

# offshore

## YACHTING

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CRUISING YACHT CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

PAUL CLITHEROE AND CREW TAKE OUT THE TATTERSALL'S AS OVERALL WINNER OF THE ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART

# PERFECT BALANCE

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## ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART 2015

FULL RESULTS, REPORTS AND INSIGHTS INTO ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING OCEAN RACES IN THE WORLD

## REVIEW

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FEB/MAR 2016

\$9.95 (inc gst)

PP: 255003/07968



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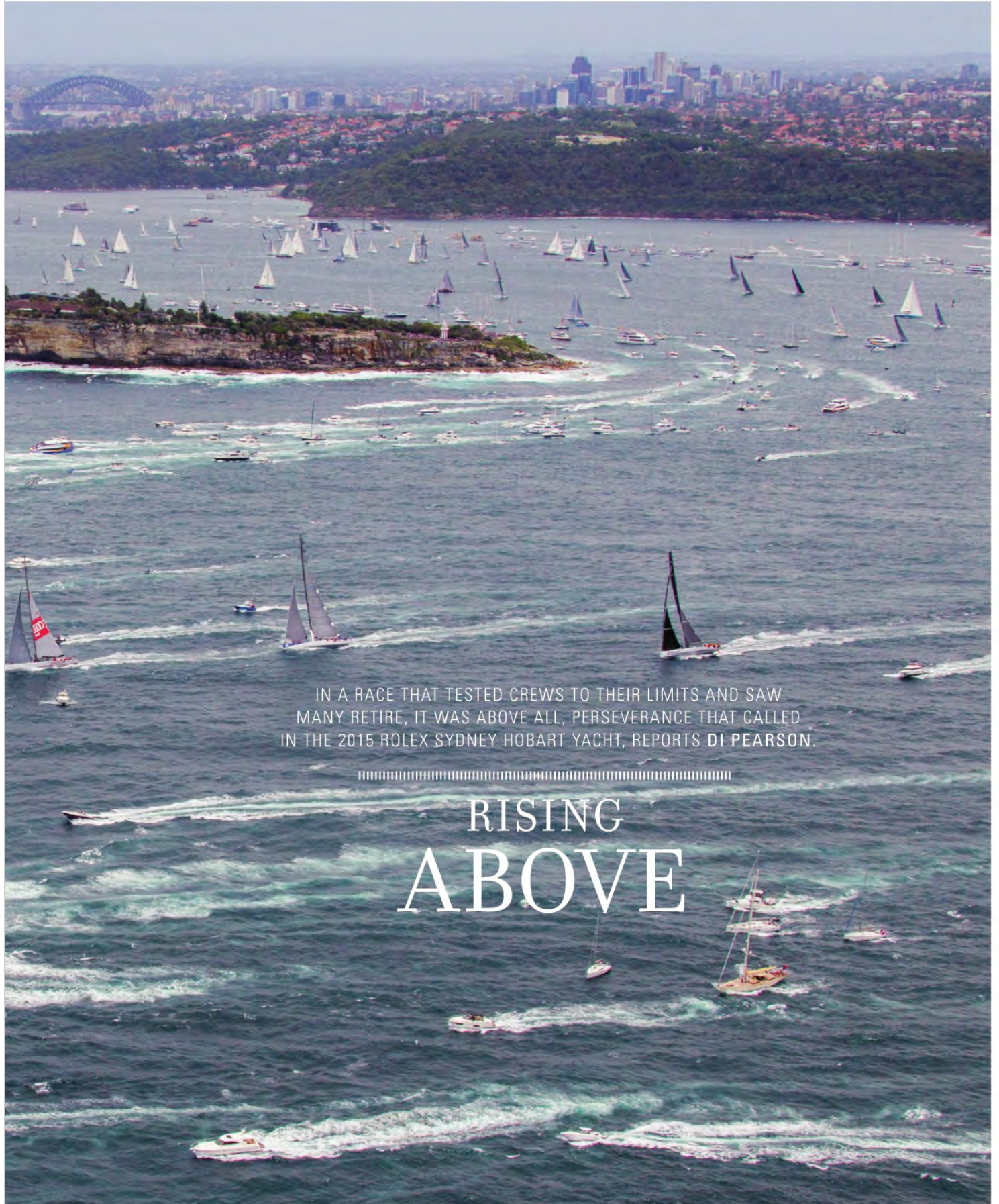


