase in speed from Holiday Shoppe". He discounted the possibility that different weather or current patterns could have accounted for the relative change in the boats' positions.

Smyth also included a scientific hull resistance report commissioned from Auckland boat architect Brett Bakewell-White. From data provided by Team CRC, Bakewell-White concluded the rowers needed to expend 44 per cent more energy to get a "speed increase". Dr Rachel Brown, a nutritional scientist who'd advised both teams, was then instructed to provide her opinion "into the nutritional possibility of Holiday Shoppe being able to increase its speed by a significant margin in the last third of the race." She concluded it was "most likely to be physiologically and biochemically impossible".

All of which sounds damning. But when the protest jury crunched the positional data, they concluded there was no evidence

of superhuman effort. In the 12 days prior to November 15, Holiday Shoppe covered 819 nautical miles at an average speed of 2.84 knots and CRC 823 nautical miles at a faster average of 2.9 knots. In the 12 days following, Holiday Shoppe covered 822 nautical miles at 2.85 knots while CRC dropped to just 742 nautical miles at 2.6 knots — spending part of this time on sea anchor and conceding 21 nautical miles while Holiday Shoppe kept rowing in tough conditions.

Steve Westlake is dismissive of the jury and its findings. He says when you "overlay the weather data" it doesn't add up: "Do the correlations between weather patterns, weather direction and boat speeds and you see our boat speeds slightly increased, as you'd expect, and their boat speeds increased somewhat like flukes."

So what's he talking about?

Being neither seafarers nor meteorologists, *North & South* sought an independent analyst to evaluate race data cited as evidence by Team CRC.

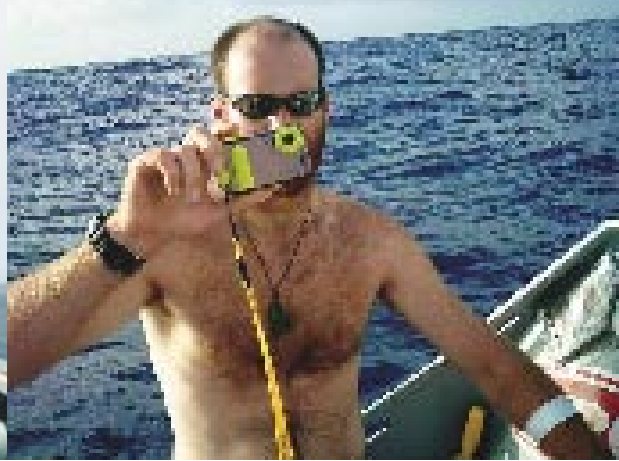
Grant Beck knows a thing or two about wind. He was New Zealand's Olympic boardsailing coach for 15 years guiding the ilk of Barbara Kendall and has an extensive background racing windsurfers and small sailing boats. He's also familiar with navigation, currents and ocean-going — it was for these skills he was headhunted for Team New Zealand's weather team.

Beck spent several days reviewing and researching the 2003 race data. He concluded Holiday Shoppe's speed wasn't out of the ordinary at any time in the race and agreed with the jury that Holiday Shoppe's speed during the latter two weeks was very similar to CRC's speed in the two weeks prior.

Beck noted there was no way anyone could deduce from that data whether or not a solar panel was used to gain advantage, but added if a small boat had some sort of sail, one would expect to see huge spikes in mileage here and there "because you only need a small change in wind strength or wind direction for there to be no gain at all from the wind, or, a lot of gain from the wind. I didn't see that. The miles per day were relatively consistent across that [disputed] two week period. If Holiday Shoppe were achieving any wind assistance, it's bloody hard to see it."

Holiday Shoppe also made a 20 nautical mile gain into CRC on a day of supposed headwinds — when any kind of sail would have been useless (you can't sail into the wind).

Besides which, the sailor asked why would someone risk their critically important solar panel by elevating it 90 degrees when actually it would make a very poor sail? In his opinion and having studied the rowing boat, the wind would have to have been directly behind the solar panel to have any effect "which wouldn't happen often". By contrast, wind blowing in from even a 20 degree angle to the supposed solar panel sail "would probably be more hindrance than an advantage. The thing would be shoving the stern sideways all the time."



Beck had strong reservations about Westlake's insinuation Holiday Shoppe couldn't legally have made so much ground given the weather conditions. He consulted an Australian acquaintance, a top nautical meteorologist highly sought after by round-the-world yachties and America's Cup syndicates.

Weather, current and wind shifts at sea change, sometimes dramatically, from one minute to the next: the meteorologist pointed out that obtaining weather records in the detail required to confirm the respective boats' conditions would cost over \$10,000 — Westlake said he couldn't afford to do this.

