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First Hobart race 'my Everest'

LAUREN NICHOLLS

ALTHOUGH he is looking forward to his first ever Sydney Hobart Yacht Race, Woy Woy sailor Dave Bracher admits he is a bit nervous about competing in one of the world's most famous and challenging events.

"I'm excited but terrified," he said.

"I'm a bit wary of the weather. There's no telling what it will do out there.

"But it will be great to be part of it."

Bracher is one of three sailors from Gosford Sailing Club who will be on board the boat *Wahoo*, which is owned by Graham

Mulligan and based in Brisbane, from Boxing Day.

He will sail alongside Phil Taylor, who has more than 10 Sydney to Hobarts under his belt, and Phil Owen, who is backing up for his second year after competing in the cruising division in 2009. They will be joined by Bill Ratcliff, of Gwandalan, who is contesting his 43rd Sydney to Hobart race.

Wild weather has already been forecast for this year's race, but Owen says "it's all part of the challenge".

"Our main goal will be to get down there safely and have a bit of

fun on the way and if we can get a divisional win that would be the icing on the cake."

For Bracher, who has been sailing since he was eight years old, racing in the prestigious event is a tremendous milestone. "It's a bit of a personal Everest for me," he said. The Central Coast representatives aboard *Wahoo* will have a practice run with the rest of their crew tomorrow. Two other Gosford Sailing Club members, Greg Johnstone and Stuart Gray, will feature in the Sailors with disABILITIES' *Wot Eva* boat.



Hobart first timer Dave Bracher.



The start of last year's race Sydney to Hobart.



Veteran of 42 Hobarts Bill Ratcliff.