

# MEDIA RELEASE

0800/27 December 1998

## FIVE TOP YACHTS OUT AS SOUTH-WEST FRONT HITS FLEET WITH STRONG WINDS

As predicted, a southwesterly front with winds of 25 to 35 knots, quickly building up steep short seas, has hit the fleet in the Telstra Sydney to Hobart ocean race as they sail down the South Coast of New South Wales – with a storm warning still out for waters south of Merimbula.

So far, six yachts have been forced out of the race, three of them were among the favourites for handicap and two for line honours:

- ABN AMRO Challenge, Ray Roberts' Sydney 46, with designer Iain Murray on the helm, is being towed into Bateman's Bay, taking water after apparently suffering hull damage.
- Sydney, Charles Curran's 60-footer, skippered by David Kellett, has lost its rudder - as has the new Sydney AC 40 One Design yacht Sledgehammer, skippered by Ron Jones. Both yachts are heading for port under jury steering.
- Phillip Bennett's King 38, King Billy – radioed in at 5.00am this morning to say the yacht is taking water and is heading back to Sydney.
- Line honours contenders, Grant Wharington's brand new 70 foot maxi Wild Thing retired at 6.30am this morning and is heading to Eden with rig damage while another line honours chance, Marchioness, has also been forced out with rig damage and is motoring back to Sydney.

Meanwhile, the American maxi Sayonara reported her position at 3am as four miles north of Green Cape and 20 miles to sea. She should by now have entered Bass Strait and is already hours ahead of Morning Glory's position when she broke the race record in 1996. She has averaged almost 15 knots since the start.

Brindabella, George Snow's maxi which had been duelling with Sayonara all the way from Sydney, did not report her position at the 3am "sked" with the fleet, nor did several other boats. However, the ABC helicopter reported sighting Brindabella at 6.30am this morning sailing at the same latitude as Sayonara but 3 miles further inshore.

On handicap, the little Melbourne yacht Chutzpah (Bruce Taylor) leads in the IMS overall standings from Roger Hickman's Atara and Stewart Niemann's Terra Firma, Geoff Boettcher's Secret Men's Business from Adelaide and Syd Fischer's Ragamuffin from Sydney.

As the leaders near Bass Strait, the Bureau of Meteorology has reaffirmed its storm warning for coastal waters south of Merimbula, predicting that the west to south westerly winds will reach 40 to 50 knots this afternoon as the low deepens.

### Further information:

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# TELSTRA SYDNEY TO HOBART MEDIA RELEASE

0400/27 December

## THREE TOP YACHTS OUT AS SOUTH-WEST FRONT HITS FLEET WITH STRONG WINDS

As predicted, a southwesterly front with winds of 25 to 35 knots, quickly building up steep short seas, has hit the fleet in the Telstra Sydney to Hobart ocean race as they sail down the South Coast of New South Wales – with a storm warning still out for waters south of Merimbula.

So far, only four yachts have been forced out of the race, three of them are among the favourites:

- ABN AMRO Challenge, Ray Roberts' Sydney 46, with designer Iain Murray on the helm, is being towed into Bateman's Bay, taking water after apparently suffering hull damage.
- Sydney, Charles Curran's 60-footer, skippered by David Kellett, has lost its rudder - as has the new Sydney AC 40 One Design yacht Sledgehammer, skippered by Ron Jones. Both yachts are heading for port under jury steering.
- Philip Bennett's King 38, King Billy – radioed in at 5.00am this morning to say the yacht is taking water and is heading back to Sydney.
- During the early hours of this morning, the Victorian yacht Challenge Again, skippered by veteran yachtsman Lou Abrahams lost a man overboard, but successfully recovered him. The yacht is continuing in the race.

Meanwhile, the American maxi Sayonara reported her position at 3am as four miles north of Green Cape and 20 miles to sea. She should by now have entered Bass Strait and is already hours ahead of Morning Glory's position when she broke the race record in 1996. She has averaged almost 15 knots since the start.

Brindabella, George Snow's maxi which had been duelling with Sayonara all the way from Sydney, did not report her position at the 3am "sked" with the fleet, nor did several other boats. However, Sayonara reported sighting Brindabella around midnight.

On handicap, the little Melbourne yacht Chutzpah (Bruce Taylor) leads in the IMS overall standings from Roger Hickman's Atara and Stewart Niemann's Terra Firma, Geoff Boettcher's Secret Men's Business from Adelaide and Syd Fischer's Ragamuffin from Sydney.

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**From:** Rankin, Ewen <Ewen.Rankin@team.telstra.com>  
**To:** 'Campbell, Peter (BigPond)' <peter\_campbell@bigpond.com>  
**Date:** Wednesday, 19 July 2000 17:40  
**Subject:** FW: Syd Hob news releases 26-Dec-98

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Peter this is what they managed to dig up. I hope it helps.

