

# Tesch sets sail in reverse

by Amanda Lulham

WHEN Paralympic gold medalist Liesl Tesch sailed into Hobart yesterday she was covered in bumps and bruises but 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, with a head of tiny cuts and bruises thanks to banging into small rivets above her bunk, will help deliver the 52-footer *Sailors with disabilities* back to her home in Sydney on New Year's Day.

"When is there ever sailing in your life?" laughed the former wheelchair basketball captain who discovered a talent – and

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enthusiasm – for sailing just three years ago.

The yacht finished 26th over the line despite blowing out all her spinnakers the second day at sea, then copping a pasting from 45-knot headwinds approaching the finish line.

While Tesch plans to be adding Sydney to Hobart to her resume for plenty more years, skipper David Pescud yesterday called it quits in one of the race's great losses.

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hind starting 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," said Pescud, who has put hundreds of sailors through his program and who was one of the few yachts to make it safely into Hobart at the end of the fatal 1999 race.

Pescud's program, which is committed to changing the way disabled people regard themselves and changing society's perception of the disabled, will continue with another crew expected to be back in the race next year.

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



Liesl Tesch after finishing the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.