

HELSAL II's MELBOURNE-HOBART

Jim Boucaut has asked me to write a few lines of HELSAL's Melbourne-Hobart Race, so at the risk of boring my friends who have heard it all before and seen the video tape provided by Channel 7 in Melbourne, I will keep this as brief as possible.

The intense rivalry that exists between Sydney and Melbourne in all spheres of activity ensures that the Melbourne-Hobart receives a great deal of publicity in Victoria, and HELSAL II featured prominently in all sections of the media and was usually referred to as the "pocket maxi from SA" etc, etc.

I frequently point out to my NSW yachting friends how easy it is for them to compete in the Sydney-Hobart, most of them living within minutes of the starting line. Jim Howell had a great run to Sydney doing it in 6 days (it can easily take 10) but we weren't so lucky. It's about 500 miles to Melbourne and we sailed 620 into head winds for most of the way, but arrived there in good time.

Right up until the day that we left, we were uncertain as to where we were to be moored in Port Phillip Bay which was a little worrisome, but we were eventually accommodated at the Sandringham YC and we were greatly helped by Bill Williams who is still an RSAYS member.

The lead up race to the main event is the annual "Cock of the Bay", the course being from the Station Pier to Mornington, a distance of 24 miles. This race normally attracts a very large field, not only the entrants for Hobart, but those going to Devonport and any other racing yacht from around the bay also taking part. The press reported that there were about 100 starters, but this is open to question as I am sure that a violent storm that swept the city on the evening of the 25th would have deterred a lot of potential starters.

We didn't try for a spectacular start as too many

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vessels were milling about in a fairly confined area and as the weather looked unsettled we sailed in the early stages very conservatively. The 3 fast lightweight Inglis 47's paced us for a fair time, but as the wind increased and later we came harder onto the wind, we pulled away from them and gained great pleasure in making fastest time and setting a course record. Squalls of 45 knots were coming through in the latter stages, and one violent gust of 60 knots hit us just after we finished and battered the rest of the fleet.

The Hobart event for many years has been started at Portsea, but to give the people ashore a better view of the combined fleets, the start was at Rye. We were given the choice of sailing through the Sorrento Channel, close to shore and a shorter course, or through a passage in the sand banks to gain the deep water of the main shipping channel. As H II draws nearly 10 ft loaded, we chose the latter, and at Portsea had just one vessel a few seconds ahead of us, but at the turning mark near Shortland Bluff we had cleared ahead and gained a nice trophy for being first to clear the Heads, having averaged 11.5 knots. The photo of H II in Alan Wilkinson's office gives a good indication of what we were all heading into. We had 4 reefs in the main and a new No 4 on and were doing 9 knots to windward.

The hard conditions continued throughout the night causing a number of retirements, but things gradually settled and we passed Black Pyramid at 0900 on 28th December 89, which wasn't bad going having sailed 200 miles at an average speed of 9.5 knots.

Late afternoon and evening saw conditions lighten considerably and as we closed the Tasmanian coast, the fleet which was strung out well behind us revelled in continuing fresh winds. Any chance of a race record previously set by HELSAL I of 2 days, 3 hours and 10 mins was lost at this stage. Most of the second night

we had the .5 oz kite on, but dawn brought better conditions and we changed to the .75 oz, to the 1.5 and finally the 2.2 which we were using when we achieved our highest speed of 26.7 knots approaching Maatsuyker Is.

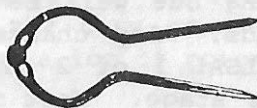
The only problem we had at the high speeds (we were regularly clocking 20 k) was the wildly spinning propeller, for which we had to stop on 4 occasions to apply a brake to the shaft.

The usual apprehensions about fickle conditions in the Derwent were dispelled when for the run up from the Iron Pot we carried a fair wind right to the finishing line off the casino. We finished at 0012 on the 29th, well outside the record but 8 hours earlier than the Race Committee was expecting us. Under full main and No 3 genoa, we were doing 12 knots in the final stages.

Jim Howell did exceptionally well in the Sydney-Hobart and we were equally pleased with what we had achieved in making fastest time and enhancing the good name of this State in yachting.

By the way, the conditions that we experienced in Port Phillip Bay reaffirmed my opinion from earlier encounters in those waters, that the waters of the Gulf of St Vincent are unsurpassed, and that our club facilities and hospitality are second to none.

KEITH FLINT



Sydney based South Australian, Don McIntyre, will sail his Adams 15.2 m racing sloop, SPONSOR WANTED, under the Squadron burgee in the forthcoming 1990/91 BOC Challenge single handed around the world race. Don, who left on 30th May 90 on the first leg of his delivery voyage, is the only Australian entry in Class II of the event which will start at Newport, Rhode Island on 15th September 90.



In 1978, at the age of 22, Don left the Squadron in his first deep keel yacht, a Duncanson 29, on a 14000 mile, 3 year cruise around the Pacific. He subsequently developed successful business interests in the eastern states, became heavily involved in yachting administration and still found time to pursue his main passion, sailing. Now at the age of 34, he is on his way to compete in the third BOC Challenge expected to finish in Newport in May 91.

Don has always been associated with the sea and adventure sports. Sailing off the beach dinghies from a very early age, he progressed to keel boats in his late teens. At some time or another he has been involved with all forms of racing including competitive "One design" racing. He has sailed aboard RAGAMUFFIN on one occasion representing Australia in the International Southern Cross Cup Series, and on another occasion with the late Ben Lexcen in the Burns Philip Maxi Series.

An accomplished swimmer, Don became a certified scuba diver at 15 and went on to surfing for nearly 8 years until motorcycle racing took over. He has also been involved in rock climbing, gliding, trekking and parachuting.