



ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT RACE

NEWS RELEASE

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Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race: Looks like a quick race this year

A long range weather forecast predicts a fast, possibly record breaking 2016 Rolex Sydney Hobart, according to the Bureau of Meteorology's Jane Golding, Manager, Weather Services NSW.

However, like last year, a southerly front on the evening of day one will most likely determine who wins and who loses the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia's 628 nautical mile race.

Golding expects the fleet to start in a fresh to strong north-easterly, giving everyone a joyous sleigh-ride down the coast under spinnaker through the afternoon of Monday, December 26.

Late Monday evening though, a southerly front will begin to move through the fleet, reaching the front runners sometime between 6pm and 11pm, and working its way up the NSW coast. The front will bring winds of 20 to 30 knots on a 2 metre northerly swell.

Those southerlies are expected to last until late on Tuesday 27th, then swing to the east and north-east for all of Wednesday. A second southerly is expected on the 29th or possibly the 30th. This forecast is incredibly similar to the way things panned out in last year's race.

Juan Vila, Wild Oats XI's navigator, says weather models say the super-maxis could arrive in Hobart in 1 day 15 hours, well inside Oats' 2012 record of 1 day 18hrs 23mins 12secs.

But it is still a long way to race day, and there are still important question marks about when it will arrive, and how long it will last. And as well as the race record, the answers to these questions will likely determine who gets to finish in Hobart first.

Wild Oats XI will be hard to beat in the northerlies, but the more powerful super maxis, like Perpetual LOYAL will want to spend as much time beating into a southerly as they can: "There is a bit of something for everyone," Vila says. "We are an all-round boat, but everyone will have their sweet spot at some time."

The timing of this first front could probably determine the overall winner of the race too. It looks a good forecast for the super maxis. They will race away from the rest of the fleet in the early part of the race, but they will also reach the front sooner than anyone else. The

later the southerly change and the quicker they can get out of the southerly, the better for them, as far as both the record and winning the race goes.

Last year conditions suited the 50 and 60 footers. The overall winner was Paul Clitheroe's Balance, a TP52, and this looks a fairly nice forecast for them again.

"As you look at it at the moment (the forecast) favours the bigger boats because they'll get through the southerly a little quicker," says Adrienne Cahalan, the navigator of the TP52 Ragamuffin. "But anything can happen in this race and there are lots of passing lanes.

"The forecast is very similar to last year in the running into the front. There were lessons to be learned from that and not being too greedy and leaving your spinnaker up too long. We're looking at a very tactical race. There'll be transition zones that will win or lose you the race. We navigators are constantly asked how long will the transition be? A lot of pressure to give a precise time. You have to maximise spinnaker and minimise downtime during the change."

"We didn't manage the transition well last year," says Michael Bellingham, navigator on Tony the Ker 46 Patrice." We had a gear failure, so we've thought a lot about that. It's all about how we manage this first transition. But there will be lots of fun across Bass Strait.

"What'll be quite interesting is the Tassie coast. It'll also be very cold and windy, which will really test the mettle of the crews and their boats. You can't win this race unless you finish."

Bellingham likes the chances of the TP52s, but says Patrice, which has a big handicap advantage over the bigger boats, can match them running and broad reaching. It's when they are sailing to windward that the TP52s can get away from them. He wants as little time in the southerly as possible.

So Bruce Taylor and his 40ft downwind flier, Chutzpah, may finally have their time – if they can stay in tune with the transitions. This will be the Victorian's 36th attempt to win the race, after finishing second in 1994 and 2014, with many other top five results and divisional wins.

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

By Jim Gale, RSHYR media

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Photo Captions & Credit:

Today's panel: Phil Eadie (Sonic), Juan Vila (Wild Oats XI), Jane Golding (BOM), Adrienne Cahalan (Ragamuffin) and Michael Bellingham (Patrice) – credit ROLEX/Daniel Forster

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