

THE STORY OF YES!

A second life for a notorious IRC winning boat. But how many would spot Yes!'s previous life as *Mustang Sally*?



yes!

BIG WINS

SMALL PRICE

A class and overall win at Cowes Week in Black Group is always impressive, especially in an 18-year-old boat. Matthew Sheahan reports how owner Adam Gosling and designer John Corby breathed new life into a modern classic and claimed one of the biggest trophies of the season



“ Gosling bought an 18-year-old, tired-looking, well used 36ft boat and fitted a new rig and sailplan. Two months later he walked away with the top trophy at Cowes, and all for half the price of a new boat ”

Adam Gosling likes to win. Over the last 25 years he has competed at every Cowes Week and won his class on 12 occasions, twice winning Black Group overall, the most recent victory being last year. He has succeeded at international level too, winning the highly competitive Etchells World Championship in 1996 with Olympians Mark Covell and David Howlett as crew. His contact list includes some of the best sailors in the world and he is married to double-gold medalist Sarah Webb, adding to an already enviable sailing network.

Gosling has the ability, focus, will and, to be blunt, the financial means to compete at pretty much any level he should choose. Yet given all this, Gosling has a disarmingly down-to-earth approach to his sailing.

While others may commission complex one-offs or undertake major reconfigurations of large grand prix racers to chase prestigious silverware in the glamorous headline-grabbing classes, Gosling bought an 18-year-old, tired-looking, well used 36ft boat and fitted a new rig and sailplan. Two months later he walked away with the top trophy at Cowes, and all for half the price of a new boat.

This is how he did it.

The boat

He began by choosing a designer with whom he had worked and sailed with for a number of years and who has a long and successful track record in IRC racing. Designer John Corby has not only proved that he can create fast boats straight off the drawing board, but that he can also breathe new life into earlier models. In recent years Corby has been busy refurbishing his older race boats with such success that they have been reclaiming the podium.

Gosling's latest *Yes!*, his 12th boat bearing that name, was one of Corby's early successes. Originally named *Mustang Sally*, she was a ground-breaking, loophole-busting, trophy magnet in the early days of IRC. But while this 36-footer claimed the silverware and headlines in the mid nineties – she scored 33 firsts from 53 starts in her first season – she was not popular with the IRC rule administrators.

Corby had exploited a weakness in the rule whereby heavy displacement was seen as slow when compared with the modern lightweight flyers. She may have been heavy but there was nothing slow about *Mustang Sally's* hull shape which, as has been proved 18 years later, was both modern and ahead of her time. Putting a heavy bulb keel on a slinky modern hull gener-



▲ Above: in her previous life as *Mustang Sally*, the trophy magnet ◀ Left: a winning team – designer John Corby and owner Adam Gosling, right

ated large amounts of unmeasured righting moment and hence power.

What is perhaps most extraordinary about the reworking of this modern racing classic is that only the rig and sailplan were changed. Her hull, deck and underwater appendages are original, with one exception, the keel was changed in 2005 and refaired to a different section in 2013.

“Adam's previous boat was a 30-footer in which he'd won his class at Cowes three times and come second once,” says Corby. “This time he wanted a boat that was slightly bigger so that his tactician, David Howlett, didn't have to do the mainsheet. He also wanted a boat that would get into a bigger class at Cowes. On the other hand he didn't want to be racing against boats like the King and Ker 40s. A 36-footer fitted the bill perfectly.

“We bought *Mustang Sally* in Kilrush last Easter. Given her state we knew it was going to be a daunting task to have her in the water 11 weeks later. We spent 2,500 man hours on reconfiguring her, yet this was still 2,000 hours less than building a new boat of the same size.”

