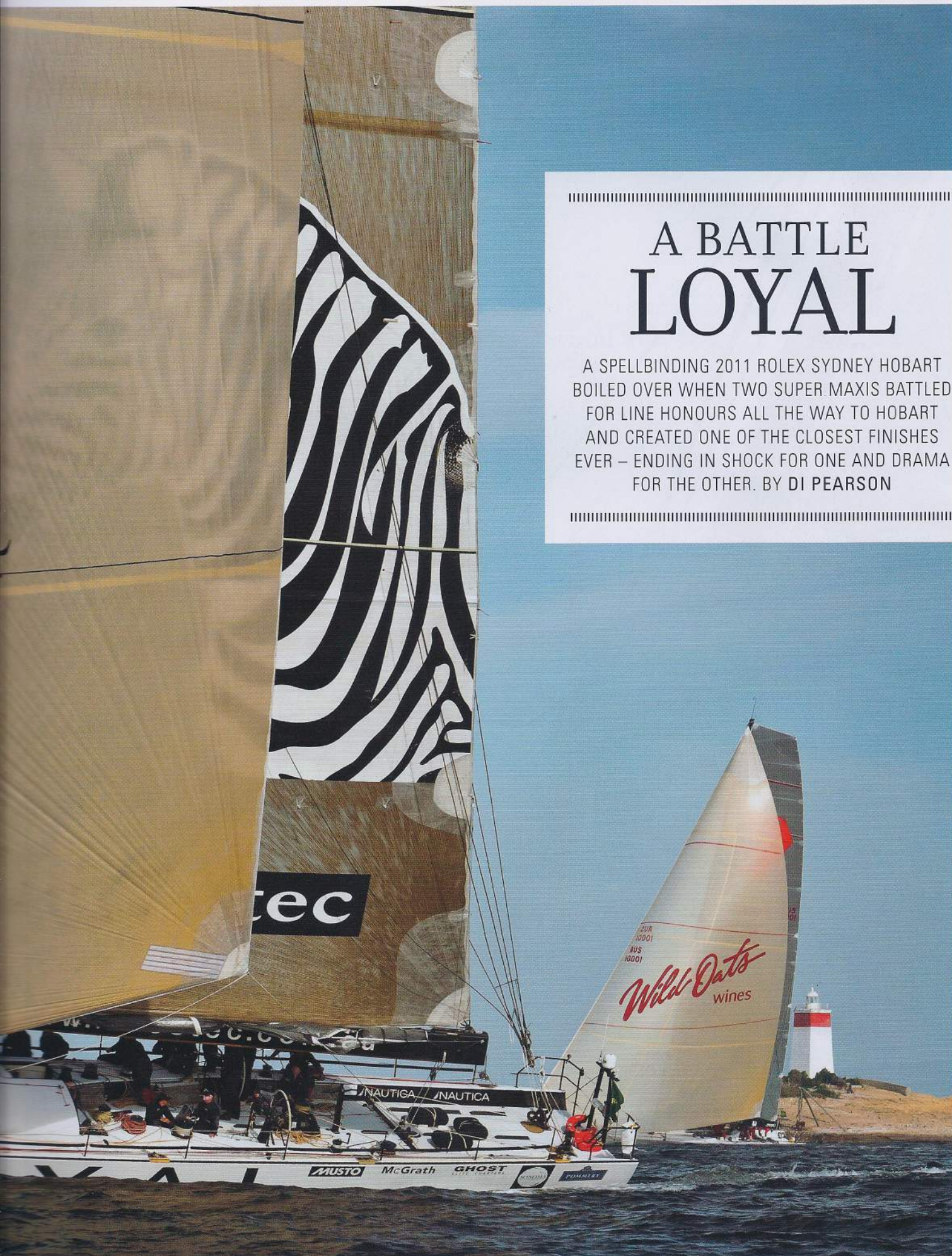


FIGHTING FINISH
Investec Loyal and
Wild Oats XI play
their game of cat
and mouse right
to the finish line.
The controversial
protest only
heightened the
anticipation of
which maxi would
take out line
honours.



