

# offshore

## YACHTING

### TRIPLE THREAT

FULL REPORT, RESULTS  
AND REVELATIONS OF  
THE ROLEX SYDNEY  
HOBART YACHT RACE 2012

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### RUNNING WILD

MARK RICHARDS  
ON OATS' WILD RIDE  
SOUTH TO VICTORY

# ACES WILD

WILD OATS XI TRIPLE  
HEADLINE WINNING ACT IN  
THE ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART

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# TRIPLE THREAT

THE 68TH ROLEX SYDNEY TO HOBART RAN ACCORDING TO SCRIPT FOR SOME, WHILE A SHOCK DISQUALIFICATION AND FIERCE BATTLING AMONG THE SMALLER BOATS KEPT THINGS INTERESTING FOR A FLEET THAT WATCHED *WILD OATS XI* DISAPPEAR OVER THE HORIZON WITH SPECTACULAR SPEED. **DI PEARSON** RECOUNTS A RACE THAT DEMONSTRATED *WILD OATS XI*'S PREVAILING DOMINATION OVER THE 628 NAUTICAL MILE DASH TO HOBART.





ANDREA FRANCOLINI



**OATS, WILD OATS**  
A true James Bond  
moment as *Wild Oats*  
*XI* powers out of the  
harbour in record time.



**RUSH HOUR**

A brisk southerly led the fleet out of the harbour at a rapid pace.





When Mark Richards and his *Wild Oats XI* crew burst off the start line in the 2012 Rolex Sydney Hobart, the right weather patterns for a race record and an overall win by a big boat were already destined; and Bob Oatley's 2005 record holder was odds-on favourite.

After last year's shock defeat by Anthony Bell's *Investec Loyal*, Bob Oatley and his *Wild Oats XI* crew vowed they would come back faster than ever, their light weather performance improved by new keel winglets, a retractable bow centreboard and a new Code Zero light weather headsail.

It is impossible to know if these mechanisms helped the maxi beat her 1 day 18hrs 40mins 10secs record, in a new time of 1 day 18hrs 23mins 12secs, as the weather was never light long enough to test the theory.

The newly renamed *Ragamuffin-Loyal* did take miles out of *Wild Oats XI* in lighter moments, but could not keep pace when winds freshened.

“The Race Committee has no option but to not accept the entry of *Wild Thing*.”

COMMODORE HOWARD PIGGOTT  
CYCA

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In the end, *Wild Oats XI* repeated her incredible feat of 2005, winning the treble again, but not before some anxious moments.

She took 16 minutes and 58 seconds off her old record for the 628 nautical mile course, the only yacht to twice take the treble in the history of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia's race.

The only other yacht to deliver a treble was inaugural race winner, Englishman Captain John Illingworth's *Rani*, in 1945.

Wild Oats XI now boasts six line honours wins, just one short of Morna/Kurrewa IV's record seven.

*Wild Oats XI* scooped the pool, courtesy of a dream forecast for the 68th edition of the race. The Bureau of Meteorology's (BOM) Michael Logan had told competitors it would be a big boat race if they were there for the breeze transitions.

It was a bitter pill for other competitors to swallow, but all remained hopeful, because in this race, anything can happen.



Back to the start, drama was unfolding on Boxing Day morning. After extending the time limit for paperwork until two and a half hours before the start of the race, CYCA Commodore Howard Piggott announced that the Race Committee would not accept the entry of *Wild Thing*.

He said, "The decision has been made as a result of non-compliance with the Notice of Race, in particular NoR 4.1, dealing with documentation to be lodged and verification of construction requirements."

*Wild Thing* had undergone recent extensive modifications, including a new section of her hull that added two feet to her overall length. The race rules require that a boat designer and builder provide declarations that the yacht has been built to ABS standards

"The Race Committee has worked with the owner of the boat, Grant Wharington, to allow him up to three hours prior to the start of the

**ON A MISSION**  
Left: *Wild Oats XI* made it round the mark in a record time of just over six minutes. Above: Heavy traffic as the rest of the fleet makes its way to the heads.



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Adrienne Cahalan, *Wild Oats*

**CUT TO THE CHASE**  
Above: *Calm*. Right: *Jazz*. Both were out to spoil *Wild Oats Xf's* dream race.





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**FLAT OUT**  
*Lahana* was in contention until a lapse in breeze.







