

# Ninety Seven set to claim victory

SHINING new Sydney discovery Ninety Seven emerged from a day of confusion to loom as the most triumphant survivor in the 49th Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race yesterday.

As the damage toll on the weather-beaten fleet reached an estimated \$3m., Ninety Seven shot clear yesterday afternoon to establish a 14 nautical mile lead over fellow NSW entry Microgale Cuckoos Nest, about 140 miles out of Hobart.

After a day of confusion over the position of French-crewed Bobsled-Societe Generale, it became apparent Ninety Seven had taken the lead on Tuesday night when race favourite Brindabella withdrew.

Race officials believe Bobsled's crew erred when they reported their position on Tuesday afternoon, leading to the belief that Bobsled was in the lead when Brindabella pulled out.

The race's casualty count also changed in odd fashion, with the fleet actually increasing at times as some retirees re-entered. The fleet stood at 38 out of 105 starters at 3 p.m. — the smallest finishing contingent since fleets reached their modern size in the late '60s.

Hobart's economy will be a loser, with the city's pubs expecting to turn over only half as much as they do after a calm Sydney-Hobart.

Crew members aboard South Australian entrant Advantedge were treated for injuries after they retreated to Uladulla.

Ninety Seven, a 33-1 chance with bookmakers, was only 2.7 miles ahead of Cuckoos Nest at 6 a.m., but had shaken off the 40-footer by 3 p.m. The NSW yachts were also one-two in the IMS handicap division.

Wild Thing was a further 36 miles away in third place, ahead of Hartz Mineral Waters, of NSW, Victorian Sword, of Orion, South Australian Helsal II, NSW's Bright Morning Star and Bobsled.

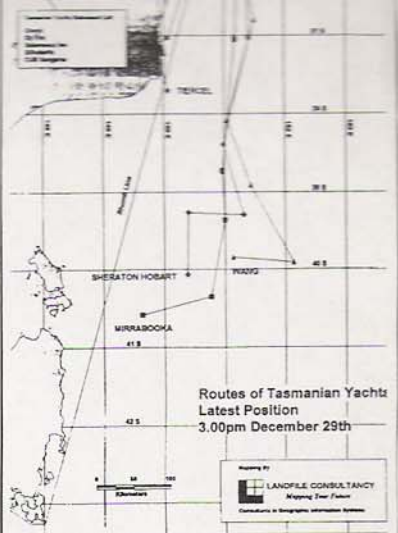
NSW's Impeccable, 16th overall, held a five-mile lead over Solbourne Wild Oats in the IOR division.

The all-female team aboard Telecom Mobilenet was still sailing and was in 20th position.

However, the celebrations are expected to be hearty and lengthy for Andrew Strachan and his crew aboard Ninety Seven, the aesthetically popular pale blue sloop launched only last month.

A relative "bolter" in the fleet, Ninety Seven progressed through the fleet without fanfare, having coped with Bass Strait's 12-metre seas and being rewarded with calmer conditions as she reached Tasmania's North-East Coast.

The 14.3-metre sloop is expected in Constitution Dock before lunch today.



## Prime Example shows the way

Brighton 52-footer Prime Example continued to build its lead on the third day of the Melbourne-Hobart yacht race yesterday.

David Gotze's Prime Example grabbed the lead in the 480 nautical mile Melbourne to Hobart when the two early favourites, Animal Farm and Pains Wessex, lost their masts in the first three hours of the race.

The lead boat was last evening approaching Sandy Cape in 10 to 15 knot south westerly winds, 15 nautical miles astern of Yoko (Robin Hewitt).

IMS handicap favourite, Geelong's Extasea (Paul Buchholz), was eight miles further inshore, south of Cape Grim.

In fourth position — eight miles astern and with 280 miles to sail — was Rex Billing's By Order Of The Secretary, which made up four places during the day.

With 12 boats still racing, Volante is in fifth place followed by Adam Apples.

The lead boats are not expected to arrive in Hobart till early tomorrow morning.

## Hazard A Tas claims D'port win

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The winning time was 12 hours outside the race record, despite Hazard A Tas finishing hours before expected.

"Today started with shocking weather — we had winter, summer and nothing all in the one day," a jubilant Edmunds said late last night.

Edmunds reported the fleet was becalmed between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. yesterday.

Winning the race has seen the crew score "a few cartons of refreshments" from Wynyard sailmaker Stephen Walker, who bet them they would get line honours.

Edmunds said he expected to finish in the top six before the race, and possibly further back after they missed the start and had to

return to the finishing line for not rounding a starting buoy.