A BATTLE LOYAL

A SPELLBINDING 2011 ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART
BOILED OVER WHEN TWO SUPER MAXIS BATTLED
FOR LINE HONOURS ALL THE WAY TO HOBART
AND CREATED ONE OF THE CLOSEST FINISHES
EVER – ENDING IN SHOCK FOR ONE AND DRAMA
FOR THE OTHER. BY DI PEARSON



HOT PURSUIT
Lahana, took advantage of a solid start to hold with the leaders down the coast. She crossed the line third with a sixth placing overall.



Favourite for the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia's yearly 628 nautical mile race, Bob Oatley's *Wild Oats XI*, skippered by Mark Richards, has only been beaten once before (by *Alfa Romeo* in 2009) and she missed out on the hoped for sixth victory this time.

Instead, the victory went to *Investec Loyal*, whose owner Anthony Bell had to fight a second battle in the protest room to hold onto the J.H. Illingworth Trophy.

Wild Oats XI, which broke the race record in her debut Hobart in 2005, has kept up with the times, undergoing modifications again in 2011 with the expectation of racing against the USA's *Rambler*, ostensibly the fastest super maxi in the world. But she lost her keel in the Rolex Fastnet Race in August, postponing the awaited showdown.

With her usual strong crew, *Wild Oats XI* sported new twin daggerboards and a 3Di square top main, made from the latest in North

We've come second to *Wild Oats* quite a lot; we came second to them in last year's race. It's an against-the-odds victory."

ANTHONY BELL
Investec Loyal

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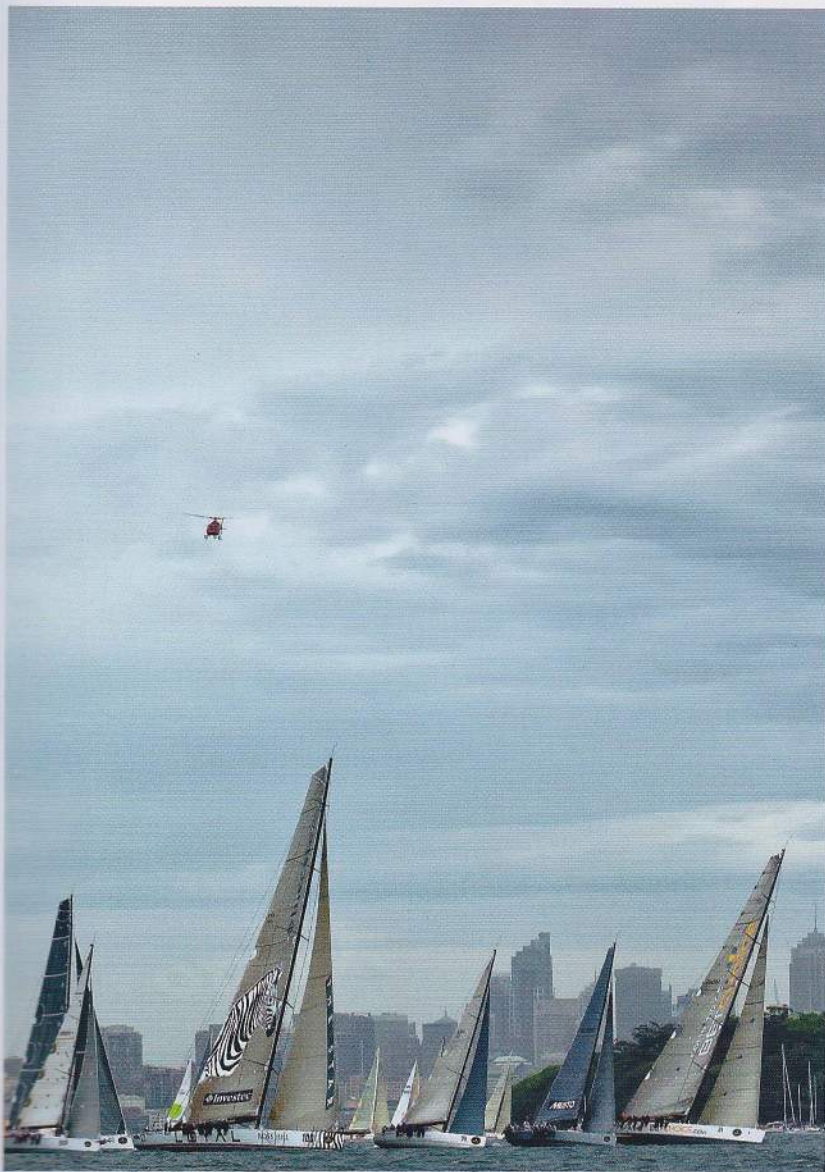
Sails technology; ironically the cause of a protest against *Investec Loyal*.

