

Sharp sailing

A girl
in just
about
every
crew

By R R W NIXON

YOU sail by the seat of your pants and the feel of the wind in your face — but have to study seamanship to get the right to sail an ocean.

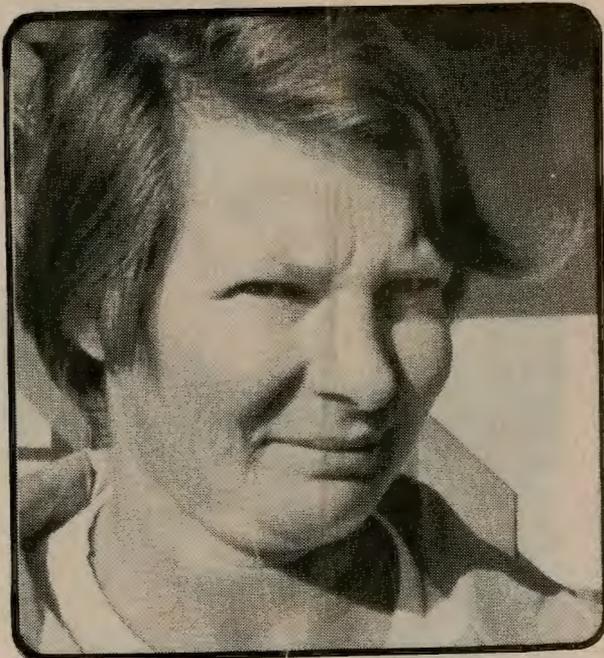
Rookies qualify fairly regularly in Port Elizabeth and their tutor is likely to be Rozana Sharp, one of the women who has taken male chauvinism out of local yachting. Over several years she has seen 40 or 50 sailors through the curriculum prescribed by the Cruising Association of South Africa and one-third of them have been women.

The effect has been that almost every yacht sailing out into Algoa Bay now has at least one girl in the crew.

Some of Rozana's learners these days are yachtsmen's wives or girlfriends and others, single women, hoping to be invited to join a cruise to the magic Mediterranean.

Rozana has done the Med bit, which is how she learnt the hard way, back in the 70s, before formal tuition was available locally. Now aspirant sailors can learn navigation at the Port Elizabeth Technikon or seamanship at the Algoa Bay Yacht Club in one of her classes.

They learn theory and practical (for a prescribed number of hours including night sailing) to earn deck-hand or first-yacht skipper's tickets (for local wa-



Rozana Sharp

ters). She is qualified as a yachtmaster, the highest grade.

Port Elizabeth-born, Rozana has been infatuated with the sea from childhood, first as an angler then as a regular skiboat rider.

That year she joined a friend who had bought a yacht and they learnt to sail it by trial and error and scary moments, she told me. She thinks nostalgically of that buccaneer, a 24ft Dutch-design, "seakindly" boat in yachting parlance.

"It took me on my first cruise — to East London — and when I was invited to cruise to the Mediterranean via the Bahamas and the Azores in a 40-footer I jumped at the chance.

"It was wonderful, even the rough weather. We spent from Christmas to April 30, 1975, battling the north-east trade winds before we reached the straits of Gibraltar and then were horrified to see the number of ships in that confined space — everything from ferries to liners moving about us. We spent 20 hours beating against the wind

were blown 150 kilometres, nearly back to France, with no sail up at all.

Now knowing all from practical experience, Rozana Sharp cruised through the yachtmaster's course she took there.

Back in Port Elizabeth, adding to her 20 years in the motor assembly industry, she loves, next to sailing, promoting the sport of yachting. It figures that she was a first team chess player at school at Victoria Park.

Rozana's philosophy is yachting is basic common sense: Keep a clear head and think rationally. Give direct instructions in the proper terminology. Shouting at crew only creates fluster. Good crews remember that there is a difference between a sailor and a seaman. There is only one skipper. Act promptly, debate afterwards.

through the passage."

They ran into a Force 12 hurricane off Cornwall and