

Wild Thing sheds weight for Syd-Hob

- by: *Amanda Lulham*
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Close quarters: (left to right) Wild Thing and Investec Loyal on the harbour this week. Picture: Brett Costello
Source: The Daily Telegraph

SKIPPER Grant Wharington has stripped more weight from his yacht Wild Thing to give him a better shot at beating the line honours favourites in this year's Sydney to Hobart.

"We are on the big Jenny Craig," said Wharington, who also shed two tonnes from Wild Thing a year ago.

The 98-footer will be lighter by two crew as well.

"All in all we're about seven tonne lighter than Wild Oats now," Wharington said.

"A big heavy car like a land cruiser is two tonnes. So imagine dragging the weight of 3 1/2 cars off the back of your boat." The weight loss has come through eradicating old technology and reducing his sail wardrobe to just seven. He has also halved the size of an average supermaxi crew.

Now painted a slimming black and looking svelte, Wharington believes the modifications have put his yacht back in the race for line honours - if Mother Nature comes to the party.

"The reality is we had to find a point of difference we can exploit," Wharington said.

"Our point of difference is that we are lighter and faster downwind. It gives us the best possibility to win should we get those conditions."

The Mark Richards-skippered Wild Oats is the pre-race favourite to claim her fifth line honours win in the Sydney to Hobart.

Her main rival is expected to be the [Anthony Bell-skippered 100-footer Loyal](#), which is carrying sporting celebrities to raise money for charity.

But Wharington believes he can match - if not outpace - both if he gets downwind conditions all the way to Hobart. [Wild Oats](#) and Loyal have had major modifications to increase their speed, while Wild Thing has had extensive repairs after a pontoon punched a hole in its stern during the Brisbane floods.

* SYDNEY to Hobart skipper Stephen Ainsworth believes practice makes perfect.

Which is why the veteran sailor was out off Sydney Heads putting his crew on the 63-footer Loki through their paces for five hours in bumpy seas and light winds yesterday.

And why they will be back out again for the next three days in the final regatta before the Sydney to Hobart.

With the battle for overall honours expected to be close, Ainsworth says the little could make the difference.

"This is great practice before the Hobart," he said of the four-day Rolex Trophy series.

"It's good to have everything gelling before the start."

After two races, Loki, Marcus Blackmore's Hooligan and Robert Hanna's Shogun are equal on points on corrected time.