

11th-hour sponsor saves Voortrekker

AN 11th-hour sponsorship has put South Africa in the BOC single-handed round-the-world yacht challenge and Two Star double-handed transatlantic race.

This was announced at a Press conference at SAS Unities naval base in Cape Town this week.

Lieutenant-Commander John Martin, who will skipper Voortrekker II in both races, said he had given up hope last week and been on the brink of withdrawing.

Announcing the dual sponsorship, Mr John Church of Tuna Marine said his company had decided to become involved "to hold the South African flag up proudly in two of the world's most respected yachting events".

Martin will be assisted by naval colleague Lieutenant Rob Sharp in the double-handed race, which starts at Plymouth in June.

The pair have sailed together for the past four years.

The gruelling BOC 27 000-mile single-handed race, which has 57 entrants from 12 countries, starts at Newport on August 30, with Cape Town the first stopover.

Martin said the BOC race was the pursuit of a life's ambition — his psychological preparation had begun "years ago". He wanted to prove Voortrekker II was the world's best single-handed ocean

racer.

"She may be five years old, but was modernised last year. Another advantage is that I know the boat inside out."

Of the double-handed race, Martin said: "If preparation is a yardstick of success, we must surely finish in the top three."

The sloop, renamed

Tuna Marine for both races, was to be shipped to a European port this week, unnamed at this stage because of political sensitivity.

Among the guests at the conference was the Minister of Environment and Fisheries, Mr John Wiley.—
Water Sport Correspondent