

Windy weather forecast for Big Boat race

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The titans of the Sydney to Hobart fleet could have quite a ride in Tuesday's Big Boat Challenge on Sydney Harbour.

The fleet of 15 for the 14 nautical-mile race in Sydney features the two main Sydney to Hobart line honours contenders: Wild Oats XI and Investec LOYAL.

The Bureau of Meteorology has forecast southeast to southwesterly breezes of up to 30km/h.

"Sensational," was the reaction of Wild Oats XI skipper Mark Richards to the forecast.

Bob Oatley, the 83-year-old owner of Wild Oats XI, is expected to steer the boat for part of the race, which it has won on four occasions.

The crew will include at least one newcomer in Farr 40 world champion Guido Belgiorno-Nettis.

The conditions could prove a challenge to some of the crew from other sports and celebrities aboard Investec LOYAL.

Among those added to the crew this year are Paralympic wheelchair racer Kurt Fearnley, Sydney Roosters rugby league star Anthony Minichiello and television personality Karl Stefanovic.

Only boats between 50 and 100 foot in length are eligible to contest the race, which is in its 18th year.

The Big Boat Challenge is useless as a form guide to the much longer Sydney to Hobart but is valuable for testing crew work under race conditions.

Among the other prominent boats in Tuesday's fleet are established maxis Lahana, Wild Thing and Brindabella.

A number of the 98-foot Lahana's crew were scheduled to arrive from overseas and interstate on Monday.

"It'll be good to have testing conditions tomorrow, but we won't be taking any risks that might put a speed bump in our Rolex Sydney Hobart preparations," said Lahana's co-owner Peter Millard.

"We want to see a lot of pressure tomorrow and for the great race. We're hoping for a southerly all the way to Hobart."

Not all of Tuesday's fleet will be backing up for the Sydney to Hobart.

Among that contingent is the near-new TP52 Shogun V, which will make her Australian racing debut in the Big Boat Challenge after performing well in Europe.