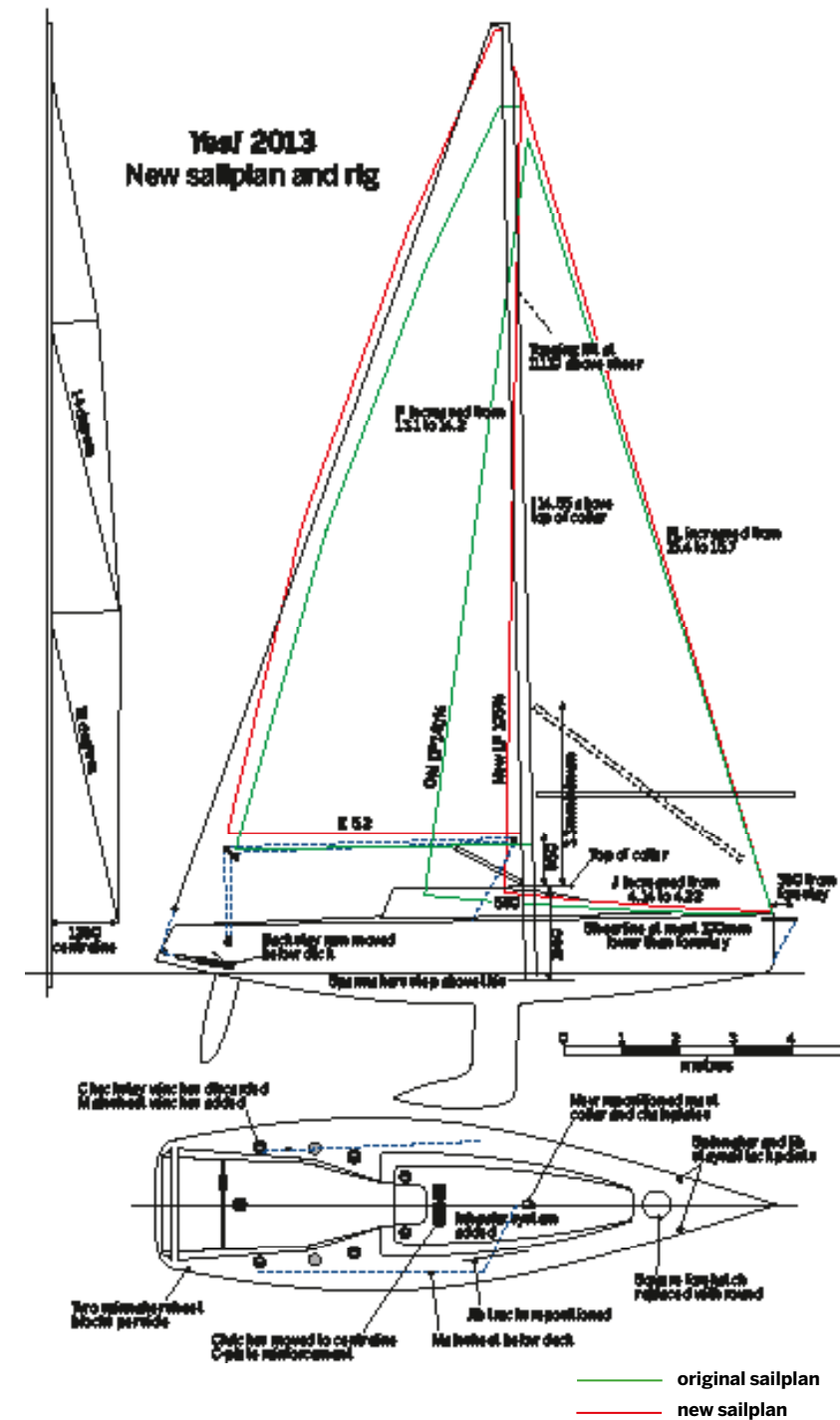
Another benefit of buying a secondhand boat was the age allowance that came with it which Corby estimates is probably worth around a minute per hour.

