

On yellow brick road

All-Australian team to compete in the Tour de France

THE green light has been given for the first all-Australian team to race in the Tour de France.

The historic team is named GreenEDGE and it will boast the likes of track star and road racer Jack Bobridge, multiple Olympian Stuart O'Grady, Grand Tour stage winner Simon Gerrans and top sprinter Matt Goss.

Bobridge described news of the team being granted WorldTour status next year as "awesome".

But before the Australian team lines up in races such as the Tour de France and Giro d'Italia, it will compete next month in two major Australian events.

They are the Jayco Bay Cycling



Amanda Lulham

series in Melbourne and the Santos Tour Down Under in Adelaide, which is the opening WorldTour event of the year.

Backed by well-known businessman Gerry Ryan, the Australians will name their line-ups for the two events in the coming weeks.

Bobridge said riders will be keen to make an instant impression when they don the yet-to-be revealed strip in the first WorldTour event.

"Definitely we'll be there (at the

Tour Down Under) with the best team possible to win," said Bobridge, who is rated one of the sport's most exciting talents.

"Our whole objective will be to win."

The Australians have been granted a UCI WorldTour licence for 2012-13.

"This is a key moment for Australian cycling and we are proud to enter the WorldTour with a new and extremely motivated project," team founder Ryan said.

"I am convinced that we will bring great moments and a lot of passion to the sport with this team."

The Australians are one of just 18 teams to be granted UCI WorldTour status, which makes them eligible

to compete in all of the events in the series.

"This is a team built for the future and we are obviously thrilled to have the licence in place," team boss Shayne Bannan.

"We have been confident all along during the process, but at the same time humble towards the criteria you need to meet in order to get the final approval."

"We are currently busy with our first team camp and everything is coming together for a great debut year in the WorldTour."

"We are a young team with big ambitions about giving back to the sport and creating excitement both in Australia and across the globe."



Starter: Olympian Stuart O'Grady

Happy couple: Anthony Minichiello and Terry Biviano at Rushcutters Bay yesterday
Picture: Brett Costello



Bass Strait stories put wind up Mini

Amanda Lulham
Sailing

ANTHONY Minichiello is quickly realising that what he thought would be the ride of his life in the Sydney to Hobart could be more like a Bass Strait boot camp - complete with crash tackles, king hits and body slams.

The Roosters fullback is the latest athlete to join the crew of Anthony Bell's supermaxi Loyal for the race south.

But after he and his shoe designer fiancée Terry Biviano attended a fund-raising function for the Loyal Foundation, Minichiello is bracing for potentially bruising time.

"Some of the stories the other guys on the boat have been telling me have been fairly interesting," Minichiello said.

"But it's something I've always wanted to do. I know it will take me out of my comfort zone, but that's good."

"I'm still hoping for those tailwinds. Not the nasty stuff."

Depending on the weather, crews can experience a thrilling high-speed sleigh ride or be pounded into stomach-churning, steep seas and vicious headwinds that barrel out of the Southern Ocean.

Boats will break and bodies will bruise, but for most sailors to "do a Hobart" is reward enough for the pasting they expect in Bass Strait - where waves pass over a shallow bottom and can break like surf on a beach.

Minichiello believes the journey aboard the 100-footer, which is one of the headline acts this year, could be life changing.

Watch the video

Amanda Lulham talks with nervous NRL star Anthony Minichiello and fiancée Terry Biviano ahead of his first ever Sydney to Hobart

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"I spoke to Skippy (Geoff Huegill) and Matt Hayden and they both said their mental preparation and focus was rejuvenated after the race," Minichiello said of the swimmer and cricketer who raced to Hobart to raise money for the Loyal Foundation and Humpty Dumpty children's charity.

"They also said it was one of the toughest

and most challenging things they have faced and that it gave them a real mental edge afterwards."

Paralympian Kurt Fearnley, boxer Danny Green and rugby "old salts" Phil Waugh and Phil Kearns - both back for their third race on the supermaxi - are also in the celebrity crew alongside Minichiello.

Skipper Bell said all his "celebs" will have a role to play because the Loyal crew is deadly serious about winning the line honours race.

"Everyone will be putting in. We are very serious about this. We want to win," said Bell, who has twice finished behind the Mark Richards-skipped Wild Oats.

To make a donation to the Loyal Foundation, go to www.loyalfoundation.com.au