

second Sydney, nce to lesson



CHAEL MERRICK

ne Heart, a club which has had a very public invitation to the disenchanted with the perceived arrogance of the Victory to be on board. That VPL graduates Masa Ogdenovski, Manny Musvan Franjic and Nick Kalmar gone on to better things after ignored by the Victory is significant – not in isolation, because the club is going to get it right all the time but as a philosophy.

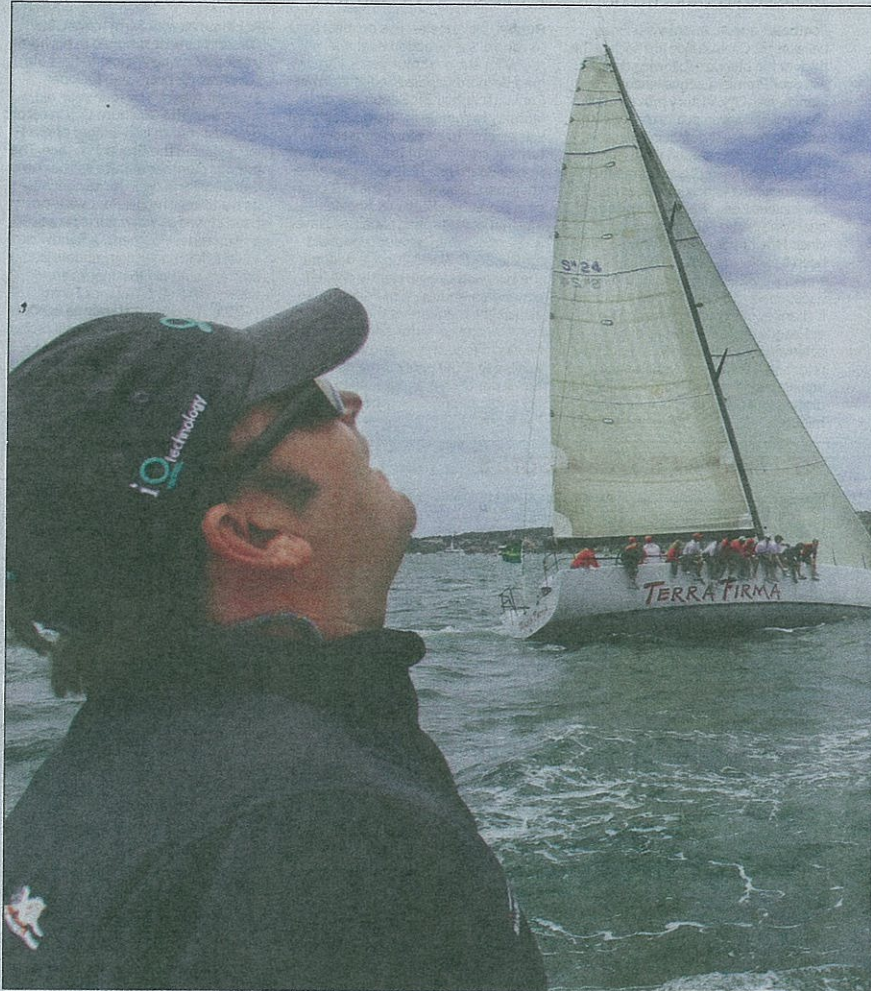
Under the Merrick-Cole partnership there was a perception the club felt they didn't need to look for their own backyard – a mistake the club can't afford to repeat. There are other issues. Cole's disengagement from the media during his time at the Victory is legendary. It wasn't common for the Victory coach to accompany Merrick into the pre-game press conference and, at the back of the room, heckle him by asking the questions.

Having started to make headway in the PR department since Melton's departure earlier this year, the Sky Club don't need to jeopardise their good relations with the fourth club. According to Melton, Melbourne is a "bankers' town and Melbourne is a "media town", so we can't expect he's going to keep a close eye on how things evolve.

He succeeded at Melbourne in a narrow, but important, results. He was backed to the former chairman Geoff Lord, even an open cheque book in process. Not long ago, the Victory were a \$12 million-a-year operation – a not-insignificant portion on beefing up the football department in order to meet the expectations of the self-proclaimed elite club in the A-League.

He was the man who pulled the strings. He'll be pulling those strings in a different city, different environment. Here's hoping he's mellowed, learnt from past mistakes.

