



ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT RACE

NEWS RELEASE

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'Taylor Made' for Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race

Let's be frank, when it comes to ocean racing, some people are just a bit obsessive – they turn up to the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia year after year for their annual fix of salt water mayhem - 628 nautical miles of being chucked around in a sweaty, noisy, outrageously high maintenance tin can on one of the most ornery race courses in the world.

These people know they are going to be very wet and very cold a lot of the time, and often very scared, too. But sometimes, between fronts, the sun shines, 15 knots settles in from the north, the spinnaker goes up, and you wouldn't be dead for quids. It's a bit like a poker machine that pays out just often enough to keep you hooked.

The alarm bells should probably start ringing the second time a sailor turns right out of Sydney Harbour on Boxing Day - but unfortunately, there is no 'Rolex Sydney Hobart Anonymous' for the addicted. So you do your fourth, fifth, and before you know it, one of the great milestones of popular Australian sporting culture beckons – 25 Hobarts. No one goes cold turkey after that.

This year Bradshaw Kellett becomes the youngest ever to do 25 in succession, Adrienne Cahalan becomes the first women ever to reach the quarter century, Peter Sheldrich will do his 25th on Love & War, while James Permezel will notch up his 25th on Chutzpah, along with a Hong Kong expat by the name of Drew Taylor. Son of Bruce.

Drew blames his dad. Bruce Taylor has been chasing the Tattersall's Cup, awarded to the overall winner of the Sydney Hobart, ever since he entered his first Chutzpah, a three quarter tonner in 1986. He's gone through a few Chutzpahs over the years, come mighty close more than once, but the fat lady just hasn't sung his aria yet.

"Five times he's said 'this is my last boat' and god knows how many times 'this is my last Hobart'", Drew has been known to sigh in mock outrage. "And I can't give up until HE does. I'd look too much off a wimp. One day we've got to win this bloody thing."

They have come so close at times - winning their division, but the prevailing weather has favoured the bigger boats, and sometimes the smaller, slower boats as well.

In 2014, after three days of racing, Roger Hickman's veteran Wild Rose crossed the finish nine hours after Chutzpah. With a storm predicted on the Derwent after Chutzpah finished, the pundits said Taylor had it in the bag. But the storm waited, Wild Rose reached the finish 10 minutes before the storm hit, and won the trophy by 38 minutes overall - from the Taylors.

But even if they had won years ago, would that have been enough - really? Bruce loves racing, and especially ocean racing, and Drew caught the bug early. He was just 15 when he crewed his first Chutzpah to Hobart, and he'd done a lot of delivery trips from their hometown, Melbourne, before that.

And that's why, this year, the Taylors will write a new page in the history of the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race. When Drew crosses the start line for his 25th Hobart, it will be the first time a son will have amassed so many races with his father, who is a veteran of 35 Hobarts.

Bruce is pretty chuffed: "It's a great privilege to be able to sail with my son a lot," he says. "We've got a number of records: most divisional wins, coming second overall twice, breaking more masts than most during the 80s and 90s!

"A lot of fathers and sons have done 25 Hobarts on different boats, but it's nice that we've been able to do all of Drew's 25 together."

For the past 20 years Drew has lived in Hong Kong, travelling to Australia each Christmas for the race. He has his own 41 footer in Hong Kong, and Bruce goes up there regularly, "To cook the meals, say nothing, be part of the afterguard," as he puts it, in the longer races.

"But they are mostly running and reaching races," he says, "and aren't as complex and challenging as the Hobart."

And when Drew does come down, he slots into one of the most stable racing crews in the history of the race. "We sail with 10 crew, and seven of us have done 20 to 33 Hobarts as a unit," Bruce says, "and three other guys have done 25 on Chutzpah."

"We don't see a lot of each other socially because we have very diverse backgrounds, but we get on really well, because we've all done every one of the different jobs on a boat at some stage. We all know the difficulties and understand each other."

"The great thing about ocean racing is that it allows you to change jobs as you age, and still contribute and compete. We do it for fun."

"I was given two pieces of wise advice once: always have a radio that works, and only sail with guys you want to sail with."

It also helps if you have a great boat. Some of these guys must keep coming back when aging bones suggest otherwise because the current Chutzpah is a rocket: "I asked them to build us the fastest off the wind 40 footer in the world and that's what they did. This is such a fun boat to sail. We have people lining up to do delivery trips," Taylor says.

"When you look at the way boats are rated (handicapped), the 50 footers are generations apart from the old IOR boats, but in the 40 footers, the rules at first didn't allow you to go fast. They favoured the cruiser/racer style Beneteaus."

"That's changing now," Bruce says with a little relief, because there was never any way his last Chutzpah was going to be anything but fast and exciting.

So what does Mrs Taylor make of all this?

“We’ve been together for 47 years, so I’ve nearly trained her,” Bruce chuckles. “My only angst is we have a wonderful Christmas lunch at home, all the kids and grandkids, and then we leave all the mess.

“She’s not into sailing, but she is coming down to Hobart this year for Drew’s 25th.”

By Jim Gale, CYCA Media

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Photo Captions & Credit:

Drew and Bruce Taylor - Credit Bruce Montgomery, RSHYR media

The start of the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race will be broadcast live on the Seven Network throughout Australia.

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