

—Close shave for Bertie Reed as Grinaker capsizes

CAPE TOWN — South Africa's Bertie "Biltong" Reed had a close shave on Tuesday night when his 18 metre yacht Grinaker capsized in the south Atlantic ocean.

According to Tony McKeever of Sports Mark, Reed had a "torrid time".

"He had a terrible fright and got no sleep," he said.

Reed, who is competing in the Globe Challenge solo round-the-world yacht race, had a similar experience to that of Frenchman Philippe Poupon.

Poupon's Fleury Michon capsized a week ago.

Reed was luckier in that the Grinaker righted itself.

Apart from the knock-down, Reed is also extremely concerned about his port side autopilot which is not working.

"The Grinaker did a Chinese gybe twice and was knocked flat but fortunately it came upright again.

"This happens when the craft suddenly changes direction and both the sails and ballast move to the same side.

"The accident probably happened because Bertie increased his sail in the heavy wind and the starboard autopilot couldn't take

the power," Mr McKeever said.

During the first night of the race, which started on November 26, Reed and Philippe Jeantot's Credit Agricole collided during heavy weather off the coast of France.

In this collision, the bracket of Reed's Predica safety unit was damaged which has probably caused the electrical problems which Reed is experiencing.

The Predica unit becomes activated if the skipper falls overboard. Water contact with a tiny transmitter — attached at all times to the sailor — sends a radio signal to the

sounding line receiver in the hull.

This signal then acts on the autopilot which steers the boat towards the sailor. At the same time an inflatable raft and floating rope is ejected from the boat to enable the sailor to re-board.

"We are trying to get the electrical problems sorted out. After the accident with Credit Agricole, Bertie removed the damaged Predica bracket and since then he has had electrical problems.

"I will contact Paris tomorrow to make sure that the wires Bertie cut are the correct ones," Mr McKeever said. — Sapa.