YACHTING



Wave of expectation ... sailing master Andrew Jackson surveys the scene aboard Lahana, which ended up finishing

Wet and wild: debut race gives Fearnley a

Rupert Guinness

AFTER wheelchair racing supremacy, Kurt Fearnley had his first experience of racing on a 100-footer maxi yacht in preparation for the Sydney to Hobart race, he dubbed it "wild" – and that was without passing the heads of Sydney Harbour.

But the triple Paralympic gold medallist, whose feats include climbing the 1504 steps of Sydney's Centrepoint Tower and crawling the Kokoda Track, realises yesterday's SOLAS Big Boat Challenge on Sydney Harbour was only the entree for what is served up en-

route to Hobart come Boxing Day. Raced in south to south-westerly winds with gusts up to 23 knots, maxis dominated line honours yesterday. First was Wild Oats XI, 2 minutes 51 seconds ahead of Anthony Bell's Investec Loyal, on which Fearnley was a crewmate, and 7m 52s clear of Grant Wharington's Wild Thing, followed by Lahana at 9m 43s.

Fifth was Stephen Ainsworth's 63-footer Loki that was second on handicap to Marcus Blackmore's 52-footer Hooligan, which crossed in six place.

For Fearnley, the adrenalin rush

'I can't wait to be out there on Boxing Day.'

Kurt Fearnley

began from the start off Shark Island, when Investec Loyal and Wild Oats XI were side by side.

"It was close enough for me to board you guys at the start line," Fearnley said, looking at Wild Oats XI skipper Mark Richards.

"I was thinking about it. It was just wild mate."

That was as close as the two yachts



fourth, at the start of the SOLAS Big Boat Challenge off Shark Island yesterday. Photo: Dallas Kilponen

taste for upcoming Hobart adventure

got. By the finish of the 14 nautical mile race off Farm Cove, it had become just another boat race.

Sure, Richards made mention of the "little tussle off the line" the boats had at the start and conceded the race "was a real challenge getting the big boats around the race track". But it was soon clear there was no stopping the defending Sydney to Hobart champions.

Bell, whose Investec Loyal also placed second to Wild Oats XI at Hobart last year, had to deal with a furling problem yesterday, but he joked: "We're very good at coming second to Wild Oats actually ... if

our furling system starts to work at some stage we might actually shade one of these races."

Not that that marred Fearnley's day out. "That wasn't my mistake, so I was pretty happy with that," he said. "It was good just to get there and be on the boat while it was angry; while it's racing. You get in there, do your job. I did everything that was asked of me and can't wait until Boxing Day now."

"I've been part of some pretty good teams with my trips, three Paralympics and even the team that crossed Kokoda, we were a real tight unit. Now I have hung around with

the boys for the past few months and it's good to be part of [it]. The intensity on the boat ... I love that.

"That's why I chose to become an athlete ... when you are in front of 100,000 people in a stadium and you have to make the right choice, to be really on the game and contest right to the finish.

"I can't wait to be out there on Boxing Day ... with another thousand yachts on that harbour. It will be a little different to wheelchair racing. But then I have that instinct of competition and you take it out on to the stage ... that doesn't change no matter what sport you do."

GOLF

Christn early wi at hat-t

Martin Blake

GREG CHALMERS is the month in golf, unfamiliar place for

He is pitching for the Triple Crown of golf at the Australian Open and Masters this week and his popularity and as Chalmers ex day, life can be fickle

"After the PGA I Sydney and I got w Channel Ten were go me," he said. "My wife be on TV. That's fine. kids walked off. I was reporter who was just with a cameraman. I interest, who are you She said: 'I'm waiting mers.' I said: 'Yes, tha to my wife: 'It's only been 24 hours and my star is fading already.' It is the nature of the game."

Chalmers, 38, was not intending to play at Victoria this week but added the tournament to his schedule on the off chance he could complete the hat-trick only previously done by Robert Allenby in 2005. It was an easy decision for him even though it cut s with his family. "A wouldn't have imagi sitting here today, I crazy month," he said very fortunate in the weeks; I have been took my kids to Lun went to the zoo and bunch of dad stuff."

Aside from his shot of history, Chalmers play for this week. He is 64, and a high fin put him inside the t him a start in all the r

Players in this week Masters are competi est prize pool offered ment in almost a dec

IMG, the tournam promoter, said it had to set the prizemone down from the usual because it was given to Christmas by the Australasia, which ha

AFL

Clouds over Lovick's Star Player future

Swans draw fourth round in CWS