

Liesl jumps back in the boat as her skipper takes a bow

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SAILING

PARALYMPIC gold medallist Liesl Tesch was covered in bumps and bruises when she sailed into Hobart yesterday — but she also sported a smile she couldn't wipe off her face.

The partial paraplegic's second Sydney to Hobart has left her wanting more, so much so she will now sail the race in reverse.

Tesch, whose head sported tiny

cuts and bruises after she banged into small rivets above her bunk, will help deliver the 52-footer *Sailors with disABILITIES* back to her home in Sydney tomorrow.

"When is there ever sailing in your life?" laughed the former wheelchair basketball captain who discovered a talent and enthusiasm for sailing just three years ago.

The yacht finished 26th over the line despite blowing out all her spinnakers on the second day at sea and copping a pasting from 45-knot

headwinds approaching the finish line.

While Tesch plans to sail more Sydney to Hobart races, skipper David Pescud yesterday decided to call it quits.

The respected veteran of 21 races south — the brain and muscle behind the tradition of disabled sailors competing in every Sydney to Hobart since 1994 — has handed over the reins of his not-for-profit organisation.

"I can't see anything getting me back," Pescud said.

He has put hundreds of sailors

through his program and was one of the few yachts to make it safely into Hobart in the 1998 race that claimed six lives.

Pescud's program, which is committed to changing the way disabled people regard themselves and also society's perception of the disabled, will continue.

Another crew is expected to be back in the race next year.

"It's time for someone else to take my role," Pescud said of crewmate David Leslie assuming leadership.



Paralympian Liesl Tesch.

Client:	Sailors with disABILITIES
Publication:	The Daily Telegraph
Circulation:	799,000
Readership:	341,583
Date:	Monday 31 December 2012
Position:	Page 50