"We lost 10 minutes going back but we were able to make up the time.

"The wins (including the Three Peaks) are good if you can share them with friends — it's great."

Excalibur crossed the line in second position last night 23 minutes and 11 seconds outside Hazard A Tas, pursued by More War Games, one minute and two seconds behind.

Reverie followed in fourth with a race time of 33 hours, 31 minutes and 58 seconds.

Launceston's Hot Property, skippered by Robert Turnbull, crossed the line in fifth position in a time of 33 hours, 34 minutes and 56 seconds.



HOPES DASHED: Melbourne-Hobart race competitor Peter Cook assesses damage to Zone 3 Kohi Bay's steering after the yacht limped into Devonport yesterday.

## Crippling end to quest

THE FIRST yacht to dock in Devonport yesterday was not involved in the Melbourne-Devonport classic.

Due to calm conditions no yachts from the race made it into port during daylight hours, with the first boat to moor at the Mersey Yacht Club being crippled Melbourne-Hobart entrant Zone 3 Kohi Bay, which limped in yesterday afternoon.

After sitting pretty in second position, the Bellerive Yacht Club entrant lost its steering about 9 p.m. on Tuesday night in the middle of Bass Strait.

Rather than turn around and head for Melbourne, the yacht made it into Devonport using an emergency tiller.

Crew members were bitterly disappointed with the outcome, especially

after making it through the treacherous rip at the mouth of Port Phillip Bay, which had earlier claimed Melbourne-Hobart line honours favourite Animal Farm.

Skipper Peter Cook said the crew was in no immediate danger despite the 30 knot winds and four to five metre seas.

Competing in the performance handicap division, the Clark 59 boat was undertaking its first racing season.

Owner Dr Chris Lloyd said he hoped to enter the vessel in next year's Sydney-Hobart race.

Zone 3 Kohi Bay was the only Hobart entrant in the race and one of two Tasmanian yachts to compete.

## Tas. yacht Mirrabooka in top form

By John Andrewartha

TASMANIAN yacht Mirrabooka maintained her excellent form in the Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race yesterday and, following the 3 p.m. sked, was placed 10th on the water only 71 nautical miles astern of race leader Ninety Seven.

Mirrabooka's skipper John Bennetto has sailed in 33 Sydney-Hobart races and his wealth of experience and perseverance has paid off yet again.

Mirrabooka was placed 6th in the IMS Division late yesterday and her chances of improving on that looked viable.

The Frers 47 has maintained a position well east of the Rhumb Line and, if Bennetto's yachting track record is anything to go by, the pale blue beauty will finish well up the order.

Earlier this year Mirrabooka underwent comprehensive refurbishment to prepare her for the '93 challenge, and the Frers 47 has competently survived this year's atrocious conditions — weather that has totalled several yachts and caused many other retirements.

Only three other Tasmanian entrants remained in the race late yesterday including the gallant Tiercel, John Saul's Wang and the RYCT yacht Sheraton Hobart.

On Tuesday, Tiercel's crew chose to shelter briefly in Eden before rejoining the race fleet late yesterday.

Tiercel was just east off Point Hicks at 3 p.m. yesterday and still had the daunting task of crossing Bass Strait before her.

Although the RYCT entrant was the last yacht on the water at 3 p.m. her tenacity has impressed many.

And despite being dismasted earlier this month on her delivery trip to Sydney, Tiercel has continued to meet the challenge.

Sheraton Hobart, skippered by Huon orchardist Ian Smith, was only 43 miles north-east of Mirrabooka after details of yesterday's sked were made available and is proving to be a serious contender in the IOR Division.

She was 18th on the water and placed 4th in IOR at 3 p.m.

Sheraton Hobart only needs to overcome three New South Wales yachts to win on handicap.

Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania entrant Wang, skippered by John Saul, has also maintained her progress and was only 28 miles astern of Sheraton Hobart and steadily improving.

She was 23rd on the water and 17th in IMS.

The five Tasmanian yachts that have retired from this year's race are Oz Fire (broken stay), Clwyd (sank), Silhouette (no reason given), CUB Sangaree (no reason given) and Salamanca Inn (no reason given).

Tasmanian fleet placings: Mirrabooka, 6th (IMS), 10th (line honours); Sheraton Hobart, 4th (IOR), 18th; Wang, 17th (IMS), 23rd; Tiercel, 22nd (IMS), 23rd.

Retirements: Oz Fire, Clwyd, Salamanca Inn, Silhouette, CUB Sangaree.