Team CRC provided brief, generalised daily log notes from their boat. Beck noted on some days CRC had logged little or no wind, Holiday Shoppe tended to do just as well as when there was wind. "That would suggest Holiday Shoppe rowed a hell of a lot harder — or the other guys didn't row so hard."

Lastly, was it even reasonable to assert the two boats would have experienced similar weather conditions? The race fleet was scattered over hundreds of miles, but according to CRC's evidence, the New Zealand boats were separated by no more than 62 nautical miles. For most of the race, the separation oscillated between 20 and 55 nautical miles, except for the very start of the race and four days towards the finish when it closed to below 20 nautical miles.

Beck: "Those boats only needed to have been 20 miles apart and who knows what cycle or trough or lift or wave pattern of the trades [the other was] getting?" There was, he believed, "not a hope in hell" Westlake could know, or even realistically guess, the conditions encountered by his rivals.

North & South found Westlake and Goodman passionately believed they were right when they launched their protest. But Kevin Biggar is equally adamant he and Fitzgerald should never have been put through the two-month ordeal that questioned their integrity and robbed them of the chance to savour a special, come-from-behind success built from sap-sucking hard work. To Biggar the protest smacked of sour grapes.

A physics graduate himself, he gave up Christmas with his family to compile a comprehensive, 70-page response to CRC's allegations, crunching data and gathering supporting affidavits. He and Rob Hamill paid for his airfare to Southampton, England, and accommodation to represent the team to the tribunal — which made no provision for costs.

If Biggar was angry at the public mud-slinging, he was startled to find so many holes in CRC's written submission — about the bolt holes, bolts and boat speed, for instance. Biggar: "We were somewhat pissed they'd made all these claims about our speed without working it out."

On January 27, after hearing in person from Westlake and

Biggar, reviewing their submissions, questioning other participants and considering the case for five hours, the jury unanimously found no evidence of cheating and, at last, confirmed Holiday Shoppe as the official winner.

Yet Westlake has continued to play up speculation. On the day of the decision, he told TV3 news, "The only person [sic] who really knows what happened is Kevin and Jamie, and Rob Hamill, being involved in the team. They've got to look to themselves." He told TV One: "I don't hold anything against them personally — much the same with people you end up arresting. It's a process you go through. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose."

Later he sent out an invitation to supporters to celebrate Team CRC finishing "with all our mandatory equipment and fresh water ballast on board!" and "breaking the 1997 race record!"

He also implied to *North & South* he didn't think the jury was "knowledgeable enough" to judge data in his submission, and alleged they weren't independent. But he didn't formally object to any juror before the hearing, as was his right.

North & South tracked down juror John Searson, a Jersey, Channel Islands, meteorologist who rowed the 1997 event. Searson felt Westlake's comments were most unfair: "The data presented [by CRC] was all relatively circumstantial [in that it was] based on computer models and not real information. We were able to draw very good conclusions from the data presented to us."

And of course, Channel Islands meteorologists know a thing or two about weather. He did not agree with Westlake that when you "overlay the weather data" Holiday Shoppe's speeds don't compute. "Again, we're not looking at real information. I don't believe there's any evidence there."

In any case, in a race with no prize money, what motivation was there to cheat? Westlake alleges Biggar did the race to make money on the public speaking circuit — yet Biggar was already a well-paid consultant, besides which Westlake told *North & South* he earned less than \$3000 from speaking after his 2001 race.

As for Jamie Fitzgerald, why would a budding flat water rower risk his sporting reputation on an inconsequential adventure? Tauranga barrister Tim Richardson, who coached Fitzgerald through school and national junior crews, supplied a character affidavit for the protest hearing. Richardson: "With my professional reputation and reputation as a rowing coach, I wouldn't have done that if I didn't totally believe there's no way Jamie would for one moment accept the need to cheat."

So why did Holiday Shoppe win?

Boat builder Gordon Robinson thinks CRC's first mistake was to underestimate their competition — Biggar having gone from a flabby man in a suit to breaking a million-metre world record on an ergometer during his training.

Robinson: "Kevin, as the underdog, played it beautifully — he's

a very clever guy. Whenever Steve saw him out practising, Kevin would row like an idiot. A week before he left Steve told me he'd seen Kevin out rowing and that he'd be no threat. He reckoned Holiday Shoppe would probably pull out of the race in the first week. When he said that, I knew Kevin could beat him."