> Regards,  
> Ewen C Rankin - Events Manager  
> Telstra OnAir - Marketing Communications  
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> )Mobile: 0418 347 718  
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>  
>  
> -----Original Message-----  
> From: Brennan, Sharon  
> Sent: Wednesday, 19 July 2000 5:34 pm  
> To: Rankin, Ewen  
> Subject: FW: Syd Hob news releases 26-Dec-98

>  
>  
>  
> Sharon Brennan  
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>  
>  
>  
> -----Original Message-----  
> From: Virant, Michael W  
> Sent: Wednesday, 19 July 2000 5:22 pm  
> To: Brennan, Sharon  
> Subject: Syd Hob news releases 26-Dec-98

> Hello  
>  
> The 3 news releases would have been written by Peter Campbell, the Media  
> Director for Telstra. If the issue is the web site, no need to contact  
> Peter - but if the issue is something else then maybe, just maybe Peter or  
> one of the Media Centre staff may have a copy on file - but I doubt it.  
> Unlucky too that our file doesn't have it - but we tried to stay  
> electronic for the race. If I can dig into my archived email I might find  
> a MS Word version emailed by Peter.

19/07/00

- >
- > Gale Warning Issued for Fleet
- > 26-Dec-98 10:00 AM
- > The Bureau of Meteorology issued the forecast a gale warning just four
- > hours before the 115-boat fleet was due to set sail at 1pm on the 630
- > nautical mile race to Tasmania.
- >
- > The galeforce south to southwesterly winds, kicking up rough seas, are
- > expected to continue through to Monday evening, giving the fleet a severe
- > battering as they battle headwinds and heavy seas down the NSW Coast and
- > across Bass Strait.
- >
- > Ken Batt from the Bureau of Meteorology said that the latest satellite
- > models indicated the south westerly front would hit the fleet from
- > midnight onwards. It is due to pass through Eden at 10pm, reaching the
- > Shoalhaven area soon after midnight and Sydney about 4am Sunday.
- >
- > "A south to south westerly change at 30 to 40 knots, with stronger gusts,
- > is expected near Jervis Bay around midnight to 2am and then near Sydney
- > around 3am to 5am Sunday," Batt said.
- >
- > "Waves will rise to 3 - 4 metres with the southerly change, with the swell
- > increasing to 2 to 3 metres after the southerly change."
- >
- > Batt said the Bureau expected that strong to gale force southwest to
- > westerly winds south of Jervis Bay would continue through to Monday before
- > moderating on Monday evening.
- >
- > -----
- > Spectacular start for Telstra 54TH Sydney to Hobart Race
- > 26-Dec-98 06:00 PM
- >
- > The maxi yachts Brindabella and Sayonara are this evening sailing
- > virtually boat for boat as they power down the New South Wales south coast
- > under their huge spinnakers after a spectacular start for the 115 boat
- > fleet - but with a dark and stormy night at sea ahead of them.
- >
- > Sayonara, the American maxi skippered by Larry Ellison with New Zealander
- > Chris Dickson at the helm, won the beat to windward down Sydney Harbour in
- > a 12 knot nor'easter, clearing the Heads 45 seconds clear of George
- > Snow's Brindabella, followed by Grant Wharington's Wild Thing.
- >
- > However, Sayonara lost ground when a spinnaker blew out shortly after
- > rounding the sea mark, and about an hour after the start Brindabella
- > reported they were to seaward and slightly ahead of the US boat.
- > Tactically, Brindabella, by going to sea, has clearly gained an
- > advantage in the fast running East Coast Current.
- >
- > The perfect Sydney warm summer day attracted the biggest fleet of
- > spectator craft since the 50th Sydney to Hobart in 1994, with an
- > estimated 300,000 people on the headlands and on the water, with several
- > hundred craft following the fleet to sea, churning waters off the Heads
- > into "washing machine" conditions.
- >
- > Just before 4.30 this afternoon, ABC helicopter pilot Gary Ticehurst

- > advised the Telstra Media Information Centre that Brindabella was 500
- > metres ahead of Sayonara and about 15 miles offshore as the two maxis
- > sailed to the south of Wollongong.
- >
- > In third place came Marchioness, revelling in the downwind sailing as the
- > nor'east freshened to 20 knots. <P>
- > Also exceptionally well placed was Syd Fischer's 50-footer Ragamuffin
- > with the two Sydney AC 40 one-designs Sledgehammer and Sharp Hawk V also
- > looking right up in the money on projected IMS handicap results.
- >
- > However, there is a dark and stormy night ahead with thunderstorms moving
- > up the coast ahead of a severe southerly change late tonight or early
- > tomorrow morning.
- >
- > The Weather Bureau this morning issued a gale warning for the Tasman Sea
- > south of Sydney and mid-afternoon upgraded this to a priority storm
- > warning for coastal waters south of Merimbula.
- >
- > The warning says the gusty west/south westerly change of 30 to 40 knots
- > was expected on the NSW South' Coast late tonight, probably between
- > midnight and 2am when most of the 115 boat fleet is in the Shoalhaven
- > area, with leaders south of Jervis Bay.
- >
- > Seas will rise to 3 to 4 metres with the change, with the swell also
- > increasing to 2 to 3 metres after the change, with short steep seas
- > generated by the galeforce winds against the fast running southerly
- > current.
- >
- > The stormy conditions are expected to continue through Sunday, with west
- > to north-westerly winds increasing to 45 and 55 knots south of Merimbula
- > late Sunday afternoon, with little sign of them abating before Monday.
- >
- > The mass start from the harbour was spectacular, with all yachts getting
- > a clear start but the maxi ketch Nokia involved in a double collision with
- > Sword of Orion and Bright Morning Star. While damage was not extensive
- > and all three are continuing in the race, they each lost time at the
- > start, with Nokia back in 10th place as the fleet as they cleared the
- > Heads.
- >
- > At the Heads, Sayonara rounded the mark 45 seconds ahead of Brindabella,
- > followed by Wild Thing and Marchioness and at the sea mark, one mile east
- > of the Heads, the order was the same with Sydney (Charles Curran) close
- > astern of Marchioness, followed by the Swan 68, Elysion Blue, with
- > Ragamuffin literally riding her wake as they headed down the coast.
- >
- > Of the IMS grand prix racers, Ragamuffin was exceptionally well placed,
- > with Kenwood Cup team mates Quest and ABN AMRO Challenge also well up in
- > the fleet along with the two Sydney AC 40 One Design sloops Sledgehammer
- > and Sharp Hawk V.
- >
- > The first position report from the fleet will start at 2005 hours tonight,
- > with computer generated details available on the Telstra web site about
- > 2200 hours.
- >