The project

Following a team meeting aboard the newly-purchased, but tired-looking boat, *Mustang Sally* was stripped of all her deck gear and metal work, inverted and the hull fairred. Her keel was also refaired, to a new David Hollom-designed section.

“Much of the industry seems to like NACA 63 and 65 series sections but I was persuaded to go for this different section which doesn't have the hollows towards the trailing edge,” says Corby. “It's difficult to say that it has definitely worked, but I have no reason to think otherwise!”

While Corby was fairing and painting the hull, work began on the new sailplan that the team had decided to replace. The key aims were to strip weight out of the rig and create a more efficient sailplan. “Over the last few years I've refurbished a number of my previous designs,” continues Corby. “But this was the first time I have put a completely new sailplan in the boat. In the past it's been more about changing



Sail wardrobe – £50,000

- 1 x mainsail
- 4 x jibs including heavy weather jib
- 1 x jib top
- 2 x staysail – genoa and spinnaker
- 1 x AO/3
- 1 x A1
- 1 x S2
- 1 x S4

Specifications

LOA:	11m	36ft 1in
LWP:	9.21m	30ft 3in
Beam:	3.1m	10ft 2in
Draft:	2.23m	7ft 4in
Displ:	4,700kg	10,360lb
Bulb weight:	2,200kg	4,850lb
Sail area upwind:	75m ²	807ft ²
Sail area downwind:	148m ²	1,593ft ²
IRC rating:	1.068	

Rig package – £37,000

- Carbon mast
- Carbon boom
- Carbon spinnaker pole
- Rod rigging

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Gosling, left, and Corby discuss their racing plans

Lloyd Images

the shape of the boat.

“Although we went for an Axxon carbon mast and boom we conducted a very detailed cost/benefit analysis to establish the best way to reduce weight. We decided to go for high modulus carbon, M46J, which saved 10kg at a cost of £5,000 rather than going for carbon spreaders which would have cost around £4,000 for a 2kg saving. The weight savings in the mast cost us £500/kg whereas we would have paid £2,000/kg for saving weight with carbon spreaders. The new rig has alloy spreaders. With the mast we saved 65kg as a result of the higher modulus material, a smaller tube section and reduced diameter rod rigging. We also saved 10kg on the carbon boom.

“We looked at items that would let us change the rig setting more easily, such as the internal stainless steel hydraulic mast jack. At around £2,700 it was expensive, but the ability to

change the rig tension quickly and efficiently on this type of high aspect ratio sailplan is key to changing gears between races.”

The biggest change was in her sailplan, which became a higher aspect ratio, fractional configuration with a non-overlapping headsail and full-width chain plates.

“We didn’t want to move the mast heel position in the boat because this would have required major modifications and created balance issues, but we wanted to maximise the size of the non-overlapping headsail,” says Corby. “This meant sweeping the spreaders aft by 70mm using the existing structure below decks to attach the chain plates to. This allowed us to make the headsail as big as possible, but despite its extra height it still didn’t quite make up for the original overlapping sail. The mainsail is much larger, and although we have less sail area than before, the sailplan is more efficient.” The deck layout remained largely the same with the exception of a few details

ADAM GOSLING

“As I sat in the cockpit of *Mustang Sally* after she had arrived from Ireland my heart sank as I thought, ‘I just can’t sail a boat in this condition’. It was Easter and the intention was to race her for the first season as she was and then refit her in the winter. The amount of work required before the season started was daunting.

“Planning the project should be the second most exciting time in any campaign, succeeding on the water being the first, but I wasn’t feeling it. We couldn’t race her in the condition she was in. I have been fortunate to have good people around me so when David Howlett, John Corby and I met on the boat we decided it would be easier to make a list of what didn’t need attention – hull, rudder, tiller, keel and engine. Gradually, a clearer picture emerged and in the end, due to John’s hard work, we had her on the water for the IRC Nationals nine weeks later. David and John were the right to people to have overseeing the project.”

