The 1952 Hobart Race

Sydney-Hobart Race Is Test Of Yachts And Men

As the second hand of the starter's watch ticks off the last minute to 11 o'clock this morning, 17 or 18 ocean-going yachts will be making their last run up to the line in Sydney Harbour for the start of the eighth Sydney-Hobart race. This 680-mile blue-water event is one of major importance to the yachtsmen of Australia. Indeed, it is one of the three outstanding ocean races of its kind, the other two being the 615-mile British Fastnet race and the 660-mile American Bermuda race.

An indication of the importance of the Hobart race in the eyes of yachtsmen is provided by the fact that four of the six States are represented among this year's competitors. Yet this race is by no means a "pot-hunter's" event. It is a severe and expensive ocean test for skilled, experienced crews.

Although the race is supposed to be "downhill" that is, a run before the north-east wind that usually prevails along the eastern seaboard at this season—the competing yachtsmen must be prepared for every vagary of wind and weather. The experience of previous races tells them that a fair wind can quickly change into a "dead muzzler," entailing hours of arduous thrashing to windward. Sea conditions, too, along the coastline can be boisterous, especially so when the yachts cross the eastern opening to the wind funnel that is Bass Strait. These conditions demand physical and mental fitness on the part of the crews, and yachts which can take advantage of every shift of wind.

Officials of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, which sponsors the race, are particularly pleased this year with the number of new entries. Of the 18 boats entered, nine or 10, will be competing in the race for the first time. For this reason the race is the most "open" of any since the initial race in 1945-46. One of the most interesting of the new entries is the yawl Ruthean, representing the Lake Macquarie Yacht Club. Owned and skippered by A.V. Toll, this yacht was designed by the eminent English naval architect, Laurent Giles.

Many yachtsmen expect her to be first across the finishing line

Big Newcomer

She is a big lump of a boat, 54 feet overall, but so proportioned that her size in comparison with other competitors will cause no special comment. However, experience has proved that the Hobart is not necessarily a race which favours large craft, and Ruthean, with her high handicap rating, will have to perform exceptionally well to win.

Experts also give a reasonable chance of line honours to Mr. George Mayne's 52 foot staysail schooner Pavana, representing the Royal South Australian Yacht Club.
Another of the big fellows is B.R. O'Brien's 57-foot ketch Wraith of Odin. New and untried, Wraith is from the board of one of America's finest designers, John G. Alden, designer of many blue-water winners.

Two other big vessels in the race are S. Heaton's 64-foot cutler Nirvana and F. and J. Livingstone's 58-foot ketch Kurrewa III, the scratch boat of the fleet.

Kurrewa III has represented Australia in the Trans-tasman and Honolulu races and last year was wireless mother ship to the contestants. She figured in the most dramatic episode of the race when her co-owner and skipper, F. Livingstone, contracted blood poisoning and, after an unsuccessful air-drop of drugs from a flying-boat, had to be put ashore at the fishing port of St. Helens on the north-east coast of Tasmania.

This year will be Kurrewa's third attempt to win the race. A popular prediction is that winning honours in this year's race will again be divided between four of the smaller contestants. One of these is the 35-foot yawl owned by the Rear-Commodore of the Cruising Yacht Club, Mr. Hal Evans. Superbly tuned and fitted for the race, Moonbi rates well and will be driven hard by Mr. Evans in his third attempt to win the race.

**On The Limit**

Two other fancied contestants from Sydney are Mr. W. Fesq's 37-foot cutter Fortuna, sailing in her fourth Hobart race, and Mr. J. Clark's 35-foot sloop Kurura, limit boat of the fleet.

Kurura performed well in the last Montagu Island race. Fourth of the fancied yachts is another South Australian entry, Mr. J. S. Taylor's 38-foot Bermuda ketch Ingrid. Ingrid rates well and is reported to be a top performer in South Australian waters.

Among other newcomers to the race this year is Mr. D. Richardson's 44-foot yawl Landfall, which will race under the burgee of the Victorian Royal Brighton Yacht Club.

She was built to plans to a leading American designer, Olin Stevens, who has probably designed and sailed more successful racing yachts than any other designer in the world.

Landfall has performed well in Victorian races this season and is among the middle raters. The map shows the coast between Sydney and Hobart. The mean sailing distance between the start and finish of the race is 680 miles on the performances of the sister ships. Much interest will be focused on the performance of Nocturne, from Sydney, and Terra Nova, from Tasmania. Both yachts are 35-foot cutters from the board of young Sydney naval architect, Alan Payne, who will be sailing in the Tasmanian entry.

Terra Novis the winner of five ocean races this season, and yachtsmen expect a hard fight between her, and Mr. R. Bull's Nocturne.

Two more or less unknown performers in the race this year are Mr. K. C. Hobson's 35-foot sloop Ripple and Mr. G. Brenac's 48-foot cutter White Cloud, both from Sydney. The Halvorsen brothers have entered Solveig, winner of the 1951 Trans-Tasman race. This 34-foot sloop goes well under any conditions and has a most experienced crew.

**Veteran Craft**

Two of the other three contestants in the race are Tasmanian entries, the veteran schooner Wanderer and Mr. D. McRae's 40-foot cutter Kintail. The third is L. and M. Markey's 35-foot yawl, Stormy Weather, from Melbourne.

At the time of writing there is doubt whether this, the 18th entrant, will be a starter. Accompanying the fleet as radio mother yacht this year will be the motor-sailer Lauriana, owned and skippered by Mr. V. Meyer, of Sydney. Lauriana is equipped with twin engines and sail, and, as well as maintaining wireless communication with the contestants and shore stations, she will carry emergency medical supplies and spares.


Record elapsed time for the voyage is four days two hours 29 minutes one second, established by Margaret Rintoul last year.
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