

Morning Herald

Veterans save the day

(but not the Test)

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Protest knocks wind out of winner's sails



Photo finish ... Investec Loyal and Wild Oats XI battle it out on the approach to the Battery Point finish line. Photo: Rolex/Daniel Forster

Rupert Guinness
in HOBART

THE Sydney to Hobart yacht race will again be decided off the water after a protest was lodged against the honours winner Investec Loyal following its stunning victory over the five-time champion, Wild Oats XI.

Last year, after winning its fifth title, Wild Oats XI had to endure a protest and was able to celebrate and set her sights on a possible sixth win.

But now it is Anthony Bell's turn to sit out the agony of a

breaching article 41 of the race rules. The allegation is that on Tuesday, the crew asked an ABC helicopter what sails Wild Oats XI was carrying - the charge being outside assistance.

Bell and his crew management must face an international tribunal at the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania in Hobart today at 10am.

Bell defended his boat against the charge, declaring they did "everything by the book".

According to the protest sheet, the charge stems from an audio recording taken of a "conversation between [the] ABC helicopter [crew]" and a crewman on Investec Loyal, "seeking

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How the race unfolded.
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of the sail plan in use on Wild Oats XI. In particular, information as to whether Wild Oats XI was flying a trysail."

The controversy marred a spectacular line honours victory that will now be regarded as provisional until the outcome of today's hearing is known.

Investec Loyal crossed the line into a glorious sunset with a time of two days, six hours, 14 minutes, and 18 seconds. On board, most of the crew were

racing superstar Kurt Fearnley and former Wallabies Phil Kearns and Phil Waugh, broke into rapturous celebrations. Others attended to dropping its big reaching headsail before motoring to dock.

As the celebrations and commiserations continued into the night, there was no doubting the finish to the 628-nautical mile race had been nail-biting.

The closest finish for line honours is still for the 1982 race when the British entrant Condor beat the Australian boat Apollo by seven seconds. But the last time the line honours race saw two boats vying for it in the