

Martin needs 'a fair blow of wind' to win

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IT could all end in heartbreak for South Africa's solo racing yachtsman John Martin, now tantalisingly close to the end of the 4 827 km singlehanded Transatlantic yacht race from Portsmouth, England, to Newport Rhode Island.

"Wind. Wind, is what John needs," a race official said today, "and wind is not what John is getting at the moment."

Martin has chased the Frenchman Jean Ives Terlain all the way across the Atlantic, closing the gap yesterday to a mere 11,2 km and promising a thrilling victory run for the line.

But in light and flukey air, Martin dropped back during the night and early this morning. Race officials estimated the Cape Town sailor in Allied Bank Voortrekker 2 was

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259 km short of the finish line off Newport's Brenton Reef light.

Terlain at that point was 33 km ahead of his South African pursuer.

"Given a fair blow", though, most race experts thought Martin could just make it across the line ahead of the Frenchman, the official said.

BERTIE REED

South Africa's other solo competitor, the grizzled veteran Bertie Reed, sailing what he hopes is a victory cruise for the 21-year-old Invertex Voortrekker, in the Class 2 boats, continues to play hide-and-seek further back in the pack.

With several days to go before he reaches Newport, Reed is still thought, however, to lead the Class 2 pack.