

Yachtsmen ready themselves for race

The Star Bureau

NEW YORK — South Africa's contenders in the gruelling BOC challenge Round the World solo yacht race are preparing their boats for final inspection to ensure they qualify for the start at Newport, Rhode Island, next weekend.

John Martin and Bertie Reed are competing in a field of 25 world class sailors with many million-dollar boats.

"There's a lot of innovative design," said John Martin from his temporary home at the famous yachting town.

"Every boat is different, and some of them are quite fantastic."

All competitor's boats undergo a half day-long scrutinisation by a committee of former competitors and experts.

The 31-year-old veteran of ocean sailing won the double handed race from Plymouth, England, to Newport last month, sailing with compatriot Rob Sharp.

Martin said the biggest news in the yacht basin was the late arrival of Philippe Jeantot, the Frenchman who won the last single-handed around the world challenge.

Another Frenchman, Yves Terlain, also arrived late.

"The race committee has to decide what kind of penalties there should be. It's hard on the other competitors who've really struggled to get here in time," he said.

As the scheduled start of the race approaches, the tension in Newport is growing, Martin said, "but the comradeship and friendship is fantastic."