**SYDNEY SPECTACLE**

Crews leave Sydney Harbour in glorious weather after the race start on Boxing Day, but conditions were soon to change with extreme weather building along the south east coast.







IN A RACE THAT TESTED CREWS TO THEIR LIMITS AND SAW  
MANY RETIRE, IT WAS ABOVE ALL, PERSEVERANCE THAT CALLED  
IN THE 2015 ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT, REPORTS DI PEARSON.



# RISING ABOVE





It was a race that delivered shock departures and ended hopes for many – a demolition derby with more twists and turns than a soap opera. The line honours trophy left our shores, while the overall winner sat it out until the smallest boat’s chances had evaporated.

Jim and Kristy Clark’s *Comanche* took Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race line honours with steering issues and minus her starboard daggerboard and rudder, when the former snapped off and took out the starboard rudder on the way through. In the race for overall honours, Paul Clitheroe and his TP52 *Balance* were victorious, despite a badly torn main.

Drama arose before the start. The start vessel took on water and offloaded passengers at the Zoo wharf, among them Col Betts, Norm Hyett and Chris Oxenbould, who were to fire the start, five-minute and 10-minute cannons respectively. The Cruising Yacht Club of Australia had to quickly deploy a replacement boat, obviously without the trio and the cannon.

More drama ensued when the predicted building nor’easter arrived for the start of the CYCA’s 628-nautical mile classic. That, and







**THRILLS & SPILLS**  
 Clockwise from left: *Perpetual Loyal* beat her highly fancied rivals out of Sydney Harbour, but her victory was short lived, bearing away at the sea mark; *Rambler 88* fought hard until the end; The diverse race fleet heads out of Sydney Harbour; *Wild Oats XI* and *Comanche* raced tack for tack immediately after the race start.

perhaps some nerves, signalled the end for four boats just after the start.

A collision with *Ragamuffin 52* left *Ark323* (the first Mainland China entry in the history of the race) with a cracked deck, forcing her retirement. *Ragamuffin 52* finished the race, but later lost the protest and was penalised. A shredded forestay and forecast southerlies ended M3's race.

In the other incident, *Lupa of London* (UK) and *Cougar II* collided, resulting in bow damage to the canting *Lupa*, which had sailed all the way to Sydney for the race, while *Cougar*'s transom on the starboard side was smashed up. Both retired. The international jury found *Cougar II*, one of only two Tasmanian entries, had failed to keep clear.

*Maserati*, carrying Pierre Casiraghi, grandson of Monaco's Prince Rainier and Princess Grace, sensationally hooked three exclusion zone marks near South Head, her famous skipper and first-time Hobart sailor Giovanni Soldini sending a crew member over the side to free them.

In another sensation, *Perpetual Loyal* was the first boat around the first mark. Anthony Bell's victory



was short lived. Bearing away at the sea mark, *Comanche* unleashed in big running conditions and shot away from the pack. Fellow US entry, George David's *Rambler 88*, also picked up speed and took off.

The competition between the two was to continue nearly to the end, but under reduced circumstances for them and others.

As predicted, a southerly buster hit the fleet on the first night out and wreaked havoc before retreating the next afternoon.

Defending line honours and race record holding champion, *Wild Oats XI*, made a shock exit shortly before 10pm that evening when a 40-knot squall ripped her main in half. Game over for Mark Richards and crew on Bob Oatley's boat. *CEX Dolce* was next, her mast broken.

