

Missing teen sailors saved

Caryn Dolley

FOUR Cape Town sailors have been rescued from a sinking yacht in the remote southern seas after four tense days without communications or sight of the vessel.

Missing since Monday, The Spirit of Izivunguvungu was spotted by a Liberian-registered ship sent to try to locate it near Tristan da Cunha.

Late last night, Royal Cape Yacht Club commodore John Martin said the ship had rendezvoused with the yacht.

Martin said all four crewmen, skipper Kader Williams, 30, of Strandfontein, Anthony Edwards, Kenwyn Daniels and Joweal Klasse, of Ocean View, were found unharmed.

But the yacht, sponsored by the City of Cape Town and which participated in the Heineken Cape to Rio yacht race earlier this year, was found to have a broken mast that had damaged the rudder, leaving the crew unable to steer the boat, which had started sinking.

"An engineer got on board the yacht and deemed it unseaworthy. It was a risk to life. It had started sinking with the boys on board," Martin said.

It was not immediately clear why the yacht's communication system and engine had not been working.

During the late night rescue operation, the four crew members were transferred on to the ship expected to arrive off Cape Point in about a week.

"The ship is not stopping in South Africa so they will then be transferred on to a naval warship off False Bay," Martin said.

This meant Daniels, who turns 21 on Tuesday, would not be able to celebrate his birthday on land and in Cape Town,

as the four men had initially planned.

Williams, a teacher at the Izivunguvungu Sailing School, had tutored Daniels in sailing for years. His three crew members were Izivunguvungu graduates.

Last night, Williams's mother, Mariam Williams, sobbed in relief when she heard her son was safe.

"Oh, lovely. Oh, thank you, thank you. I'm too happy. I'm sitting here with my family. We were so, so worried. Oh my. I can't wait to tell them," she said.

When she told them the news while still on the line with the Cape Times, cheering and laughing could be heard in the background.

Mariam Williams had not slept since hearing her son was missing.

"I can't wait to eat and sleep," she said last night.

Earlier yesterday, when she did not know what had happened to her son, she had wept as she talked about him: "All I want for Kader is for him to bring his crew back safely," she had said, wiping tears away.

Mariam Williams said she had last spoken to her son on February 28 when he had left Brazil.

The Heineken Cape to Rio yacht race had been his first international voyage as a skipper.

"That was really what he wanted ... He's always been very passionate about the sea. He fished as a young boy. He still does. His father (Majiet) is fishing at the moment," she had said.

Last night, Dorianne Delcarne, Edwards's girlfriend, at first did not believe he was safe.

"It can't be true. I don't believe this," she reacted when

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FOUNDERING BUT FOUND: (From left) Anthony Edwards, Kenwyn Daniels, Joweal Klasse and (front) Kader Williams photographed in Brazil in February after the Heineken Cape to Rio yacht race, and who were sailing back from Brazil and not been in radio contact since Monday. They were rescued last night.

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hearing the news.

After realising Edwards and the other three had been rescued, she laughed.

“Oh this is wonderful, too good to be true. I’m so relieved. I can’t wait to tell everyone. Wow,” she said.

The Cape Times could not reach Daniels’s mother Charmaine nor Klasse’s family last night.

Earlier yesterday, the City of Cape Town said the tracking device on the yacht, which at one stage had been moving erratically, had only been working intermittently.

“The yacht appears not to be moving at present, which could indicate engine problems. Based on the tracking device on board, the yacht it is in the area of Tristan da Cunha,” it had said.

International maritime authorities had then issued an alert for ships to watch out for the yacht.

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