



The South African yacht Ilanda is expected to withdraw from the Cape-to-Rio race after being damaged in a storm while sailing this week from Durban to Cape Town. Her mainsail was ripped and a crewman injured. She has now put in at East London.

Rio race yacht badly damaged in high seas

DAVID ALEXANDER, an experienced sailor and navigator on the Durban ketch, Ilanda, en route for Cape Town to take part in next month's Cape-to-Rio race, which he is to report for the SUNDAY TIMES, sent this report from the East London Yacht Club after a hazardous trip from Durban this week in which high winds and seas almost wrecked the yacht:

27.12.70

GALE FORCE WINDS and mountainous seas almost wrecked the 48-ft. ketch, Ilanda, off Port St. Johns early on Christmas morning.

Ilanda, badly damaged in the storm, will possibly be out of the Cape-to-Rio race.

She limped into East London today under repaired and reefed mainsail and storm jib, with Dudley Hills, one of her nine-man crew, injured.

Frankly, I thought we had had it. Only a magnificently equipped and built boat, and a tremendous crew, saved us from danger.

The owner of the boat, restaurateur, Mr. Peter Boshoff, whose attractive wife Jean manned the galley and the radio, thinks we might be out of the race. It does not seem possible to repair Ilanda and have her seaworthy in time

for the Cape Town start on January 16.

The trip to Cape Town was expected to take eight to ten days. Just before midnight on Christmas Eve we were struck by a terrific squall about 50 miles off Port St. Johns.

The mainsail ripped away from the mast, two other sails flew away, the anchor unshipped from its lashing, and the propeller nearly broke away from the shaft casing.

The mainsail ripped away from the mast with a terrible crack and the anchor broke from its lashing and badly damaged the foredeck. The navigation lights went out.

As the sail broke away, a flying winch handle which had

come adrift smashed Dudley Hills across his arm. The propeller, jarred and pounded by the smashing seas, threatened to break loose from its shaft.

We were in trouble.

The crew worked feverishly but without panic. The night was pitch black and the screaming wind and lashing seas did not make our job easier. We managed to repair the mainsail and bend it back on to the mast.

We ran smack into a south-westerly gale which young crew member, Hugo Ashton, son of the famous Bulawayo yachtsman, Dr. Hugh Ashton, measured as "force nine".

We had reefed the mainsail deep. All we had left for the fore triangle was the storm jib, a very small sail of heavy, high-strength canvas. We bent that on and reefed the main sail even deeper to keep a sail balance.

We staggered into East London and looked for a doctor for Dudley. He is all right now, but a bit sore and still a little shocked.

As it seems Ilanda will not be repaired in time for the gun on January 16, I shall be looking for another berth aboard a Cape-to-Rio race yacht for on-the-spot coverage of the race for the SUNDAY TIMES.