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'Superflag' flies for the record

Rips force it to be taken down early

SUN STAFF REPORTS

Workers early today hoisted Ski Demski's "superflag" at Hoover Dam, but an hour later the wind-whipped banner had to be taken down, missing the Olympic torch relay.

Winds tore up the 500-by-250-foot, 3,000-pound banner, and it was taken down shortly after 10 a.m., two hours before the start of the festivities.

"It was up long enough for the record (flying the world's largest flag)," said John Kuhlman, spokesman for the United Way, an event sponsor. "We got pictures of it flying, but the winds just caused more and more rips in the flag."

A day earlier, Demski's flag suffered a 30-foot rip during a test rise, putting in jeopardy the attempt at the record.

"It ripped along the opposite corner from the stars," the 62-year-old Demski said Tuesday. "The flag ain't going to fly the way it is now. I'm going to try to get it fixed."

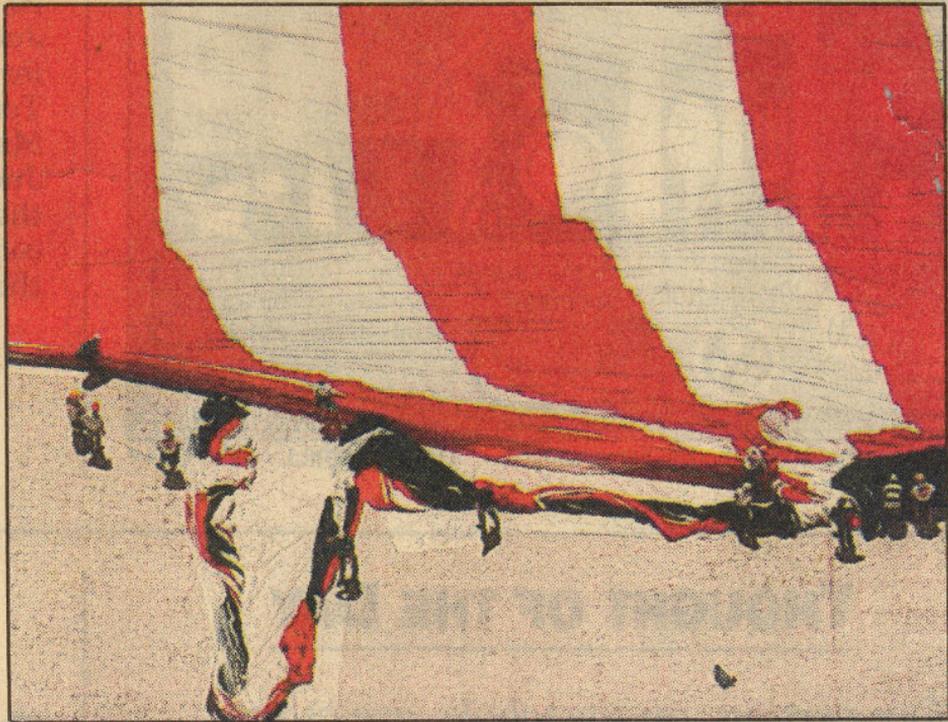
A welcome-to-Nevada ceremony was scheduled for noon today for the 95 torchbearers who will relay the flame from Hoover Dam to the Fremont Street Experience.

Because the flag was lifted from the base of the dam, it posed no threat to the runners if it had fallen, as the torchbearers and spectators would be atop the structure, said Bob Walsh, spokesman for the Bureau of Reclamation, which had the final say over whether the monster flag would be unfurled.

He noted that Demski had approached the Bureau of Reclamation a month ago seeking permission to raise the monster flag as part of the ceremony.

Demski's flag first ripped as it was being hoisted on cables above the roof of the power plant at the dam.

"She broke loose from the cables and the flag was torn," said Demski of Long Beach, Calif.



AARON MAYES / STAFF

Old Glory

United Way volunteers help unfurl a 505-foot American flag as part of the Olympic Torch Relay festivities at Hoover Dam. The flag, which is owned by Ski Demski, will cover most of the dam's face and will be flown vertically because it is too long to fit horizontally. **See story, Page 6A**