Adam Gosling, whose father developed his love for the sea in the Royal Navy and went on to found National Car Parks, has sailing in the blood. According to some of those who’ve sailed with him, what he may lack in natural racing ability he more than makes up for in focus, planning and gritted determination and will do whatever it takes to improve.

Gosling has competed in 25 consecutive Cowes Week regattas and has won his class 12 times and Black Group twice. His four Etchells campaigns, culminating in his world championship win in 1996, point towards his enthusiasm for small boats and a thoroughly hands-on approach.

He began sailing at Gordonstoun school in Scotland where he sailed a variety of dinghies such as Wayfarers, Enterprises and Fireballs. His first offshore race was the infamous 1979 Fastnet aboard Robin Bishop’s *Tamasin*. He was 16, with no previous offshore experience, so assumed sailing offshore in a Force 9 was normal! He was introduced to David Howlett in 1994 who took his racing to a new level. “Sailing with David was like beginning again, one can’t help but learn from such a meticulous sailor. It was the beginning of a steep learning curve and I’m still learning from him – we both have a very focused drive to win. It can sometimes be fiery on the water but it’s a relationship that has stood the test of time; to this day we continue to race together”, says Gosling.

Gosling’s prime focus is racing, but he also helped with the buyout of the World Cruising Club, organisers of the ARC, and remains an investor and director. His long list of boats started with a Beneteau First Class Europe in 1989, and stretches to bigger boats including a Swan 651 and a Sydney 60. In recounting his favourites he is frank about the good and bad times. “The Swan 651 was the first lemon that I bought,” he says. “I had it for a year, long enough to discover that mixing cruising and racing simply doesn’t work, at least not for me. However I loved the Sydney 60,” he continues. “We had lots of fun with a big crew. We sailed hard and partied hard at many of the major events in the Caribbean, US and Europe. I have always known that while I want to win, I also want to sail with mates. If you have limited time to race, a mix of amateur and professional sailors is one of the best ways to learn and improve.”

His return to smaller boats began in 2001 when he sailed with Peter Morton on a 50-footer, *Mandrake*. And won the Gold Roman Bowl overall in the Round the Island Race. By 2005 he was back in 30-footers with his first taste of a Corby boat in which he won his class and Black Group at Cowes Week. Thereafter followed a season in a half-tonner, *Harmony*, and a Ker 39 before his more recent long-term connection with Corby boats started.

“My Corby 30 was one of the nicest boats to helm that I’ve ever owned and we had three class wins in a row at Cowes from 2009, but it was a bit on the small side. Three of us on the team are over 50 now so I felt we needed a few more feet under us,” he concludes. The move was clearly successful: more boat beneath him, a smaller bill and more trophies on the shelf.

Adam Gosling photographed aboard his father’s narrowboat *Maisie* on the Thames, January 2014.

Photo: Mark Lloyd/Lloyd Images



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Having raced in many venues around the world, Gosling's favourite remains closer to home, the Solent



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such as the mainsheet and rope clutches.

"The larger mainsail meant that we could no longer use the original block and tackle mainsheet system so we fitted an under deck, German system. We also fitted an under deck hydraulic system that is rope and bungee operated for the backstay, which is lighter and simpler than an electric system or one with a hydraulic panel," says Corby. "We replaced all the deck gear which saved weight but we also had to beef up the rope clutches in the pit to cope with the higher loads from the new sailplan."

Custom replacement stanchions were fitted while the height of the lower guardwire was reduced to make hiking more efficient. "We knew the boat would be OK on windward/leeward courses so our main concern was on cracked sheet and reaching legs, some of which are long enough to really matter in Cowes Week. Maximising the reaching capability was our mindset right from the start," he continues.

"As soon as the jib sheet starts cracking on any upwind leg we immediately think about changing to a cutter rig, which in our case is a furling jib top, (high clew jib with the same LP as other jibs), set on the bowsprit and loose luffed with a jib stay-sail tacked just in front of the fore hatch. We use the hydraulic backstay to tension the jib top luff.

