

Washed overboard, but SA solo sailor carries on

Own Correspondent
NEWPORT — Anthony Steward, the South African attempting to become the first person to sail an open boat singlehanded around the world, has reached Antigua in the Carribean.

Steward, 27, a Springbok dinghy sailor and experienced ocean yachtsman, left Cape Town in February and has survived food poisoning, being washed overboard and four months of being drenched in sea water.

He sails, eats and sleeps in a minute cockpit aboard his 5,8 m **NCS Challenger**.

He flew to Rhode Island to wish the crew of Grinaker good luck before they set off on the Transatlantic race to Torquay.

Sunburnt and tired, Steward admitted he had reached the stage where

the pressure to succeed in his mission had become almost unbearable.

'When I left Cape Town I wanted to prove something to myself. However, I now feel compelled to complete the voyage, not for myself but because I am a South African.'

Still aching from semi-healed salt sores on his legs and buttocks, Steward said he had been very depressed after interrogation by Barbados immigration officials.

'I was the first singlehander to cross the Atlantic in an open boat, yet I was cross-questioned about apartheid for two days simply because I was a white South African.'

Steward said he was forced to put into Barbados because he had run out of water and food. He arrived on the island weak and covered in salt sores after a 17-day 2 000-

mile voyage from Fernando da Hornos.

Steward was not allowed to stay ashore and slept in NCS Challenger's cramped cockpit under a wet sleeping bag instead of relaxing in a warm bath and sleeping between clean sheets.

Only the next afternoon, after four days without food, did his interrogators begin to accept he was not a supporter of apartheid.

'After that they were really wonderful and although I asked for 48 hours they allowed me to stay on the island for a week.'

He said he was concerned that he was expected to complete his circumnavigation quickly.

'When I set off, I thought I could do it in a year, but I think I will have to take a bit longer. I hope South Africans and my backers will realise I

have taken a tremendous battering and must have a break.'

'I just hope people will realise that its mostly quite unpleasant out there.'

Often at night he is woken by a wave breaking onto his boat. 'You have to wait until sunrise to warm up, because the sleeping bags are wet,' he said.

Some days there was no wind. 'Then I feel I am going mad. The sea is so flat and I can't get the boat moving.'

Steward had a surprise waiting for him in Newport. His girlfriend, Karen Olsen, an American geochemist studying at the University of Cape Town, was there to meet him.

The next leg of his voyage to the Panama Canal where he will decide whether to rest for a few months.