## &gt; LATE NEWS:

- > At 5.30pm, Geoff Cropley reported that Brindabella off Port
- > Perpendicular, near Nowra, making record-breaking boat speed bursts of 16
- > to 20 knots and catching every wave to stay in front of Sayonara which was
- > 250 to 300 metres astern.
- > "The southern sky is getting very dark...very quickly," Cropley said.

&gt;

- > Three Maxis Abeam In Record Breaking Dash Towards Hobart
- > 26-Dec-98 10:00 PM
- > All three boats were 33 nautical miles south of Jervis Bay, some 30 miles
- > east of Ulladulla, having covered 110 miles since the start at 1pm today
- > at a remarkable average speed of just over 14 knots.
- >
- > Only a couple of miles astern of this trio came the newly launched Wild
- > Thing from Melbourne.
- > The four leading maxis, revelling in the continuing 20 to 25 knot
- > nor'easter they have enjoyed since clearing Sydney Heads, are well ahead
- > of the position of record breakers Kialoa and 1975 and Morning Glory in
- > 1996, also aided by a fast running southerly current.
- > The rest of the 115 boat fleet is already spread back some 100 miles, with
- > everyone enjoying the fast sail south after the spectacular start from
- > Sydney Harbour on a perfect, warm summer's day - the traditional Boxing
- > Day holiday in Australia.
- > But there is a dark and stormy night ahead of all at sea in this 630
- > nautical mile race southwards in the Tasman Sea - a west/south westerly
- > front is expected to hit the fleet between midnight and 3am with winds of
- > 30 to 40 knots kicking up short steep seas along the south coast of New
- > South Wales.
- > The Bureau of Meteorology has issued a priority storm warning for tomorrow
- > with the westerlies to increase throughout the day, reaching 45-55 knots
- > with four to six metre seas late in the day.

&gt;

- > Already, however, a severe electrical storm has hit the fleet, with
- > violent lightning in a 35 knot squall from the north-west which ripped
- > sails, including Nokia's spinnaker and mizzen sail.

&gt;

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- > Chris Dickson at the helm, won the beat to windward down Sydney Harbour in
- > a 12 knot nor'easter, clearing the Heads 45 seconds clear of George
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- > rounding the sea mark, and about an hour after the start Brindabella
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- > astern of Marchioness, followed by the Swan 68, Elysion Blue, with
- > Ragamuffin literally riding her wake as they headed down the coast.
- >
- > At the first position report or "sked" from the fleet, Marchioness, a
- > noted downwind flyer skippered by Tony Beilby, had drawn level with the
- > two line honours favourites, Brindabella and Sayonara, which had dualed
- > all the way south from Sydney.
- >
- > Astern of them came Wild Thing, followed by Fudge from Melbourne, Doctel
- > Rager from Adelaide, Bobsled from Brisbane, Innkeeper from Sydney, the
- > former Whitbread round the world race Nokia (ex The Card) racing under the
- > burgee of the Cook Islands, and Team Jaguar Infinity III from Sydney.
- >
- > On corrected times, the CYCA's computer has assessed the IMS overall
- > leader at this early stage of the race as Chutzpah, a new 36-footer owned
- > by Melbourne yachtsman Bruce Taylor and designed by Andy Dovell from the
- > Murray, Burns, Dovell design team.
- >
- > In second place is the 1996 overall winner Ausmaid now owned in South
- > Australia by Kevan Pearce, while third is Sledgehammer, Ron Jones' new
- > Sydney AC 40 One Design, in fourth place Syd Fischer's Farr 50,
- > Ragamuffin.
- >
- > The next sked from the fleet will be at 0300 hours Sunday, 27 December -
- > about the time the southwesterly change is hitting the fleet.
- > -----
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- >
- >
- > Thanks
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