



ANTHONY STEWART and his 5,8 metre NCS Challenger just before he set sail from Cape Town. 17/6/1991 DAILY NEWS

Big setback for 'open boat' hero

Durban yachtsman tries for global record

THE tiny open boat in which lone Durban yachtsman Anthony Stewart (27) is attempting to make the first circumnavigation of the globe has been dismasted in a squall.

Only eight hours out from St Martin in the Leeward Islands, the forestay of his 5,8 metre yacht broke, bringing down mast and rigging. Under jury rig he limped into St Croix in the Virgin Islands.

According to his parents, who live in Durban and who had a telephone call from him after the dismasting, he said that he had hoped to leave for the Panama Canal this week.

The former Natal University student has already scored one world first by crossing the Atlantic single-handed in an open boat.

Mr Stewart left Cape Town on February 9 and hopes to enter the canal

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at the end of next week. Now he hopes that NCS Challenger will become the smallest boat ever to traverse the Panama Canal.

To date he has travelled more than 6 000 nautical miles aboard his South African designed and built fibreglass yacht.

In addition to his dismasting this week he has been capsized in a storm, been swept overboard, suffered from food poisoning, damaged his sextant and run out of food and water.

On arrival in Barbados early in May after a hazardous trip when he was nearly run down by a ship and when he ran out of food, the authorities refused him permission to land. They forced him to stay aboard his anchored vessel for two days.

Despite these hard-

ships, Mr Stewart has been showered with kindness at other ports and has been presented with a Global Positioning System navigator, a portable satellite navigation system which tells him exactly where he is at any time. While not replacing his sextant, this will save him many hours of attempting to fix his position by traditional methods.

The voyage is expected to take 270 days during which he will cover an estimated 22 890 nautical miles. The only other attempt in such a small boat was made in 1983 by American Webb Chiles but he had to give up after being shipwrecked off Saudi Arabia.

Mr Stewart's attempt has been labelled by British marine chronicler D.H. Clarke as the "last of the firsts". No one has yet sailed around the world in an open boat.