

## Atara's 1998 Sydney to Hobart

A short recap. Following a fair start we we ran well down the coast. Our group was tight and in 20 knots of wind no one made any gains or losses. During the night the breeze increased to a steady 30 to 35 knots. We slowly moved ahead of our group. Terra Ferrma, Industrial Quest, Rapscaillon, Sharp (Sydney Forty), Ninety Seven, etc. We were running with Sword, ABN, Quest. Around 0100 hrs the wind gusted to 40 plus and ABN wiped out and went home. Quest Chinese and faded over the horizon astern and Sword also wiped out. AT 0230 hrs the wind went to 350 from 020, the sea became difficult and as we had hit speeds of 19 knots plus and done 86 miles in 4 hours and 10 minutes I felt the fun was up. ( please note the was 2 to 3 knots of favourable current) We downed the .9 and put up the jib top poled out, gybed and settled down. All our size boats were either behind or retired. Rags was our of sight and Ausmaid was a white light out seaward. They gybed some time later. The breeze moved quickly in to the west around 20 to 25 knots. With the #4 and two reefs we were in good shape. By day break the wind was 40 plus so we took the main down, rolled it up, put the cover on, put the trysail up and settled into the 50 to 55 knot gail. At 0800 hrs we removed the #4 and felt comfortable with the trysail, on course and doing approx. 8 knots. By 1000 hrs the wind was hitting 65 plus on our dial and the Trysail was a little more than we needed. However as we had it set up on the main boom we could twist it off allot. Unfortunately as we leaped of waves the sail would flog. ( also unfortunately I was down below during those 2 hours ) and eventually the check stay adjuster chaffed through the leech and as the boat was over pressed we decided to take it down. By this time we had and were registering a couple of 72 to 75 knots steady gusts.

During this time I had a long hard look at the best things to do as we sailed under bare poles for 20 minutes or so. We were still doing 6 to 7 knots on course of 180 with the wind at 60 to 80 apparent. The seas were huge, biggest I believe I have seen from a yacht or any craft for that matter.

The rollers were serious say every 10 minutes or so as the big big ones rolled through. When the wind was over 55 knots this rig was okay but now and then the wind would drop below that and it was then we did not have enough speed to be in control. So we put up the storm jib and off we went. 8.5 to 10 knots course 190 at 70 apparent. We got creamed plenty of times with only two being of real concern. One had to steer the boat carefully throughout. Our greatest concern was the leeward gunwale catching underwater as we were swept side ways down the waves, however with enough speed we could control this. By this time we were in the middle of Bass Strait and the wave were fully formed storm waves and with Atara 43 feet I guess some of the rollers were 80 to 90 feet from top to bottom. 15 meter waves, as the Kiwi's say we had a bit on. By dusk we were again putting the mainsail on with the trusty #4, only to reef it again 1 hour later. Along first half of the night sailing in fresh 30 to 40 knots of west sou west. At around 0200 hrs we were pissing around with the drifter. At 0400 hrs just before dawn we put up the red half ounce. A very black night with no wind gear (the B & G wand was bent 50 degrees and not registering and the windex was gone) sloppy seas and wind from all over the place we suffered our first damage. The head blew out of the spinnaker. The sail was an old original sail yet perfect for the conditions. We sailed past Fudge Future Shock and were pleased with our selves.

At the morning sked Rags was 34 miles ahead, Quest ahead but out to sea was about even and nothing heard from Ausmaid. Industrial Quest was 18 behind and 20 inside which put us about 12 miles ahead. Midnight Rambler was 42 miles behind and 62 inside right on the coast. Any way the day

saw a close reach with the Jamison and or the jib top. The breeze slowly died and by 1100 hrs we were in a light SE breeze only then to be completely becalmed by Midday.

Around 2130 we rounded Tasman Island. At the 0300 hrs sked we were near the Iron Pot and much to our horror Midnight Rambler and Industrial Quest were ahead of us and Ausmaid had come from somewhere to beat Rags across the line.

They all finished before sun rise and we then in the fading breeze we drifted home, even loosing so much time Sonyara beat us on time.

The finishing was one thing which we were very very happy for.

The lives that were lost was a tragedy.

Our final result was disappointing as we followed the rum line all the way, especially down the Tassie coast. Rags lost to Ausmaid because Ausmaid went close down the coast, yet we lost over two hours to Rags because of the timing to Tasman Island and the being becalmed for so long.

Roger Hickman, Skipper.  
(Atara is a Lyons IMS43)