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## Investec LOYAL's Sydney to Hobart victory upheld

By Carl Gregory (Cross Media Reporter)

**An international jury has cleared the crew of the Sydney to Hobart-winning Investec LOYAL of breaching race protocols, following a controversial end to this year's race.**



Investec LOYAL completed the 1170 kilometre journey at 7:14 pm on December 27th, with their closest competitor (2010's champion Wild Oats XI) finishing only three minutes after.

However, Investec LOYAL's victory was contested, following accusations that the ship's crew used an ABC helicopter pilot to spy on their closest competitor Wild Oats XI.

The official protest form asserted that Investec LOYAL tactician Michael Coxon "sought information from the helicopter (pilot) about the sail plan in use on (race leader) Wild Oats XI."

"In particular, information was sought as to whether Wild Oats XI was using a particular sail plan. This is assessed to breach rule 41 (of the international Racing Rules of Sailing) by soliciting help from an outside source."

LOYAL's defence drew from the fact that Coxon was the chief executive of the company that had supplied Wild Oat XI's \$250,000 mainsail inquired, and had inquired out of concern for his business reputation.

Investec LOYAL was named the provisional champion while a protest hearing was held.

Hunter wheelchair athlete Kurt Fearnley was part of the Investec LOYAL crew as they made their victorious journey into the Hobart harbour.

During the following protest period, Fearnley admitted he wasn't concerning himself greatly.

"I think I've been involved with sport for long enough now that those particulars, all the issues that are brought up outside of the racing arena, it's out of my control and that's all I can worry about," said Fearnley.

But I've heard the conversation and I know the bloke and I don't think we're going to be hearing too much about it."

The protest controversy aside, Fearnley says that he won't soon forget his experiences in the competition.

"It's been terrifying, it's been hard, exhausting, fun and everything in between," said Fearnley.

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The annual Sydney to Hobart race has been running for 67 years. (Eric Qian - Flickr/Creative Commons)

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