

Time for the Wild Boxing Day sails

AMANDA LULHAM

SHE is the short-priced favourite for the Sydney to Hobart, has won line honours the past five years and holds the race record.

And skipper Mark Richards now has an ominous warning, saying the multi-million-dollar super maxi Wild Oats is going faster than ever.

With the race to Hobart starting tomorrow week, Wild Oats looked slick off Sydney Heads as part of the Rolex Trophy series and Richards believes the boat is getting better with age.

About to line up for her seventh edition of the classic, Wild Oats has won five times — the only loss coming against Alfa Romeo in 2009.

Richards said constant modifications have kept the Australian maxi up to speed and he added that she can challenge the race record of one day, 18 hours, 40 minutes and 10 seconds.

"Absolutely, without a doubt, this is the best the boat has ever been," Richards said.

"It's a result of a lot of things; time together, modifications, general preparedness. And she is as race ready as she has ever been."

Richards and his crew have a knack of getting the boat to Hobart in one piece.

And the crew that sailed her in her maiden race south in 2005 will again form the core of the team to take her to Hobart this year.

In the brains trust are the likes of America's Cup skipper

67th ROLEX SYDNEY TO HOBART

STARTS 1pm Boxing Day
COURSE From Sydney Harbour, down the south coast, across Bass Strait
DISTANCE 628 nautical miles
FLEET SIZE 88
RACE RECORD Wild Oats 2005 one day, 18 hours, 40 minutes, 10 seconds

Iain Murray and veteran navigator Adrienne Cahalan, who is contesting her 20th race.

Hoping to counteract Wild Oats is Sydney skipper Anthony Bell on Loyal. He has secured numerous men from the Alfa Romeo team which beat Wild Oats in 2009.

Last year, Loyal made it to Hobart four hours behind Wild Oats.

When the starting gun fires on Boxing Day, it will be for the first time since the Sydney to Gold Coast race in August that the two yachts will race in anger.

In that race, Wild Oats managed to pip Loyal by just nine minutes.

"Wild Oats are the benchmark. They are the boat to beat," Bell said. "But we are giving it everything we have to do it."

The early forecast is for a fast start, but whether the conditions will be favourable enough to throw up a new race record is yet to be determined.



Ragamuffin heads for Sydney Heads during the Rolex Trophy series yesterday. Victorian skipper Rob Hanna and his team on Shogun claimed the overall handicap honours after dominating the 19 nautical mile jaunt down the coast and back. The series is used by skippers to give their crews a full workout before the long race south. Heading into the final day of racing, Shogun shares the regatta lead with Marcus Blackmore's Hooligan. Picture: Mark Evans

SMOOTH SAILING

CELEBRITIES Round-the-world solo sailor Jessica Watson and her team of 10 on the little 38-footer

Ella Bache. Another Challenge. Sporting celebrities Kurt Fearnley, Anthony Minichiello, Phil Waugh, Phil Kearns, Danny Green on Loyal along with TV presenter Karl Stefanovic

YOUNGSTERS Ed Psaltis' new 40-footer AFR Midnight Rambler lining up in her first ever Sydney to Hobart. Jessica Watson and her crew, who have an average age of just 19 and a half

OLDIES The beautiful timber yacht Maluka being sailed south by veteran Sean Langman, daughter Nicky and son Peter, just 18. Ocean racing veteran Syd Fischer at 83, the oldest sailor in the race south



MONSTERS The biggest yachts in the fleet are the 100-footers Wild Oats and Loyal. Also racing are fellow super maxis Lahana and Wild Thing

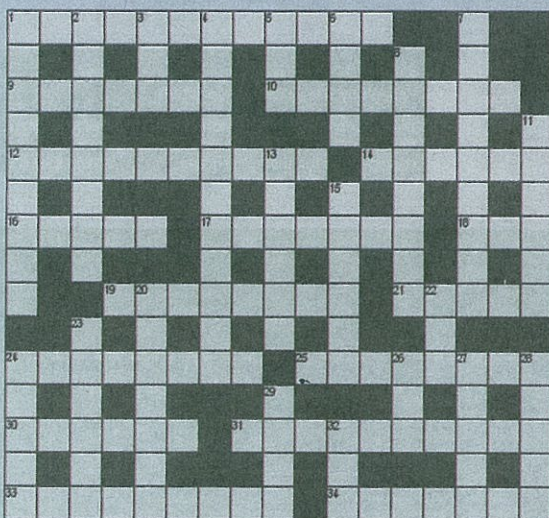
RECORD BREAKERS Sydney sailor Tony Cable will start in his 46th Sydney to Hobart on Duende to set a new mark for the most races south. The yacht Bacardi is sailing south for the 27th time, which will match the record of the most capped yacht, Phillip's Foote Witchdoctor

GIRL POWER Navigator Adrienne Cahalan will be the first woman ever to set sail in 20 Sydney to Hobart yacht races.

Cahalan also holds the record as the most successful female sailor, having been aboard Wild Oats for four of her five line honours wins and also Nicorette for her fastest time victory in 2000



SUNDAY SPORTSWORD | NO. 763 with NORM BROOKS



ACROSS

- 1 Only Australian male to reach the 2011 Wimbledon singles quarter finals. [7, 5]
- 9 Sri Lankan cricket captain. [7]
- 10 The notorious 17th at St. Andrews. [4, 4]
- 12 Classic for 3-year old horses run annually at The Curragh. [5, 5]
- 14 Took over as England captain in 1974/75 when Mike Denness dropped himself. [6]
- 16 Jonathan ----- England batsman. [5]
- 17 ----- Stadium. Lahore, Pakistan sports ground. [7]
- 18 Skating surface. [3]
- 19 Road race of 42km run at the Olympic Games. [8]
- 21 ----- Perry. US golfer. [5]
- 24 Australian 2010 V8 driving champion. [8]
- 25 AFL tea [8]
- 30 First name of 1958 Wimbledon men's singles champion Cooper. [6]
- 31 AFL club which 11 down left to join GWS. [10]
- 33 Racehorse grooms. [9]
- 34 Edwina ----- Only Australian

to win the English women's amateur title. [7]

DOWN

- 1 ----- Park. England home of equestrian horse trials. [9]
- 2 Melissa ----- Won the 2011 women's triathlon at Noosa. [8]
- 3 Timber usually used in the manufacture of cricket stumps. [3]
- 4 In May 2011 won the world IBF middleweight title in Germany. [6, 5]
- 5 Tommy ---- Wallaby and Queensland Roar centre. [3]
- 6 Controlling body of world athletics. [1, 1, 1, 1]
- 7 Won the 2008 W S Cox Plate. [9]
- 8 Florence -----, First woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. [8]
- 11 Coach of the pending AFL Team Greater Western Sydney. [6]
- 13 Nickname of Chris Handy and former AFL star Garry Hocking. [6]
- 15 Berrick -----, Wallaby centre. [6]
- 20 City which held the 1920 Olympic Games. [7]
- 22 First name of former boxing trainer McQuillan. [3]

- 23 Matt -----, US 2011 President's Cup team member. [6]
- 24 Gambling game of American origin. [5]
- 26 Dick ----, Won a diving gold medal at the 1924 Olympics. [3]
- 27 Won the 1998 AJC Epsom. [5]
- 28 First name of four times Australian women's tennis singles champion Bolton. [5]
- 29 Rode Makybe Diva in its Melbourne Cup victories. [4]
- 32 First name of former rugby league forward Kose. [3]

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

