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SAILING

CAPE TIMES

DALE GRANGER

PARAPLEGIC sailor Russel Vollmer is bracing himself for a barrage of abuse from his six crew in January when he sets out on ITI Winforce to become the first yachtsman to skipper a boat across the Atlantic in the Cape-to-Rio yacht race.

When Vollmer, a regular rogue in Table Bay, hurdles the horizons in the epic 3 600-mile blue water classic he will be sailing in the wake of a pioneering Zimbabwean paraplegic couple who some years back made a daring ocean crossing to America.

Pete and Liz Fordred, while living in Durban in the early 1980s, bought a boat only to find themselves embroiled in ongoing battles with Port Control, who weren't prepared to allow them to sail the yacht together without any able bodied crew on board.

Eventually they sailed the boat to Cape Town before crossing the Atlantic to Fort Lauderdale



where they sold the boat and now live.

When Vollmer sails in Table Bay, his crew do not treat him any differently to any other able bodied rascal onboard. "We've put together a bunch of hooligans and when I fall down they kick me, they abuse me," says Vollmer explaining the common, often volatile characteristic of racing.

Once they're back in the pub though, all's forgiven and forgotten. That's yacht racing.

Everyone at Royal Cape knows Vollmer will succeed in his ocean crossing and he himself says of the prevailing attitude. "I don't see why anyone should let anything get in their way, even if you are sitting in a wheelchair. I know a lot of disabled people in this world, some wear glasses, others are epileptics. But if you're always feeling sorry for yourself you might as well jump off Table Mountain".

Bravo Russel.