

TEENAGERS PROVING YOUTH HAS 'GUTS'

East
London
yacht
launching
tomorrow

Daily News Correspondent

CAPE TOWN, Thursday.

TWO CAPE TOWN teenagers, out to prove that today's youth has guts, determination and a spirit of adventure have entered the 3 500 mile Cape to Rio yacht race.

PORT REX, East London's contender in the race to Rio de Janeiro, will be launched in Cape Town tomorrow — the first of two 11.8m (39ft.) - long mast-head sloops which yachtsman Bobby Bongers is building for the event at his Zeekoevlei workshop.

An East London syndicate headed by Mr. B. B. H. ("Bunny") Curran will race Port Rex which was designed by Mr. F. M. Bongers, Bobby's father.

Equipped with a 15 h.p. diesel auxiliary, the sloop has a beam of 3.5m. (12ft.) and will draw 1.8m. (5ft. 6in.).

She is expected to do 15-18 knots downwind, conditions which should prevail for yachts making a northward swing across to Rio.

Skipper Curran hopes to sail Port Rex round to East London next month following the arrival from Britain of her mast. It is aboard the cargo ship Journalist, due in Cape Town on July 4.

Curran will have a crew of five, already selected, during the race next year.

A sister sloop, to be launched in about a fortnight, will be sailed by Bobby Bongers, skipper of Voortrekker in England last year.

WEATHER BUREAU GEARED TO GIVE BEST

SOUTH AFRICA'S Weather Bureau is gearing itself to give the best possible forecasting service to competitors in the race to Rio de Janeiro early next year.

A meeting of race authorities held in Cape Town under the chairmanship of the Port Meteorological Officer (Capt. Johan Smit), has agreed on a scheme to co-ordinate regular daily reports from the yachts with forecasting in Pretoria.

In World meteorological organisation terms, the South Atlantic is a "sparse area".

That means the success of this forecasting venture will depend almost entirely on the co-operation of the competing yachtsmen.

If all goes well they should know what to expect from the weather in any 24-hour period.

The idea is that the yachts will report once a day on conditions in their area, the signals to be passed by radio from the naval guard ship accompanying the boats to the Weather Bureau in Pretoria, which will collate the data and issue two forecasts daily — at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Eleven areas — 10 degrees by 10 degrees — have been drawn up between Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro to cover probable routes.

Eighteen year-old Andrew Birkenshaw, of Southfield, will skipper the 40-foot concrete hulled ocean racer with 19-year-old Roy Susman, of Bergvliet, as navigator.

The ferro-cement sloop-rigged yacht which the two youngsters hope will be among the first six to finish is at present being built in Andrew's garden at Marion Road Southfield.

Andrew, a part-time student at the Cape Technical College, is no stranger to the sea.

He has been sailing since he was eight years of age and acted as crew for his father, Mr. Frank Birkenshaw, in the family 40-foot sailer in cruises in British waters and through the Mediterranean.

Why the Cape-Rio race for his first big solo effort? "It just so happened that this was the first big race that came at the right time," said Andrew.

And, he added with a big grin: "There's four days and four nights of the Mardi Gras at the end of it."

SPIRIT

Mr. Birkenshaw, Snr., then commented: "You hear so much today that youth has lost its spirit, that youngsters are lazy and have no will to do anything different. I am proud that my son is proving this otherwise. He's got my blessing all the way and if he wants me as a crewman I'll sail under him."

The 9.7 ton sloop is being built to a New Zealand design with all but the concrete plastering of the hull being done by Mr. Birkenshaw, Andrew and Roy.

"We hope to launch her at Simonstown in mid-October and take her for trials in the False Bay and probably a long cruise to St. Helena and back," said Andrew.

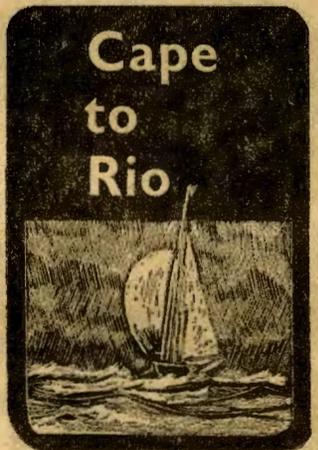
The Quo Vadis — the

provisional name of the yacht — will sail with a 428 sq.ft mainsail, a 1 300 sq. ft. spinnaker plus a genoa.

"The first 400 miles will be the worst," said Andrew. "That's where the worst weather will be, but it doesn't worry me."

Not only will the Quo Vadis be the only concrete hulled yacht in the race and have the youngest skipper but it will also be the cheapest built entry.

"We reckon it will cost us about R5 000," said Andrew, "with the most expensive item being the 47ft high mast and the suit of sails costing R2 500. These are coming from New Zealand."



The Quo Vadis is being built to Lloyds A1 specifications, said Andrew, who was confident that it would easily pass the scrutiny test of the organisers of the race.

"When I left school I wanted to sail around the world" said Andrew "and to prove that youngsters of today have got an adventurous spirit and the guts to take chances."

Roy, a property salesman, has sailed only in South African waters "but I jumped at the chance to go on this trip."