

Ian Martin builds a 'flyer'

Yachting □ GRAHAM LIZAMORE

THERE are two scores the Cape has to settle with Natal this year; the return of the rugby Currie Cup and South Africa's most prestigious ocean racing prize, the Hepburn Trophy for the 1 600 mile **Crystic Beachcomber Crossing**.

This will be the fourth Crystic Beachcomber Crossing and in the space of eight years it has been without doubt become the prestige long distance race on the South African calendar.

Not since the Cape to Rio races has a deep sea event captured the imagination of yachtsmen and the public like this race.

Set for September this year, the race from Grand Baie, Mauritius to Durban has since its inception in 1985 been won by Cape Town skippers except for the 1989 event when Cape Town veteran Richard Nankin came third in Swimlion.

This year the race is expected to attract the likes of dou-

ble-handed Trans-atlantic champion, Ian Martin, now completing a superfast downwind yacht for the race, Richard Nankin and Dave Abromowitz, who won line honours on Royal Palm in the 1987 race.

Talk has it that Abromowitz might team up with British skipper Robin Aisher, one of the more successful campaigners on the European circuit, who is building a superfast boat here in South Africa. According to a spokesman for the sponsors of the race, Aisher might use the Beachcomber Crossing as a test drive with Abromowitz at the helm.

Needless to say Abromowitz, one of the most wily and experienced skippers in the country, is playing his cards close to his chest.

For the first time since the

inaugural race in 1985, twin-rudder boats have been allowed to compete which means that the 1989 winner, Get more Fun, designed by Phil Southwell, as well as Terry Usher's Beluga and the Durban flyer Hulett Aluminium, will be able to compete officially.

Cape Town's hopes will be pinned on Martin's radical 43 foot boat which has already been billed as the 'giant killer' for the race.

Computer projections show that the streamlined craft will be faster than some of the bigger boats.

Martin said recently as soon as the yacht was launched he would start sailing to tune both his crew and the yacht to perfection.

"I have set my sights on a handicap victory and it's going to take a really potent crew to

beat us," he said confidently, still revelling in the glory of breaking the line honours record in the recent Mykonos Offshore Challenge.

Although under the new International Measuring System (IMS) all boats have theoretically the same chance, experts believe that yachts in the 40 to 50 foot range have the best potential.

In the previous Crystic Beachcomber Crossing the IMS brought two 34-foot yachts, Close Again and Spar Sunseeker, and two 40-footers, Swimline and Lanzarac Hotel, as well as the 60-foot Get More Fun, in the top five positions. Consequently most yachtsmen see the Beachcomber as a test of seamanship.

There are those, however, who say a 70-foot downwind flyer that will beat last year's line honours winner, Get More Fun, is being imported for the race.