

Bertie and John in peril — race storm

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A SWIRLING cold front and 120km winds are racing Springbok yachtsman Bertie Reed to Cape Horn where a Chilean Navy vessel is due to pick up shipwrecked yachtsman John Martin today.

This morning Reed said he was worried about the front, about 50 nautical miles behind Grinaker, 90 miles from Cape Horn.

"With any luck we should get there and transfer John before the storm hits us," Reed said. He said Martin would be transferred to the Chilean minesweeper Galvarina even if the weather deteriorated.

"John wants to get off and leave me to do the job I'm supposed to do. If I were in his shoes I would do the same thing," he said.

Survival

Asked what his feelings were as he approached Cape Horn, a relaxed Martin said he switched off his mind when he got on to Grinaker 10 days ago.

"It's a matter of survival and pacing yourself — controlling what I can control and then relaxing and sleeping," he said.

He wanted to get off Grinaker before Cape Horn because being a single-hander himself he knew Bertie had to get on with the job of sailing.

"It's worked out well over these 10 days, but not being able to do anything is frustrating. So the sooner I get ashore the better."

Although thrilled with Allied Bank's offer to build him another yacht, Martin said he would have to get back to South Africa before he really knew what was going on.

Martin said he and his former sailing instructor had got on well. Although conditions were cramped, they devised a system for living on a boat fitted for one.

Miles together

"Bertie and I have sailed many miles together but we are both single-handers. That's why I want to get off," he said.

Before signing off Martin said he wanted to thank all who had gone to so much trouble to help him, particularly the South African diplomatic corps and the Chilean Navy.

Reed, one of South Africa's most illustrious single-handed yachtsmen, said he was impressed by the way Martin had accepted the loss of Allied Bank, which he scuttled three days after hitting a submerged chunk of ice about 1 800 miles from Cape Horn.

"It's a hell of a blow to lose your boat and then to be on another yacht where you are not allowed to do anything. The sooner you get to shore the better," Reed said.