Among others, *Perpetual Loyal*, with former Aussie cricket captain Michael Clarke on crew, retired with a broken rudder. Then *Comanche* retired, reporting daggerboard and rudder damage.

Will Oxley, *Ichu Ban*'s navigator, reported 43-knot gusts from the front end of the fleet. In all, 23 yachts retired with damage by early morning, including *Pretty Fly III* with a broken forestay and *Takani* with rudder damage. *Brindabella*, an early casualty last year, was also out with main damage, as was *Patrice*.

In all, 31 were to retire from the 108 starters, including *Black Jack* when owner Peter Harburg broke his leg, and *Victoire*, after owner Darryl Hodgkinson broke three ribs and a haemothorax. But the skippers of *Comanche* and the German entry, *Haspa Hamburg* (rigging damage), found solutions and returned to the race.

Meanwhile, *Rambler* pressed her advantage, taking the race lead for 13 hours, with Syd Fischer's *Ragamuffin 100* just 19 miles astern.

Decorated Italian single-handed sailor, Giovanni Soldini, had taken *Maserati* on a course out to sea and it was paying dividends, as the V70 was only a handful of miles behind Fischer's boat, but later found a nasty parking lot.

Jenifer Wells, navigator of 2014 Sydney Hobart winner *Wild Rose* reported: "The predicted front arrived almost bang on. Our group of boats faced a sudden change of 38 knots from south-east at about 10.15am, 50 miles east of Ulladulla. As Hicco would say, 'we had a bit on.'

"News of a boat with its spinnaker in the water up ahead came across the radio as we reefed and put up the



number five jib.”

From further south a little later, Will Oxley reported: “The southerly is more manageable, in the 27-knot region.” The carnage was over for the time being, but there was more to come.

At 9am on December 27, *Comanche*'s skipper, Ken Read, called and said: “We decided to punch on through. We think we can get to Hobart safely.

“I don't care if we limp over the line. We didn't come all this way not to finish. We're going to finish this damned race,” he added with emotion.

It was hard-going; sailing on port tack was compromised and steering was difficult.

*Rambler*, an 88-footer, was 11 miles ahead of the race record, *Comanche* giving chase in the weakening southerly. *Ragamuffin 100* and *Maserati* were in their own match race, 20 and 30 miles astern of the leaders.

“I don't care if we limp over the line. We didn't come all this way not to finish. We're going to finish this damned race”

KEN READ

*Comanche*



That afternoon, *Comanche*'s bow was back in front. *Rambler*'s Australian navigator, Andrew Cape, reported their starboard daggerboard was broken.

“We have no idea what we hit, but it was a solid hit. It shook the boat. Our port tack performance has been badly affected, and it's all upwind to Tasman Island, so we have a lot of pain to come,” Cape said.

The race for line honours became a 'race of the sailing wounded' when *Ragamuffin 100*'s port daggerboard sheared off during the southerly. She dropped from eight to over 50 miles behind *Comanche* and *Rambler 88*.

Sailing master David Witt said, “We dropped off a wave and snapped it off. The wind has been on the nose for the last... since I can remember.”

“We pulled the starboard daggerboard out and drilled a hole in the bottom of it. When we tack, we



**FEAR FACTOR**  
Decorated Italian single-handed sailor, Giovanni Soldini skippered *Maserati* (above), which was only a handful of miles behind Fischer's boat *Ragamuffin 100* (left), before it found a nasty parking lot.

turn it upside down and drop it in on the other side. It's a bit dangerous in the heavier conditions; easier in the lighter winds we have now,” Witt said, seeing the irony of imparting this news from the parking lot they were now in.

Witt later told how during the first night, he and bowman Justin Shave were dragged overboard and the yacht capsized on top of them – the water ballast and keel on the wrong side of the boat – their electronics wiped out.

*Ragamuffin*'s crew, including 88-year-old owner Syd Fischer (the oldest competitor in the race), were hopeful the westerly would offer them a lifeline to catching *Rambler 88* least, which was a tantalising 25 miles ahead.

