

Christmas Racing

The 64th Rolex Sydney Hobart was a milestone with a high-quality fleet of 100 boats including eleven overseas entries. There was an unexpectedly close line honours battle at the head of the fleet between the maxis 'Wild Oats XI' and 'Skandia' and four of the sensationally fast downwind TP52s filling the first four placings overall on handicap.

Congratulations to Ian Murray and his crew on 'Morris Finance Cinquante' who won the Sydney 38 One Design division. Unfortunately, 'Shogun' was disqualified for a start line infringement.

MELBOURNE TO TASMANIA (LAUNCESTON, EASTCOASTER AND THE TRADITIONAL WESTCOASTER)

In the Eastcoaster, 'eXtasea' and 'Shamrock' had a close race to Hobart. 'eXtasea', attempting her second win, was shaken off by the Reichel Pugh designed 'Shamrock' to take line honours. A very tight race up the Derwent to the finish, between 'Helsal II' and 'Eccy' resulted in 'eXtasea' taking second. 'Ocean Skins' finished a creditable 2nd in PHS. Jarrod Wallis's MBD 41 'Mocean' retired from the Kidder Williams Rudder Cup race due to radio communication problems. 'Mocean' was leading the fleet in a freshening wind and navigator Jason Martin told of the disappointment in not being able to continue. However - no radio - no race !

REPORT FROM EXTASEA - FIRST 18 HOURS OF THE EASTCOASTER

At 10 am this morning 'eXtasea' pushed off from Queenscliff and made its way to Portsea for the start of the 2008 Hems Kirk Melbourne to Hobart East Coaster. As usual a great crowd of well wishers and support craft turned out to wish the fleet well - where are they normally for club racing??? - that of course is said firmly tongue in cheek, it was great to see them all there.

We had a fairly good start hoisting the kite about 10 seconds before the gun. We then changed to our number 3 headsail approximately three quarters along the leg. That set the theme for the first 18 hours of the race with us having used all but two of our sails and the storm sails so far. We also rebuilt our R2 spinaker which had a minor meltdown and you will be happy to know it is flying as we speak.

Presently it is 4:35 am and we are just starting to see day break as we approach Curtis Island. There are two watches on deck at the moment, one working and one on standby while the rest of the crew and the navigator are in the rack. It's called the rack because the bunks are like shelves - when you need a sailor you just go grab one out of the rack.

Sleeping on a boat in light breeze while the battery is charging is something akin to sleeping on the bonnet of a 1980 Nissan Patrol as it navigates its way along the Birdsville Track! Loud with the odd clunk and bang thrown in.

Eating however has been another story. As is always the case in light weather, much eating has occurred. On last night's dinner menu was apricot chicken and rice served with a Mornington Peninsula red. For all you sommeliers out there, red wine with chicken is pretty good!

Our first shift went down at 7 pm for their three hours' kip. We are now into our second time around and for at least the second time tonight Bucky (owner) has been observed sleeping on the wet sails on the floor. This is just one example of how Bucky runs his boat, keeping an eye out for everyone's health and well being, not just standing at the helm barking orders - like a lot of other skippers. We've even seen him on the bow!!!!!!

It's very difficult to describe the beauty of Bass Strait - you could probably start with the colour of the water, then the wildlife and the rugged scenery and tonight's sky is clear with (and this is just an estimate) 30 billion stars as well as an old winch from a 26 foot thunderbird yacht that we sent into orbit during a chinese gybe we did about 10 years ago - it still seems to be circling the Earth. We had a pod of Dolphins playing along side us for at least an hour. It's too early to really say how we are going at this stage. There are a lot of variables to contend with and a few more days of sailing but the crew are all happy and getting along well. Our third sched is coming up in about 45 minutes (5:35 am) so I guess we will see.

Stefan Treurniet



Ocean Skins



eXtasea



Outlaw



Mocean

