

BUSINESS

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Drama as rogue wave swamps Thunderchild

DURBAN — One of the fancied boats in the Crystic Beachcomber Crossing, the Cape Town-based 15m Thunderchild, was swamped by a massive wave and her crew almost washed overboard while sailing for Mauritius this week.

The giant wave shorted the boat's entire electrical system, including all navigation equipment, and she was forced to sail into Port Elizabeth for emergency repairs.

The racing sloop — said to be one of the fastest boats competing in the prestige race between Mauritius and Durban next month — was being skippered by experienced Dave Elcock, who was delivering the boat to the island on be-

half of owner Vince Goldswain.

Speaking from Cape Town, Goldswain's son Glenn said the boat had been surfing "fantastically" and doing about 17 knots an hour in strong winds when the rogue wave hit them.

"The wind was a steady 40-knot south-westerly but the seas weren't particularly rough. In fact, some of the guys weren't even wearing foul weather gear.

"Then, at about midnight, this massive wave pooped the boat from behind. Most of the crew were flung out of the cockpit, but, fortunately, everyone was wearing lifelines and so no-one went overboard.

"If someone had, it would have been pretty hairy trying to find them in the dark".

"The boat was leaning to port at the time, and this wall of water came pouring through the companionway into the cabin, swamping the galley and the affecting the electrical system.

"There must have been about half-a-metre of water sloshing about below and everyone just grabbed buckets or manned the pumps".

The damaged electronics, including a sophisticated weatherfax, were flown to Cape Town to be repaired, and Thunderchild was able to resum her voyage. — Sapa.