

# Jeantot plans to circle the world in 124 days

NEWPORT, Rhode Island — Frenchman Philippe Jeantot aims to shave 10 days off his record when he leaves Newport on Saturday to begin defending his title in the Challenge Around Alone yacht race.

The solo around-the-world yacht race, billed as "the ultimate challenge," has been held twice, with Jeantot winning both times.

He completed the first race in just over 159 days and knocked nearly 25 days off that time in the second race, finishing in 134 days.

Jeantot is widely favoured to win the race again.

"This boat, Credit Agricole IV, is about 10 per cent faster than my previous boat, and I believe I can lower the record to 124 days," he said earlier this week.

Twenty-five contestants, including two women, will set sail on Saturday in the 43 200 km survival test held every four years.

The race has three ports of call — Cape Town, Sydney, and Punta del Este in Uruguay.

In between, the skippers will be on their own, facing mountainous seas, gale-force winds and daily life-and-death decisions.

The yachts in which the lone sailors take on the world's most notorious waters — rounding Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope and the Southern Ocean's "Roaring Forties" and "Screaming Fifties" — are no larger than 60 feet (18 metres) with the smallest only 40 feet (12 metres).

The fleet of 25 yachts is divided into three categories — Class One for yachts between 15-18 m, Class Two for yachts between 12-15 m, and the Corinthian Class for unsponsored entries in the 12m-16m range.

Jeantot's boat at 18 m falls into Class One. A notable competitor on the other end of the performance scale is Canadian Jane Weber, a 45-year-old grandmother of three, who will be racing a 13 m built in 1985 — Sapa-Reuter.