

Dave's Beat

DAVE BEATTIE



Sandy Duff is planning to be aboard one of the smallest boats in the fleet — a Stadt 34 called Techrent — in next month's **Crystic Beachcomber Crossing** from Mauritius to Durban.

And that is just the fore-runner to a far more ambitious venture: a solo circumnavigation of the world.

So what? Solo circumnavigations are hardly a rarity these days.

Well, this one will be different. Sandy Duff is a paraplegic, the legacy of a landmine explosion during the Rhodesian bush war.

Duff (38), married to Elgene — who does her fair share of sailing, too — with a family of three, was reluctant to talk about the war incident.

"Let's just say I trod on something. But I am paralysed from the waist down, and I walk with calipers.

"When sailing I get rid of the calipers and just scoot around on my bum. It has the effect of lowering the centre of gravity, and with most of the controls leading back to the cockpit it is really quite easy."

With him aboard Techrent, a new boat that will be shipped to Mauritius, will be an all-Deneysville Aquatic Club crew, all of whom sail Stadt 23s: builder/owner Milton Coplan, Peter French, skipper Rob Martin and Anthony Uphof.

"But the Beachcomber is just the start for me," says Duff. "I'm hoping to find a 34ft or 36ft boat so that I can go solo round the world.

"My aim is to raise R20 million for paraplegic organisations."

Duff started sailing at the age of seven but only changed from dinghies to keelboats after his injury and a mishap on Langebaan lagoon in the Cape.

"It was basically a communications problem" — he speaks English, the crew spoke Spanish — "and that didn't help when we went about." The boom swung over, knocking the crew into the water. Duff followed, and both had to be rescued, by a fishing boat and by the navy.

"Rather embarrassing," he concedes.

Sailor Sandy to bum around