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Offshore Yachting

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CRUISING YACHT CLUB OF AUSTRALIA

Telstra signs for Sydney to Hobart

Safety Afloat feature

IMS "Mystery" explained

Aussies win Kenwood Cup

Slow Race to the Gold Coast

A near record fleet, a spectacular start in a fresh nor'wester, followed by a highly tactical coastal race in tricky conditions, drama at sea with injured crew and yachts aground. They were the ingredients which made the 11th annual Canon Sydney-Gold Coast Classic a memorable but frustrating event. Report by OFFSHORE's Kevan Wolfe who sailed on *PL Lease Future Shock.*

This striking backlit picture of the maxi yacht *Brindabella* (George Snow) surfing north in the Canon Sydney-Gold Coast Race was taken from a helicopter by OFFSHORE photographer Ian Mainsbridge. *Brindabella* took line honours but was well outside the race record with the wind easing away as the race progressed north.

As the competitors in the Canon Sydney to Gold Coast race lined up for the start off Shark Island in Sydney Harbour, a 25 knot nor'westerly piped in and there was an expectation that the long standing record of 38 hours 57 minutes and 00 seconds, set by Arthur Bloore's *Hammer of Queensland* in the 1988 gale swept race, could be broken.

The 386 nautical mile race, now in its 11th year, attracted 77 entries from New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and South Australia - and after the Sydney to Hobart, is the largest race to start from Sydney Harbour.

But the record was to stand for another year as the race became one of the slowest since the inaugural race in1986. Many of the yachts in the middle of the fleet and most of the back markers spent many frustrating hours parked off the New South Wales coast - some even going backwards in the south-setting current. At one stage the fleet was spread over more than 140 miles in the varying conditions with five yachts failing to make it to the finish off Southport in the time limit.

George Snow took line honours in *Brindabella* for the second year in a row, despite losing some 45 minutes when the yacht was forced to go into Coffs Harbour to drop off a badly injured crewman.

After the finish George Snow echoed the sentiments of the rest of the competitors when he said it was a frustrating race. It took the Mumm 36 *Hartz Mineral Water* and *Skilled 2KY*, a Jutson 10.9m, six hours to complete the last 16 miles of the race from Cook Island to the finish off Main Beach, Southport.

The IMS handicap results proved a nightmare for the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. When the computer churned out provisional results at Southport, eyebrows were raised and questions asked. Obviously, something was wrong in several IMS classes but the prizegiving went ahead, with the winner of the IMS Cruiser/Racer Division B being named as *Ronita* which at that stage had not even finished the course. Doubts were raised about other corrected time results.

A week later the Club wrote to each competitor, enclosing a revised set of IMS results which had significant differences in all divisions and announcing that new prizes would be awarded where major placings had been affected.

"The original results published were found to be incorrect due to an

Above left: Sailing in its maiden offshore race was the Mount Gay 30, *Team Fujitsu*, designed by David Lyons for Nigel Holman.
Pic - Ian Mainsbridge

Top: Lake Macquarie yacht *Stormrider* ended up flying two spinnakers after it broached and hooked the sail of the Sydney sloop *Hog's Breath Witchdoctor* as the fleet cleared the Heads in the Canon Sydney-Gold Coast Classic. Above: Fresh to strong south-westerly winds gave the fleet in the Canon Sydney-Gold Coast Classic a fast spinnaker run down Sydney Harbour, but the breeze faded off the NSW North Coast over the weekend.
Pic - Ian Mainsbridge

error in a formula of the CYCA spreadsheet used to calculate corrected times," wrote Vice-Commodore Hugo Van Kretschmar, Chairman of the Sailing Committee. "Handicaps used to calculate these revised results have not been changed from those issued at the start of the race. Only the mathematics used in the application of those handicaps have been corrected."

The revised results saw a complete change of top placings in the IMS Racer Division B and in IMS Cruiser/Racer Division B.

In Racer B, the end result was a win for South Australian medico Geoffrey Vercoe with his Jutson 43, *Maglieri Wines*, second placing going to CYCA member Dick Voorderhake's Lyons 40, *Rapscallion* (the 1993 Sydney-Hobart winner, *Cuckoos Nest*). *Wild Oats*, Bruce Foye and Lance Peckman's Farr 43 from the CYCA, dropped from first to third, Bob Mulkearns' NSX-36, *Skilled 2KY* from Middle Harbour Yacht Club, slipped from second to fourth.