Eighty eight yachts left Sydney Harbour in the predicted north-easterly sea breeze. *Wild Oats*, which had a problem with its primary winch, narrowly led *Loyal* out of Sydney Heads, with Peter Millard and John Honan's *Lahana* and Stephen Ainsworth's *Loki* next.

Outside the Harbour, the yachts cracked kites on a really lumpy sea, but as the fleet sailed southward, the sea state settled.

An enjoyable downwind ride came to an end that evening. As predicted by the Bureau of Meteorology, a 30-40 knot southerly hammered the fleet, and combined with the effects of a cyclone, caused a terrible sea state. Surprisingly, there were only three retirements by late morning the next day. Most of the 11 retirements occurred the following day.

Wild Oats XI continued to lead Investec *Loyal* on Day 2. Late morning she was in 15 knots at Green Cape,



and stretched an 11 nautical mile lead to 14 by lunchtime.

Lahana remained third, the British yacht *Hugo Boss*, skippered by single handed world sailor Alex Thomson was fourth, and Stephen Ainsworth's *Loki* fifth. Bob Oatley's original ocean racer, the Farr 43 now named *Wild Rose* and owned by Roger Hickman, was the overall leader at that stage on corrected time.

The race took a dramatic turn on the second night when *Loyal* overtook her foe. From second place, the former *Maximus* avoided the hole *Wild Oats XI* found when the breeze lightened and oscillated between south-east and south west.

Anthony Bell was not counting his chickens early. His older yacht lacked the budget of *Wild Oats* and was crewed by a mixture of outstanding sailors and sports stars.

At the back of the fleet, Sean Langman, co-owner of *Investec Loyal*

SET FOR THE START

Left: Right from the starter's gun the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race was set to be a tight race The super maxis jostle with the smaller yachts to position themselves well as they go through Sydney heads.

with Bell until early last year, was struggling aboard the smallest yacht in the fleet, his 9 metre gaff rigged 79 year-old *Maluka of Kermandie*.

Finishing last on line at 4.48pm on New Year's Eve, Langman admitted: "It was pretty hard being at the back and knowing *Loyal* had taken line honours."

On the morning of December 28, as the leaders charged down the Tasmanian coast, *Wild Oats XI* regained the lead, keeping all connected with the race riveted as the line honours chase became a match race.

Both yachts ran out of wind and slowed to 2 and 3 knots. *Wild Oats XI* stopped and *Investec Loyal*, again with the benefit of hindsight, sailed around her adversary.

Confident in tactician Michael Coxon and distinguished navigator, American Stan Honey, Bell and crew, including celebrities Kurt Fearnley, Anthony Minichiello, Phils' Waugh and Kearns and Karl Stefanovic, were not drawn into *Wild Oats XI*'s tactics as Mark Richards' crew did everything

"Crew wet and cold, but I've promised more jugs of rum for each hour they hang on the rail."

