



**SOLO SAILOR . . . Capetonian Neal Peterson is the only South African entrant in the Around Alone 1998-99, a round-the-world solo yacht race.**

Picture: Clive Smith

PE EVENING POST

# Solo yachtsman visits PE

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By **TINA ROMER**

"PEOPLE need to be encouraged" is the inspirational force behind South African yachtsman and motivational speaker Neal Peterson, who had to overcome numerous obstacles to achieve his dreams.

Mr Peterson, the only South African competitor in the Around Alone 1998-99 yacht race, flew into the city today from Cape Town, from where he will set off on the second leg of the race on December 5.

The round-the-world race for solo yachtsmen covers a distance of more than 27 000 miles and is expected to take about nine months to complete.

Peterson, who is in fifth position, said it took him 51 days to complete the journey from Charleston to Cape Town, during which time he had to endure high North Atlantic seas, rain and buffeting winds.

The race's next stop is in

Auckland, New Zealand. The 31-year-old yachtsman is hoping to improve his position in the race, thanks to the donation of medical supplies and essential marine equipment by the Netcare Hospital Group, the first South African company to sponsor his endeavour.

His dream of sailing across the seas began as a young child after he was born with a hip defect and spent six years of his early childhood in the Princess Alice Hospital.

As a young adult he saved every cent to fulfil that dream and built his own wooden frame yacht over several years, with which he set sail across the oceans of the world.

Four years ago, Peterson took part in the BOC round-the-world single-handed challenge, but ran into problems about 1 000km south of Port Elizabeth when his mast broke off in winds of 80km/h and 8m swells.

His hand-built yacht, Protect Our Sealife, was towed into the PE harbour by the National Sea Rescue Institute after a dramatic eight-hour sea operation on December 15, 1994.

Peterson told the Evening Post that for this reason it was a great pleasure to be back in the city.

Apart from giving motivational talks to hospital staff in PE, he also visited children at the SOS Children's Village and an orphanage.

Based in Charleston in the United States, where he founded the No Barriers Education Foundation, a non-profit outreach programme, Peterson likes to teach children to believe in themselves.

He has also written a book on his remarkable life story entitled *No Barriers*.

It is on the European best-seller list and was No 1 in Ireland.