

# COCONUT'S PREPARATIONS

By Mark Sinclair



Coconut's preparations continue

The current list of entrants has dwindled to 25; there is currently no waitlist and new applicants can join the race, if they are quick. There are now two women in the race: Susie Goodall (UK) and Izabel Pimentel (Brazil). There are at present only two other Australian entries: Kevin Farebrother and Mike Smith. Kevin, who has summited Mount Everest on three occasions, is sailing a Tradewind 35, *Blue Heels*, and is currently on passage between Sydney and Perth (north about). Mike Smith, a boat builder in Newcastle, is building a modern *Suhaili* replica; and I am preparing *Coconut* at RSAYS. Unfortunately, Shane Freeman recently retired when he lost his boat off the Chilean coast approaching Cape Horn. As well as *Coconut*, there are two other Lello 34s competing, raced by Neree Cornuz (Switzerland) and Gustavo Pacheco (Brazil).

*Coconut's* preparations continue. The mast steps for going aloft have been strengthened with a strut – the previous ones were not strong enough and bent under my weight. A specially designed sail bag has been constructed for the storm trysail for rapid deployment up its separate track on the mast. An emergency rudder has been manufactured to operate over the transom without impacting the Aries wind wave; the rudder blade deploys from the horizontal to the vertical position from within a cassette and then locks down into place, which enables it to be quickly fitted in a seaway. The companionway coaming has also been designed to provide additional protection from seas flooding the cockpit making their way down below.

Electrical rewiring is now about 90% completed. This includes cabin lighting, selectable white by day and red by night to preserve night vision. Navigation lights and foredeck lighting have also been installed. An Echomax active radar transponder has been fitted to the backstay bridle. The VHF has been set to work with an aerial at the top of the mast and a secondary aerial on the pushpit for redundancy, selectable down below by a changeover switch. An HF transceiver has been installed with a backstay antenna, and, if

the mast is lost, an emergency whip aerial can be screwed into the deck fitting in the stern. An active HF receiver antenna has been mounted on the pushpit for the receiver which will be fitted in the cabin. Engine gauges have all been installed and three electric bilge pumps will be fitted, two in the main cabin and one up forward behind the watertight door. Flexible solar panels will be fixed to the doghouse and cabin top to deliver up to 360W of power; I do not intend to carry a wind generator as I think these are less reliable in a race of this type. Portable communications equipment has also been obtained including VHF and air band transceivers.

What's next to do? The list of jobs does not seem to get any shorter, but the tasks may be becoming less daunting. On the upper deck, they include: repairing the toe rail and applying non-skid paint to the deck, conducting general repairs in the cockpit, fitting a screen on the back of the doghouse for protection from weather from astern, fitting guides on the mast to lead the tack of the reefed mainsail to the right position, and fitting bags in the cockpit for loose halyards and sheets. The list of jobs down below includes: plumbing in the new bilge pumps, fitting catches and latches and ties on everything, cosmetic work including painting etc. Some things need to wait until *Coconut* is on the slip, such as dropping the rudder and inspecting the shaft. There are one or two things I will leave until the end; for example, the life raft will be purchased and fitted just before the race, to ensure it is new, of approved type and recently serviced.

I need to conduct as much testing and trialling as possible in the next few months. Practice in heavy weather will be very useful, as far as this is practical. Hopefully, by the time this magazine goes to print, I will be starting to venture further afield. The plan is to ship *Coconut* to the UK at the end of the year, so I only really have six months left to prepare locally.

