

Lone sailor nears home

Weekend Argus Reporter

DURBAN. Lone around-the-world yachtsman Anthony Steward of Durban is due to arrive at the island of Mayotte in the Comores this weekend.

Mr Steward's fiancée, Miss Sue Middleton, said yesterday she was scheduled to talk to the plucky sailor on Monday by radio telephone through Cape Town.

"Nothing happened, which means either that Anthony is having very bad weather and does not want to bring out his radio or that he is very low on power," said Miss Middleton.

However, she said that, according to Mr Steward's timetable, he was due to dock at Mayotte today, or at the very latest by Monday.

"It is now two weeks since I last spoke to him, but he is past his most trying tests over the 7 000-mile trip from Darwin.

"From Mayotte to Durban is a relatively short trip compared with what faced him when he started out from the Far East," said Miss Middleton.

Mr Steward is close to realising his life's ambition, which is to circle the world single-handed in his small open boat.

He has spent the last two years planning and making the trip and on his return he and Miss Middleton plan to marry on August 29 in church in East London, where they hope to set up home.

When last spoken to, Steward was hoping to reach Durban by August in his 5,8-m craft.

He said he was bored, hungry and eagerly looking forward to

■ Anthony Steward, the South African open-boat sailor, is due at Mayotte in the Comores, this weekend. His goal, to sail around the world, is within reach.

his favourite dish — roast chicken.

"I'm hungry, sick, very bored and can't wait to get home," the former University of Natal student told his sponsors in a telephone interview this week.

Actually, he's not quite alone.

With him for company he has Captain Blue Bear, a little teddy given to him by children who saw him off from Cape Town in February 1991.

Steward made it as far as Bok Point then, but had to return because his steering gear malfunctioned.

His first near-fatal accident came on the way to St Helena when he was washed overboard in darkness and rough seas.

Fortunately, he was able to hang on to a rope attached to the capsized boat and work his way back to the craft.

The moment his boat righted itself he grabbed what he could and hauled himself aboard, but by then vital navigation tables had been washed overboard.

A few days later, the weather cleared. He cast a line and caught a tunny — but fell ill with food poisoning.

From St Helena, he went to Ascension Island and on to Fernando de Noronha where he made friends with officers in a Brazilian Navy ship and telephoned his mother, Mrs Muriel Steward.

He sailed to the Caribbean and at Bridgetown, Barbados, he was able to sit back, having crossed the Atlantic in an open boat and escaping death when a ship almost ran him down.

After he had entered the Pacific through the Panama Canal he faced the epic leg of the journey — the Great Barrier Reef stretch to Darwin. With less than 100 miles done, he ran aground, with major damage to the boat. He made it to the town of Mooloolaba for repairs.

Although he has had to battle through one gale on the leg from Darwin he has been fortunate with good weather and is making more than 100 nautical miles a day.

Contaminated water supplies have been a major problem. He has tried to purify his water with tablets, but has been "exceptionally sick".

"Now, I am quite low on food and have to ration myself until I get to the Comores.

"I really can't wait to get there as Durban will be only 900 nautical miles away and I'm looking forward to getting home."

If all goes well, Steward should reach Durban in the first 10 days of August. He has reported not seeing much sea life around him.

"I haven't seen any birds, nor have I caught a fish in weeks. I'm bored now, and I'm counting the days until I get home," he said.