Robinson was also surprised Westlake didn't install self-steering, something they'd considered when they worked together in the 2001 campaign, before running out of time. "You can see from the snail trails on the race website it was an advantage [for Holiday Shoppe]. Particularly in the last two weeks CRC's trail starts to get quite wobbly, while Holiday Shoppe, when they were on auto-helm, were dead straight, and that's energy conserved."

Also, notes Robinson, "When we fitted the guts into it, we set up the Holiday Shoppe boat to run fast in headwind conditions — it's pretty scientific and we spent many hours working it out. The problem with those boats is they're very tail-heavy, giving them a rocking-horse effect [stalling progress]. Holiday Shoppe's boat didn't do that [because the rowers were able to shift more weight up front to keep it bow down]."

Kevin Biggar believes photographic evidence that Goodman changed his watch to his other wrist and bound his forearm with tape showed he was labouring with tendonitis. He speculates this may be why CRC's performance deteriorated, but Goodman says this is nonsense and that the tape was to cover a scratch.

Goodman told *North & South* he trained morning and evening, around work, until leaving New Zealand, save for a taxing 15-day block of simulated altitude training. Sports fitness guru Jon Ackland, a Holiday Shoppe advisor, was surprised at this pre-race training schedule. Says Ackland, "One of the things about a 40-day race is you have to peak in the middle of it. [For this reason] in the last month, we had Kevin doing very little."

Rob Hamill believes a telling difference between the crews occurred on day 32 when CRC had dropped their sea anchor in strong headwinds while Holiday Shoppe kept rowing. CRC had once before put out their sea anchor, on day two, while Holiday Shoppe kept toughing it out into the wind. Hamill: "They must have known Kevin and Jamie would keep rowing this time as well, yet they still put out their sea anchor. I think the only reason is they must have been running down."

There were many other contrasts and arguments, for instance over how much the crews rowed — they employed very different rowing shifts, which affect recovery and physical freshness. Westlake has also seemingly intimated a difference in character, telling the *New Zealand Herald*, "The big thing with Matt and I being policemen is [we were] out there to do the race with integrity."

Jon Ackland thinks the biggest shame about the protest is it not only sullied Holiday Shoppe's outstanding performance, but overshadowed Team CRC's own achievement. "Holiday Shoppe

did a great job and won fair and square. Steve and Matt, too, have been great athletes and champions in the past. I think it's sad they can't let Kevin enjoy the success. This is beneath them."

One thing seems clear. Our policemen rowers already had a red flag hoisted in their minds about the potential for cheating when they rocked that boat with their haka. They deliberately burred over the bolts on their solar panel frame so no one could accuse them of lifting it. Even so, organisers found with some effort they *could* lift CRC's panel to 45 degrees (above the 15 degree tilt allowed during racing). Importantly though, they also found on both boats this was highly impractical.

Steve Westlake had heard a boat in the 1997 race "basically sailed right through the fleet". There was no proof of this however — and the suspect didn't win. He also told us a 2001 team was thrown out for using a sleeping bag or sheet as a sail. "A support boat sailed up to them and they didn't see them coming." This was news to event organiser Teresa Page, who oversaw all three races; and we found no media reports of a boat being ousted.

This said, it's true rules have been tightened from race to race as rower discontent has surfaced — the maximum solar panel tilt rule was brought in after the 2001 event.

In the latest race, Westlake says "a number of people suspected other teams as well" and maintains other crews backed Team CRC's protest.

This is contentious. Kevin Biggar took issue with the slant of a Michael Smyth-written December 9 press release announcing race organisers had postponed the original hearing date.

Smyth wrote: "We are led to believe by race organisers the reason for the postponement is other crews presently racing may wish to lodge a protest against Holiday Shoppe... we are pleased other crews are lending their support."

Organisers say they postponed the hearing to bring it in line with yachting protocol, where protests aren't conducted until all crews are in port. *North & South* pressed Westlake and Smyth as to which crews "lent their support". Smyth replied these were Rowing Home, Per Ardua, Team Petrel and Huntswood Challenge. Westlake believes he spoke to "Dave" of Team Petrel.

Certainly Team Petrel's Sjaak de Jong had queried organisers about Holiday Shoppe's odd bolt holes before the race started, but (assumedly satisfied with the explanation) had not taken the matter further. His team-mate David Pearse, contacted in England, was adamant Team Petrel did not support the protest. "I didn't support anyone in the protest, I told both teams that."

The Rowing Home team (Barbados) was also emphatic they never supported CRC.

Per Ardua was a British RAF team with whom the New



ROB HAMILL

Zealand policemen clicked. Per Ardua's Matt Stowers confirmed he did support CRC, wanting due process to establish facts. He added he felt Holiday Shoppe were "arrogant, aloof, superior and generally uninterested in the remainder of the field".

