



TEAM SHOSHOLOZA

Parents of *Shosholoza* Sailor Sell Up and Sail for Valenica

by Di Meek



The Rauscher family from Boksburg - Rusty, Martie and Eric.

The parents of a Team Shosholoza sailor have been so inspired by South Africa's first challenge for the America's Cup that they have sold their home, bought a yacht and set sail for Valencia, Spain, to support the team in the final rounds of racing leading up to the Cup in June this year.

That they had never been on a yacht before was simply a minor detail for adventurers Martie 46, a bookkeeper, and Rusty Rauscher, 48, who had a racing car repair business in Boksburg – a dry highveld town east of Johannesburg some 600 kilometres from the sea.

"Reinhardt was our biggest inspiration. He was lucky enough

to join Team Shosholoza in January 2005 and we are just so proud of him and what the team is doing for South Africa that for a long time now we've wanted to be part of it all. Then our younger son Eric finished school and went off to Durban to do a yachtmaster's course. So we were sitting alone at home one night thinking: What about us? What are we going to do now? That's when we decided to sell up and sail away!" said Rauscher senior.

By April last year Rauscher was in Cape Town buying a 13 metre yacht called *Halcon*. A few weeks later he, 19-year-old Eric and a delivery skipper set off on a 1000km maiden voyage from the Cape to Richard's

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The heavily laden *Halcyon* anchored off Mozambique having set sail for the Mediterranean to support their son who is crewing on *Shosholozo*.

Bay in KwaZulu/Natal where they would keep the boat until things were wound up at home in Boksburg.

"I've spent a lot of time at sea fishing, but this was my first time on a yacht. Before we even got to Cape Point we went into a storm. I was terrified. In fact I have never been so terrified in my life! But I looked into the eyes of my son and our skipper and saw no fear. That's when I knew we would be OK," said Rusty.

Soon their house and business were sold and regular trips were being made to

Richard's Bay to stock up the yacht. By the end of August they were ready to set sail. The yacht was plastered with 'Proud Supporters of Team Shosholozo' stickers and Mozambique was earmarked as their first stop.

"We'll spread the word about Africa's first America's Cup entry as we make our way up the continent and through the Suez Canal. Our biggest worry though is having to run the gauntlet of pirates and thugs off the notoriously dangerous Somalia coast. But, no matter what, we must be in Valencia by April.

"We have to be there to support South Africa in the Louis Vuitton Cup – the challenger series which decides which single team squares up against the defending champions, the Swiss Team Alinghi, in the America's Cup itself. And when it's over, we'll turn around and sail back to South Africa," said Rusty from a cell phone at sea.

He said they hit a storm some 200 nautical miles out of Richard's Bay and had to turn back because of a diesel leak. They set off again 10 days later.

"No one was sea sick and we caught a lot of fish. We live on fresh tuna and fantastic sushi! It's pure heaven out here! We'll spend about two weeks in Mozambique and then head north to Tanzania where we arranged to meet Reinhardt and *Shosholozo* team mate Johann Spilhaus, who will spend time with us during their Christmas break and give us some more sailing lessons. We can't wait!" said Rusty.

At that stage the Rauschers were a couple of days into their voyage. Since then their satellite phone has been faulty. However a message relayed via another yacht said they had arrived safely in the turquoise waters of Mozambique's Bazaruto archipelago.

Latest news of the Rauschers came via Johann Spilhaus who flew back to Cape Town for Christmas after spending two weeks cruising the islands with them off Tanzania and Zanzibar.

"They admitted to being a bit frightened initially, especially in heavy weather and big seas, when they started going backwards! But

they have had some amazing experiences. They are very brave to have dropped everything like that and sold up to do this trip," said Johann, who at 125 kg is not only the lead grinder but the strongest and heaviest on Team Shosholozo.

Coincidentally Johann's parents, Erika and John Spilhaus of Villiersdorp in the Cape, also packed up their home, sold their business and followed the team to Valencia in March this year. Both passionate followers of the America's Cup, John is now in charge of hydraulics on yacht *Shosholozo* and Erika assists with shore activities.

Reinhardt, who weighs in at a hefty 109 kg, celebrated his 21st birthday in September. He was the youngest sailor competing in the Louis Vuitton Acts in Valencia. Even more extraordinary is that his first yacht race ever was in an America's Cup event in June 2005. Since then he has toured Europe with Team Shosholozo and raced in America's Cup events in Sweden, Italy and Spain.

Reinhardt's meteoric rise from the school rugby field to the pinnacle of world yachting was the result of sheer dogged determination.

Just out of school in 2004, he had completed a three month sailing course in Durban with the intention of cruising the world when he read a newspaper report about Team Shosholozo scouting for heavyweight grinders. He immediately applied, but the team were already on their way to Europe.

He was devastated, but not deterred. Back home in Boksburg, friends and family helped him achieve his dream. Dad Rusty hand-built a grinding pedestal for him and installed it in the garage. Mom Martie decorated the room with giant size *Shosholozo* banners and inspirational words from team managing director Captain Salvatore Sarno and sailing manager Paul Standbridge. School friends joined him at gym for strenuous daily workouts.

Rauscher finally tried out with the team in December 2004. He says his best Christmas present ever was being given a three month trial, and by April 2005 he was on the team.

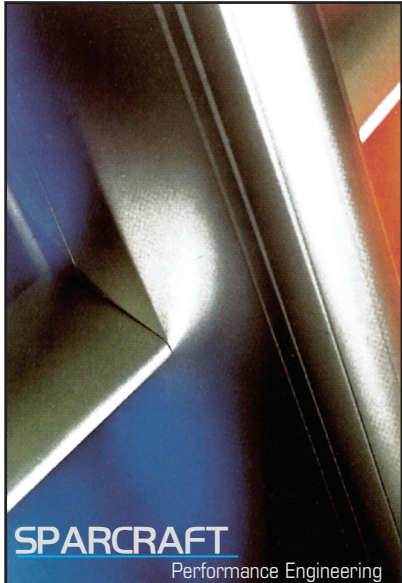
"As a team we have one thing on our minds ... sailing to win the America's Cup! I want to make South Africa proud," said Reinhardt.

Boksburg has also celebrated his success by naming him not only Sportsman of the Year but the city's 2005 Celebrity of the Year.

"I am still a Boksburg boy. Even though my folks have sold our house and everything, Boksburg will always be my home!" added Reinhardt. ⚓

* The grinders are a select group of 100 kg plus sailors who represent the power house of *Shosholozo*. Their specific task is to drive the winches which control some 750 square metres of sail area to power up the 24-ton America's Cup class campaign yacht for optimum speeds in controlled tactical manoeuvres. When racing at full pelt the team relies on the combined strength of six to eight grinders working flat out for intermittent explosive periods of 10 to 30 seconds over some two hours of racing.

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