

# SA's Olympic yacht crew 25/4/1992 MERCURY make their presence felt

THE crew of the Olympic yacht Port Owen, SA's entry in the Flying Dutchman class at the Barcelona Games, returned home this week after the first phase of their European training programme.

Reports from Spain, France and Italy over the past month showed that South African yachtsmen are already making their presence felt amongst the world's top Olympic sailors.

Speaking to an enthusiastic group of local yachtsmen at the Royal Cape Yacht Club, Dave Hudson, skipper of Port Owen, reported that the entire SA Olympic yachting team are moving rapidly up the learning curve at this stage.

"Things have been going particularly well in the Soling and Flying Dutchman events."

South Africa's three-man Soling team of Bruce Savage, Giles Stanley and Cape Town's Rick Mayhew, and the two-man F.D. team of Hudson and Kitchen both finished in the top third of their respective world class fleet at the San Remo Olympic week that ended in Northern Italy last Sunday.

"It's a race against time to beat the effects of 30 years of isolation from Olympic yachting.

"Actually the SA team faced the twin challenge of lack of international competition in the past and having to compete now against the highly geared up 'Olympic machines' of most other nations.

"Our yachtsmen are in Europe largely at their own expense and running their Olympic campaign on a shoestring with no support infrastructure at all. Our major interna-

tional competitors on the other hand are generally well funded and are backed by team managers, team coaches, met advisors, etc."

The South Africans would leave shore early in the morning on the long sail out to the start on each day's racing, in freezing conditions at San Remo in particular with the snow capped Alps clearly visible from out at sea.

Our opposition on the other hand would be able to stay ashore warm and dry for as long as possible, to be towed out to the start by support boats bristling with technology, while team coaches briefed the crews on up to date wind and current conditions on the race course.

"However the morale of the SA Olympic team is really high and the level of dedication is impressive. I think we can look forward to steadily improving results from the whole team over the next few months, particularly as the weather in Europe warms up.

"Dave Kitchen and I have been particularly fortunate in that Port Owen have assisted us with the cost of our yacht in Europe. However the overall costs of competing on the European circuit are staggering. At present the South African Yacht Racing Association is trying urgently to raise funds and we hope that by the end of the pre-Olympic circuit the SA team will be far better supported."

Hudson and Kitchen return to Europe next week for a further five major international events including the World Championships in mid-May and European Championships in early June.