

Fiftieth Sydney-Hobart Race 1994 "Kodak Gold"

Jamie Cowell

The 1993 Sydney-Hobart race was characterised by bad weather. Two thirds of the fleet retired, and John Quin, the skipper of *Mem*, was picked up after five hours in the water. These events, among other things, served to focus the minds of many on the fiftieth race in 1994, resulting in over four hundred Applications for Entry. 371 yachts actually started, and 308 finished to make a spectacular sight in Hobart.

Nineteen yachts from South Australia started in the race, of which eleven were from the Squadron, seven from CYCSA and one (*Scavenger*) from Port Lincoln. Much has been written about the race in other places, and I don't intend to repeat it here. South Australian yachts sail a thousand miles to reach the starting line, making a round trip of nearly three thousand miles. They have a slightly different perspective of the race from some other competitors.

Many saw the line squall on the third day as the dominant feature of the race. The great "jam roll" of cloud, stretching from horizon to horizon in an otherwise clear sky, brought a 130° change in wind direction and an increase in strength to 50 or 60 knots. Bob Francis in *Renegade* described it as the most active and exciting front he had ever seen. *Renegade* revelled in the conditions, and went on to be the first South Australian boat and sixth in Division F. Bob gives all the credit to his crew.

For spectators and some yachts the spinnaker start on Sydney Harbour was the highlight. Yachts started in five groups on three start lines. The Thirty Year Veterans, including *Southern Myth*, *Kareelah* and *Reprieve*, started first on the front line, followed five minutes later by the Twenty Year Veterans, including *Morning Hustler*. The other three hundred or so started 25 minutes later, using all three start lines. In the mêlée that followed, *Celerity* was jammed and rammed several times. Her most exciting moment occurred when the outer end beak of an adjacent yacht's spinnaker pole clipped itself on to her backstay. In the few moments while

Celerity's backstay was rigidly attached to the other's mast, they expected to lose the whole rig. John Wicks, sailing *Gambol* with his two sons in their first Sydney-Hobart, said he could have walked a hundred metres across boats in the crush at the start. He described the whole race as a great exercise in personal development.

After sailing a thousand miles to be in Sydney well before Christmas, and then being in the vicinity of the starting line one and a half hours early, *Tradition* was late for the start. Bill Strangways suddenly remembered that he'd left his video battery and charger in the marina at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. (CYCA). He hot-footed it back to the marina [a nice image for a yacht! - Ed.], only to find it devoid of yachts and "looking like an empty cattle yard" – thus making it very difficult to identify which berth he'd been in! David Seaton, on the other hand, was so intent that *Niambri* should not be late that he left without saying goodbye to his wife. It was said that a nice diamond would atone for this lapse. *Niambri* and *Tradition* cruised home in company after the race via Dunally Canal, Wineglass Bay, Lady Barron and Flinders Islands and Port Fairy.

The race was sailed in thirteen divisions. Three of these were Performance Handicap Divisions and included *Advantage* and *Scavenger* from South Australia. The ten IMS Divisions included the Thirty Year Veteran and Twenty Year Veteran Divisions. It is to the great credit of Hilary Barclay and Peter Riddell, together with the crew, that the rebuilding and preparation of *Southern Myth* were completed in time for her to make the passage to Sydney and complete the race. Similarly, *Kareelah* in new garb (including a new deck and coach-house) under the tender care of Simon Moody came a creditable eighth in the V30 Division. [She was almost certainly the smallest boat in the fleet - Ed.]

After the debacle of the 1993 race, when there was so much damage to the fleet and so many retirements, the race organisers and insurance companies imposed very strict regulations on competitors. They required professional survey



Getting to Sydney for the race: Rodondo Island arises out of the mist. (Zenon Oniszk)

of rigging and hull structure; evidence that in all respects yachts were up to a high standard of preparedness for offshore conditions; and that crews included a nucleus of members with recent offshore experience. All these requirements demanded much effort and dedication to bring older yachts up to standard. *Reprieve*, formerly *Gip*, the Tasman Seabird now owned by David Barnfield, returned last year to the Squadron after a period interstate. David and his crew, in their first Sydney-Hobart, did very well to sail into fifth place in the V30 Division.

Of the remaining eight Divisions, *Sundance II* was seventeenth in B Division and second overall amongst the Squadron yachts. She achieved this in spite of breaking her boom and other rigging problems in Storm Bay. All the rest (the smaller local yachts) were in the higher time allowance Divisions F, G and H. Their Divisional and overall positions are shown in the accompanying table. There were two separate handicapping systems. Divisional handicaps were calculated on a progressive basis, according to the weather conditions experienced by the average yachts of that Division over each

radio sched period. For overall results, the handicaps were calculated before the race started, and were based on the predicted weather conditions for the four and a half days after the start. The system led to some results which were confusing between Divisions. For example, an S&S 34 in Division H with a corrected time of 99 hours 41 minutes in its Division was 88th overall. Another S&S 34 in Division V20, with a corrected time in its Division of 72 hours 13 minutes, was 108th overall. These figures show how Divisional times did not directly relate to the overall results. It is not a complaint.

