

Yacht skipper rescued in high Atlantic seas

Post Correspondent

CAPE TOWN — John Biddlecombe, skipper of the R2-million yacht ACI Crusader, arrived in Cape Town today a weary and disappointed man after being rescued in the Atlantic.

In two days of drama he was hit by a wave, eight metres high, which damaged his boat.

He was left drifting helplessly in a gale and was taken in tow in a 46km/h wind and three-metre to four-metre swells by the South African Navy minesweeper SAS Windhoek.

The Australian tailender in the first leg of the BOC Challenge round-the-world yacht race intends completing the race however.

Biddlecombe's steering gear was seriously damaged and his aluminium boom buckled when sailed into a 90km/h south-easter about 60 miles west of Cape Town.

He signalled Cape Town Radio yesterday that he had sprung a leak and lost steering and SAS Windhoek left immediately from Simonstown at the request of the Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre.

The ship found him at sunset following pinpoint navigation.

Sharp-eyed sailors using binoculars picked up his mast from more than five miles away and the boat was attached to the tow before nightfall.

It was a delicate operation getting the line across to Biddlecombe even with the help of two sailors sent across to ACI Crusader in an inflatable dinghy.