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# Offshore

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CRUISING YACHT CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

*Yachting*

**Records  
broken on  
the northern  
race circuit**

**Fiasco in  
the Fastnet**

**Safety at  
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**Fire Guts  
Champion**





The charred and twisted hull of *Foxtel Amazon* lies in its berth at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. (Pic - Peter Campbell)

### XXXX Sydney - Gold Coast Race

## MIGHTY AMAZON in full flood for final race

*Foxtel Amazon* and six other yachts broke the 12 year race record in the 1997 XXXX Sydney - Gold Coast Race, as Lisa Smith reports.

career, *Foxtel Amazon* had taken line honours in every major ocean race off the Australian East Coast - except the Sydney to Hobart - since being launched in December, 1990:

- Four times in the Sydney - Gold Coast Race, including breaking the record in August this year.
- Once in the Gosford to Lord Howe Island Race.
- Once in the Pittwater to Coffs Harbour Race.
- Four times in the Sydney - Mooloolaba Race
- Once in the Brisbane to Gladstone Race.

Line honours eluded her in five Sydney to Hobarts since 1991. She was forced to retire when leading the fleet in 1991, retiring again in 1993. She finished second across the line to New Zealand Endeavour in 1992, third to Sayonara in 1995 and third to the record-breaking Morning Glory last year.

Peter Walker has taken a long time to live down the unwanted record he set with his maxi yacht *Amazon* in the 1992 Sydney - Gold Coast Race - the slowest ever winning time, 60 hours 34 minutes 05 seconds, for the 386 nautical mile course north to Queensland.

Five years on, with a new carbon fibre mast, many new sails, a new keel, a realistic rating, and fresh tailwinds all the way north, the Kell Steinmann-designed 69-footer finally lived up to her potential in the 1997 offshore classic. Sadly, it was to be her last race as she was destroyed by fire just one month later (see story opposite page)

*Foxtel Amazon* not only cut her own slowest time almost in half, but also slashed more than seven hours off the previous race record as she surfed north under spinnaker, finishing in a remarkable time of 31 hours 12 minutes 18 seconds.

This was *Foxtel Amazon's* fourth line honours victory in the race and clearly her best. Walker described the race as

"champagne and sandwiches stuff" but for some, blustery conditions on the first night spelt the end of what was to become the fastest dash to the Gold Coast in the race's 12-year history.

A fleet of 86 boats from all Eastern States lined up for the spectacular spinnaker start in Sydney Harbour in early August, the largest since the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia introduced the midwinter race to Queensland waters 12 years ago following the opening of the Gold Coast Seaway.

Once around North Head, the fleet settled in for a long, hard run up the coast - most boats dropping their spinnakers only for the final 16-mile reach to the finish.

The race did not begin well for *Foxtel Amazon* and owner Walker. The maxi broke the start, then collided with another yacht. *Foxtel Amazon* was forced to re-round the start buoys and complete two penalty turns before heading off in pursuit of the race leaders offshore.

Martin James' *Team Jaguar* (the former *Infinity III*) and Syd Fischer's *Ragamuffin*,



ABOVE LEFT: How many protest flags were flying after this gunwale-to-gunwale dash down Sydney Harbour after the start of the XXXX Gold Coast Race? (Pic - Ian Mainsbridge). ABOVE RIGHT: Not only did *Team Jaguar* (ex *Infinity III*) look smart in her new livery but she gave her sponsors an early return by leading the Gold Coast fleet through the Heads. She was fifth to finish race, also breaking race record. (Pic - Ian Mainsbridge)

steered by Tony Ellis, led the fleet down Sydney Harbour to the Heads. As they headed offshore, the former South African 75-footer *Marchioness*, with John Messenger at the helm, and Peter Hansen's Melbourne-based *PL Lease Future Shock* soon closed the gap, with *Foxtel Amazon* looming up astern.

With the winds strengthening throughout the afternoon and evening, the fleet swept northwards at record speeds. While the downwind flyers *Foxtel Amazon*, *Future Shock* and *Marchioness* revelled in the hard running conditions, first light uncovered a host of casualties limping into NSW North Coast ports.

Line honours contender, Warwick Miller's Reichel/Pugh-designed 66-footer *Exile*, was one, dismasted early Sunday morning 20 miles north of Port Macquarie when the lower spreader end gave way, bringing the carbon fibre mast crashing over the side. With the mast and spinnaker pole flailing about underwater and threatening to pierce the hull, the only option was to cut the rig away.

By Sunday morning nine yachts had retired while the race leader *Foxtel Amazon*, averaging 12 knots, was forging north 25 nautical miles ahead of her nearest rival, *PL Lease Future Shock*, with the former South African maxi *Marchioness* running third. It was clear that the nine-year race record of 38 hours 57 minutes set by Arthur Bloore's *Hammer of Queensland* in 1988 was going to be broken - it was just a question of by how much?

At 20:12:18 on Sunday night, *Foxtel Amazon* crossed the finish line alone off Southport's Main Beach, smashing the previous race record by 7 hours 45 minutes. A crowd of well wishers cheered the black-hulled pocket maxi as she docked at Southport Yacht Club, including the boat's designer Kell Steinmann who climbed aboard to celebrate with the winning crew.

With a top speed of 26 knots and an average boat speed of 12 knots over the 368 nautical mile course, designer Kell Steinmann was ecstatic about the boat's performance. "With the new keel and bigger rig, *Amazon* is really powered up," he said.

In the coming hours, another six boats were to break the previous race record, with *Amazon* being followed home by *PL Lease Future Shock* (Peter Hansen), *Marchioness* (Marchioness syndicate), *Innkeeper* (Innkeeper syndicate), *Team Jaguar* (Martin James), *Rager* (David Hanlon) and Syd Fischer's *Ragamuffin*, skippered by Tony Ellis in the owner's absence at the Admiral's Cup.

