

**The 71<sup>st</sup> edition of the Rolex Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race underway**  
***Maserati* and Giovanni Soldini are in fourth position**  
**Eight boats retire, including *Wild Oats XI* and *Comanche***  
**Front bringing 30 to 40 – knot southerly winds approaching in next few hours**

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Rolex Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race

A hooter blast from the Australian Cruising Yacht Boat marked the start of the 71<sup>st</sup> Rolex Sydney-Hobart Race at exactly 13.00 local time (2.00 GMT and 3.00 in Italy). The 108-strong fleet got underway from three start-lines under cloudy skies and in a 15-knot north-easterly wind. All eager, of course, to tackle the tough 628-mile route separating the Australian port from the Tasman capital which will also see them traversing the infamous Bass Strait.

*Maserati* started from the first line alongside the rest of the big boats. The super maxis immediately took command of the race with *Comanche* out in front tailed by *Wild Oats XI*, *Rambler*, *Ragamuffin 100* and *Black Jack*. However, the situation changed rapidly and at this point, a total of eight boats has retired because of accidents or breakages, including *Comanche* and *Wild Oats XI*. Having spent several hours lying ninth, *Maserati* has made up ground and is currently lying in fourth position behind *Rambler*, *Ragamuffin 100* and *Perpetual Loyal*.

It proved something of an adventurous start for *Maserati*, however. Immediately after the hooter, the Italian VOR 70 became ensnared with three of the buoys marking off the spectator boat area. The crew had to halt the boat to deal with the problem, losing precious time in the process as first Carlos Hernandez and then Sam Goodchild worked their way along the hull to cut the lines entangled with the keel.

Three boats ended up retiring because of incidents at the start: Chinese craft *Ark23*, *Cougar II* from Tasmania and British entry, *Lupa of London*.

Four hours into the race, Giovanni Soldini had this to say: "The start was good but very dangerous with a very narrow channel to tack up. There was very little space between the sandbanks and the spectators. As we were starting, we heard an awful crash to leeward: two boats had collided. At the end of the channel, we were just a few metres from *Black Jack* and held the tack to the last. But we ended up in the spectator fleet and had to tack around one of the buoys that delimit it.

We'd already done that on our training days but today the keel became ensnared with a line attaching the buoy to its neighbour and we soon realised we were dragging three buoys behind us. We tried to free ourselves by backing up in the middle of the oncoming fleet but eventually we positioned ourselves to windward of everyone and with our bow to the wind, we dropped Carlos over the side. He managed to free up just one of the buoys. In the end, Sam jumped in with a knife and cut whatever he could. We're now flying the spi and the full main in a wind that's varying between 19 and 26 knots. Black Jack is a bit faster than we are. Her bowsprit is two metres longer than ours so that could be why. I only hope that there isn't still a bit of line tangled in the keel. We're expecting the front in the next few hours".

Skipper Giovanni Soldini is flanked aboard Maserati by a highly experienced, competitive international crew: Italians Guido Broggi, Corrado Rossignoli, Matteo Ivaldi, Francesco Malingri and Carlo Castellano; Spaniards Carlos Hernandez and Oliver Herrera; Pierre Casiraghi of Monaco; Brit Sam Goodchild; Australians Elizabeth "Liz" Wardley, Drew Mervyn Carruthers, Trevor Brown and journalist and "special guest" Nick Vindin.

Video footage and still photographs from the boat can be found at [www.maserati.soldini.it](http://www.maserati.soldini.it) and on the following social networks: Facebook (Giovanni Soldini Pagina Ufficiale, over 40.000 friends) and Twitter @giovannisoldini (over 127.000 followers).

*The challenge is sponsored by the main partner, **Maserati**, after which the yacht is named, and by co-sponsors **Swiss Bank BSI** and **Unipol SAI Assicurazioni**.*

*The official suppliers to the challenge are **Z Zegna** (clothing), **Vodafone Italia** (telecommunication services and official website development) and **Boero Bartolomeo S.p.A.** (specialist hull paints and enamels).*

*Also aboard Maserati are **Eataly** (provisioning), **Beta Utensili** (all professional tools), **Corderia Lancelin** (specialist lines and cables), **Jeppesen** (cartography), **B&G Navico** (technical assistance with onboard instrumentation), **Cantiere Picchiotti of La Spezia** (Maserati's home base ashore), and the **La Spezia Port Authority** (Maserati's home port afloat).*

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