

ROLEX SYDNEY HOBART YACHT RACE: A FULL EXAMINATION

26 - 31 DECEMBER 2021

PRESS RELEASE

Hobart, 1 January 2022 – Without doubt, the 76th Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race delivered on the event’s formidable reputation. It was a race of two decidedly different halves. The first was a punishing test of physical endurance and perseverance. The second questioned mental resilience and tactical judgment. Organized since 1945 by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, with the support of the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, the race has been partnered by Rolex since 2002.

The lead up to the 2021 race was overshadowed by the prospect of a brutal first 24 to 48 hours of strong southerly wind combining with opposing current to build a threatening sea state. The exacting conditions probed for weakness in equipment and mindset. Despite all the intense and detailed preparation within the 88-boat fleet, so unrelenting was the scrutiny that over a third would be forced to retire. For those that made it through, any sense of relief was short-lived with the final stages of the race setting a more cerebral challenge. A shifting weather pattern required crews to piece together a complex three-dimensional on-the-water jigsaw puzzle. When sailing, the shortest course between two points is rarely a straight line. This was never more true than during this year’s Rolex Sydney Hobart.

The overall win on time correction was eventually secured by Matt Allen’s 52 foot (15.85 metre) *Ichi Ban*. Previously winners in 2017 and 2019, the Australian crew joined two other yachts within the legend of the race to achieve three victories and is the first, since *Freya* in the 1960s, to lift the Tattersall Cup in back-to-back races. According to the winning owner, Matt Allen:

“It is amazing to be part of the history and fabric of the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race.”

With 31 races under his belt, the first back in 1980 aged 17, Allen has plenty of experience to draw upon. He felt this edition had provided a full and extensive examination of seamanship:

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“Most races to Hobart do test the entire boat and crew, but I think this year’s probably more than ever. The wave conditions we saw through the first 24 hours really caused big issues for the boats. Then to have that very complicated tactical situation for the rest of the race really [meant] decision-making was absolutely critical.”

The contest to be first to finish was no less enthralling, with three 100ft (30.5m) maxis dogfighting virtually the length of the 628 nautical mile racecourse. *SHK Scallywag 100* led out of the harbour, but a sail-handling issue let her rivals slip past. *LawConnect* then traded the lead with *Black Jack*, until Peter Harburg’s Monegasque flagged and Australian-crewed entry acted decisively in the light winds to build an advantage that survived a nail-biting drift up the Derwent River to Hobart.

Resilience and human accomplishment are qualities which have long bound Rolex and the sport of sailing. The Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race has once again demonstrated how offshore racing is both a competitive and personal challenge. Starting under a grey, but sunlit sky, as the yachts exited through Sydney Heads the building waves quickly made life onboard increasingly uncomfortable. While the race could easily be lost in this period, it was certainly not won. Once across Bass Strait, the complexion may have changed, but not intensity. All those that made it to the finish may reflect with pride on their achievement, on summoning their deepest resources and their unwavering commitment.

A NATURAL AND SUPPORTIVE PARTNER

Rolex has always associated with activities driven by passion, excellence, precision and team spirit. The Swiss watchmaker naturally gravitated towards the elite world of yachting six decades ago and the brand’s enduring partnership now encompasses the most prestigious clubs, races and regattas, as well as towering figures in the sport, including ground-breaking round-the-world yachtsman Sir Francis Chichester and the most successful Olympic sailor of all time, Sir Ben Ainslie. Today, Rolex is Title Sponsor of 15 major international events – from leading offshore races such as the annual Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race and the biennial Rolex Fastnet Race, to grand prix competition at the Rolex TP52 World Championship and spectacular gatherings at the Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup and the Rolex Swan Cup. It also supports the exciting SailGP global championship in which national teams race identical supercharged F50 catamarans on some of the world’s most famous harbours. Rolex’s partnerships with the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, Yacht Club Costa Smeralda, New York Yacht Club and Royal Yacht Squadron, among others, are the foundation of its enduring relationship with this dynamic sport.



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ABOUT ROLEX

AN UNRIVALLED REPUTATION FOR QUALITY AND EXPERTISE

Rolex is an integrated and independent Swiss watch *manufacture*. Headquartered in Geneva, the brand is recognized the world over for its expertise and the quality of its products – symbols of excellence, elegance and prestige. The movements of its Oyster Perpetual and Cellini watches are certified by COSC, then tested inhouse for their precision, performance and reliability. The Superlative Chronometer certification, symbolized by the green seal, confirms that each watch has successfully undergone tests conducted by Rolex in its own laboratories according to its own criteria. These are periodically validated by an independent external organization. The word “Perpetual” is inscribed on every Rolex Oyster watch. But more than just a word on a dial, it is a philosophy that embodies the company’s vision and values. Hans Wilsdorf, the founder of the company, instilled a notion of perpetual excellence that would drive the company forward. This led Rolex to pioneer the development of the wristwatch and numerous major watchmaking innovations, such as the Oyster, the first waterproof wristwatch, launched in 1926, and the Perpetual rotor self-winding mechanism, invented in 1931. In the course of its history, Rolex has registered over 500 patents. At its four sites in Switzerland, the brand designs, develops and produces the majority of its watch components, from the casting of the gold alloys to the machining, crafting, assembly and finishing of the movement, case, dial and bracelet. Furthermore, the brand is actively involved in supporting the arts and culture, sport and exploration, as well as those who are devising solutions to preserve the planet.

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