

# Durban dinghy crew are world champs – now for the Olympics

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**Graham Spence**

HISTORY was made this week when two Durban yachtsmen became the first South Africans ever to win a single-hull world dinghy championship.

And now that they're on a roll, Royal Natal Yacht Club sailors Martin Lambrecht and Alec Lanham-Love are going for the magic double: an Olympic Gold medal as well.

It was a tremendous win against the best of all Fireball sailors — one of the most competitive dinghy classes — and no-one was more excited than the team's supporters back home who waited chewing nails to the quick early Thursday to hear the news. It came with a pre-sunrise phone call from Wilmington, North Carolina, USA: the duo had come third in the penultimate race which gave them enough points to win overall. And they



World champs: Martin Lambrecht (left) and Alec Lanham-Love

were now the Fireball Champions of the World.

"We were ecstatic," said Alec's father, former powerboat racer Gordon Lanham-Love. "We couldn't believe it after all the hassles they had been through campaigning on the European

circuit. And despite all that, to still go to the United States and pull it off — it's fantastic."

But there were some nervous moments for Lambrecht and Lanham-Love when their boat nose-dived badly in the fast running seas on the first reach.

However, as befitting champion racers, they kept their nerve and hung on to the leaders to snatch the world crown.

However, the crucial test comes in July when they will be representing South Africa at Barcelona in the Olympic 470 class. As there are no 470s in this country the selections were made on Fireballs and Lambrecht and Lanham-Love have had to hire a craft for the European circuit.

"We've been battling to get a decent boat and so far have had to race in some real dogs," said Alec in a telephone call home.

Winning the world championships has been a long, rough road for the team. They have been campaigning on a financial shoestring, and have twice been robbed in Europe.

During the next month they will be competing in Holland and Belgium as a warm up for the final goal — Barcelona. And from there it's back home — hopefully with a gold medal.