



PICTURE: AP

AMERICA'S Cup challenger Emirates Team New Zealand in Marseilles Harbour, southern France, in a battle against BMW Oracle Racing (United States) in the opening act of the 32nd America's Cup yesterday. SA's Team Shosholoza fought bravely but lost to faster yachts

## Team Shosholoza 'sailing a learning curve'

HENRI DU PLESSIS <sup>REPORT</sup> 10/9/2006

GREAT race starts and solid tactics on the water held promise for Team Shosholoza's future in America's Cup match racing, but an occasional error and a lack of boat speed caused them two losses.

The Bay of Marseille cooked during the first day of match racing during the Louis Vuitton Act 1 regatta at this French city on the Mediterranean yesterday. Aggressive sailing was the style and close-quarters battles at the gun made for great excitement as the six yachts taking part in this precursor to the America's Cup of 2007 fought it out for supremacy.

The crews tested each other in

good winds that grew steadily as the afternoon progressed.

K-Challenge finally beat Shosholoza to the line in the first "flight" of match races that saw the yachts start the race two by two in sequence.

Shosholoza's starting tactics saw them leaving the French team virtually standing at the start, the wind out of their sails. The faster K-Challenge slowly caught up, however, and, after a nail-biting race on the first beat and first run, the Frenchmen were allowed to snatch the lead when the South Africans erred while dropping their spinnaker for the rounding of the down-wind mark.

Shosholoza lost speed and turned wide, letting the French

team through closer to the mark and higher in the wind.

Other boats that scored in the first flight were BMW Oracle, the main 2003 challenger from San Francisco in the United States, and cup defenders Alinghi of Switzerland.

In the second flight, Shosholoza again made a good start, avoiding the attentions of Team New Zealand, and crossed the line slightly ahead of the Kiwi boat.

The Kiwis attacked the South Africans again after the start and then successfully protested the South African boat when it turned in towards them slightly too early and too closely.

The New Zealand boat's superior speed in a freshening breeze

put paid to any attempts by Shosholoza to catch up. But the South Africans battled on and, at times, were able to make better use of wind patterns in the bay to match the New Zealanders for speed. They continued to match the Kiwis' tacks and gybes to the finish line.

Shosholoza skipper Geoff Meek said: "It's a pity we got that one turn around the mark wrong, but we are learning and that is part of it."

In the second race, Alinghi and BMW Oracle were the other scorers. In match racing, only the winners get points, as in the final America's Cup races.

Two match-race flights will be sailed today if the weather allows and one tomorrow.