

Team Shosholoza are doing South Africa proud

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TEAM Shosholoza, the African continent's first entry in the 156-year-old America's Cup, are doing the country proud.

Just over three years ago the critics said the South Africans would not have the skill to get their boat to the start line. But after a challenging start to their campaign, sailing an old boat and with little budget but plenty of passion, Team Shosholoza eventually became the darlings of the America's Cup media.

But as mastermind behind the project, Captain Salvatore Sarno, explained: "We are not here to make friends. We are here to win, if not this year, then the next America's Cup Challenge. Very few teams succeed first time around. We are determined to bring the Cup to South Africa one day."

The team is making great strides towards fulfilling this promise. Yesterday's racing saw two races and continued success for Shosholoza. After a good start among the fleet of 11 boats, the South Africans found themselves in second place on the first leg – only metres behind Cup defenders Alinghi.

But a bad tack onto starboard cost them and they finished in seventh position. They improved their finishing position to fifth in the second race of the day, with Emirates Team New Zealand first, Luna Rossa Challenge second, Alinghi third and Mascalzone Latino Capitalia Team fourth.

This event holds great importance as it carries valuable bonus points towards the Louis Vuitton Cup. The leading challenger earns an extra bonus point (four points) over the next three finishers (three points). Challengers ranked fifth through seventh earn two points. The remaining teams pick up a single point.



SOUTH AFRICAN DREAM: America's Cup entry Shosholoza's good result yesterday improved their overall points. Although they are still in seventh position on the leaderboard, they have increased their points, with only four points separating them from sixth position and a comfortable 11 points between them and eighth position. Today is the last time that Cup defender Alinghi will race against the group of challengers. When Alinghi next races, it will be in the America's Cup Match beginning on June 23 against the best challenger to emerge from the Louis Vuitton Cup

Picture: REUTERS