"For wider sheeting angles we switch to the AO/3 which is a paneled, not furling, sail, and rates as a spinnaker. This is a tough sail designed to be flown without a forestay so we have a special low stretch halyard and rake the rig to tension the luff as we don't have halyard locks. This is one of the reasons why a hydraulic backstay is so important.

"After 100° true we shift onto symmetrical kites, a 0.6oz A2 and a 0.9oz A4 that we use from around 120° true onwards. The other downwind sail is an A1 which is for VMG running in under eight knots of breeze which we can set either off the bowsprit or the pole." Among the changes, some key areas remained the same, such as the engine and the boat's interior, the latter benefitting from a complete clean and repaint.

Counting the cost

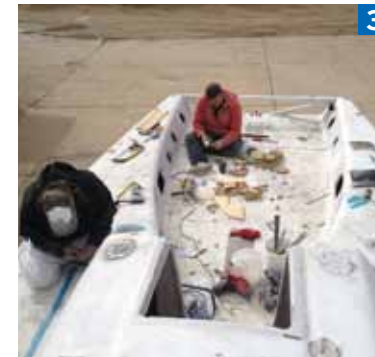
The boat cost approximately £50,000 and the project cost £150,000, of which the new rig accounted for £37,000 and the new sail wardrobe £50,000. While £200,000 may sound a lot for a 36-footer, when compared to the cost of a new race boat of a similar size it is good value.

"There's no question that if I'd had to build this boat from scratch she would have cost £400,000," says Corby. "The funny thing is that this time around, having made the weight savings, she now floats to her marks and weighs the 4.7 tonnes I intended when I drew her 18 years ago!"

For Gosling, the benefit has been a new boat and some great silverware, all for half the price.

THE RE-BUILD STEP BY STEP

- 1 **Mustang Sally** arrives in Cowes
- 2 Most of her deck layout was replaced with the exception of a few details such as the tiller and foot bars
- 3 The boat was stripped down to her bare hull and deck
- 4 Below decks – where the entire accommodation was removed... including the engine and all the electrics



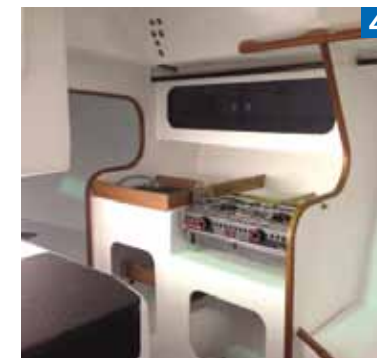
- 1 One of the few structural changes – preparation for the new chain plate support
- 2 New full-width chain plates for the new, taller rig
- 3 Higher halyard loads with the new sailplan required a new arrangement for the rope clutches in the pit area. A carbon plate was bonded in here
- 4 The entire deck was stripped, filled and faired
- 5 The keel structure remained, but the fin profile was changed



- 1 The bare hull and deck was rolled over. Work continued on her interior while the boat was upside down
- 2 The hull was filled and faired but there was no change to her lines
- 3 An early primer coat highlighted the areas that needed further fairing
- 4 Spraying the top coat
- 5 The glistening finished hull is rolled out before turning up the right way



- 1 Only a few original items of hardware were kept, otherwise completely new deck gear was fitted
- 2 New high-load clutches were required for the higher halyard loads from the code sails
- 3 A completely refurbished interior
- 4 A refitted galley and navigation station
- 5 The finished keel, exactly the same weight as before, waiting to be fitted



- 1 The finished hull is fitted to the keel
- 2 The completed deck and cockpit including new non-slip surface
- 3 Preparing for the launch
- 4 One of the key new features is her integral hydraulic mast jack, expensive but worth it, according to Corby
- 5 The finished product: nine weeks and 2,500 man hours after arriving at Cowes