*Comanche* took line honours at 9:58:30pm on December 28, making Kristy Hinze-Clark the first female owner to win the title. Their finish time of two days eight hours 58 minutes 30 seconds was well outside the record of 1 day 18 hours 23 minutes 12 seconds set by *Wild Oats XI*





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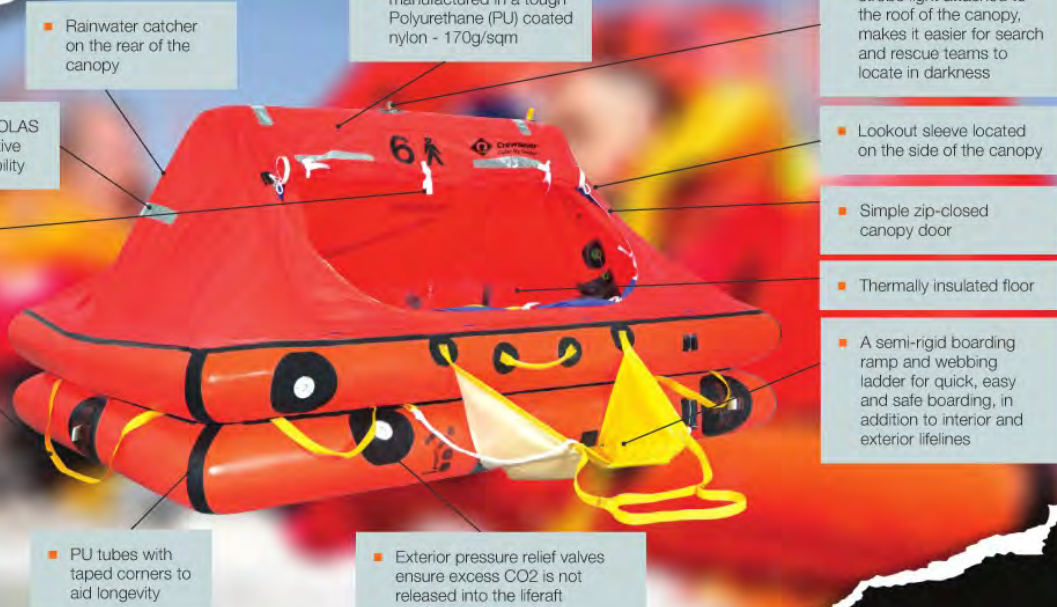
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George David commented, "We sailed a great race. We did damage, but the boat held together and everything was great until the blower shut down. Yesterday was bizarre. We had no air. The big high swallowed up the guys behind, then got us."

"To add insult to injury, the boats behind us came down with a northerly and sailed right to us. To put it in perspective, at one point we were 60 miles ahead of *Ragamuffin 100*. But this is a handicap race. Every boat is trying to win handicap. That's where the competition is."

In the meantime, the chase for overall victory was in full flight. *Rambler* looked in good shape before the north-easterly came through. Then 10 boats were in contention.

Rupert Henry's JV62, *Chinese Whisper* and Matt Allen's Carkeek 60, *Ichi Ban*, match raced the whole way and ultimately finished fifth and six on line, fifth and eighth overall for first and second in Division O respectively.

*Primitive Cool*, the 2010 overall winner as *Secret Mens Business*, ultimately finished fourth overall and second in Division 1; *Teasing Machine* (FRA) won Division 3;

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## The race for line honours became a 'race of the sailing wounded'

in 2012, but considering her damage and short retirement, the feat was a remarkable one.

Adding the race's Illingworth trophy and Rolex Yacht Master II timepiece to her already enviable collection, year-old *Comanche*, from the drawing board of Verdier Yacht Design and VPLP, was the first American yacht to take line honours since Larry Ellison's *Sayonara* in the fatal 1998 race.

