

SPORTS ROUND-UP

SAILING

with Ingrid Abery

OLYMPIC rowing hero James Cracknell has paid tribute to the courage of the crews on the eve of the start of the 2005/06 Clipper Round the World Yacht Race.

The double Olympic gold medalist has just windsurfed the English Channel and is attempting to row the Atlantic - but the real-life action man admits sailing round the world is a challenge too far.

As he prepares to fire the start gun for the 35,000-mile race, the world record rower said: "I've always had a fascination with the ocean and am racing across the Atlantic in the autumn in a rowing boat but I'm not sure I'd be ready to tackle the Southern Seas just yet!

"I'm full of admiration for those who are taking part in the challenge - I'm sure it'll be a life-changing experience and wish them all the very best of luck."

The rower's tribute comes as he prepares to fire the cannons which will start the ten-month race from the River Mersey at noon tomorrow.

Southampton doctor Nicholas Allen, 42, from Stubbington will join Cardiff Clipper for the second leg beginning from Cascais, Portugal in ten days time for the following six legs.

Councillor Warren Bradley, Liverpool city council's executive member for culture, said of the crews: "Their courage will be tested to the full over the coming weeks and months."

The race is divided into


FROM ONE CHAMPION TO ANOTHER:

Southampton bridal shop owner Shelly Jory was nominated for the Yachtsperson of the Year award yesterday by world powerboat Class 1 champ Steve Curtis. Warsash-based Curtis, six-times a world title-winner, decided to vote for Jory on the first day of the Southampton Boat Show after she won the Honda 4-Stroke 225hp British title last weekend. Along with Libby Keir, they were the only all-girl team in the event.

Clipper crews in test of courage

seven legs, following a challenging route around the globe which takes in the Southern Ocean.

The yachts will visit 12 international ports - including Salvador (Brazil), Fremantle (Australia), Qingdao

(China), Victoria (Canada) and New York - before the race reaches a thrilling climax in Liverpool in July 2006.

Ten crews will set sail on the epic ten-month adventure in a bid to bring home the coveted Clipper Cup. Yachts rep-

resenting ten nations, including Australia, Canada, China, Singapore and South Africa as well as Jersey and Glasgow, will be taking part.

Each of the ten identical 68ft yachts will be raced by a professional skipper with an

international crew of 17 amateurs - some of whom will have never sailed before.

England's hope of lifting the Clipper Cup rests with the Liverpool '06 Clipper, sponsored by Liverpool Culture Company.