We were unable to contact Huntswood Atlantic Challenge, but a further team, Spirit of Lancashire, is confident Holiday Shoppe was a deserving winner. Lancashire's Paul Nelson: "Speaking with other finishers in Barbados, our impression was other crews were happy for them."

British competitor Richard Pullan felt it a shame the winners didn't receive "the hero's welcome they deserved" and thought coming second shocked CRC. "They were so well prepared in every other aspect, but I don't think they were prepared for that."

Moreover, our investigations revealed Team CRC itself could easily have been subjected to a protest.

It was mandatory all boats be on site at La Gomera for the week October 8-15 2003, for pre-race scrutiny. But organisers relaxed the fine print when at least two boats, including CRC, arrived late due to customs hold-ups.

What's more, when scrutineers weighed CRC's stripped-down boat in a spot-check, it was 16kg under the legal minimum net boat weight. Holiday Shoppe's boat was 7kg over.

Although they dispute the weight, CRC nevertheless agreed to carry 16kg of sand ballast to compensate for transgressing the rules. Matt Goodman says they didn't object because they didn't want to cause further hassle for organisers, who'd gone out of their way to get them to the start line despite missed deadlines.

Given all this, two British teams felt it was hypocrisy to criticise the official protest panel for using discretion when it came to technical breaches of the fine print.

The jury accepted Holiday Shoppe lost their mandatory life raft and other equipment accidentally, late in the race. Although evidence of poor seamanship, they concluded it "did not afford a sufficiently material advantage over the last two days of the race to affect the result".

The jury likewise did not agree replacing water ballast was a blatant infringement of the race rules (*North & South* understands these rules will be clarified ahead of the 2005 race).

Westlake argues rules are rules and Holiday Shoppe should have been disqualified regardless of explanation and circumstances. "Trying to argue mandatory race equipment is not mandatory for the entirety of the race is a complete joke as far as I'm concerned. It means technically you could dump all the mandatory equipment at the start [instead of] having to carry it for the duration."

But should people in boathouses throw stones?

The bottom line is it was clear from the outset this wasn't a serious, Olympic-style sport guided by watertight requirements and

an international sports body (ocean rowing is not part of rowing's international association). At most it was a minor, indulgent race with a spirit of adventure, self-discovery and trust.

Without massive resources (full-time satellite tracking or a veritable fleet of support yachts) the very nature of an ocean race means it can't be officially policed as closely as, say, Olympic flat water rowing. This left all those in the still-evolving event exposed to speculation and accusations and crews stuck in a guilty-until-proven-innocent quagmire. Using the accusers' reasoning, a fleet of Martian spaceships could have towed Holiday Shoppe's boat — because there's no proof they didn't.

Why wasn't Team CRC prepared to give Holiday Shoppe the benefit of doubt?

The first time Rob Hamill heard of Steve Westlake was in 1997 when he was battling seasickness in training. Phil Stubbs suggested his mate as a possible replacement, but Hamill came right and they rowed on together to glory.

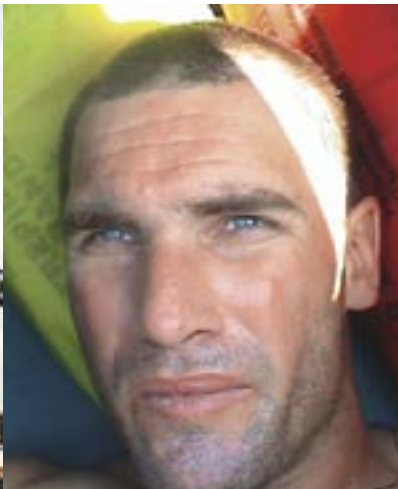
Hamill was just 12 when he first dreamed of rowing oceans, gripped by Australian Colin Quincy's daring solo trans Tasman crossing. He also learned young the worth of living life while you can. The youngest of a Whakatane family of five, his eldest brother was kidnapped and killed by the Khmer Rouge in 1978 while innocently sailing in the Gulf of Thailand. His second-eldest brother committed suicide.

By 1996 Hamill had grown into a young Olympian competing at Atlanta in the lightweight double sculls. He was already a world championships silver medallist and won a Commonwealth Games gold. But the event that changed his life was seeing a flyer in the Atlanta rowing shed seeking a rowing partner to race across the Atlantic Ocean.

Back in New Zealand, Hamill contacted the British organisers and set off on what seemed an impossible dream — raising a truckload of money to compete in an unknown extreme event halfway across the world. He put everything on the line, mortgaging his modest Hamilton house to pay for the expensive kitset boat and entry fee and leaving his Waikato Polytechnic job to hunt sponsors — on the bones of his bum financially, driving a dinged-up 1987 Holden Barina.

