

Yacht Race Leaders Nearing Sydney

The three leading boats in the Tasman yacht race were estimated to be only 30 to 40 miles from Sydney at 1.30 p.m. (New Zealand time) today. If the wind holds they should complete their 1240-mile 12-day journey before nightfall.

The position of the leading boats is uncertain, but Tara is probably still ahead of Leda. Southern Maid was nearly 20 miles behind Leda this morning, while the lighter boats had dropped back still further.

Leda reported by radio that she was 70 miles from Sydney at 9 o'clock this morning. Mr W. A. Wilson, Press Association correspondent aboard the Tauranga cutter, said Leda was close reaching under a mainsail and Genoa jib. She was making over six knots, and if the wind held she could reach Sydney before dark.

"We tried calling Tara twice last night, but could get no reply," Mr Wilson added. "So we are keeping our fingers crossed and hoping she is getting head winds."

"The Solveig has now dropped back to about 65 miles behind us. Probably all the smaller boats are now well back."

Mr Wilson said there was great excitement aboard the Leda; her crew were finding it hard to realize that Sydney lay only a daylight run ahead.

Yesterday evening Southern Maid sighted a sail about eight miles astern. This was probably either Rangl or Hope.

Anybody's Race

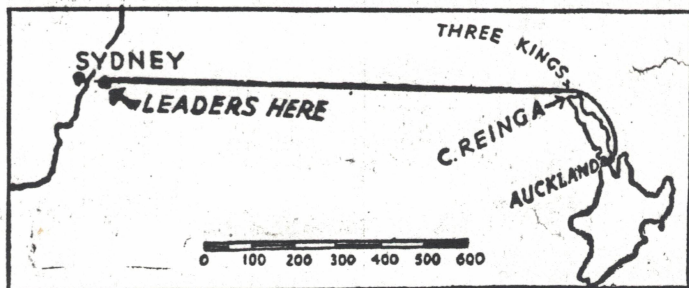
Mr Wilson reported last night that it was still anybody's race, both for first home and on handicap, as the smaller boats were dropping back rapidly in the brisk winds.

He explained that Tara received time from both Leda and Southern Maid, about three hours and six hours respectively. But he thought that the smaller boat behind Southern Maid might be the winner on handicap.

The weather there today is mild and sunny, with some cloud. Forecast is for fresh to moderate southerlies, changing to east or north-east winds later.

The secretary of the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, Mr J. A. Kyd, said today the club would take charge of the finishing line off Watson's Bay at noon, and would maintain a constant watch until the last boat came in, according to a message from Sydney.

Weather bureau reports show that the yachts should have a quiet run into Sydney.



ESTIMATED POSITION at 2 o'clock today (N.Z. time).

LEDA FIRST HOME

Race to Sydney

SOUTHERN MAID ALSO ARRIVES

(Recd. 11.50 p.m.) SYDNEY, Feb. 7
The 54ft Tauranga cutter Leda crossed the finishing line at 3.20 p.m. today, the first home in the Tasman yacht race. The Southern Maid (Sydney) finished second at 6.45 p.m. and the Auckland entry, Tara, was still about 60 miles out from Sydney at 6 p.m. She is not due until about 3 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Corrected placings will not be available until the rest of the fleet arrive, but it is not expected that the Leda will win on corrected times.

When the Leda crossed the line she fulfilled the four-year ambition of her owners, Messrs C. G. and W. A. Wilson. A back-yard job, the Leda took just on four years to build and even now she is not finished inside. Mr W. A. Wilson was pleased with the yacht's first big ocean race but explained that light conditions did not allow the Leda to really prove her paces.

In the two blows they experienced Leda rode "like a Trojan." During the first blow they carried full sail but in the second one, which had a good deal behind it, they shortened sail and finally settled for trysail and spinnaker jib. It was here she proved her paces as an ocean sailor, obviously revelling in the conditions.

The race, which took 12 days, virtually started twice, according to the Wilson brothers. When they were at North Cape the Leda was caught in the lee of the land. Again, 500 miles out in the Tasman, the Auckland cutter Rangl passed the Leda and then the Sydney cutter Solveig caught them both. During this period they were within hailing distance of most of the fleet.

The crew of the Leda gave all credit to Terry Hammond, the youthful Auckland navigator, who brought them through the Sydney Heads without one moment's anxiety. Mrs Kit Wilson and Mrs Erica Wilson, the wives of the Leda's owners, enjoyed every moment of the trip—including the two gales. "We were battered about, and have hardly dried out yet from the spray we shipped," they said.

Leda expects to be in Sydney for a week, and will then return to New Zealand.

The skipper of the Southern Maid, W. Trautwein, said they had had an uneventful trip; in fact, it had been "a pleasure cruise."

Tara's position had been given earlier in the day as the leading boat, but it was established in radio conversation with the Southern Maid that she had had been experiencing trouble with her chronometer.

An earlier message from Sydney said that the Solveig had dropped back to about 65 miles behind the Leda. It was likely that the other smaller boats would be in the same position. Until the blow started early this week they were up with the leaders.

Handicaps which have been worked out for each boat will be used to give the corrected finishing times. They are expressed as decimal fractions and multiplied to the first boat's time. Southern Maid conceded several hours to the Leda, but the Leda gives time to every other entrant.