PAUL CLITHEROE
Balance

|||||

and *Investec Loyal* seeking information from the helicopter of the sail plan in use on *Wild Oats XI*. In particular information as to whether *Wild Oats XI* was flying a trysail. This is assessed to breach RRS 41 by soliciting help from an outside source'.

Tactician Michael Coxon had asked for that information. The managing director of North Sails Australia alleged he was enquiring for commercial purposes and not to gain any advantage in the race.

The protest was dismissed when the international jury could find no evidence that *Investec Loyal* had gained any advantage from the information.

Bell surmised: "There are rules in every sport and, while it wasn't ideal to go through this, I think that ultimately it gets beyond any question. Those questions have been properly answered."

Of their line honours conquest, Bell said: "We've come second to *Wild Oats XI* quite a lot; we came second to them in last year's race. It's an against-the-



they could to recoup control.

Bell's boat claimed line honours by 3 minutes 8 seconds, crossing the line at 19.14.18 hours, in the time of 2 days 6hrs 14mins 8sec; the fourth closest finish ever.

As *Wild Oats XI* crossed the line in second, Mark Richards scattered Gary Ticehurst's ashes, while Gary's wife Teresa laid a wreath from aboard another vessel.

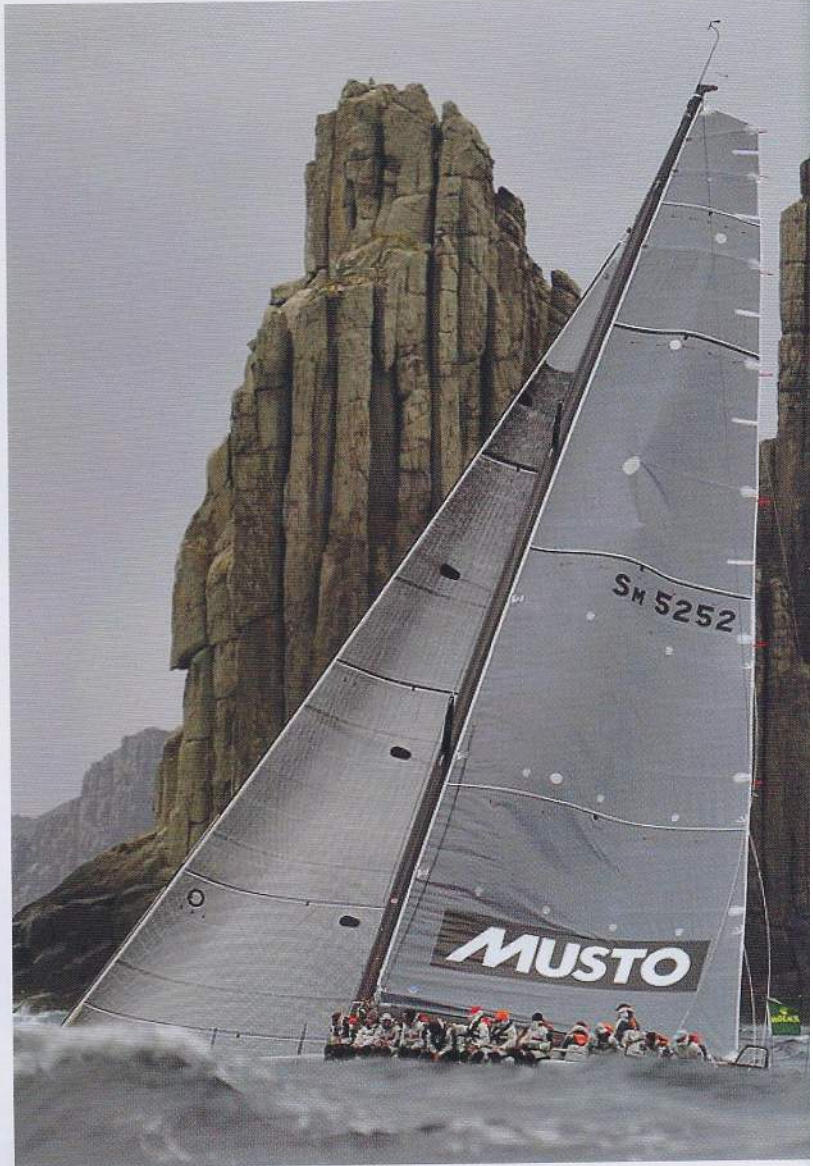
The yachting fraternity is still coming to grips with Gary's death while on assignment in his chopper last August. He was of great solace to Hobart crews over 27 years and played a significant role in the rescue of many people in the tragic 1998 race.

