

Web posted Thursday, June 19, 2003

## Built for speed

*Sailboat's crew sets sights on Chicago-to-Mackinac record*

**By JASON MILLER**

*Staff writer*

When Scott Gregory was growing up in Chicago, he used to sit by the Lake Michigan shore and gaze at the billowing sails of the sleek racing yachts in the storied Chicago-to-Mackinac sailboat race.

Now that he's grown, Gregory will be looking to break the time record in that race for the second consecutive year as first mate on Alchemy, an 80-footer based in Santa Barbara, Calif., and owned by Richard and Mary Compton.

"It's always been a lifelong dream of mine to be a sailor since I used to watch the boats go by as a kid," Gregory said Wednesday as he and his crew assembled the Alchemy at Eldean Shipyard on South Shore Drive. "Now I'm doing the races. It's a dream come true for me."

For the second year in a row Gregory is spending the month prior to the Chicago-to-Mackinac in Holland, having been a crew member on the Disney-owned boat Pyewacket last year. Pyewacket made Holland its home during the weeks leading up to the 2002 race.



---

SAILBOAT: Employees at Eldean Shipyard work on the rigging of the racing sailboat Alchemy on Wednesday.

*Sentinel/Brian Forde*

---



---

RIGGING: Sal Guerrero works on a crank shaft, Wednesday aboard the sailboat Alchemy.  
*Sentinel/Brian Forde*

---

While both boat's captains said they chose Eldean for its deep water and seasoned crews, there is a difference between the two in that Pyewacket has something the crew of Alchemy -- Scott Gregory in particular -- wants very badly.

Pyewacket broke a 15-year-old speed record in last year's race, completing the 333-mile trek in just 23 hours, 30 minutes.

"As long as there are records to be broken, we're competitive enough that we want to get it done," Gregory said of this year's race, which begins July 12. "I was fortunate enough to set the record last year, it would be quite a feat to do it twice.

"Especially with two different boats."

With Pyewacket and Alchemy both making stops in Holland the last two years, Eldean is becoming a hotbed for high caliber racing boats and their crews. Employees at the shipyard think the number will grow in coming years.

Denis Tabachuk, Eldean's head rigger, said the marina is gaining a spot among the elite yards in the country and prestige with thenation's top racers. The fact that the time record was broken last year by a boat based at Eldean, he added, is another draw.

"I'm already aware that more yachts like these will be here for this race next year," he said. "We welcome it. It's pretty exciting. I like to be able to work on boats like these. It's an honor for us."

Tabachuk, who has handled more than 1,500 riggings in his decade at Eldean, said that the marina is drawing larger and more boats than ever. And despite the fact that Wednesday's rigging of Alchemy took longer than usual -- the rigging crew had trouble fitting braces of the 80-foot mast into their positions -- his staff is ready to put the boat into the water Thursday afternoon.

"It's always something small, the last thing we have to do that causes problems," he said. "But we've got it all

measured and we'll be ready to go."

Alchemy will take a test run next week in the Queen's Cup, essentially a drag race from Milwaukee to Muskegon. The run won't set up the boat for the many twists and turns of the Mackinac race, but it will give the crew a chance to make sure everything is working well.

"It's a shakedown for the Mac," Gregory said. "We'll put it through its paces."

Gregory hopes those paces help bring him his second race record in as many years.

"That would be a dream," he said.