

John Martin, Bertie Reed line up for elite Round the World race

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AT noon, east coast American time today, 28 of the world's most expensive yachts, skippered by the world's finest sailors, will nose out of Newport, Rhode Island, and into the Atlantic at the start of the 1990 BOC Round the World race.

Ahead of them lies 27 000 miles of lonely, dangerous sea travel; an epic voyage that will take them to Cape Town, Sydney, Punta del Este, and back to Newport.

In this elite field ready to take on the "Everest of ocean challenges" are two South Africans, John Martin and Bertie Reed.

Martin, on Allied Bank, and Reed, on Grinaker, would like nothing more than success, if not in the overall race, then at least in the first leg, to their home port.

Martin, whose boat has appeared faster than Reed's — he and brother Ian broke the TransAtlantic Doublehander monohull record recently — is

World's top sailors set out from Newport

among the race favourites.

In the last BOC, John finished first in two of the four legs but had to concede the overall victory to Philippe Jeantot, the Frenchman on Credit Agricole who is seeking his third victory.

Reed, the only other competitor in the fleet doing the race for the third time, is pretty confident that, given a fair shake of the dice, he will be up with the first three boats.

Reed, only a few months

ago, was forced to retire from the Globe Round the World race with boat damage. The nearest port was Cape Town, and Grinaker had a stern to stern check-out.

Leaving nothing to chance, Reed insisted on thorough checks again in Newport, and modifications and repairs were made to the autohelm system.

"All I hope is that I have more luck than I did last time," said the man they

call "Biltong" down in the Cape.

Strangely, Martin's pre-race optimism was not on a par with his exuberance after the run from the Cape to England for the start of the TransAtlantic, nor indeed, with his joy after the Doublehander success.

Argus yachting correspondent Henri du Plessis reports from Newport, that Martin, in fact, has "a serious problem on his hands".

The yacht has not been performing as well off the wind as he expected writes Du Plessis, and his mast is about two metres shorter than those of his opponents.

Allied Bank has proved herself to be ultra fast upwind, but Martin is disatisfied with the downwind performance.

Martin told him: "I cannot change the mast at this stage. Another one would cost about R400 000. The boat is still very fast, and I'll just have to work harder."

He added: "We'll see what happens at the end of the first leg."

However, in Newport, Allied Bank, one of the lightest Class One yachts in the event, is still being hailed as a favourite.

The first leg of the race to Cape Town and the second leg to Sydney, which starts on November 24, are about 7 000 miles each. From Sydney, where the yachts depart on February 3 next year, to Punte del Este, it is 7 800 miles, and the last leg, starting on March 30, is just over 6 000 miles.



John Martin and Bertie Reed (right) in relaxed mood at Newport, Rhode Island, before the start of the 1990/91 BOC race. The two South Africans — Reed on Grinaker and Martin on Allied Bank — could be among the frontrunners when the first leg of the round-the-world solo race ends in Cape Town.