



PICTURE ANDREW INGRAM

SHOSHOLOZA team members (left to right) Joe Heywood, Paul Standbridge, Charles Nankin, Skipper Mark Sadler and Golden Mgedeza at the Royal Cape Yacht club before heading off to Valencia

Team Shosholoza aim for semi-final spot

REPORT

AZIZ HARTLEY 11/1/2007

CAPE TOWN: A semi-final spot in the America's Cup will count as success for South Africa's team flying to Valencia in Spain this week to participate in the world's most prestigious sailing event.

Three years of preparation for Team Shosholoza could see that ambition finally realised in the competition leading up to the semi-finals on May 14-19.

The South Africa team face 20 races, involving fleet racing (April 3-7) and match racing in two round-robin sections on April 18-22 and April 25-May 5,

to decide the four semi-final spots. The winning semi-finalists go forward to the Louis Vuitton Cup final to decide the challenger for the 32nd America's Cup match against holders Alinghi in the best-of-nine-race series from June 23-29.

"Currently, we are ranked eight out of 12 positions, but there is huge enthusiasm among the crew about what is to come. We've done what we can to be ready for the race, and our America's Cup goal is to make the semi-final," skipper Mark Sadler said yesterday.

He said that while Shosholoza's closest rivals

were the Italians, Spanish and Swedish, the top teams to beat were the US, Italy and cup holders New Zealand. Sadler said his team counted on South Africans to support Team Shosholoza during the competition.

"We are proud of where we come from and what we do. My message to the nation is that we would like as many people as possible to watch the America's Cup because we'll be out there doing our best and need all the support we can get," he said.

Sailing manager Paul Standbridge added: "A few years ago, we started with a

clean sheet. We had two crew members and a boat, later three crew and a boat. We started putting together a list of what we needed and we built the campaign to what we have now. We have done well in 12 races so far, and I'm just thrilled to be part of it all.

"With regards to tactics and other aspects of the campaign, we are on the same page as the best.

"The die is now cast. We have the vehicle and are 100% confident in our abilities. Things are now in the hands of the crew for us to have success," Standbridge said.