You know the story. Stubbs and Hamill won the race New Zealand has come to claim as its own. So let's skip ahead now to 2001, to when Hamill broke the knuckle of his pointer finger 10 days before he was due to race with Westlake.

Hamill is fed up with the Westlakes "rewriting history", painting him as a loose cannon who deliberately jeopardised the men's 2001 entry. Steph Westlake calls Hamill "a daft chump who got into a brawl outside a pub". Steve, too, is scornful — one



journalist told us Steve recounted the incident as if Hamill had cheap-shotted the British tourist involved.

Yet neither of the Westlakes, who were walking ahead with Hamill's wife Rachel at the time, saw what happened.

Brawling? Hamill says he'd picked up the rowers from Tenerife's airport (Tenerife was the 2001 starting venue), had a drink with them in a bar by the marina and then ducked off to get the car. "I was about to start it when I looked up and about 20 metres in front saw a man in mid-swing about to hit a woman in the face," says Hamill. "I leapt out and intervened. I'd like to think if someone was hitting Rachel, somebody would do something."

What happened next set in motion much hurt and anger between the Hamills and Westlakes. Although everyone had agreed to a set process and to wait until the last shore day to make final decisions about whether Hamill would row, a week out Westlake told him he wouldn't row with him, period. Westlake didn't want the risk or responsibility of things going wrong and frankly didn't want to be slowed down. Matt Goodman, their reserve, would not row with Hamill either.

Hamill was able to row and had shown he could perform on-board safety manoeuvres while his finger was still healing. He says medical advice indicated he would be fine, but Westlake says at least one of the doctors Hamill consulted told Westlake he couldn't give a hard and fast guarantee.

Hamill was gutted at what he saw as Westlake's about-face. Race impresario Sir Chay Blyth (an ocean rowing legend who'd conquered the Tasman alone despite badly breaking his hand in a winch) urged Hamill to compete solo, but Hamill magnanimously decided the best chance for New Zealand to win again would be for Goodman and Westlake to take the oars. He felt he owed this to sponsors who'd donated hundreds of thousands in funding and equipment and naturally had high expectations.

Rob Nichol had been employed to help campaign fundraising and was present throughout the standoff. Nichol (coincidentally another former policeman — he knew Phil Stubbs as a police colleague) thinks it the hardest decision Hamill ever made. "You could see he was shattered, but [when the boats left] he had the video camera going and had everyone geed up on the boats. I was really impressed. And it was hard for Steve and Matt too."

Yet these days the Westlakes want nothing to do with Hamill. So what's caused the bad blood and rift, and does this feuding have anything to do with Team CRC's behaviour towards the Hamill-mentored Holiday Shoppe rowers in the latest race?

Once upon a time, they were all friends — the Westlakes were even guests at the Hamills' 2001 wedding. Two years later, at the pre-race function in La Gomera, Rachel Hamill and Steph Westlake had to be physically separated.

It started when Steph spotted the Hamills and made a beeline for Rob. Rachel made a sarcastic comment about hostile emails Steph had sent them.

According to the Hamills, Steph then grabbed Rachel's head, an alarmed Rachel trying to push Steph away with her free hand. Steph denies this, saying she never touched Rachel that evening.

Among a crowd of 60 *North & South* figured there must have been a witness to their confrontation.

Englishman Marcus Thompson entered the 2003 race with partner Sally Kettle to raise funds for an epilepsy charity — though Thompson had to pull out after seasickness made him throw up his epilepsy medication and he had a seizure at sea.

We tracked him down in Brighton, England. This is what he saw: "As Rachel turned away, Steph approached her. [Steph] seemed quite intent on confronting her [and] was coming closer and closer while Rachel was trying to back away. [Steph] took hold of Rachel's face — put her hands on her face, a very strange thing for someone to do. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I could see [Steph's] behaviour seemed very peculiar."

Fifteen minutes later the wives clashed again. The Hamills were on the edge of the party now as the Westlakes and Goodman were leaving. The Hamills say Steph and Rachel had each other by the scruff of the neck and that Steph shouted out, several times, that Rob had stolen money — it was then that Rachel hit her.

Again, Steph has a different take. She admits when she initially saw the Hamills, she'd "quietly" said to Hamill, "Hey Rob my old mate, how much have you stolen from the team this time?"

Fifteen minutes later, says Steph, "Rachel launched herself at me and threw quite a lot of abuse. I said, 'I don't know why you're shouting at me, it was your husband that took \$75,000 from the trust fund'. That's when she ducked under Matt and socked me one in the jaw."

