



SEA DOGS: Abram Mmille, Evert Groenewald, Andre Bestha, Kader Williams and skipper John Martin pull in their yacht Fascination of Power at the Royal Cape Yacht Club yesterday.

Picture: ALAN TAYLOR

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Seasoned sailor presents new navy crew for 2006 yacht race

CYRIEL FREIJSER

SURROUNDED by his teammates, SA Navy representatives, and sponsor delegates, South Africa's most celebrated skipper, John Martin, presented his new navy crew for the Heineken Cape to Bahia 2006 Yacht Race yesterday.

Speaking at the Royal Cape Yacht Club, Martin said the team of five included sailors from his Development Sail Training, an initiative started

three years ago, aimed at bringing previously disadvantaged people into the sailing world.

Apart from Martin, the crew for the race, which starts on January 4, consists of Evert Groenewald, Andre Bestha, Abram Mmille and Kader Williams.

Martin told the Cape Times his 10-year-old SA Navy Fast 42-foot yacht has been equipped with a new carbon fibre mast and a new set of sails:

"The yacht is ready and I have an amazing crew with me.

It is great to see these young people coming through. And they are extremely competitive; you should see them when they do not win," said Martin.

Crew member Bestha said they were aiming for the number one spot in their class, hoping to beat both Uruguay's and Brazil's naval entries.

For the first time, the South Atlantic Race is set to finish at Salvador in Brazil, rather than Rio de Janeiro. "I think the new finish line makes the race more

competitive," said Martin. "There will be less risk of passing a stretch with little wind. And, again, competition is just what these young guys want."

Martin achieved notable success in, among others, six Transatlantic Races and two round-the-world single-handed races. Among his awards are the State President's Sports Award, Yachtsman of the Year, and the Gordon Burnwood Trophy for Outstanding Yachting Achievements in South Africa.