"I think it's fair to say we've got the fastest 100-footer in the world. We were 30 miles ahead when we broke," Ken Read commented dockside.

"You guys have a hard, hard race. I've sailed around the world two and a half times and I thought I'd seen it all, but that is one really tough body of water."

Kristy Clark said: "There were a bunch of emotions that went on. Pure terror at one stage – excitement – and now just total joy and fulfillment. It's one of the best things I've ever done.

Unable to race, Jim Clark kept the faith ashore. "As soon as I heard they were going to keep going, I knew the crew wouldn't stop unless they couldn't keep going," he said. "But we

won't be back to defend; It takes too much time and money."

Clark and *Comanche's* crew were disappointed their ambition to beat *Wild Oats XI* did not pan out.

Back on the course, *Rambler* was left to hold *Ragamuffin 100* at bay, but the 100-footer clawed back the miles.

In a thriller from Tasman Light to the finish, the two were glued together until *Rambler's* highly credentialed crew, including Brad Butterworth, saw the windless patch on the Derwent near the finish and made the decision to head for pressure closer to shore.

It forced Witt to make a tough decision for *Ragamuffin*. He opted to sail the direct route through the windless patch. It paid off. The Aussie boat secured second on line by four minutes.

On their winning move, Fischer said: "We had to try different tactics. We had to do something different, and do it better – and we did. Witty and the crew did a great job.

"It was a good feeling to beat *Rambler*. And I crossed another Hobart off – my 47th," said Fischer with his trademark grin.





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**NECK & NECK**  
Above: Ken Read, Jimmy Spithill and Kristy Hinze-Clarke take line honours on *Comanche*. Left and below: *Ichi Ban* (left) and *Chinese Whisper* (below) match raced their way to Hobart, finishing fifth and sixth on the line.

defending champion *Wild Rose* finished sixth overall, third in Division 4 and third in ORCi; *King Billy* suffered soft conditions towards the end and finished 14th overall. That left *Leon* (FRA, was *Courrier du Leon*), *Quikpoint Azzurro*, *Ragamuffin 52* and *Balance* in the running.

On the morning of December 28, Will Oxley emailed: "We're hanging in. We're watching *Balance* closely – they look to have done well inshore.

"Looks like we will see the next front near Tasman, so some more heavy air upwind may be on the cards





before the finish.”

Late that afternoon, Paul Clitheroe emailed from *Balance*: “Santa has much to answer for. I only asked for one gift; not to be smashed by a southerly in Bass Strait. True to his jolly nature, he delivered. We got smashed off the NSW coast instead. Ironically we have been drifting most of the afternoon in perfect, windless weather.

“We had a fast downwind run into the southerly, then a pretty grim 18 hours. No sleep, too rough to eat, cold.

“Bit surprised to see how many retired. We got through battered and bruised with a badly ripped main,

**OPEN SLATHER**  
**Right: French yacht**  
**Leon snatched**  
**second overall from**  
**Quickpoint Azzurro**  
**in a close result.**  
**Below: Ragamuffin**  
**52 also lost second**  
**place overall after a**  
**20 percent penalty.**



but luckily below the bottom reef. We spent our drifting time and much sticky back repairing it. Its new life as a car cover awaits...”

“Wind is back – the north-westerly we’ve been relying on – so off we go. Fingers crossed the main holds together. Got online and saw we were seventh on line honours. Now that is amazing,” said Clitheroe of the position they held for most of the race.

And then there were three. *Ragamuffin 52*, skippered by Syd Fischer’s grandson, Brenton Fischer, was penalised 20 percent over the *Ark323* incident, dropping her from second overall to 38th.

*Balance* held the top spot, but Clitheroe had to wait just over a day for Gery Trentesaux’s *Leon* to finish, and one day 14 hours for Shane Kearns’ *S&S 34*, *Quickpoint Azzurro*,

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the smallest (10.1 metres) and second oldest (34 years) in the fleet.

