



## ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT RACE

### NEWS RELEASE

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#### Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race: Mad Dogs and Englishmen

Australian sailors can be forgiven for entering the Rolex Sydney Hobart - from knee high they are indoctrinated, told over and over it is perfectly sensible, even laudable, to bash your way to Hobart with an overly full Christmas stomach – it's a cultural thing, a bit like vegemite.

But what is it with the Poms? Each year dozens of them trek halfway around the world in hope of the adrenalin and terror that, apparently, a Rolex Fastnet Race does not supply enough of. If Bass Strait behaves itself, they return home disappointed.

There seems no end to their determination, either. Richard Stain and some mates decided last year that he would ship Laura, the 40 footer he spent seven years building, to Sydney to do a Hobart.

"We've done two Fastnets, so I wondered why not the Hobart," Richard Stain said.

It was settled. All Stain had to do was line up a freighter and Bob's your uncle. Except his jaw is still bruised from when it hit the floor after hearing the price: "It was \$80,000 US, and that's each way!" he cries. So how about chartering? He couldn't find anything suitable.

Oh well, so much for that sitting-around-the-bar idea. Except these are Englishmen. They did, after all, create the world's biggest empire. If the first two options were no good, why not buy a boat, do the race, and hope like hell you can sell it again?

And so, about 10 days before the race, Stain landed in Sydney a lump in his throat, about to see, for the very first time, the \$200,000 yacht he was going to race to Hobart. She is a Beneteau First 47.7 Samskara, a pretty typical modern displacement cruiser/racer.

"She looks like a good boat. A good wardrobe of sails. Solid," he said. "I wanted a boat that is safe and will get us to Hobart."

"The boat wasn't absolutely ready, but I am pleased with it. She's a good boat for Hobart, though to my eyes not a thing of beauty. My Sovereign 40 at home sits low in the water, has a lovely sloping transom, and when you step on her from a marina she doesn't wobble about. Completely different to Samskara."

So what will make all of this worthwhile? "We've done our homework, and we have a good navigator in Welshman Karl Davies," Stain said.

"We know that at certain times you really have to look for current, really study that and winds," Curtis adds. "We know the rhumline isn't necessarily the fastest way to Hobart."

"There is lots of information about the wind and the currents, but we won't be anything like (as knowledgeable) as the locals," Stain conceded.

"I'm aiming to get there with no injuries," he continued, "and I'd like to finish in the top 50% on handicap in division. That'd make us better than average. That is my personal ambition."

"One thing for sure, when you don't finish a race there is a huge sense of depression so it is really important that we finish and acquit ourselves well," Curtis says.

"It's a privilege to be in this race. It's massively iconic, yet ordinary guys like us can get in it.

"This is our first Sydney Hobart," Stain said, "but who knows? We were only going to do one Fastnet and we've done two.

And after Stain has done the race?

"Last night after a few beers we started to talk about coming back next year – whether that was the drink talking, I'm not sure – but we did think we might not sell the boat after all, I am thinking about it....," Stain said this morning.

"The boat was fabulous, we only had one or two problems – and not my watch, I might add," he said. "One of the shrouds broke, the screw came out.

"On the race as a whole – you have your highs and you have your lows. The highs were sailing out of Sydney Harbour and then arriving in Hobart. We raced Triple Lindy to the finish line and she pipped us by just over a minute – that was special," ends Stain who plans to mountain bike up Mount Wellington today and go trout fishing tomorrow.

**By Jim Gale, RSHYR media**

\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*

**Photo Captions & Credit:**

Samskara - credit ROLEX/Daniel Forster

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