

Award of honour for SA sailing team

TRIBUNE REPORTER

A YACHT club in one of the world's smallest and oldest republics has singled out South Africa's America's Cup challenger Team Shosholoza as worthy of its highest honour.

The yacht club of the Republic of San Marino – a tiny fortified city-state atop Mount Titano in central Italy – is to present South Africa's golden boys of sail with its prized Golden Sail award.

An official letter sent to Shosholoza's Managing Director, Capt Salvatore Sarno, said, "We have decided to give this award to a team that not only has excellent sailing preparation, but one that also has a deeply human ethic and social conscience.

"In addition, it reflects the tradition of freedom, peace and respect for human rights that has always existed in the Republic of San Marino."

Sarno said he was overwhelmed by the announcement.

"We have only existed for two years as a team, so you can imagine how humbled we feel to be honoured in this way.

"We will definitely be in San Marino to accept the award on June 2."

Italian support for Team Shosholoza has been surprisingly enthusiastic, especially since Italy itself has three teams challenging for the 2007 America's Cup.

At the Trapani Louis Vuitton Acts in Sicily in October the South African crew members



SHOSHOLLOZA off Trapani in Sicily, Italy

Picture: PETER GOLDMAN

The Republic of San Marino

THE ancient European state of San Marino was founded about AD 350, and remains completely intact, despite attacks from other self-governing Italian city states, the Napoleonic Wars, the unification of Italy and the two world wars. It joined the League

of Nations (a predecessor of the UN) in 1922 and maintains diplomatic and consular relations with a number of European and American countries. It mints its own coins, issues its own postage stamps, and grants honours of merit.

were continually mobbed for autographs, while the Italian media adopted them as their "fourth Italian team".

In December Italian-born Sarno also received the highest honour of his home country when he was created a Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic – in honour of his entrepreneurial skills as Chairman of Mediterranean Shipping Company, South

Africa, and for his many philanthropic activities.

Speaking about changes made to Shosholoza, Sarno said that these should immediately make the South African team more competitive.

"We plan to demonstrate we are worthy of awards like this when we start racing again in the first of the 2006 Valencia Louis Vuitton Acts in May," he said.