Steph emphasised she was careful to say Rob had "taken" \$75,000 ("I didn't say he'd stolen it"). Steph says she made no aggressive approach to Rachel, though was "verbally provocative. But that wasn't said to attract attention from other people around. It was very quiet. There was absolutely no physical attack from me and I didn't retaliate at all."

Here's what bystander Marcus Thompson recalls: "I could see [Steph and Rachel] shouting at one another. Rob and Steve were trying to calm people down. Steph was shouting along the lines of you've stolen money, you've taken money that wasn't yours, you're a thief. She was shouting at Rob first, and then Rachel stepped in front of Rob and shouted back at her. And then that escalated. Rob tried to walk away. Steph sort of ran at Rachel as if to attack her... Rachel only hit her because Rachel was being attacked. Steph was screaming at her and running towards her and yelling. A lot of people saw it."

Rachel Hamill was shaken by the incident and clearly feels embarrassed at "flipping out" and assaulting Steph Westlake: "I admit I was like a banshee, it was just horrible. But for Steph to say she didn't raise her voice is pushing it. I don't just walk up to people and hit them."

Steph broke this assault story herself, ringing into Murray Deaker's radio show in the ugly race aftermath.

So, what was this about \$75,000?

In September 2001, campaign fundraiser Rob Nichol transferred this amount to Rob Hamill's personal bank account on Hamill's request. Both men were directors of a trust fund set up for the 2001 two-boat campaign. The Westlakes told us Hamill had a major conflict of interest: he was both a controller of the team purse and a trustee. But an arbitrator subsequently ruled this dual role was immaterial — besides which, Nichol had overseen the institution of the trust fund, with advice from a major legal firm.

Hamill was entitled to this \$75,000 — this was agreed in mediation between Hamill and the rowers.

Hamill, Nichol and others had raised almost seven figures in cash and contra, a superb effort for a marginal adventure race ensuring two boats got to the starting line — the trust fund's primary objective. The \$75,000 was surplus money Hamill always believed he was entitled to as a management fee for his work and

the financial risks he'd personally taken before enough sponsorship funding was secured. It should be noted the Westlake team received some \$40,000 of remaining surplus trust funds, following the conclusion of the mediation process.

The Westlakes maintain the point is Hamill shouldn't have withdrawn the \$75,000 without telling them, alleging it had been previously agreed — not in writing — that the division of any “leftover” funds was to be decided at the *end* of the race. But from the outset Hamill's role seems clear. In the *Evening Post* of October 30 1998 he'd said, “I want to run this [campaign] as Grant Dalton does his round the world yachting bids, as a paid event manager.”

Westlake and Hamill never wrote anything down because they were planning to row a potentially dangerous ocean together in a boat not much bigger than a bath tub: mutual trust was supposedly not an issue. Steph Westlake told *North & South* that prior to getting involved with Hamill for the 2001 race, she'd been warned “by many people to watch our backs”. If that's so, it begs the question: why didn't she demand things in writing?

If only they'd spelt it all out in legal documents — for now Hamill firmly disagrees with the Westlakes and Jude Ellis as to what was ever agreed. An ugly, complicated and protracted two-year war over money, boats and chattel ownership ended with an arbitrator finding for Hamill and instructing “the Westlake team” (the Westlakes, Ellis and, to a minor degree, Matt Goodman) to pay Hamill's costs.

Their disagreement was so heartfelt that during the long dispute Team CRC at one point refused Kevin Biggar access to the 2001 boat (which both teams were using for training purposes) even though it was jointly owned by Hamill and Steve Westlake.

In the end a disappointed Westlake says both parties were “scrapping over crap — it was so petty”.

For example, he'd donated a sponsored watch to Team New Zealand to be charitably auctioned. Undoubtedly a well intentioned gesture: problem is, the arbitrator agreed with Hamill it wasn't Westlake's watch to give. The Westlake team needed to pay Hamill for Hamill's share of its value.

Arbitrator Barry Gunson concluded in the award document that “each party has failed to account to the other for equipment to which the other is entitled. It appears that the Westlake Team has also, at times, unintentionally or otherwise, misled Mr Hamill as to the whereabouts and nature of disposition of some items”

As luck would have it, the arbitrator's final decision was released only days after Hamill's rowers won their 2003 protest case — making it two from two to Hamill. As we went to press, the Westlake team had yet to pay him an outstanding \$3949.50 in awards and costs.

Westlake says he has a clean conscience and the outcome of the arbitration still “confuses” him. He has also publicly stated he “doesn't trust” Hamill and won't touch the Atlantic rowing race again so long as Hamill is involved.

