

# Crowley's: Rehab for Raceboats

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO when your ride gets a little soft in the middle? In Chicago, take it to Crowley's Yacht Yard, a one-stop speed shop that has been whipping boats into racing shape for three decades.

"You have builders building raceboats figuring they'll be retired to the Kentucky grass fields after five or six years," says owner Grant Crowley. "Fifteen years later, somebody's still trying to milk a few good races out of them. That's where we come in."

Since moving to its current facility—which includes storage space for 1,400 boats, the capacity to haul boats up to 70 feet long, and a dedicated paint shop—Crowley's has expanded its raceboat business considerably. Because the yard is located on the Calumet River close to Lake Michigan, most boats can access it without dropping their rigs. This convenience makes Crowley's a logical staging area for teams trucking boats to events like the Sperry Top-Sider Chicago NOOD, the Verve Cup, and, coming this September, the Farr 40 North Americans.

Over the winter, Crowley's worked on a number of raceboats, repairing core damage on a Sydney 38, painting the



hull of a Farr 40, fairing the keel of a Beneteau 36.7, and fairing and wetsanding a One Design 35. The project that service manager Phillip Pollard is most proud of, however, is the restoration of an Ensign. "It took a year, but it was worth it," says Pollard. "If you parked that thing alongside a new Alerion, you couldn't tell the difference."

Effecting expert repairs is not the only way Crowley's serves Chicago's racing community. The yard provides a full range of services to help sailors navigate the complexities of owning a boat in Chicago.

"There are hurdles everywhere you turn," says Crowley, listing potential frustrations such as bridges, pump-out facilities, and despotic harbor masters.

"We try to be a turnkey

**In the paint shop at Crowley's Yacht Yard in Chicago, a Beneteau 36.7 receives a fresh coat for a new season.**

solution. We can pick up your boat from the harbor, bring it over to our yard, winterize it, store it, paint it, then deliver it back to the can next spring."

No matter what level of involvement an owner takes in the upkeep of their boat, Crowley's finds a way to make life easier. "In this economy, we're trying to make the sport simple enough so that the boat doesn't get dropped," says Crowley. "Rather than come down here with a sanding block, if you can put in a few hours at the office to pay your boatyard fees, that's probably the smart thing to do."

**-MICHAEL LOVETT**