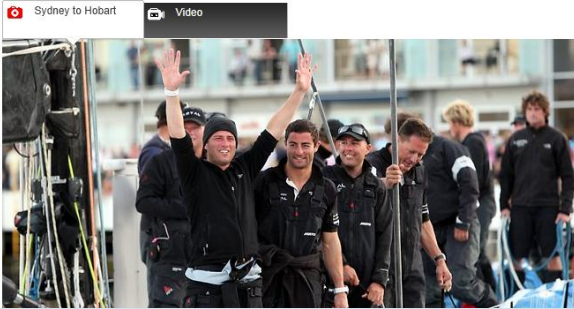




Karl Stefanovic still smiling despite Sydney to Hobart protest

Amanda Lulham | The Daily Telegraph | December 29, 2011 12:00AM | 5 comments

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The crew of Investec Loyal after taking line honours. Picture: Raoul Kochanowski The Daily Telegraph

Controversy: Loyal's win under threat

THEY wildly celebrated their line honours win in Hobart, but the celebrity-laden crew of Investec Loyal could today be drowning their sorrows.

Today host Karl Stefanovic and his crewmates face a nervous wait after a protest was lodged amid claims a Loyal crewman had illegally received outside help during the race.

News of the protest quickly soured the mood of more than 8000 spectators who packed Constitution Dock to watch one of the closest finishes in the race's history.

Initial jubilation turned to stunned silence.

The partners of Loyal's celebrity-laden crew - including those of Stefanovic and Roosters league star Anthony Minichiello, who had made a surprise trip to Hobart to meet them at the dock - were also left speechless as they tried to find out the repercussions of the race committee's sensational claim.

Related Coverage Despite a protest hanging over their win in the race, Stefanovic said crossing the line first was "an amazing feeling".
2011 Sydney to Hobart

"It doesn't get any better than this," he said.

"To come through and get over the line first, I couldn't have dreamed of it."

He said he was sick from 11pm on Boxing Day until 4pm yesterday and felt "horrible".

"A lot of the professional sailors were sick as well, so I haven't embarrassed myself," Stefanovic said.

Paralympian Kurt Fearnley was unable to wipe the smile off his face when the 100-footer Loyal pulled into dock.

"Unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable," he said.

"That was wild. I am going to take so much out of this I can't even process it yet."

Minichiello admitted he, like most others in the race, had suffered debilitating seasickness early on: "The first night was probably one of the longest of my life. I got through it."

Loyal's initial good fortune provided plenty of fodder for the crew's celebrity mates.

Breakfast TV rival Larry Emdur, who had a field day following reports of Stefanovic's violent struggles with sea sickness earlier in the race, managed to change his tune.

"Karl was spewing that he did go, now I'm spewing that I didn't," he wrote.

The race also threw up some unusual challenges for teen yachtswoman Jessica Watson, who was hit in the face by a fish.

Despite being the youngest person to sail unassisted around the world, it was the first time she'd been smacked in the face by a creature from the deep.

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