Hamill was more restrained and seemed disappointed at what he considered his own failings as a team leader, saying he should have communicated more with the rowers during the campaign.

One refrain kept echoing as we spoke to the Westlakes: that Hamill was only in it for the money. They said by contrast they believed in using any proceeds from their profile or work as ocean rowers to support youth charities or simply to compensate for giving up their day jobs during the campaign.

But this isn't the whole picture. All the 2001 rowers were paid

wages from the campaign trust fund for their efforts. Steve Westlake worked long hours readying the boats, effectively full-time on the campaign for six months. He earned \$27,500, Steph \$15,000 and Ellis \$11,250. Goodman, the last-minute participant, was paid \$4000 for rowing the Atlantic.

Westlake brought one sponsor to the campaign, but drumming up publicity and backing was Hamill's forte. In addition, Hamill took the lion's share of personal risk getting the big expensive dream afloat months before any tangible sponsorship dollars came in to pay boat building bills, wages and so forth. Over six months Hamill spent close to \$50,000 of his own money before Telecom, the major naming rights sponsor that provided cash, was signed — this was just four months before the race start when the campaign was well advanced.

The Westlakes maintain Hamill's role wasn't as significant as he makes out. They say they too shouldered significant risk when they (voluntarily) shelved their secure full-time jobs to work on the boats.

Steve Westlake stated if Hamill took risk, “it was probably in the same way [as] when I was paying for equipment and stuff before the race”. But we found the only significant bill paid by Westlake was \$3000 of a total \$8000 boat building account with Firebird Marine. Rob Nichol confirmed Westlake then asked to be reimbursed. Since there were no campaign funds available, Nichol promptly gave Westlake a personal cheque and was himself eventually reimbursed — meanwhile, Hamill paid the \$5000 balance of the bill without complaint.

Hamill asks what would have happened had the campaign gone belly-up, leaving him with a \$50,000 debt? He doubts Westlake would have bailed him out. Rachel Hamill: “They were all very happy to sit back and let Rob take the risk and get the race happening, but now it's, ‘Oh he's done nothing for us.’ Rob's very trusting, he sees the best in everybody and then can't understand when things go wrong. He just didn't see it coming.”

Many of those on the periphery of the 2001 campaign boiled down the rowers' differences to the fact the practical Westlake, a former electrician, measured a hard day's labour by sweat and toil and the amount of wood chopped; while Hamill is an ideas man with the gift of the gab who'd spend forever on the phone to pull the fine strings of the campaign together. They operated on different wavelengths. Resentment seems to have brewed from the Westlakes' perception they were the ones doing all the labour, for fewer dividends.

Rob Nichol, who did not involve himself in either man's 2003 campaign, confirmed everyone contributed in their own way. “Rob's work with commercial partners was outstanding — without all his calls and travelling we wouldn't have got the money and it wouldn't have happened. Likewise, Steve's hard graft on the boats along with Steph's support was fantastic.”

Many in this story felt it was inevitable Hamill and Westlake would clash — they both have strong personalities. Longtime rowing man Tim Richardson, the barrister and coach who vouched for Jamie Fitzgerald, suspects much of the fallout also comes down to basic philosophical differences. “People think of Robbie as a hustler,” says Richardson, “and I don't mean that as a derogatory term. He's entrepreneurial, makes things happen, and can be unorthodox. But rowing has this traditional amateur ethos. Some people in the sport see making money as wrong.”

Still, no one called Rob Waddell greedy when he rowed off to Team New Zealand. Why shouldn't Hamill try and make a go of things in the expensive realm of adventure sport? For Hamill has

not only launched and largely driven New Zealand's successful participation in the Atlantic Rowing Race — building up a brand, experience and expertise in the process — he's now creating whole new New Zealand sporting events.

Two years ago he formed a company with Waikato University's business unit and sports agent Matt Taylor to bring out Cambridge and Oxford eights to row New Zealand university crews, an idea that's taken off. He's now starting an Auckland to Sydney rowing race — the Bridge to Bridge rowing challenge. He describes it as “a huge project, probably the riskiest thing I've ever attempted”.

Just as he did in his Atlantic campaigns, the ballsy Hamill is again taking the lion's share of business risk to make it happen. Surely this is added value for New Zealand sporting folk, not to mention the interested public?

The relationship between the Hamills and Westlakes has sunk beyond repair, however. *North & South* obtained hostile, sarcastic emails sent by Steph Westlake to Rob Hamill. There's no doubt these have had a devastating effect on relationships.

North & South asked Steph whether she'd sent the Hamills “abusive emails”. Her reply: “Not abusive, no... There *were* emails when we initially found out about the money being taken [in March 2002]. Yes, that was an abusive email.”