On *Investec Loyal*, the celebrations had started when Anthony Bell was handed a protest lodged against him by the Race Committee, citing RRS 41. In short, it states 'outside help'.

It related to 'Audio recording of conversation between ABC helicopter

SIZE AND SCOPE

Above: Former co-owner of *Investec Loyal* Sean Langman puts the 9m *Maluka of Kermandie*, through her paces. Right: *Calm*, takes the scenic route close to the Tasman coast's famous Organ Pipes.



odds victory."

"*Wild Oats XI* is such a fantastic, professionally-run campaign by the Oatley family and, to have them compete so fiercely, accelerated and heightened the value to us. They are the benchmark of super maxi racing in the world," he said.

When *Wild Oats XI* and *Investec* *Loyal* slowed to snail's pace on the Tasmanian coast, *Lahana*, *Hugo Boss* and *Loki* kept moving. *Lahana* sailed a course marginally closer to the coast and eventually slowed down, but not before taking a good 60 miles out of the two leaders.

Loki and *Hugo Boss*, 63ft and 60ft respectively, sailed the rhumbline to their benefits, and kept up an average speed of 18 knots. That action all but sealed the deal for *Loki*, after she sailed a flawless race to finish fourth on line at 3.20am on December 29.

The other bigger yachts, such as Michael Hiatt's *Living Doll* (Vic), Syd Fischer's *Ragamuffin*, Chris Bull's *Jazz* (second overall in 2010) and Jason Van der Slot's *Calm*, were out of the picture and ultimately took second to fifth places overall.

However, boats in the 40-50ft range were in the running, especially *Wild Rose*, which won the 1993 race overall under IOR in conjunction with IMS winner, *Cuckoos Nest*.

Loki's chances improved when the NSW Beneteau 45's *Victoire* (Darryl Hodgkinson) and *Balance* (Paul Clitheroe), along with the new Ker 40, *AFR Midnight Rambler* (Psaltis/Thomas/Bencsik) and 2009 winner, *Two True*, Andrew Saies' Beneteau 40 from South Australia, ran into a second southerly on December 28.

Clitheroe reported: "Good grief; another southerly. We were having a nice cruise across Bass Strait and to the east of Tasmania until the predicted southerly hit us around 2.00am.

"After the hammering we got off Eden, this is pretty mild. Peaked around 30 knots then settled into 20/24 knots. We and *AFR* are parallel and three miles apart; *Victoire* a couple of miles in front, but far to the west of us.

"Crew wet and cold, but I've promised more jugs of rum for each hour they hang on the rail. Being a bunch of cheap buggers, that's likely to keep them there for days."

On the night of December 29, the bulk of the fleet was becalmed. Clitheroe wrote: "We enjoyed watching the sunset as we drifted next to Tasman Light. Roll forward nine hours and we are enjoying sunrise at Cape Raoul, representing

“I knew the boat and crew could do it, but we also needed the right conditions and some luck. We sailed a very good race – We got it right from the word go, and we’ll be going again. We’d like to be the first boat to win the Rolex Sydney Hobart two years running.”

STEPHEN AINSWORTH

Loki