This year's race featured several significant changes. The CYCA, at the request of many owners, brought the race into line with the Telstra Sydney to Hobart by re-introducing an overall IMS winner. The race was also the first to be sailed using the Offshore Racing Council's new Dynamic Allowances and the first ocean race in Australian under the International Sailing Federation's Racing

Rules of Sailing.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the IMS racing was the decision by the CYCA to create divisions of boats of similar boatspeed, which provided some exhilarating close racing all the way north. Also significant was the strength of the yachts (more than 50) entered in the PHS divisions since the CYCA decided that an IMS certificate was no longer required for entry in the Performance Handicap category.

For the CYCA's 1996/97 Blue Water Champion, *Atara* (Roger Hickman & John Storey) the constant monitoring of wind shifts by navigator Denise Richards and the crew's readiness to gybe the spinnaker to gain the advantage - despite the conditions and the risks associated - paid off. "It was one of the best, and one of the hardest races we have ever sailed," said skipper Roger Hickman, winner of the IMS overall trophy.

The competition for the CYCA's Blue Water Pointscore, which includes the Sydney to Gold Coast Race as the first race of the 1997-98 series, is so intense that the Farr 50 *Ragamuffin* competed without owner Syd Fischer aboard. *Ragamuffin* rewarded both the absent Fischer and skipper Tony Ellis with an outstanding second overall (IMS) while David Fuller and Hugo van Kretschmar placed third overall with their Sydney 36 *Bashfull*.

*Ragamuffin* sailed the entire race without lights and electronics. "It was really hard steering almost square downwind in big seas and strong winds on that first black night," watch helmsman Larry Jamieson said. "When I was steering, Tony Ellis stood behind me with the torch

"The CYCA, at the request of many owners, brought the race into line with the Telstra Sydney to Hobart by re-introducing an overall IMS winner."

on the Windex and I did the same when he was on the helm, calling the angles in compass degrees. He called me his 'talking B&G' and said we should patent the idea."

Designer David Lyons took out a double in the IMS divisions with *Atara* winning IMS Division 1 and Bruce Mead's *Jarkan 38*, *Dictator*, from Lake Macquarie Yacht Club, winning IMS Division 2.

In PHS Division, *Foxtel Amazon* took out the double of line and handicap honours and set the new race record of 31 hours 12 minutes 18 seconds. Peter Hansen's Elliott 55 *Future Shock* placed second on line honours and second overall (PHS) while Warren Anderson's Swarbrick designed *Wide Load* placed third overall. Anderson is a former Australian half ton champion and sailed his Curragwong 31, *Granny Apple*, into third place overall in the 1974 Sydney to Hobart.

A famous fleet of boats made up the veteran's division with first place on Handicap going to Peter and Geoff Docker's *Camille*, designed and sailed by the late Ron Swanson in Australia's inaugural Admiral's Cup team in 1965. Second place went to another classic yacht, Phillip Brown's 15-times Sydney-Hobart entrant and 1957 winner, *Anitra V*, originally designed and sailed by Trygve and Magnus Halvorsen and later owned for many years by the late Sir Garfield Barwick. ▲



ABOVE LEFT: *Atara*, John Storey's Lyons 43 skippered by Roger Hickman, continued her successes by winning the IMS overall trophy in the XXXX Sydney - Gold Coast Race. Last summer she was the CYCA Blue Water Champion. (Pic - Ian Mainsbridge). ABOVE RIGHT: *Wild Bull*, skippered by CYCA director Rod Skellet, charges north on her first ocean race in the XXXX Sydney - Gold Coast Race. (Pic - Ian Mainsbridge)

## RESULTS

### IMS DIVISION 1 AND OVERALL:

1. *Atara*, Lyons 43 (John Storey/Roger Hickman, CYCA)
2. *Ragamuffin*, Farr 50 (Syd Fischer/Tony Ellis, CYCA)
3. *Bashfull*, Sydney 36 (David Fuller/Hugo van Kretschmar, CYCA)

### IMS DIVISION 2

1. *Dictator*, *Jarkan 38* (Bruce Mead, LMYC); 2. *Abracadabra*, Tripp 47 (James Mark Anthony, MHYC); 3. *Inner Circle*, Farr 40 (Dennis Pomfret, LMYC)

### IMS DIVISION 3

1. *Suraya*, S&S 37 (Carl Striber, CYCA); 2. *A Crewed Interest*, Northshore 38 (Warwick Sherman, CYCA); 3. *Camille*, Swanson 37 (Peter and Geoff Docker, RSYS)

### PHS: DIVISION A

1. *Foxtel Amazon*, Steinmann 69 (Peter Walker, CYCA); 2. *PL Lease Future Shock*, Elliott 55 (Peter Hansen, Sandringham YC); 3. *Rager*, Elliott 50 (David Hanlon, Coffs Harbour YC)

### PHS DIVISION B

1. *Wide Load*, Swarbrick 40 (Warren Anderson, SASC); 2. *Kidnapped*, Sayer 40 (Peter Bush, CYCA); 3. *Mistress Mercy*, Senogles 36 (James Murchison, SASC)

### PHS DIVISION C

1. *Ratu IV*, Stewart 34 (James Davern, SASC); 2. *Polar Bear*, Savage 41 (Malcolm Levy, RSYS); 3. *Caliban*, Beneteau 39 (Ian Creak, Greenwich Flying Squadron)

New race record set by *Foxtel Amazon*: 31 hours 12 minutes 18 seconds.

# River Quays

## MARINA



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Phone 9736 2633 Fax 9736 2487