And yet we sighted one savage email Steph sent well after this (on Waitangi Day 2004, following the 2003 race protest result), in which she likens Hamill to a duplicitous thief, refers to Rachel as “disturbed” and writes, “It will all take it's [sic] toll somewhere Robby (by the way how is your health, your marriage, your public image etc — noticed the cracks yet??)”.

We have chosen not to publish the most abusive content. For their part, the Hamills say they never responded to the personal tirades.

North & South also found, early in their money dispute, Constable Steve Westlake intimated to Hamill that “criminal liabilities complete with media circus could ensue” — a provocative and surely pressure-packed statement to a man found to have been in the clear.

In reviewing the Team CRC protest documents one night, our sailing expert Grant Beck found himself seriously wondering if one of the New Zealand boats had sunk in the 2003 race, would the other have gone to their aid?

Beck: “There seems to be such malevolence here. I thought my God, would they even obey the primary laws of sea? In all the years I've been involved in Olympic boardsailing, I've never once seen rancour like this. I've seen terrible dissension before — it seems to be a rowing thing, that real testosterone-charged rivalry. But I find it astounding people who are supposedly undertaking this wonderful adventure, and have been given money by sponsors, have behaved like this. It was unbelievably great of those sponsors to [get behind a race like this] and to then have these guys drag the whole thing through a protest, badmouthing each other — what a bunch of tossers! The fact they even think it's important I find astounding.”

North & South, too, was feeling somewhat seasick after wading through stacks of antagonistic documents, emails and interview transcripts laced with angry and apparently defamatory accusations. In the end, it's a story of how good people manage to fall out — and how bitter their paranoia becomes when trust unravels.

An obvious concern is that the bad blood gushing into the wake of the 2003 race may have turned off potential corporate sponsors from backing New Zealand entries for future Atlantic races. But in a small country and even smaller rowing community in which gossip travels like wildfire, the most striking damage seems to have been to Rob Hamill's reputation as he seeks to continue with his business pursuits and speaking bureau income.

Says Hamill, “Very few people know the whole story, and you know others are judging you by what they've heard from those badmouthing us. We've had two years of abuse and clouds hanging over us. It's been an awful time and the really sad thing is Kevin and Jamie have been dragged into it. I've always said this protest had nothing to do with the past — but, I have to question whether this was a genuine protest or just a smear campaign — knowing mud sticks and hoping some of it might stick to me.”

It seems the two camps will be going head to head yet again with both Kevin Biggar and Team CRC now writing books (the latter being ghost-written by lawyer Michael Smyth). It's a situation bound to only augment their respective indignation.

Where are they now? The Hamills were expecting their second child as we went to press and Rob is still working hard to realise his Tasman rowing race dream. Biggar, who says he enjoyed working with Hamill (they were sure to put all their agreements in writing) is back working as a business consultant and, having had his taste of adventure, seems uninterested in rowing the Atlantic again. Jamie Fitzgerald is back at Waikato University trying to finish his degree, did his first Coast To Coast this year and is re-acquainting himself with accomplished rower Kate Robinson, his steady girlfriend and Police Commissioner Rob Robinson's daughter.

Fitzgerald no longer has any time for one-time acquaintances Westlake and Goodman: “They're two guys who've rowed an ocean twice and I should respect them. But I don't any more. They had a right as competitors to make a protest — but I wish they'd just come and spoken to me. Instead they've said things about me even to some of my family in Auckland.”

Would he row the Atlantic again? “No, because Kevin and I never had one argument. Even in complete exhaustion we learned to think problems through critically rather than let time just pass or sleep on it. We laughed, sang, told jokes — and I wouldn't want to go back again and have it not live up to that fantastic experience.”

Matt Goodman is back on the beat in South Auckland, while Steve Westlake, formerly a member of Auckland Central's child abuse prosecution team and then white collar crime investigation unit, is now a community constable dealing with burglaries and disputes over fencelines in St Heliers. Having taken substantial leave to follow his sporting dreams has impacted on his career, he explains. He and Steph want to start a family, but recently suffered a miscarriage.

The next Atlantic race is looming, set for October 2005. Hamill hopes there will be at least one New Zealand crew at the start line to continue New Zealand's three-peat domination.

Although Westlake has previously stated he wouldn't contest the event again if Hamill were involved, it now seems he hasn't altogether ruled it out. Westlake told us, “I'd do the race again if Matt wanted to — but I'd have to do it as an income thing, because it's too expensive financially. The mortgage is going backwards.”

Why not indeed? After all, he is the man who will not be beaten. ■