

'Sailing is a hobby to be enjoyed, not a way of life to be endured'

TO armchair observers, the question about the BOC Challenge single-handed around-the-world yacht race is just how tough it really is. That was fairly well answered by British BOC executive Nigel Rowe when he withdrew from the race at the weekend.

Although the image of a business executive is not one consistent with the legend of tough old sea dogs, Rowe is an exception. His involvement with the race — dating back to 1981 — turned into an infatuation, and he set out to transform himself from the boardroom to the boat, *en route* winning Class Two of last summer's BOC Transatlantic qualifier on Skycatcher.

The dream of finishing the world's longest sporting endurance event for any individual stretched to over 15 000 miles — just over halfway around — until Monday at the Australian port of Ulladulla, where he docked to repair his tattered mainsail before throwing in the towel.

"For me, sailing is a hobby to be enjoyed, not a way of life to be endured. The race has been every bit as tough as I knew it would be, but I have not enjoyed the sailing anywhere near as much as I had expected I would.

"There seems little point in continuing to take the risks involved, now increased by my distance from the rest of the fleet, when many of the rewards of the experience are not there.

"Still my participation as a competitor has been an intensely interesting and rewarding experience in other ways, and my respect and admiration for those left in the fleet remain considerable," he said.

Rowe's withdrawal has left 13 sailors in the fleet — just under a third of the number which had started the titanic challenge last September — with thousands of miles in the gruelling Southern Ocean left to sail.

The casualty list includes Josh Hall (boat sunk), Isabelle Autissier (abandoned yacht after having lost second

mast), Neal Petersen (ran for cover when mast broke), Simone Bianchetti (asked to withdraw after having sent the National Sea Rescue Institute out on wild-goose chase and having returned to port several times), Mark Gatehouse (personal problems), Floyd Romack (failed to make deading on the first leg to Cape Town).

South African JJ Provoyeur is still soldiering on in fourth place, and his battle to maintain the position received an invaluable boost at the weekend when David Scully of the United States changed course for New Zealand to replace the torn mainsail on his yacht, Coyote.

Provoyeur started the leg with a shaky 10-hour advantage over Scully, but this has now gone up to nearly 200 miles and will increase further.

THE Gestetner/NGK Spark Plugs Formula One Grand Prix showdown in Durban harbour at the weekend — featuring world champions and South Africa's top pilots — has been rated as the most exciting powerboat race ever seen in this country.

As the flag dropped to herald 20 laps of 200-km/h high-speed racing, world champion Guido Cappellini and Italian compatriot Fabrizio Bocco were at each other's throats — and they stayed there for the duration of the contest.

Bocco shot into the lead from lap one, with Cappellini tucked in his spray for 17 laps. Their on-the-edge duel culminated in Cappellini's tucking inside his countryman around a buoy during lap 18 and fighting off a gallant last-lap comeback from Bocco to celebrate victory.

The South African contingent were forced to play third fiddle, with multiple national champion Peter Lindenberg finishing 200 metres behind the flying Italians. Lindenberg was followed by Renier Engelbrecht, Ian Mather and Sweden's Pelle Brolin.

SOUTH AFRICA's representation in the

Association of Surfing Professionals hierarchy has been increased with the appointment of Graham Stapelberg as executive director.

South African-born Stapelberg, a qualified chartered accountant, is now resident at Laguna Beach in California.

The country is now being represented by Peter Burness as president and Shaun Tomson as vice-president.

Following successful negotiations with Coca-Cola, the umbrella sponsors of the ASP world tour, prize money in world professional surfing will this year total R11,8-million.

ANY sailor aspiring to world-class performances at the Atlanta Olympic Games next year would be well advised to follow the example of Malcolm Hall of Newlands and Simone Crone of Bergvliet.

The two local youngsters launched their Olympic campaigns last year, and travelled abroad to start testing their skills against the cream of foreign competitors in their class.

They have just returned from the Middle East, where they sailed their 470 in the Sail the Gulf regatta in Doha, Qatar. They performed with distinction against some of the top overseas sailors in their class.

In the preliminary



UP IN THE AIR ... The bowman on One-Australia checks the wind aloft during pre-race manoeuvres in the Luis Vuitton Cup challenger series at the America's Cup off San Diego, California, at the weekend.

However, Hall and Crone defeated the Chinese Olympic team, the pre-regatta favourites, before beating Pakistan in the semifinals following a close-fought affair. They finally had to settle for the silver medal when they narrowly lost to the Greek team.

However, in the search for world-ranking points, Hall and Crone qualified for the elite Gold Fleet, which includes the Russian, Chinese and Singapore teams which are all ranked in the top 20 in the world at present.

The two Capetonians are now effectively No 7 in the world. Crone said: "We have now finally broken into the elite after much hard work, and are in a position to seriously challenge for the gold medal at Atlanta next year."

The pair will now travel to Europe to compete in the World Cup series of regattas, the first being the Princess Sophia Cup in Palma, Spain, early in April.

A NEW area was the ven-

ue for the ninth Western Province spearfishing trials. With the water at 16 degrees Celsius and visibility at 10 metres, 11 out of the 12 divers who signed on managed to shoot fish.

The final placings

1 Anton de Kock, 2 Tommy Botha, 3 Edward Hayman, 4 Fred Snyman, 5 Attie-Lourens, 6 Christo Vermeulen, 7 Jan Ras, 8 Richard Dews, 9 Wayne Lategan, 10 Jan Grobler, 11 Scott Russell.

THE Cape Underwater Recreation Group Diving Club (CURG) is to run a NAUI masters scuba diving course from February 27. This replaces the old advanced divers course. The venue will be their clubhouse at the Sandvlei Community Centre, in Main Road, Muizenberg. Those interested may contact Mike Hoey-Smith at tel 701-3076.

AN advanced course for experienced spearfishermen will be presented at the False Bay Underwater Club at 21h00 every Wednesday during February. The course costs R5 an evening. Further information from Edward Hayman at tel 73-5168.

