



Beau Geste joins race

by Ian Grant

ROYAL Hong Kong Yacht Club skipper Karl Kwok, winner of the 1997 Sydney Hobart race, has nominated his New Zealand built Reichel-Pugh designed sloop Beau Geste for the 2007 International Meridien Marinas Race Week at Airlie Beach.

Beau Geste, launched earlier this year, has already demonstrated her class by winning the prestigious Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron Kawanui trophy in late February before crossing the Tasman Sea to finish with the third fastest corrected handicap in the Audi Sydney to Gold Coast race in March.

The custom built sloop represents an impressive challenge to win the IRC class trophy against a very strong fleet over the Whitsunday Sailing Club courses.

They will certainly set their tactical attention on producing the required all angle boat speed to match the 2006 champion Ray Roberts and his in form Quantum Racing crew.

This will be a test of character for the Beau Geste combination, however, they are more than capable of mastering the unfamiliar sailing conditions as they proved by winning the major international Sydney-Hobart Blue Water classic almost 10 years ago.

However, Ray Roberts and his multiple world title winning tactician Stephen McConaghy will again be the pacesetters, having dominated the Australian offshore racing circuit with the new Quantum Racing since winning the Airlie Beach Race Week and Hamilton Island Race Week titles during August 2006.

The Mick Cookson designed Quantum Racing proved to be a

strong performer in the Gold Coast race, surviving the full grunt of a vigorous southerly buster spiced with 45 knot rain squalls to score another impressive win.

They have set the benchmark but only time will tell if the champion Quantum Racing crew are fast enough to match Beau Geste when the sails are tensioned on the warm waters of Pioneer Bay and the Whitsunday Passage during the short course racing championship in August.

At the moment Quantum Racing heads the betting order to win back to back titles at Airlie Beach but the crew of Beau Geste and the New Zealand 15.8m sloop Wired, skippered by Rob Bassett, have the potential to spoil the victory celebrations for skipper Ray Roberts.