Despite some prophets of doom among writers for the daily newspapers, the damage to boats and bodies was relatively limited and most boats and crews found their way to Hobart by various methods of transport for yet another great celebration of 'The Great Race South'.

Thousands of Tasmanians and visitors from interstate and overseas strolled Hobart's dockside, enjoying the spectacle of nearly 120 yachts that sailed into the southern capital in ocean races from Sydney, Melbourne and Launceston and other local festivities including the Taste of Tasmania, now bigger and better than ever.

Yachts' favourite waterfront hotels such as the Customs House did a roaring trade, as did Battery Point's famous watering hole, the Shipwrights Arms.

Organising the finish of the Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race is always a major task for the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, with some 200 volunteers again involved in tasks ranging from physically finishing the fleet (and also the Launceston to Hobart and Melbourne to Hobart race fleets), guiding them to their information centre at Constitution Dock, and manning the radio room at the club and the race management centre from the start on Boxing Day to when the last boat crossed the line on New Year's Eve.

This summer the team under RSHYR finish co-ordinator 'Biddy' Badenchach also had to find special accommodation for the dozen yachts in the Clipper Round the World Race, the brightly painted Clipper 70s certainly adding to the colourful spectacle around Sullivan's Cove. The RPYC for this year's 70th Rolex Sydney Hobart, with expectations of a fleet of 120 boats, including even more supermaxi's keen to take on the champion Wild Oats XI and celebrate the history of the Great Race South.

With bigger fleets also predicted for the Melbourne to Hobart and Launceston to Hobart races to join in the celebrations, we could see close to 200 yachts berthed in Sullivan's Cove on New Year's Eve.

This year's Rolex Sydney Hobart Race marked yet another fine sailing effort by David Pescud and his crew of the Lyons 54 Sailors with Disabilities, the 11th Hobart race for the boat and the 22nd race for skipper Pescud.

Among the crew was 19-year-old Grace Kennedy from Sussex Inlet on the NSW South Coast. Grace has Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair for mobility on shore. During the rugged race south, Grace, like other crew members in the Raceboat program had to scurry and 'bum' their way around the deck - the result plenty of bruises but big smiles when they reached Hobart.

RSHYR Finish Co-ordinator 'Biddy' Badenchach happened to be in the Liaison Centre at Constitution Dock when Grace's father Phillip asked
Rolex flag as a memento for Grace. Overhearing the conversation and the answer "unfortunately, they are not for sale", Biddy made an executive decision and organised for Grace's parents to pick up one from the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania.

"We find it difficult to describe our joy at being involved in the race. As parents we were bursting with pride (after chewing our nails for three days)," Phil and his wife, Nicki, wrote from back home at Sussex Inlet. "The whole experience was topped off by your kind gift of a Rolex Sydney Hobart flag, a lasting memento."

Grace has been sailing about four years, starting with the local Hobie class at Vincentia Sailing and then to Sailability at Callala Bay and on to Sydney with Sailability, achieving fourth place in the world championship for the 303 class in 2011.

The inclusion of the 69th Rolex Sydney Hobart as a leg of the Clipper Round the World race not only boosted the fleet by a dozen 70-footers but their start in Sydney and arrival in Hobart gained much attention.

Not only did the brightly painted topsides of the Clipper 70s add colour to the scene in Sullivans Cove, the crew of Great Britain even came along to the prize giving at the RYCT dressed in colourful apparel reminiscent of the London's costermongers.

Great Britain finished second in the Clipper 70 division, with Derry-Londonderry-Doire the first Clipper 70 to finish.

Another Clipper 70 skipper collected an historic trophy with Victoria Ellis, skipper of Switzerland, receiving the Jane Tate Memorial Trophy for the first woman skipper to Hobart in the 2013 race. This trophy commemorates Mrs Jane Tate, the first woman to complete the Sydney Hobart Race back in 1946.

According to the Rolex media team, about 150 women competed in the 69th Rolex Sydney Hobart, among them the CYCA's Crewperson of the Year for 2013, Jennifer Wells, navigator on Roger Hickman's Wild Rose, in her fourth Hobart race.

It's been a big season for the crew of Wild Rose, a 28-year-old 43 footer designed by Bruce Farr and IMS overall winner of the 1993 Sydney Hobart. Late in the race they looked a chance to win the Tattersalls Trophy, but ended up 11th overall. Nevertheless, Wild Rose won IRC Division 4 and also ORCi Division 3.

Wild Rose was also a member, along with Victoire and Patrice, of the winning crew in the revived Southern Cross Cup; and to cap it off, Wild Rose won the prestigious CYCA 2013 Blue Water Pointscore, which concluded with 2013 Rolex Sydney Hobart.

One of the most popular awards made at the Rolex Sydney Hobart Race prizegiving was a 40 year medallion presented to David Kellett, whose racing career has included being sailing master on Sovereign when it won the double of line and handicap honours in 1987. In recent years, he has done an outstanding job as the CYCA's senior representative aboard the radio relay vessel.

David has made a major contribution to the status of the Rolex Sydney Hobart race across a broad spectrum: as a highly successful competitor, as a past Commodore of the CYCA, as chairman of the world body - the Ocean Racing Council - and in race communications and safety at sea, not just for the Rolex Sydney Hobart, but for ocean racing worldwide. As Australia's past senior representative and an executive member of the International Sailing Federation (ISAF) he considerably lifted this nation's status with the sport's international governing body.

Seven competitors in the 69th race were also awarded medallions for achieving 25 Hobarts, including Noel Drennan, Erik Adriaanse, Peter Messenger, Darren Senegal, Bill Sykes and Grant Wharington. Michael Coxon was also recognised as having sailed 25 Hobarts even though he did not compete in 2013 (he's actually completed 27). It was noted at the prizegiving that Tony Cable had sailed his 48th Hobart Race.

Westerly gales caused a number of disruptions to yacht racing on Hobart's River Derwent this summer, including the iconic King of the Derwent on January 2, which was abandoned for the first time in 30 years. Westerlies howled across the river at 50 knots and more and the Derwent Sailing Squadron wisely pulled the plug.

Fortunately, conditions eased late in the afternoon for the start of the Clipper Race leg from Hobart to Brisbane, but Clipper officials did abandon the pre-start sail past and a planned short windward/leeward leg between Castray Esplanade and the John Garrow Light before heading down the river and out to sea.

The inclusion of the Rolex Sydney Hobart as a leg of the Clipper Race proved a great hit with competitors and race organisers and I expect they will be back again in 2015. 