

DURBAN MAN HAS DONE TRIP

He has the edge in Rio race

Daily News Reporter

26 1170

A DURBAN man probably has the best chance of winning the Cape to Rio yacht race — merely because he is the only navigator in the event to have covered the entire course recently.

Mr. David Alexander was the navigator on board the boat Stormy from Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town and — in spite of an extremely stormy passage in every sense — knows the winds and currents along every mile of the long route.

He has now been invited to skipper and navigate Ilanda by the owner, Mr. Peter Boschhoff, the well-known Durban restaurant owner. "And I accepted with alacrity," he said.

"Ilanda is a beautiful 48-footer which formerly belonged to Helmet Stauch, the Olympic yachtsman. I think we stand a very good chance on handicap as she's a very fast boat," he said.

CREW OF EIGHT

There will be a crew of eight on board, including another experienced Natal yachtsman, Dr. Hugh Ashton, and his son, Hugo. The vessel is now being prepared for the gruelling race at the Durban Yacht Mole. Then Ilanda is due to leave for Cape Town on December 19.

Mr. Alexander still bears scars from the tempestuous crossing on Stormy. In fact the voyage was ill-fated from the start. Only a few miles out of Rio a fire broke out and forced them to return for repairs.

Then, just out of Tristan da Cunha, the boat was swept miles off course in a savage storm which lasted for three days.

LEG SCARS

"I was very nearly swept over the side," recalled Mr. Alexander. At one stage he was whirled the length of the deck and has scars on his leg as evidence of the ordeal.

Ilanda should finish the course within 20 days if the winds and currents are favourable," he now predicts, more determined than ever after his pounding by the elements.

"At least I'm the only navigator in the race who knows where the currents are, and that is information that I'm strictly keeping to myself."