



The Volvo Ocean Race heads to Cape-Town

Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing have finally given ground to Team Brunel after almost exactly a week at the head of the fleet but the new leaders' thin advantage may well be very short-lived as the Volvo Ocean Race Leg 1 turned into a game of hunt-the-breeze.

Ian Walker's (skipper-GBR) men edged ahead of the fleet on October 21 after leapfrogging past Dongfeng Race Team, having navigated the Cape Verde Islands.

They kept their noses in front until Tuesday morning when Bouwe Bekking (skipper-NED) and his crew moved into a 59-nautical mile advantage.

But before Dutch race fans get too excited, their position only reflects their placing in the most easterly point of the fleet, closer to the opening leg finish in Cape Town.

Team Vestas Wind have gambled by following a course to the west of the two leaders but it was paying slim dividends with markedly less breeze where they were.

Spain's MAPFRE went even more for broke, heading 230nm west of Team Brunel but in the best gusts of

the fleet.

Could that be the ploy to propel them first to the westerlies which could give them the crucial advantage in the Southern Ocean sprint to the finish?

"Right now it's almost as if we're in a three-way tie for the lead with each boat making bets as to where the breeze is going to be strongest as we make our way around the western edge of the St Helena High," said Abu Dhabi Ocean Racing's on-board reporter, Matt Knighton (USA).

"Vestas is way out west. We gybed westward a couple of times during the day to try and find more wind. Brunel opted to continue on our original southerly route and not gybe west.

"Three boats, spanning 100 miles of ocean, each with a chance of working around the other two to get around the high fastest. We've been routing all of our positions and if you were to trust the computer, we'd all be finishing within an hour of each other with Abu Dhabi in the lead."

Meanwhile, the temperatures are dropping as the tension rises with the thermals being donned for the first time on-board Abu Dhabi while the women of Team SCA were putting on their fleece-layered hats.

The boats are expected to complete the 6,487nm first leg from Alicante to the V & A Waterfront, Cape Town around November 5 after setting out on October 11.