

Wild Oats XI

New navigator appointed for **Wild Oats XI's** attempt on the race record in the Transpac Race from Los Angeles to Hawaii



(July 13, 2015) - The bid by Australian supermaxi yacht Wild Oats XI to establish a race record time for the 2225 nautical mile Transpac race from Los Angeles to Hawaii is back on course after a new navigator was signed on today.

New Zealander Nick White, who has vast experience in around-the-world and international competition, took up the opportunity to replace Stan Honey as the yacht's navigator after Honey withdrew due to injuries he suffered in the Trans-Atlantic race, which finished earlier this week.

Honey, arguably the world's best ocean racing navigator, was injured when he had a fall aboard Kristy and Jim Clark's 100-footer, Comanche, when the yacht was on her way to establishing a remarkable new world sailing record of 620 nautical miles in 24 hours.

A doctor who checked on Honey's condition after Comanche finished the race advised him to rest for the next two weeks. This meant he could not be aboard Wild Oats XI when she started in the Transpac race next Saturday.

Roy P. Disney, who has entered Wild Oats XI in the Transpac race in a co-charter arrangement with the yacht's Australian owner, Bob Oatley, said that he and the entire Wild Oats XI crew were relieved to know that Honey was given the all-clear by doctors after reaching the Trans-Atlantic race finish in England.

"We will certainly miss Stan's presence in the Transpac race," Disney said. "But it's completely understandable that he needs to take a break after his experience in the Trans-Atlantic. We are certainly looking forward to him joining us for other races in the future."

After echoing Disney's sentiments, Wild Oats XI's skipper, Mark Richards, said that Nick White was a well-qualified replacement as navigator in the Transpac race.

“Stan’s health is more important than a yacht race, and we wish him a speedy recovery,” Richards said. “He is a man who is hard to replace, but I’m sure Nick will do the job for us.”

White was on a flight from New Zealand to Los Angeles within hours of taking up the offer to join the Wild Oats XI crew for the Transpac. He is expected to be on board for his first training run tomorrow.

The Transpac Race, one of the world’s classic offshore challenges, is a downwind run for all but 25 nautical miles of the total distance. It is recognised as an extreme challenge for navigators due to the numerous weather systems that influence the course. Weather analysis and tactical navigation are the keys to success.

The latest race weather forecast from Australian yachting meteorologist, Roger “Clouds” Badham confirmed that the same challenge will exist this year. His current synopsis has Wild Oats XI sailing way north of the rhumb line, and making only one gybe to reach the finish.

“We’ve seen weather outlooks like this before,” said Disney, who is competing in his 21st Transpac race. “There are still lots of weather systems out there that could influence our course, including two ex-hurricanes, so we will have to wait until much closer to our start on Saturday before we decide on our final race strategy.”

Wild Oats XI, which is recognised as Australia’s most successful ocean racing yacht, is out to break the race’s monohull record of 5 days, 14 hours, 36 minutes, 20 seconds, a mark set by Neville Crichton’s Alfa Romeo II in 2009. Her average speed then was 16.6 knots.

With that in mind, the combined Australian and American crew aboard Wild Oats XI returned to the dock after the training run today exceedingly encouraged by what they had experienced. Wild Oats XI had averaged near 22 knots in 17 knots of wind with only her smallest headsail set.

“It was a very exciting day on the water,” Mark Richards said. “If we get the right wind conditions in the Transpac race we could be on the money for a race record. Time will tell.”

The first division in the 61 yacht fleet contesting the race started off the coast of Los Angeles today.

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