



**YOUNG TURKS:** The young guns of Zeekoevlei Yacht Club will soon be battling it out with the big guns at the Lipton Cup. They are, from left: Rodney Gardner, Ashton Sampson, Greg Barker, Davy James, Rodney Tanner and Bevin Moolenschot.

# Schoolboys compete in Lipton regatta

**DALE GRANGER**

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TO compete against the cream of South African sailors in the Lipton Cup is an accomplishment in itself. To convince your headmaster to set new exam papers and postpone your matric exams so you can sail is another matter altogether.

This illustrates the enthusiasm which has brought Ashton Sampson, 17, a pupil at Grassy Park High, to the startline as a crewman on Zeekoevlei Yacht Club's "Daly's ZVYC" for the week-long regatta at Gordon's Bay.

Sampson joins Bevin Moolenschot, 14, a standard six pupil at Plumstead High, as one of only two sailors still at school who are sailing on the yacht.

"I got a letter from Davy James (the skipper) inviting me to sail the regatta and I just had to do it. So here I am and I'm very thrilled. We're looking to finish in the top three and are very psyched up," said Sampson.

He started sailing three years ago on Sonnets at Zeekoevlei where he also competes in his school team and says of the sport: "Sailing is relaxing, a great contest and an exciting test of your skills".

On land, however, he will have little time to enjoy the post-race revelries. Next week it's back to school where he will write his English, Afrikaans, Geography and Maths papers.

So sailing and the less appetising pastime of studying are his full-time occupations this week — particularly as he intends enrolling at Cape Technikon to study engineering next year.

"I would love to own my own L-26 (the yachts sailed at Lipton). They're old boats but very good and fast. And once I've finished matric I would also love to put something back into the sport by coaching my school team and having a role in development," he said of his future vision.

Moolenschot, who turns 14 today, is the youngest sailor in the regatta and says he's "the little runt they say they'll throw overboard if we win a race."

Unlike Sampson the standard six pupil had no worries about exams. But he also had to talk his headmaster at Plumstead High into giving him the week off to sail.

"I started sailing last October on sonnets with my dad at Zeekoevlei. When Davy first asked me to crew my initial response was no as I had been out on the ocean once and been really seasick.

"Since then it's been fine, though, and I hope to sail the regatta next year as well. Then we would like to come out with real force and win," he said.

Another of Sampson's short term aspirations is to sail a Mirror in next years worlds at Simon's Town.

"Sailing is different to a sport like rugby as it's not contact. Also it's more relaxing," he says of sailing.

James has to be applauded for his efforts in putting together one of the youngest teams in the regatta for the second year in succession.

And sailing under the Zeekoevlei burgee is not easy as they have a hard act to follow in the wake of the dynamic duo, Chris King and Rick Nankin, who won the R500 000 Sir Thomas Lipton Cup a record six times in recent years.

"It all came together last year when Rick (Nankin) phoned and asked me put something together.

"Most of our crew last year were in standard nine and we learned a lot. Now we're a lot better, we've set the rig better, we've had the bottom resprayed and our boat is much faster," he said.

James refuted any suggestion that his crew could be intimidated against the likes of distinguished rivals that include champion SA yachtsman Geoff Meek (Gordon's Bay), Olympic stars Iain Ainslee and Greg Davis (Royal Cape) and Nankin and King (False Bay).