



## Results Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race

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HOBART 1  
 January  
 2012 The  
 2011 Rolex  
 Sydney  
 Hobart Yacht  
 Race was  
 notable for  
 an  
 unexpected  
 winner of  
 the coveted  
 line honours  
 trophy, a  
 worthy  
 worthy  
 overall  
 winner and a  
 slow  
 passage  
 home for the

smaller boats.

The Boxing Day start of the 628 mile race south to Hobart was spectacular, with the 88-strong international fleet setting off from the heart of Sydney Harbour, with its iconic bridge and Opera House as a backdrop. The Heads and shoreline were teeming with spectators as news helicopters flew overhead. Leading the charge on the beat out of the Harbour was Bob Oatley's maxi *Wild Oats XI*, the line honours winner in five out of the last six Rolex Sydney Hobarts.

Weather-wise the start of the race was fairly conventional with some fast running conditions for the afternoon, but with a dramatic 180 degree wind shift into the south forecast for the first evening. A swell from the north generated by the ex-tropical cyclone Fina, combined with this wind shift, created a horrific confused sea on the opening night, as the 30 knots southerly wind kicked in with a punch, gusting up to 40 knots. But it is these brutal, testing conditions competitors expect when they set out on the Rolex Sydney Hobart and give the event its reputation as one of the world's toughest offshore yacht races.

For the crews it was a case of battening down hatches and muscling through and by the first morning there was an impressively low attrition rate with just two retirements. They were joined later by a third, the 2003 line honours winner Grant Wharington's *Wild Thing*, suffering sail damage.

24 hours in and race favourite for line honours, the Mark Richards-skipped *Wild Oats XI*, was 11 miles ahead of Anthony Bell's maxi *Investec Loyal*, these two having broken away from Peter Millard's *Lahana* with singlehanded round the world sailor Alex Thomson on *Huao Boss* holding fourth on the water. On IRC handicap Roger Hickman, an old hand in the Rolex Sydney Hobart, competing in his 35<sup>th</sup> race, had pulled into the lead aboard his 1993 race winner, *Wild Rose*.

For this Rolex Sydney Hobart *Wild Oats XI* had been 'turboed' with the addition of new twin daggerboards and a larger square-topped mainsail, but her dominance as the fastest boat in the race was called into question when at 20:00 on the second evening of the race she was overtaken by the similarly-sized, but older, *Investec Loyal*.

With the wind lightening and backing from the southwest into the southeast, so *Wild Oats XI* was caught in a wind hole. Her co-navigator, Ian Burns explained what happened: "They [*Investec Loyal's* crew] were keeping track of how we were doing and the moment we stopped under a cloud with no wind under it, they basically sailed right around the outside of this large hole we were stuck in and came back above us. It was good work on their part."

The theoretically faster *Wild Oats XI* managed to catch up and overtook *Investec Loyal* at 07:30 on the second morning of the race as the two boats were sailing down the east coast of Tasmania. For the rest of the morning followers of the race were on the edge of their seats as the two boats match raced around the remainder of the course.

As they rounded the south side of Tasman Island, so *Wild Oats XI* was becalmed again and, taking their chance, *Investec Loyal* once again pounced, sailed around the outside of them to regain the lead. Crossing Storm Bay and sailing up the Derwent River to the finish, the *Wild Oats XI* crew, sailing with many of Australian yachting's elder statesmen and women on board, threw all they could at *Investec Loyal*, but it was not enough. *Investec Loyal* crossed the finish line at 19:14:18 local time, after 2 days 6 hours 14 minutes and 8 seconds at sea, just 3 minutes and 8 seconds ahead of *Wild Oats XI*. This was the fourth closest finish in the 67 year history of the Rolex Sydney Hobart.

Unfortunately celebrations were dampened when the line honours winner was protested by the race

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