The French yacht arrived, nearly three hours short of the money. *Quikpoint Azzurro* was way ahead on time and coming home fast in the building north-easterly.

Clitheroe was convinced the small yacht had snatched victory. He hadn't

reckoned on what was awaiting the boat bought on a credit card and her crew of six once they rounded Tasman Island in the late afternoon – light winds that continued to soften to almost nothing through the night and into the morning.

*Quikpoint Azzurro*, which Kearns had sailed to 2015 Sydney Gold Coast



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overall victory, was relegated to third overall by six minutes to the French Valer/JPK 10.80, a sistership to the yacht Gery Trentesaux won the 2015 Rolex Fastnet Race with in August. *Leon* also claimed divisional honours from Kearns' boat.

However, Kearns and crew wore mile-wide smiles as their boat came to dock with another wooden boat, Phil Bennett's *King Billy*, which they finished 2 minutes 10 seconds behind. *Quikpoint's* crew quickly realised third overall and winning ORCi overall and the Corinthian division was extraordinary.

**END IN SIGHT**  
Left: *QuickPoint Azzurro* was way ahead in time but came in third overall after *Leon*. Above: *Primitive Cool* finished fourth overall and second in Division 1.

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Clitheroe was shocked. "I was sure they had it in the bag. Most of my crew went home – I'll have to get them back."

Recovering when presented with the Tattersall's Cup and a Rolex Yacht-Master timepiece, Clitheroe said, "We are very excited to have won this iconic race, and just thrilled to find our win was enough to tie us with *Chinese Whisper* in the Blue Water Pointscore and to win it on countback."

"A Hobart win was not in my expectations, so it's a very happy shock. The whole thing is quite surreal and yet to sink in," said *Balance's* quirky owner of the yacht that had also won the 2008 Rolex Sydney Hobart as *Quest*.

"Best bit.... crew getting their crew medals. That was a lovely surprise and I was so proud of them, many have stuck with me through three other boats. The 52 is one great boat,

"There were a bunch of emotions that went on. Pure terror at one stage – excitement – and now just total joy and fulfillment. It's one of the best things I've ever done"

KRISTY HINZE-CLARK  
*Comanche*



but talk about wet and noisy.... the slamming," he said of the boat he referred to as "my carbon frying pan."

"Watch captains Mike Green (his 37th Hobart and second overall win on this yacht) and Brownie (Adam Brown – 29th Hobart and second win on this yacht) did a great job. Bruce Hollis (the respected Ullman sailmaker and coach) has made new sails for every one of my boats and is a key team member and a super guy," Clitheroe finished.

James Murchison's *Abracadabra* won the battle for PHS overall honours, a best result from seven Hobarts. Second was Tasmania's *Helsal 3* (Robbie Fisher and Paul Mara), with Les Goodridge's *Wax Lyrical* third.

Many competitors said it was the worst Hobart they had encountered since the 2004 race, but added "it was a real Hobart." ↓  
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**WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS**  
Left: *Balance*, the overall winner on corrected time, took home the coveted Tattersall's Cup. Above: *Abracadabra* took first in PHS overall honours, its best result in the seven Hobarts it has completed in.

### For the record

- A record 27 international entries, enhanced by the 12-strong Clipper fleet
- Mainland China entered the race for the first time with two entries representing separate yacht clubs
- Apart from the 60th and 70th editions of the race, it was the first time fleet numbers exceeded 100 this century, with 108 starters
- Tony Cable (*Duende*) contested a record 50th Hobart, while Tony Ellis (*Triton*) sailed his 48th and Syd Fischer and Bill Ratcliff (*Takani*) their 47th
- There were four female skippers, three of whom own their own boats. CYCA member Wendy Tuck skippered *Da Nang - Viet Nam* to top place in the Clipper fleet, and as the first female skipper to finish, won the Jane Tate Memorial Trophy
- There were many newcomers to the race, including the majority of international entries
- There were a record nine TP52 starters – just three finished