ANDREA FRANGOLINI

XI's co-navigator confirmed Cropley's statement, adding: "We were constantly changing sails in yesterday's changing conditions. The wind gradually shifted around to the north/north-east, and built in the early hours of the morning."

The north-easterly was at 15 knots and built to 30 knots. Cropley reported after the change: "*Wild Oats* is now about 30 miles ahead of *Lahana* and *Ragamuffin-Loyal* is around 20 miles ahead."

Behind its record by 27 miles, these are the conditions the leader and her cohorts were banking on; hard running across Bass Strait. It cost all some breakages and sails, but *Wild Oats* constantly logged 24 knots, putting her on record pace.

Abeam of Flinders Island, she was around 10 miles ahead of her 2005 record, and had to finish before 7:40.10am on December 28 to beat it. About 32 miles behind, *Ragamuffin-Loyal* was also inside the record.

At 5:00am, *Wild Oats* was approximately 40 minutes behind the record, the nor' easter replaced by a weaker westerly.

But at 7:00am, the crew's hopes were revived as the boat picked up speed to 15 knots in a fresher breeze. Her original 8:30am ETA was upgraded to 8:00am, then 7:50, 7:36, 7:23 and 7:13 with five miles to go.

The breeze eased. Richards ordered a bigger sail up front, and although her pace slowed, she was fast enough to break the record. The tension aboard could be seen in every face.

Elated, Richards said: "We're all over the moon. How many places have this level of race with a fleet this size?"

"Last year we were beaten by *Investec Loyal* (now *Ragamuffin-Loyal*) by three minutes, which was very disappointing. This year we beat them by much more," he said of the 45 miles and over four-hour gap.

"We'll be back next year," Richards declared. Bob Oatley concurred.

Of beating the old record, Richards explained: "We just kept chipping away. You expect it to be light in the Derwent and it did get lighter towards the end. This is a very testing event and the Derwent is very testing."

Along with the treble, Adrienne Cahalan finished her 21st Hobart, a Women's record, while team member Steve Jarvin sailed his landmark 25th race and made it a record 11 line honours victories.

Meanwhile, *Jazz*, Chris Bull's *Cookson* 50, and the TP52 *Calm*, skippered by Jason Van Der Slot, were hoping to spoil the treble for the Oatley's boat. *Jazz*, whose British owner races internationally, finished the race fourth overall last year and second in 2010, so anything was possible.

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*Black Jack* and *Lahana* went wide in the race, for third and eighth overall.

“Last year we were beaten by *Investec Loyal* (now *Ragamuffin-Loyal*) by three minutes, which was very disappointing. This year we beat them by much more.”

MARK RICHARDS  
*Wild Oats XI*

respectively, while *Jazz* and *Calm* were fourth and fifth. Van Der Slot was devastated by light wind conditions. "The Tasman hasn't been good to us. We parked for two hours off Tasman Island and for an hour in the Derwent," he said.

"We watched *Jazz* come up to us under kite — they took 20 miles out of us finding their own private breeze. We only just beat them over the line — that was hard."

"We were aiming to finish in time to win – around 1:00am – that's the cruelty of it all. Up to Tasman Island we were on track. It had all gone according to plan until then... We did everything possible to win this race."

Ragamuffin-Loyal was sixth and *Quest*, with tireless sailing master Mike Green aboard, sailing his 34th Hobart (one less than his dad Peter Green) doing a great job to finish the race seventh overall and the second TP52.

Quest was sailed with a mixture of the initiated and some young guys with little or no Hobart experience. They



**HOME STRAIGHT**  
Left: *Loki* Above:  
The first ever  
Lithuanian entry  
*KLC Bengal 7*.

were among an encouragingly growing number of new blood this year.

Despite limited opportunities for the smaller yachts, the race proved riveting right to the finish line. There were some thrilling finishes and divisional fights to the end.

The first ever Lithuanian entry, *Ambersail* and Japan's *KLC Bengal* 7, match raced to the finish line, *Ambersail* the victor by six minutes on line when the Japanese ran out of air, but Japan emerged the victor once the handicap was applied.

*Chutzpah*, David Pescud's *Sailors With Disabilities*, Rikki – the Kiwi entry of Ray Haslar, and *Peugeot Surfrider* with Nicolas Lunven and his mostly French crew experiencing their first Hobart, also lunged for the line together.

They finished with only 15 minutes separating the four, after nearly four days at sea. ⚓