The 1994 Sydney-Hobart race was the largest fleet ever in a major ocean race. Simply to have participated in such an event was a unique experience. The organisation was a huge task, and whilst there may have been some small criticisms in Sydney, Hobart was spectacular. The 308 yachts that finished were all berthed in the immediate vicinity of Constitution Dock. The smaller yachts were in the Dock two rows deep. Outside and sheltered from southerly winds by moored barges were yachts lining all available wharf space on both sides of Elizabeth Street Pier and

beyond. Moored with them were the two Radio Relay Ships *Young Endeavour* and *One and All*.

Hobart turned on its usual enthusiastic welcome and great hospitality. In contrast to the last time *Morning Hustler* was in Hobart at the end of a race, the Dock and its surroundings were kept spotlessly clean. There were no drink cans in the Dock, and all rubbish was cleaned up in the early hours of each morning. It was a credit to the organisers and a pleasure to be there. The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania (RYCT) was as hospitable as ever, and attended to every request from the visitors. Alan Quigley, well known to RSAYS Members, is Marina Manager or Bosun at RYCT. He sailed *Youth* in the race under the burgee of the Squadron, but soon after his arrival in Hobart he was busy looking after the needs of others. His unfailing sense of humour and helpfulness were greatly appreciated.

Many RSAYS yachts took advantage of Tasmania's unique cruising grounds after leaving Hobart. For Don Morton's *Toolka-T* the Sydney-Hobart appears to have been merely an interlude between cruising the Pacific. He headed for New Zealand after a brief period in Tasmania. *Celerity* spent a few days in d'Entrecasteaux Channel before heading home to Kangaroo Island via the east coast. *Morning Hustler*, with Commodore Peter and Helen White on board, explored a number of anchor-

ages on the south and west coasts that Anthea and I had not previously visited. These were in addition to Port Davey and the Gordon River, where we have spent many days since our first visit in 1978. Peter and Helen left us in Strahan. Anthea and I continued alone via Three Hummock Island on Tasmania's north-west corner. From there our non-stop passage to American River took just under three days.

The vexed question of insurance for the race is worth mentioning. Over recent years lightly built racing boats with fragile rigs have cost insurance companies dearly. This has resulted in punitive premiums, with high excess clauses applied with scant regard for the type of vessel or its previous history. In some cases there was little or no room for negotiation. My experience with *Morning Hustler* was not unique. I applied for insurance months before leaving for Sydney. The day before we sailed for Sydney, leaving no time to negotiate, I was presented with a notice requiring a premium of \$880 for \$80,000 cover, with an excess of \$8,000. This was for the race only, and was in addition to the normal insurance required for the rest of the round trip. In effect, this meant that the mast and rigging were uninsured, and the hull was covered only for major structural damage or total loss. *Morning Hustler* is one of 130 S&S 34s built in Australia. Several of these have made world circumnavigations. Jon Sander's

Peric Banou sailed twice non-stop round the world. She was capsized several times without damage. The rigs of *Morning Hustler* and *Peric Banou* are identical. No consideration was

given to these facts. Another owner received his premium notice only after he returned from the race. I hope that future entrants receive better consideration. SQ

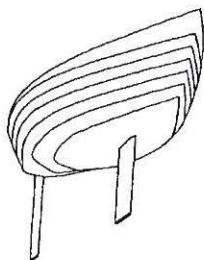
Kodak Gold 1994 Sydney-Hobart Race: South Australian Participants

Name	Owner	Position		Place	
		OA	DIV	RSAYS	SA
<i>Renegade</i>	R Francis	63	6 F	1	1
<i>Dictator</i>	R Fidock	76	8 F		2
<i>Maglieri Wines</i>	G Vercoe	83	15 B		3
<i>Sundance II</i>	G Boettcher	90	17 B	2	4
<i>Morning Hustler</i>	J Cowell	108	12 V20	3	5
<i>Celerity</i>	D Harris	129	6 H	4	6
<i>Tradition</i>	W Strangways	144	7 H	5	7
<i>Reprieve</i>	D Barnfield	152	5 V30	6	8
<i>Kareelah</i>	S Moody	180	8 V30		9
<i>Toolka-T</i>	D Morton	184	10 H	7	10
<i>Willyama</i>	J Runnegar	200	21 F		11
<i>Youth</i>	A Quigley	204	15 H	8	12
<i>More Imagination</i>	T Nicholas	209	16 G		13
<i>Gambol</i>	J Wicks	213	18 G	9	14
<i>Southern Myth</i>	P Riddell	220	16 V30	10	15
<i>Niamhri</i>	D Scaton	229	19 H	11	16
<i>Auspicious</i>	W Szewczuk	Retired			
<i>Advantagedge</i>	R Egerton	TPHS			
<i>Scavenger</i>	P Barwick	TPHS			

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