



ICY CHALLENGE: International yachtsman Skip Novak prepares his yacht for his trip to the Antarctic at Royal Cape Yacht Club yesterday. His crew (from left) Alex Hazell, Giselle Botha and Gcobani Mfobo do last-minute checks. *Picture: ALAN TAYLOR*

Off to Antarctic to sail in the legendary wake of Shackleton

ALEX PETERSEN *CAPE TIMES*
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SAILOR, mountaineer and adventurer extraordinary Skip Novak and his team were hard at work in Cape Town harbour yesterday preparing Novak's yacht Pelagic Australis for its departure tomorrow for further adventures in the icy reaches of the Southern Ocean.

The 74-foot aluminium boat, specially designed to withstand harsh Arctic conditions, will collect a team of adventurers in South America to re-enact the

ordeal of Sir Ernest Shackleton, who crossed the snow-bound mountain passes and wilderness of South Georgia alone – from King Haakon Sound to the whaling port of Grytviken – to summon help.

Shackleton stumbled into Grytviken exhausted, but his successful crossing meant the saving of the crew he had left with his ship *Endurance*, crushed in the Antarctic ice, and also the crew of the 20-foot whaler *James Caird* with whom he had sailed the 800

miles from Antarctica to South Georgia. His trip is one of the epics of sailing history.

Novak, a veteran of four Whitbread Round the World Races, first hit international headlines when he was on *Drum*, the yacht owned by Duran Duran lead singer Simon LeBon when *Drum* lost its keel, and turned turtle.

Since then the feisty American sailor has combined his love of mountaineering with increasingly adventurous sailing escapades. The yacht,

which was built in SA in 2003, has had adventures in the Arctic from Spitzbergen, and attempted to sail the infamous Northwest Passage across the top of Canada, but was defeated by icepacks.

Back in Cape Town, Pelagis Australis has undergone a complete refit by local industry specialists. The yacht will be sailed to South America by Briton Alex Hazell, Giselle Botha from Port Alfred, and Lawrence Lagnado, who arrives from Britain tomorrow.