

2011 Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race

Race Report – Michael Bellingham, Navigator, Overall Winner *Loki*



The race started with week E-NE breeze predicted to increase from the NE up to 20 knots and then NW before a vigorous SW-S change up to 30-35 knots.

The NE increase was stalled because of thunderstorm activity over the land, however the clouds cleared and the day provided good running conditions until the change which hit the first yachts in the fleet around 7pm on the first night. The wind in the change was South West then South with initial confused direction and strength up to 40 knots for around the first hour. A feature of the change was a spectacular roll cloud from the South West.

The breeze settled around 20-25 knots turning left to the SE with rain through most of the evening and next morning. Those who approached the coast were eventually greeted by a change in direction eventually settling in the South West and once south of Gabo Island around 25-35 knots.

From Green Cape out into the Bass Strait the direction and strength remained the same late into the second afternoon with current assist up to 3 knots which did provide some unpleasant sea conditions.

The next main feature was an East Coast High in the east of Bass Strait which was different from the previous few years when the fleet had encountered the more traditional Low Pressure system. A feature of this system was low cloud and light rain and winds easing to around 10 knots away from the clouds under some of the clouds there was little wind.

On the western edge of this system the sky was clear and the breeze turned to the North and North West up to 25-30 knots which provided spirited running conditions into the

afternoon of the third day.

Close to the coast of Tasmania a sea breeze effect developed in the South and this enabled VMG running down to Maria Island. Those further offshore did not enjoy this effect and suffered from the lee low of Tasmania.

The breeze in the far south was South East light 5-15 knots which was enough to get around the Tasman Light and then down Storm Bay and up the River Derwent. At 3am on the 29th when *Loki* finished the wind was light 0-7 knots and did not build in any significant way for the next 36 hours.

During the day and night of the 4th day the yachts offshore experienced very light conditions.