

2016 Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race

Race Report – Francesco Mongelli, Navigator, Overall Winner *Giacomo*



The 72nd edition of the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race started in a 15-20 knot north easterly sea breeze, giving competitors a jump on the 2012 race record set by *Wild Oats XI*, as more than one third of the fleet was ahead of the record after the first night of racing.

Three yachts finished in record time: *Perpetual Loyal* took line honours followed two hours later by *Giacomo* in second and *Scallywag* in third. However, the fast-paced race did not hold in for the majority of the fleet, as the yachts trickled into the dock in the following days after spending much too long on the Derwent River when the wind shut down for days on end.

On *Giacomo*, we sailed our race following the forecasts and routing made before the start.

The synoptic forecast showed two high pressure systems in place. The first one was quite steady, in between the Australian east coast and the North Island of New Zealand, and the second was to the south west of Tasmania, moving from the west to the north-east eventually ending up with the two combined during the night of 27 December.

These combined with the low pressure systems to the south of New Zealand, and over central Australia, showed us a trough located between Sydney and Cape Howe. This trough was forecast to bring rain and light winds and the timing and depth of this trough, we believe, would end up being the most critical part of the race from the strategic point of view.

At the start, the synoptic winds were about 15-20 knots from the north-east, and as soon as we were out of Sydney Harbour, the wind would increase to 25 knots for the first few hours

after the start. We then saw a drop in wind speed, as predicted for the first night. We expected this transition to take longer than the initial routing said, as the low resolution models generally underestimated the significance of wind holes.

At that time, our main goal was to sail a reaching angle as soon as possible, due to the new 15-25 knot easterly winds on the other side of the trough. This moved slowly back to the north and took us down to Hobart.

The predicted forecast turned out to be what we had on the course, better to be lucky than good!

On the sail down to Tasman Island, we played on the eastern side of the rhumbline to get the double advantage of avoiding the light winds to windward of Tasmania, and to stay on the right side of the expected wind shift.

Once we turned at Tasman Island, we were quite lucky to arrive in Hobart just as the wind began to drop dramatically, where the other big and mid-sized boats got stuck from Tasman Island up the Derwent River to Hobart.

For the whole race, the crew did an unbelievable job at always keeping the boat fast and efficient, constantly changing the boat's setup and sails with perfect knowledge and timing. This was, no doubt, our strongest weapon!