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**Rolex Sydney Hobart: Post Race Protests - is there another way?**



**Can the Sydney Hobart Yacht Race sort itself out?**

**There have been two Race Committee Protests against the Line Honours winners dismissed in two years, putting a dampener on celebrations.**

When Investec Loyal and Wild Oats XI battled up the Derwent there were around 8,000 people waiting to meet them. The following day, after the International Jury dismissed the Race Committee's protest again Investec Loyal and she was declared the line honours winner, there were but a few hundred people to see her owner and crew receive the Illingworth Trophy.

Sponsors, media and fans want a result as the boats cross the finish line.

It is clear that a better and faster way of resolving race issues needs to be found and it is the opinion of many that the Race Committee has to be more proactive in determining if their concerns are truly justified, before taking a formal protest to the International Jury.



Look at the 2010 incident. That incident, just as in 2011, delayed the declaration of the Line Honours winner from the evening until the following afternoon. Wild Oats XI had made its mandatory Green Cape Radio declaration to Hobart Radio, (as they were allowed to do) after they were unable to get through to JCW (the Radio Relay Vessel). The Race Committee failed to find out all the facts before lodging the formal protest.

This year, there was an obvious explanation of the commercial reason for Investec Loyal's tactician Michael Coxon (also North Sails CEO) asking a question about a \$250,000 mainsail he had sold to Wild Oats XI. The response to that question was not even reported to the rest of his after-guard.

If Investec Loyal had been asked for an explanation mid race and it having been determined to be plausible with email statements from Coxon, navigator Stan Honey and owner Anthony Bell, their opponent Wild Oats XI could then have had the information transmitted to them.

It would have been immediately confirmed by the Wild Oats XI after-guard that there could not have been any advantage to the boat in the question and response, pretty self-evident to any offshore sailor, and the issue needed not to have gone any further.

However had the Race Committee not been satisfied with the responses in either of these two incidents, it could have been referred to the International Jury and the Jury could have given them up to 12 hours notice, that there would be a Protest Hearing 30 minutes after the boats docked.

(Yes that might be an inconvenience for the International Jury, but really that's bad luck. Note for fairness the boat under question would need to be able to receive a time deferral if THEY needed it.)

When this year's incident appeared the boats were in a challenging seaway. Both Investec Loyal and Wild Oats XI were extensively communicating with the media by phone, email and Skype in flat seas later in the 2010 and 2011 races and could have dealt with questions from the Race Committee, if the Sailing Instructions had been written to allow that action.

The Race Committee might have been concerned that by contacting Loyal at a point when the race between the first two line honour contenders was so close that such an announcement to Loyal could have affected their on water performance. Boat on boat protests by red flag and radio do that - its part of sailing.

It is clear that owners/skippers would rather have initial on water discussions mid-race and then an immediate post race hearing rather than suffer allegations of 'cheating' and 'spying' plastered across the media.

There is absolute certainty that the sponsors and the public would have preferred that.

That requires rewritten Sydney Hobart Yacht Race Sailing Instructions.

Because the Investec Loyal incident involved the media, we can all be sure there will now be much greater reluctance of the skippers to talk to the media and we'd hardly blame them.

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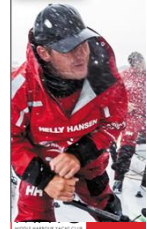


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