Acadia Captures IOC Offshore Yacht Race

HAMILTON, Bermuda (AP) — The 51-foot sloop Acadia, owned and skippered by Bert Keenan of Lafayette La., captured first place in the IOR (International Offshore) division in the Newport-to-Bermuda Yacht Race Wednesday with 80 of the 162 boats in the race still on their way to the finish line.

Acadia, the eighth yacht to finish, also was assured of first prize in the Class B IOR division and she placed first in the final race for the International Onion Patch Trophy, virtually assuring victory for the United States in the four-race series.

Going into this final race, the U.S. team had 124 points, 93 for Britain, 56 for South America and 39 for Bermuda.

It was Keenan's first crack at the Newport-to-Bermuda race and only two members of his 14-man crew had sailed in the race before. But their conservative tactics and hard work paid off for them in what shaped up as the slowest race in this series since 1960.

"We knew there was no way we could afford to gamble," Keenan said. "We just tried to sail as close to the rhumbline as possible and keep the boat moving."

The rhumbline course is the shortest distance on the map between Newport and Bermuda, but nearly all the yachts are forced to sail a considerably longer distance to compensate for the easterly flow of the Gulf Stream, which they must cross a third of the way down the course.

Acadia made a fast passage across the Gulf Stream in what Keenan described as: "light and sloppy weather."

After that the critical point in the race came late Tuesday when she ran into a broad stretch with virtually no wind some 90 miles north and northwest of Bermuda.

"We had not much of anything for about six hours but we were able to keep the boat moving," Keenan said.

Not since 1960, when the first finisher took more than five days to complete the course, has there been a Newport-to-Bermuda race as slow as this one.

The first finisher, Circus Maximus, a 67-foot sloop, coowned and skippered by John Raby of New York and Don Ritter of Short Hills, N.J., took 105 hours to complete the 635-mile course.