



PICTURE: SHERELEE CLARKE

FORMER street children (from left) Sifiso Buthelezi, Thulani Mthembu, Jah Khumalo and Khehla Zondi with Denise Cochran at the naming ceremony of a new yacht, Moqunie. They will sail the boat in some of the world's biggest yacht races

3/2/2005 MERCURY

It's plain sailing for five former street children

XOLISWA ZULU

AFTER a year of intense training, five young men from the Sakhithemba Home for Boys are now ready to sail in some of the world's toughest yacht races.

The young men, who have a strict sailing regimen, have just completed their first trip between Durban and Richards Bay and said they had enjoyed every minute of it.

The five, Sifiso Buthelezi, Thulani Mthembu, Jah Khumalo, Khehla Zondi and Michael Goolam, hope one day

to sail yachts of their own.

Their sailing instructor, Sheldon Dickerson, said the youngsters had learned a lot and were "doing fantastically" well.

"The boys want to better themselves. They are showing initiative, and they are working as a team. Two weeks ago, we did an overnight trip from Durban to Richards Bay. They did very well."

In eight weeks time they will sail in their first major race, the Inhaca Ocean Race, from Maputo to Richards Bay. Dickerson believes they have the

ability to crack the top spot.

"They most definitely will do well," he said.

"They have shown commitment and are improving fantastically. They may not eventually decide to go into sailing as a career or as a sport, but at the end of their training they will get their skippers' licences. I am trying to teach them skills they can use in their future work.

"In September, they will sail in the Vasco Da Gama Race from Mauritius to Durban. Later in the year they will also sail from Cape Town to Salvador. It will be

a challenge, but they are up for it," Dickerson said.

Sifiso said he never expected to get the opportunity to sail. He had been afraid of water, but he was now ready to take the opportunity with both hands.

He said: "I am fully prepared to be in the sea for a very long time. I want to be a master at it. Sheldon has helped us.

His heart is in it and it shows, because he has taught us well. I hope that one of these days I will be the owner of my own boat and sailing overseas."

Graham Cochran, of Icare,

who has been with the youngsters from the beginning, said that they have shown incredible improvement and commitment.

"The boys have not had many opportunities in life but, working together, their confidence has grown. I have noticed many changes in them.

"They are now smiling more and seem happier.

"Their commitment is amazing. They get up early in the morning and get back late in the afternoon, and they are always ready to work hard."

xzulu@nn.independent.co.za