

Plumber who knows the water looks for an ocean victory

By Dave Beattie

Ernie Shaw (56), a Durban plumbing contractor, believes he now has the know-how to pull the plug on the L34 fleet in the fourth **Crystic Beachcomber** yacht race from Mauritius to Durban in September.

He also believes that the hard-earned experience gained in two bruising attempts at the biennial 1 600 nautical mile crossing will stand him in good stead in the race for overall handicap honours.

Shaw, who will once again be aboard AFI Warrior, now in its fifth year of sponsorship by the fibreglass firm, said: "I certainly know more about the race now and I'll put that experience to good use.

"Moreover, I have a more specialised crew now and I think we'll give a good account of ourselves."

Shaw and his men have been busy honing the combination with some degree of success, taking first place in the Natal championships and fourth in the 1990 national event.

The L34 class could account for about a third

of the 35 to 40 yachts expected to line up for the Mauritius-Durban race.

The Benoni-born Springbok has been sailing for more than 30 years, picking up many singlehanded titles. Ten years ago he switched to bigger boats "when I thought I was getting a bit long in the tooth for the solo stuff".

The more recent "experience" Shaw speaks

of was earned the hard way. In the 1987 event, AFI Warrior was heading the L34 pack when it broached badly in heavy seas south of Madagascar. The damage was severe and Shaw did well to limp in fourth of the 12 boats in the category.

Two years later, Shaw was again going well but lost ground when he opted for a more southerly route after passing Madagascar.

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