

City sailor first to cross Atlantic solo in open boat

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Yachting Reporter

CAPE TOWN sailor Anthony Steward has become the first person to cross the Atlantic singlehanded in an open boat.

He has completed the 5 500-mile voyage from Cape Town to Barbados in an epic 52-days.

Steward set off from Cape Town on February 16 in a bid to become the first to sail around the world in an open boat.

He made landfalls at St Helena, Ascension Island and Fernando de Noronha before reaching Barbados.

Steward completed the 2 000-mile leg from Fernando de Noronha, off the Brazilian coast, to Barbados in an amazing 17 days. He ran out of food two days from the island.

Steward lives and sleeps in the open cockpit of the 5,8m **NCS Challenger**.

In a telephone call from Bridgetown last night, he said his biggest problem crossing the Atlantic had been the number of ships that did not keep a lookout.

"Near the equator I was almost run down by a ship during a squall which had cut visibility down to a couple of metres — but luckily I heard the sound of the ship's engines.

"Because there was no wind I wasn't able to move NCS Challenger out of the way.

"So in desperation I called up the ship on my hand-held VHF radio. Fortunately the captain responded and immediately cut his engines."

The vessel drifted past about 50 metres away from the tiny, 5,8m yacht.

Steward said he had seen many ships — and few seemed to keep a listening watch on the international distress frequency.

The Barbados authorities had given him permission to stay on the island until Friday. Steward plans to head for the Panama Canal, some 1 400 miles from Barbados, and then enter the Pacific Ocean.

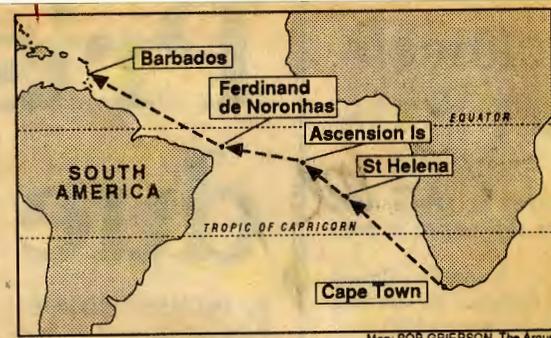
On the first leg from Cape Town to St Helena Steward was knocked overboard and NCS Challenger was capsized in heavy seas.

This was followed by a severe bout of food poisoning, during which he drifted aimlessly for two days in a near-comatose state.

He hopes to complete the voyage by the end of the year.



Anthony Steward leaving Cape Town on his epic voyage.



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7/5/91