

# A true wave of courage

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HOME AND DRY — a victorious John Martin and wife Lynne

'Moral winner'  
of BOC race  
John Martin  
gets a hero's  
welcome from  
the Americans

TRUE GRIT carried Springbok sailor John Martin from the depths of despair to a victory that has confounded the yachting world.

With only 1 200 miles to go in the final stage of the gruelling BOC Round-the-World lone yacht race, the rugged Capetonian clawed himself out of a seemingly hopeless position 400 nautical miles behind the leaders.

At last finding a strong wind, he packed on the sails and scorched past seven yachts to surge into Newport, United States to a hero's welcome — and an unofficial nod from sailing pundits as the "moral winner" of the race

for taking first place in two of the four stages.

His wife Lynne and brother were at the quayside to welcome him.

"I just decided that this was it," a jubilant Martin said from Newport on Friday after his resounding success.

"I didn't sleep for over a week as I caught the leaders, passed them, and then grimly held them off."

Martin won the first leg of the world's toughest yacht race when the fleet of solo sailors set out from Newport for Cape Town nearly eight months ago.

From Cape Town they sailed for Sydney, Australia, round Cape Horn to Rio de Janeiro, and back to Newport, covering nearly 27 000 miles.

The Springbok sailor survived a capsizing in monstrous seas near Australia and equipment failure near the infamous Cape Horn, which nearly led to his being dismasted.

He endured 15m waves and a massive setback that came when backstays which secured the mast snapped in nightmarish seas.

"The mast went like spaghetti," he said. "But you just have to find the courage to survive."

These disasters in the second and third legs cost him the race.

He was forced to slow down and attempt repairs to his stricken yacht in stormy seas while Phillipe Jeantot, in Credit Agricole, gained a virtually unassailable lead on him.

## Records

Martin's spectacular finish in Tuna Marine Voortrekker II has given him fifth place overall, behind the four French skippers.

Jeantot arrived in Newport six hours behind Martin to claim overall victory. It was his second win in the round-the-world race.

Jeantot completed the voyage in 134 days, 5 hours, 46 minutes.

Martin finished in 147 days, five hours and 14 minutes.



'BILTONG' BERTIE REED — fellow SA yachtsman in Stabulo Boss

breaking records for the first and last legs.

"I climbed out of my bunk one morning and just decided that this was it," Martin said.

At that stage he was still 400 miles — or two days — behind the leaders.

"I had been in the depths of despair — and extremely embarrassed — as the leaders averaged one-and-a-half knots more than me every hour.

Martin said he made a "tactical error" by sailing too far east in search of winds.

## Scorched

But his "error" paid off as he found better winds and the race leaders started slowing down.

Martin scorched through the field to take the lead last weekend with just over 800 miles to go.

"When Jeantot was 80 miles ahead of me I was like a racehorse with the bit between my teeth," he said.

"I knew I could do it." He had not slept since then as Tuna Marine Voortrekker churned through the sea, overtaking fellow South African Bertie Reed in Stabulo Boss and the three leading Frenchmen.

"I was exhausted after finishing and nothing really registered — but now I feel fantastic after a good sleep," he said.