In Cruiser/Racer B, *Ronita*, initially ranked first ended up ninth and most other placings changed. First place eventually went to *Superfine*, a newly launched, Davidson-designed Cavalier 350SL, owned by CYCA member George Waldthausen, with second going to another New Zealand designed boat, the Stewart 34 *Pendragon* skippered by 26-year-old Andrew Cochrane. Third was Peter Style's *Cavalier Express* from the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club.

Other IMS division placings were unchanged with the veteran 66-footer *Freight Train*, skippered by Damian Parkes, ending her racing days on a winning note by beating *Brindabella* and *Foxtel Amazon* in IMS Racer Division A. *Freight Train* is being put out to pasture with other retired racers as a charter boat in the Whitsundays with owner Parkes ordering the first of the new Iain Murray-designed Bashford/ Howison 60-footers.

IMS Cruiser/Racer Division A saw an excellent win by *Yendys*, the big Beneteau owned by Middle Harbour yachtsman Geoffrey Ross, from the largest IMS division in the race. Runner-up was the latest Bashford/Howison 36, skippered by America's Cup challenger Ray Roberts and appropriately named *Challenge 2000*. Third went to Roberts' former boat, now called *B52* and owned by Townsville yachtsman, Wayne Millar.

"*Freight Train*, skippered by Damian Parkes, ending her racing days on a winning note by beating *Brindabella* and *Foxtel Amazon* in IMS Racer Division A"

In an excellent performance, fourth place went to *Sidewinder*, the Dubois 50

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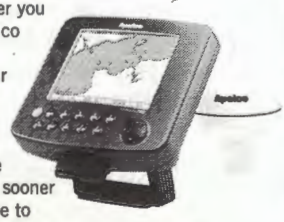

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The finish team at Southport in action during the Canon Sydney-Gold Coast Classic. The same team have finished the race since its inception in 1986, using highly sophisticated laser beams and time-keeping to accurately check the yachts across the line. Pic - Lisa Smith

which owner John Needham makes available to the CYCA Youth Sailing Academy for its offshore training program. The crew, apart from a couple of adults, averaged only 17 years of age.

PHS Division A saw a fine win by the Steinmann 50, *Flying Colours,* a smaller version of *Foxtel Amazon* owned by the *Flying Colours* syndicate from MHYC, with Stephen Everett's J130, *Ragtime,* from Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron placing second, third going to Melbourne yachtsman Joe Westerlo with his Elliott 47, *Indospray Prowler.*

The only entrant from the Port of Yamba Yacht Club on the NSW North Coast, Peter Williams' *Paycheque,* won PHS Division B from John Laird's *Galatea* from the Royal Motor Yacht Club, third going to veteran CYCA member Peter Hill with *Ruthless.*

Canon Sydney-Gold Coast Race Control

It is 2.00am and three yachts are about to cross the finish line of Southport's Main Beach within seconds of each other. Gail Garrard and Peter Middlemiss are sitting silently in front of the nine marine radios with pens poised ready to record results, while the Race Finisher Doug Lee, is staring through the telescope fixed on the flashing beacons which mark the finish line.

They are backed up by on-the-water volunteers from Southport Air/Sea Rescue who help to identify sail numbers in the dark, but there is no official finish boat. The Ruby Laser Beam telescope fixed on the finish line allows visibility up to 5 miles offshore, which means Race Control can operate 24 hours per day from their more comfortable vantage point inside an apartment.

Doug, Peter and Gail have always been part of the Sydney-Gold Coast Classic. They were three of the original 42 volunteers it took to run operations for the inaugural race in 1986.

These days, recording yacht positions throughout the race, co-ordinating the Air/Sea Rescue facilities along the NSW coast, and timing the finish is a job for three.

Amazingly, Gail takes holidays from her full-time job as a dental assistant to be involved. 'The satisfaction of knowing I've played a small role in making sure nearly 1000 competitors arrive safely each race is enough for me,' says Gail, who is also a volunteer with Southport Air/Sea Rescue.

A life has never been lost during this race but on several occasions Race Control has had to initiate search and rescue operations and provide support over the radio to people in distress.

"In the 1989 Classic, a family onboard yacht *Russell Dean II* became disoriented and refused to believe their compass reading," Doug recalls. "I convinced them not to initiate a Mayday and helped them establish their position."

In this year's Canon Sydney-Gold Coast Classic, Doug and his team assisted CYCA yachts *Rager* and *Hewlett Packard Farr Lap* after they ran aground and radioed for help.

Lisa Smith.