

Weekly Watersports Roundup



OUT IN FRONT . . . It's been a great year so far for Capetonian yachtsman, Greg Davis. Following his Rothmans Week victory in December, Davis has made an excellent start to adding the Opel Week trophy to cabinet. On the 35-foot Simonis AMC Classic Challenger, he currently leads the handicap ratings in the regatta being sailed in Port Elizabeth — and he has also confirmed the yacht's entry for September's **Crystic Beachcomber** race from Mauritius to Durban.

Picture: ANNE ROELOFSE

YOU just can't keep a good solo-sailor down.

Capetonian yachtsman Anthony Steward last Thursday became one of the few sailors in the world to have sailed the Atlantic Ocean in an open boat, the tiny 5,8m NCS Challenger.

And, during the 5 500 mile trip, Steward suffered enough mishaps to put any average sailor off the sea for life — let alone to continue his quest of becoming the first person in the world to conquer the globe alone in an open boat.

Since leaving Cape Town 52 days ago, Steward, and his tiny boat, have been capsized, pounded with gales, he has suffered food poisoning and sun burn and has fallen overboard, but was luckily saved an icy death by his harness.

The latest leg of his trip has taken him 17 days to sail the 2 000 miles from Fernando de Noronha in Brazil to Bridgetown in Barbados.

In the process he was nearly run down by a passing ship at the equator during a heavy rain squall which restricted visibility to almost zero.

Before leaving Cape Town in February, Steward said: "It's not the ocean I fear most but being run over by a passing ship."

Steward had heard the engines of the unsighted ship and, in desperation, grasped his hand-held radio and managed to arouse the ship's captain who immediately cut the vessel's engines.

trip to Antigua, followed by a short hop to St Maarten, he faces several hazards.

In this area he must endure strong winds, big swells, and the threat of pirates unless he stays less than 100 miles off the Columbian coast.

Solo-yachtsmen really are a breed apart, but it's good to know that South Africa has sailors of this calibre ready to inherit the solo sailor mantle in the post-Martin/Reed era.

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There had been no wind and he was helpless to evade the vessel as he watched it drifting a mere 50m from his tiny craft.

"I'm a quarter of a way around the world now and this stretch certainly has the reputation of being one of the worst. When I get to the Panama canal, which is only 1 400 miles away, I will really have conquered the Atlantic," he said from Barbados.

"I have seen many ships, but none keep a listening watch on the international distress radio as they are required to do. I have tried calling but without success. It is most frustrating as I can see the ships, but hardly ever get a response . . . It gets quite lonely and a chat on the radio would certainly be the highlight of my day," he added.

Steward had also ran out of food two days before arriving in Barbados and endured two hungry nights at sea.

He was also plagued by salt sores which prevented him from sitting down.

The ongoing saga of the lone sailor is far from over, however.

As he is a South African, the Barbados authorities have given him until Friday to depart from the islands and, in his forthcoming 350-mile