



Sailing Toward a New Life

At the Izivunguvungu MSC Foundation for Youth sailing school, young South Africans from the slums learn all they need for a better life. Three of them have made the leap into Team Shosholoza, which is sailing in the preliminary regattas for the America's Cup this year.

■ Even as a child, Marcello Burricks knew that he couldn't hope for too many chances. His parents had been forced by the South African apartheid regime into the "Slangkop" township in Cape Town, and had to live there in a tin hut with their four sons. Their everyday life was marked by poverty and violence: When Mr. Burricks was eight years old, one of his fellow pupils attacked him with a knife – several scars on his chest still remind him of the incident. At 14, Mr. Burricks was arrested because he had beaten up a teacher. He joined a gang and eked out a living as a "gangster". "There was no alternative," said the 21-year-old. "There was no other way of surviving in the township."

The only chance for the young South African: He had to get out of the ghetto. And he made it – with the help of a national sporting idol. Olympic sailor Ian Ainslie gave Mr. Burricks a place at the Izivunguvungu MSC Foundation for Youth, which he had founded in 2001 – a school for colored children and adolescents from the townships. Mr. Bur-

ricks, the son of a fisherman and the grandson of a whaler, received professional sailing teaching from then on, and crammed navigation and ship construction. And he came to know a different world: "The most important aim of the school is to communicate social values," says Mr. Ainslie. "When

they come to us, many of the pupils only know the leaders of gangs as authority figures."

Mr. Burricks worked hard – with success. He made the leap to gain a place on Team Shosholoza, the first African crew to take part in the America's Cup. His teacher, Ian Ainslie, is acting as the Shosholoza's strategist in the competition, which will be held this year off the coast of Valencia. "He was enormously keen at our school from the very beginning," said Mr. Ainslie about his protégé. "Sometimes we really had to chase him off the boat, so that he would do his schoolwork."

Talent in the team


The Izivunguvungu MSC Foundation for Youth currently teaches 300 pupils. In addition to Marcello Burricks, who is on board as an all-rounder, bowman Golden Mgedeza and the second bowman Solomon Dipeere, two more graduates of the school, are also Shosholoza crew members. Both come from the Kwa-Thema township on the outskirts of Johannes-

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They come from the south, and they feel the call of the sea: some of the current total of 300 pupils learning seamanship in the team at the Izivunguvungu MSC Foundation for Youth

burg. "I think that some team members were skeptical – they thought we would test the boys for a while and that they wouldn't cut it," says Mr. Ainslie. "It obviously hasn't happened that way." They have long since proved their huge talent at regattas. For instance, Golden Mgedeza won the most famous race in the country, the Lipton Cup, in 2002.

Underdogs with a tailwind

Mr. Ainslie had already met Mr. Mgedeza and Mr. Dippeere in 1996 – after the Olympic Games in Atlanta, he worked as a teacher in a high school in Cape Town. The two youths, just 15 years old back then, had received a grant to attend the school. Mr. Ainslie taught them sailing – it was the beginning of the Izivunguvungu project. In parallel to preparing for the Sydney Olympics in the year 2000, he ran sailing courses for young blacks from the townships once a week. "Just for fun," said Mr. Ainslie. He would never have dared to even think about a project like an America's Cup application.

But that changed when the passionate sailor Salvatore Sarno came onto the scene. At first, he hired the youths as crew members for his racing yacht. And finally, he dared to take a big step. With a tight budget and a huge portion of optimism, Mr. Sarno and Mr. Ainslie started Team Shosholoza. "A total-

ly crazy idea," was Mr. Ainslie's initial assessment – but he joined the team.

Mr. Sarno's persistence has paid off. The team now includes the Briton Paul Standbridge and the German Tim Kröger, experienced professional sailors who have been successful over several years. The crew is being supported financially and with high-tech equipment by the main sponsor, T-Systems. And in the meantime, Team Shosholoza – which started out as a rank outsider – has now registered its first victories in preliminary regattas for the America's Cup, and even finished fifth among the 12 competitors at one of the final races off Sicily last October. "We certainly caused a few surprises," said Ian Ainslie. "And there might be a few more to come."

The team itself is now absolutely delighted, and not just with its initial successes. "My life has been completely transformed by sailing," said all-rounder Marcello Burricks. "I still find it all absolutely unbelievable."

IMME UBBEN



"Unbelievable...": Professional sailor Marcello Burricks (above) is still thrilled about the astonishing changes in his life. The next generation of pupils at the foundation are already following in his footsteps