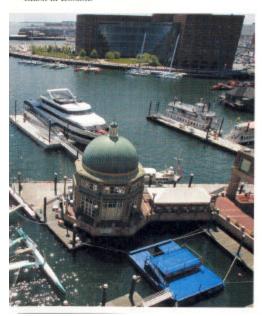
Sailing into Boston Anna

ray skies, a 20-knot headwind and a light drizzle that turned into a torrential downpour accosted the 37 competitors as they crossed the Transat start line off Plymouth, England, May 31. The cantankerous weather continued to plague the fleet as they headed the hard way across the Atlantic to the finish in Boston.



The 11th running of the former OSTAR race had a new lease on life breathed into it by Offshore Challenges, the British-based company headed by Ellen Macarthur and Mark Turner. The fleet was one of the best and most competitive, but gone, to the chagrin of some, were the Corinthian efforts that for the last three decades have provided the drama and human interest. Replacing them were cutting-edge 50- and 60foot monohulls and multihulls raced by some of the most skilled sailors in the world.

But it didn't take away from the drama as the four classes saw closely fought battles in the 2,800 mile slog across the Atlantic. The most anticipated competition was in the Monohull 60 class as this was the last time these skippers would square up against each other before the nonstop Vendee Globe in November. The eventual winner, Britain's Mike Golding on Ecover, scrapped for every mile until finally beating multiple circumnavigator Dominique Wavre on Temenos and "the other Mike," Mike Sanderson on Pindar/Alphagraphics, by just a couple of hours. Sanderson and Golding raced within sight of each other for much of the race until a damaged daggerboard scuttled Sanderson's chances of victory.

Some say it was a win by attrition as two of the most anticipated entries, Roland Jourdaine on Sill and Jean le Cam on Boundelle never made the start because of keel problems on their brand new boats. Jean Pierre Dick on Virbac, the early leader, was dismasted as was Vincent Riou on PRB. Golding's most

ennis star and Internet darling Anna Kournikova Tennis star and internet darring control and private hopped a ride on an Open 50 racer for a private sailing lesson with solo-racing diva Ellen MacArthur during the pre-start festivities of the Transat 2004 at

spark a little extra publicity for the event, Kournikova fired the starting flare at 1 p.m. May 31, in less than pretty conditions, with pouring rain and 13-foot swells.

The singlehanded transatlantic race lived up to the prestart hype, with plenty of offshore action and a number of records-and boats-being broken. Six of the 37 starting boats had to abandon the race due to damage.

