



SHIP SHAPE . . . teenage yachtswoman Brenda Webb, who'll be watching out for whales during the Cape to Lisbon yacht race Picture: ROB KAMHOOT

By ALAN DUGGAN

TEENAGER Brenda Webb grew up with the story of how her parents spent 16 terrifying hours in a small raft in the south Atlantic after their yacht hit a whale and sank.

But thoughts of whales and life rafts are far from her mind now as she counts the days to the greatest adventure of her life — crewing on a yacht in the gruelling **Portnet Dias Yacht Race from Cape Town to Lisbon.**

With only days to go before the start of the 6 000 nautical mile race in Cape Town's Table Bay, the pretty 18-year-old is hard at work preparing the 17-metre cutter King's Transport for the long haul to Portugal.

On board with her will be skipper Bobby Bongers, Charles Girdlestone, John Twiggs and owner Juno King.

At least half the fleet features a female crew member.

"I'm very excited about the race," said Brenda, who first went to sea at the tender age of five. "It's the chance of a lifetime and I expect to learn a great deal.

"This will be my first long race and I'm really looking forward to seeing Portugal again."

Although most of her time will be spent cooking in the yacht's tiny galley, this game youngster is quite happy to take her share of watches with her male colleagues.

"I've been involved with yachts and yachting for so long that this feels like home to me," she said.

Brenda is the daughter of veteran yachts-

Perils of the deep don't faze Brenda

man Gordon Webb, chairman of the Dias race committee and former chairman of the Cruising Association of South Africa.

It was during the first Cape-to-Rio Race in 1971 that the yacht Pionier struck a whale 11 days out to sea from Cape Town.

Within minutes Mr Webb, his wife Jenny and three other crew had clambered into a life raft and cast off from the doomed yacht. They were rescued by a passing bulk carrier, Potomac, after drifting helplessly for 16 hours.

So far a record 22 yachts have entered the race to Lisbon via St Helena and the Azores, which is expected to take about 40 days.

Competitors include Dave Abromowitz, last year's line honours winner Bertie Reed and naval Lieutenant-Commander Hanno Teuteberg in SAA Vortrekker II.

The race, which starts next Sunday, is sponsored by Portnet (formerly SA Harbours).