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By Donna Goodison

The Volvo Ocean Race wraps up its three-week stay here tomorrow, leaving \$20 million in spending by spectators, sponsors and participants in its wake.

The Boost came at an opportune time for the city's hotels, restaurants, retailers and other businesses, compensating for a large drop in corporate travelers. "That's a huge shot in the arm given what the visitor economy has been experiencing, said Pat Moscaritolo of the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau

But Moscaritolo and race officials acknowledge that increased publicity likely would have made the around-the-world race's stop here more lucrative.

Yacht ocean racing is a niche sport that was competing against the Red Sox and the Celtics and Burins playoffs, according to Moscaritolo, who also believes the corporate branding of the race, left local media uncomfortable covering it.

"Once you brand the race with a name or a product, how may media outlets are going to give you (lots of) free publicity, especially in a day when no one's buying ads anymore," Moscaritolo said.

Volvo Ocean Race communications director Marcus Hutchinson acknowledged the event's inability to attract adequate corporate sponsorship limited pre-race publicity.

"For sure, in this economic crisis, we didn't secure the sponsorships here, and we didn't have the revenue to spend on promotion and advertising that normally we would have expected to do in America," Hutchinson said. "It's a regrettable situation, but it's worked out well, and the park was full when we wanted it to be full."

Nearly 135,000 people had visited the Volvo Ocean Race Village on Fan Pier as of Monday. The sailors received a "fantastic" reception, said Dave Endean, pitman and boat captain for Ericsson 4, which won the Rio De Janeiro-to-Boston leg of the 37,000-nautical-mile race and is in first place overall in the seven-boat standings. Endean knew that Marblehead and Newport were big sailing communities, but he wasn't so sure about Boston.

"It took me by surprise," said the native New Zealander, who met his wife, Blair, here five years ago.

The race's seventh leg bound for Galway, Ireland, starts tomorrow. In the meantime, the Ireland Waterfront Festival kicks off at Fan Pier today at 5pm and continues until the race village closes at 6pm tomorrow.