

# Voortrekker II gets a flying start

By MARK SEIDEL

SUBMARINE commander Hanno Teuteberg and his National Servicemen underlings tossed out a stern warning to the opposition yachts taking part in the second **Bartholomew Dias** race starting from Table Bay on March 31.

Displaying frantic skills, "grope-a-rope" tactics to hoist the main sails and the 300m<sup>2</sup> of spinaker, emblazoned in the dark blue colours of South African Airways, and scurrying on deck to obey the skipper's instructions, the team and Voortrekker II impressed the media this week in a gentle lope around Robben Island and back to the Royal Cape Yacht Club.

Stomachs mercifully remained intact as Voortrekker II took the two-hour cruise on a virtually windless Cape day in her stride, but upset penguins, seals and the sardine run.

Voortrekker II, which sailed to fame under the guidance of John Martin, has now reached "older generation" status at nine years of age.

A tamer of the fickle seas, the 18,2m old girl was in need of a repair job — and help ironically swooped in from the commanders of the South African air routes.

SAA decided it needed impetus at sea level and pumped in an estimated R1-million to help the cost of a full refit.

The rejig and intensive preparation put in by Teuteberg and his mechanically-minded sextet tossed overboard suggestions that "booze cruise" tactics would come into play.

The crew are mechanical engineer Rob van Wieringen, 25, from Cape Town, quantity surveyor Dave Collins, 27, civil engineer Rowen Clark, 26, and John Leigh, 20, all three from Durban, William Voerman, 20, from Transvaal and the baby of the squad, Barry de Kok, 18, from Cape Town.

"When the only thing in your life is working to get Voortrekker II ready for action, the will-to-win is very strong," said Teuteberg, keeping half-an-eye on the steering apparatus and the other on the darting movements of his crew.

"For some of the national servicemen it will be their first and last race in SADF colours. They want to go for a win — and go out on a high."

Teuteberg, who thinks highly and fondly of Voortrekker II, showed a slight tinge of aggro when he spoke of the critics who had written off the maxi.

"Many have said Voortrekker II is too old to win now. She has passed her best. Not so, not so. And we'll prove this during the race." Bertie Reed's high-tech Grinaker may disagree.

However, battered by waves and howling winds over nine

years, Voortrekker II has shown her durability at the height of a crisis.

Even a broken boom could not prevent her from breaking the Cape Town-to-Mauritius and Mauritius-to-Durban records in the Beachcomber crossing last year.

But Teuteberg does not want a repeat of that drama — be it flips, flaps or flops.

"Line and handicap honours, that's our aim," he growled softly. "I'd be disappointed if we didn't cross the line first."

The route takes the fleet via St Helena to Ponta Delgade in the Azores and from there to Lisbon. And what awaits the crew are capricious weather patterns.

For example, the windless doldrums around the equator and the sun beating down are more conducive to sun-tanning and relaxation than to a yacht race.

But Teuteberg has planned a tactical race to ride the high pressure systems around the doldrums, the Azores — and any storms that Voortrekker II may sail into.

"We've worked long and hard for this — the crew will be ready to handle anything," he said.

Forty days and nights is the estimated duration of the journey, "40 Days" is the theme song.

But the figure is only a recommendation. The crew want another record.



HANNO TEUTEBERG... skipper of Voortrekker II