

NERIDA'S STORY

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We again had to settle down to another hard slog to windward with steep hollow seas that made progress slow and uncomfortable. It took us until 5 p.m. that day to get round Cape Forestier at the tip of Freycinet Peninsula.

There we encountered the worst seas of the whole trip. We just floundered and pounded, making very little progress.

The passage between Freycinet Peninsula and Schouten Island was just under our lee, and we decided to pull away and run through the passage into the calmer waters of Oyster Bay.

The gamble paid, and we soon were able to set our big light weather head sails again, and began making good progress.

From the positions given on the radio we realised we had the race within our grasp and the tension mounted.

The wind held but hauled more westerly and allowed us to steer for Tasman Light, which we sighted at 2 a.m. Since the day after leaving Sydney we had sighted no other yachts.

At daylight on December 31 we were approaching the Hippolyte Rocks, some seven miles from Tasman Island, when we identified Mistral V, which we knew was the leader. The yacht was about three miles ahead.

We rapidly drew up on the Tasmanian slope, but when a mile or so behind, lost the wind and Mistral V gradually drew away.

We passed Tasman Island at 7 a.m. about two miles behind Mistral V. Then we sighted Margaret Rintoul rounding our bows some two miles ahead.

We now knew that barring very bad luck on our part and very good luck on the part of our most dangerous opponent, Fortuna, we had the race in the

bag.

We got a check when our radio told us at 8 a.m. that Fortuna was only 12 miles behind. But we had the luck and Fortuna didn't.

She was becalmed outside Tasman Island for almost 24 hours.

We did our best running up Bligh Bay to overhaul the two

leaders. But although we managed to match up a little on Mistral V, Margaret Rintoul ran away from both of us in the light southerly, and she passed the finishing line off Battery Point with Mistral trailing her by 18 minutes. We finished 35 minutes after Margaret Rintoul.

The handicap placings were Nerida first, Margaret Rintoul second, Mistral V third, and Fortuna fourth.

My impressions of the race were firstly of a fine, weatherly ship with a marvellously constructed hull. Nerida is 17 years old, and took a terrible thrashing on the beat along the New South Wales coast and again, off Schouten Island. But the Nerida did not show a cracked seam when we reached Hobart.

Secondly, I had the best of crews.

Peter Osborne, the mate, besides his naval qualifications (lieut.-commander RANR) is an experienced yachtsman, and his dry humor turned many anxious moments into material for jokes.

Jack McLaren, also a Navy man with previous Hobart race experience, Harold Dicker, who has been with me for many years, and John Powell the youngest but perhaps the most useful member of the crew, made up one watch.

In my watch I had Ian Smith, a complete Hobart race addict, Alan Smith, no relation but just as good and keen

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Peter Berry. All are members
of the Royal South Australian
Yacht Squadron.

We ate regularly and well
thanks to John Powell, who has
a cast-iron stomach quite im-
mune to any form of sea-
sickness.

We slept comfortably but
sufficiently and the hardships
of the race were more than
compensated by the comrade-
ship of the crew.

Berlin was, because we had
a good boat and a good crew
she was hard-driven.

But, most important we had
a remarkable share of lucky
breaks.

I am delighted to be bringing
the trophy to South Australia
and I hope that it won't be long
before other yachts from the
squadron will repeat the per-
formance.