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BY RUPERT GUINNESS SAILING
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Anthony Bell, owner and skipper of underdog Sydney to Hobart line honours contender Investec-Loyal, is so committed in his quest for an upset victory in the race that starts today he is willing to make a potentially race-winning move even if it costs him a place on the podium should it fail.

Investec Loyal last year placed second to the defending and five times line honours champion Wild Oats XI that is again favourite to reach Hobart first. However, based on how sturdy Investec Loyal proved to be last year, Bell says he will push her harder this time to put more pressure on Wild Oats XI.

Bell has told his American navigator Stan Honey and tactician Michael Coxon to chase line honours, even if it means risking the position they have.

Asked if he would be willing to lose second place in the attempt to take first, Bell told Fairfax: "One hundred per cent. Without a doubt in the world.

"I have given that instruction to Stan and to 'Cocko'. I would rather come sixth in a shot at winning than just follow it down and come second or third.

"We think we are worthy contenders. We have worked hard to get that point. But we are very well aware that we are the underdogs."

Bell said he had complete faith in Honey's judgement: "He is renowned as the best in the business. We will give him complete autocracy - well, naturally in consultation with 'Cocko' and I. But we brought him here for that reason - to help us with those risks and to take our chances."

So diligent has Honey been since arriving, he refused to work in the comfort of the crew office, and planned his strategy from the navigation station on Investec Loyal that has been moored at Rose Bay during her Sydney preparation.

"I said he could come into our offices and work; but he chose to work in the 'nav station' for three days straight - to get used to his equipment, to get used to the confined space, to get used to the boat," Bell said.

Bell realises the battle for line honours is not a two-yacht race though. The two other maxis in the fleet of 88 are Lahana and Wild Thing. Bell is also wary of the Matt Allen-owned and skippered Volvo 70, Ichi Ban, that was second on line honours in 2006, third in 2007 and 2008 and fourth last year.

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