

City men out to conquer the waves

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Pretoria boasts two members of South Africa's America's Cup challenge - Cape Town-based Team Shosholoza.

The team hopes to challenge the current title holders, the Swiss, who snatched the trophy from Team New Zealand in 2003.

Former Pretoria Boys' High pupil, David Rae (30), joined Team Shosholoza last year as its mainsail trimmer.

The mainsail trimmer plays a pivotal role on a race yacht by either decreasing or increasing the main sail's surface area, depending on wind conditions.

Rae, who competed in the 2000 Sydney-Hobart Race and has notched up seven Lipton Challenge Cup regattas, says he is privileged to be part of South Africa's bid to challenge for the America's Cup.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to compete in this prestigious event and to bring sailing to a broader spectrum of South Africans," said Rae.

A season spent racing 18-foot skiffs in Sydney, Australia, gives Rae a decisive edge in his responsibilities aboard the Shosholoza and he brings valuable experience to the team.

"We still have a way to go until 2007. I am confident of doing our country proud," he says.

To strengthen its challenge, Team Shosholoza assembled a formidable design team, headed by renowned British yacht designer, Jason Ker.

The team will be building two yachts to replace the current vessel, which is considered competitively obsolete.

Former Pretoria University

engineering student, Sipiwe Mthandi (26), is responsible for the team's performance analysis and computer programming.

Mthandi jumped ship from Denel where he worked on missile programmes when he was given the opportunity of becoming involved in the country's America's Cup challenge.

"Working on the design team presents new challenges in my chosen field and the chance to be part of the whole challenge experience," said Mthandi.

Refusing to elaborate on the nature of the new boat designs, he says the first boat, due for completion in April, is a preliminary design. "We will use this boat as a test-bed for our final race-boat design with which the America's Cup will be contested," said Mthandi.



SAILING AHEAD: Sipiwe Mthandi and David Rae are confident of Team Shosholoza lifting the coveted America's Cup trophy in the first ever challenge to be launched by an African team.