

Wild Oats unbeatable, say stats

Stroke of Fortune as crack uncovered

D.D. McNICOLL

SANTA Claus, using a small motorboat rather than a sleigh, dropped in to see Quintin Fowler aboard his Beneteau First 45 Outrageous Fortune at the CYCA marina in Sydney yesterday — but Christmas had come a day earlier for the Kiwi skipper.

On Saturday, as the crew were making final preparations for the yacht for today's start of the Sydney to Hobart race, one of them noticed a long crack in one of the spreaders — the wing-shaped pieces of metal that stick out from the mast to support the rigging.

"We just hadn't noticed it and we could have lost the mast in a big blow if it collapsed," Fowler told Santa as the bearded one handed him a sack of presents for his crew.

"It was a real rush to get it fixed yesterday, but spotting it was the best Christmas present we could have hoped for.

"Now if you can give us some decent winds on the way south, we will promise to be good boys for the next year."

Fowler launched Outrageous Fortune in 2008 and has logged impressive results in ocean races run by the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron in New Zealand and longer races across the Pacific.

While this will be the first Hobart race for all but one of the eight crew, they have sailed thousands of miles in events such as the Auckland-Noumea and Auckland-Fiji races.

Santa also delivered a sack of presents to the crew of the Hong Kong yacht Firefire 52 and its skipper Anthony Day from the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club.

Firefire, launched in 2001, was the first TransPac 52 class yacht, and Day is hoping it will hold its own against the newer TP52s.

Originally designed for the long race from California to Hawaii, they have become one of the most popular handicap racing yachts in the world, loved by yachtsmen for their sparkling performance.

Meanwhile, Australian skipper Chris Nicholson has taken the overall lead from Spanish rival Telefonica on the second leg of the Volvo Ocean Race.

His yacht Camper led Telefonica by 21 nautical miles with the remainder of the fleet — Groupama, Puma (US) and Abu Dhabi — between 95 and 160nm adrift of the pacesetters.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING: AP



ANDREA FRANCOLINI

The vastly experienced crew of hot favourite Wild Oats XI have a combined tally of 269 Sydney-Hobart races before the start today

TAKE one look at the facts and figures and it's not surprising Wild Oats XI has her opposition covered in the Sydney to Hobart race.

Each statistic sheds a little more light on the reasons why Bob Oatley's remarkable supermaxi has been nigh unbeatable in the bluewater classic.

Five line-honours wins in six years, with New Zealand's Alfa Romeo inflicting the only blot on the Oats' copybook back in 2009.

Between them the crew of 20 aboard Wild Oats XI have sailed for a combined total of 901 years and accrued 269 Sydney to Hobart journeys.

Eight of the crew have participated in all five of her line honours triumphs.

Steve Jarvin has a race record of 10 line honours wins achieved on different boats. The one female crew member, co-navigator Adrienne Cahalan, is also a record breaker.

tough a run as we can and take it to her when we can."

Labana and Wild Thing are the other boats that could push for line honours in the event Wild Oats XI or Investec Loyal suffer race-ending damage.

"If something breaks, these boats have got huge loads and are highly stressed and it doesn't take much to go wrong," Wild Oats tactician Murray said.

Another line honours win this year will leave her just one off the

race record of seven set by the boat bearing the names of Moma and Kurrewa IV, which octogenarian Oatley watched in his youth.

However, that boat needed 15 races to log her seven wins and she had far smaller fleets to contend with than Wild Oats XI.

The crew will scatter some of the ashes of former ABC helicopter pilot Gary Ticehurst shortly after rounding the offshore mark off Sydney Heads.

AAP

saucour round nmsent beneath the temperamental seven-year-old at his Cranbourne stables one morning last week and feared he would be injured, but later in the day the gelding was like a lamb.

There are two Peridukis on the racetrack. There is the brilliant sprinter who can jump to the front and give nothing else a chance. There is also the one that blew the start at Flemington last start and worked home well to finish fourth.

Balfour said he has had several conversations with previous trainer Mick Whittle, regarded as a tremendous horseman, at the risk of driving him mad. Balfour has gained valuable insight from Whittle and is expecting Periduki to run well in the Boxing Day feature.

Another Territorian, jockey Steven Arnold, will guide Periduki and the outstanding rider, who returned this month after taking a break following the spring carnival, should be able to straighten out the well-travelled galloper.

His danger may be a former Sydney racehorse spirited into Melbourne via Darwin.

Recoup De Fortune was trained by Anthony Cummings but is now with Steven Brown, who has mounted several worthwhile raids on Victoria in recent months.

Good reports about the progress of Recoup De Fortune have preceded the horse, who has been out of the winner's list for more than 18 months.

Bookmaker Michael Sullivan was one of the six-year-old's original owners but now owns the gelding outright.

Jockey Stephen Baster, who has been enjoying a good run, coinciding with the announcement that he will take up a contract to ride in Singapore next month, has the mount on the lightweight (53kg).

In five campaigns, Recoup De Fortune has won twice first-up from a spell and finished second on another occasion.

Shout Out Load has done his racing between Adelaide and Darwin but the last-start Morphettville winner is now with leading trainer Peter Moody.

Stablemate Mr Make Believe resumes on his home track, having won five races last campaign and progressing through the grades to open company.

A winner of eight of 13 starts, Mr Make Believe has not raced since July.

He has two wins and a second from three starts at the journey. Stable jockey Luke Nolen rides Mr Make Believe while Brad Rawiller is on Shout Out Load.

Victoria's premier trainer for the past two seasons, Moody, will have a Sydney presence from January 1 after being granted 10 boxes at Rosehill.