

Visitors eye off Coastal Classic

Team Australia's head-to-head with Team VodafoneSailing on Waitemata Harbour, Auckland, yesterday was a mixed bag for the visitors. Result aside, skipper Sean Langman is confident the Australian boat and crew have the ticker to successfully challenge the local ORMA 60 in this Friday's Coastal Classic.

In the showcase sprint race the Aussie trimaran led Team VodafoneSailing off the start line, expectations resting heavily on the afterguard including Mike Sanderson and celebrity guest crewmember, Team New Zealand skipper Dean Barker in his first race since the 34th America's Cup.

The sprint kicked off with a downwind start off Westhaven Marina at 1600hrs. Langman's Team Australia gybed early and grabbed a several hundred metre advantage over Simon Hull's near identical ORMA 60 by the time the frontrunner reached Orakei and North Head.

The pair, considered the fastest boats in Australasia, was reasonably well matched speed wise in the moderate westerlies until the Aussie trimaran gave up the advantage. A few hundred metres south of Rangitoto Light the crew they realised they were shooting for the wrong mark, allowing TeamVodafone to romp in and take the lead, and the gun by more than seven minutes.

Sail selection was another drawback, Langman acknowledging they were undercooked in terms of sail area for the easing conditions. A busted batten car didn't help matters.

Mike Sanderson made light of their navigational faux pas, "The Vodafone guys told us the mark had been moved and wasn't where it says on the chart but a lot closer in. They were heading to the wrong one too for quite a while then altered at the last minute. Dean and I don't do much harbour sailing in Auckland unfortunately. Anyway, as I said to Simon [Hull], 'you never want to win the practise race!'"

When Barker was asked why he was on board Team Australia instead of the Kiwi boat he responded, "Moose [Mike] gave me the call up and it sounded like a bit of fun!"

He also spoke of the overwhelming support Team New Zealand has received since returning from San Francisco. "It's great to be home where we can work hard on keeping the team together," he said.

Kiwi Mike Sanderson is one of four New Zealanders saddling up for Friday's Coastal Classic on Team Australia. Joining and Sean and Peter Langman, James Ogilvie and Andy Woodward and making up a true blue Anzac crew is the NZ contingent of renowned round-the-world yachtsman Sanderson, multiple America's Cup sailor Chris Salthouse, AC and Volvo Ocean Race sailor Phil Jameson and boat captain Josh Alexander, now living in Sydney.

Langman is happy with the forecast for Friday's race from Auckland north to the Bay of Islands, adding "From here we just can't second guess us or the boat. I believe Team Australia is prepared to take out the race."

The PIC Insurance Brokers Coastal Classic is organised by the New Zealand Multihull Yacht Club. Boat tracking, commentary, sked times, photos and video will be available from race start at www.coastalclassic.co.nz.

Team Australia is in Auckland having set a world speed record from Sydney across 'the ditch' and to line up in Friday's PIC Insurance Brokers Coastal Classic.

Team Australia website <http://teamaus.net.au/>

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