

SWORD OF ORION

Interview conducted by Peter Bush on 23rd of March 1999 at the CYCA

Present: Rob Kothe, Darren Senogles, Carl Watson

Crew experience:

Extremely experienced crew, own very well prepared yacht. (Note: Sword had subscribed to Roger Badham's private weather service).

Conditions prior to the storm:

SOO collided with Maxi Nokia at the start, taking out two stanchions and punching the pushpit through the deck. On passing the sea mark, the crew took time to make substantive repairs, placing pads under the damage.

SOO had a fast run down the NSW coast, recording up to 4 knots of set, particularly south of Jervis Bay. By 0230 hours, they removed the spinnaker and poled out a #3, now in 40-45 knots of north westerly.

By 0330 the breeze had moved to the west and SOO was reaching with 2 reefs and a #5, and by 0630 the #5 was replaced by the storm jib. The crew commented that they were sailing conservatively and the boat and crew were all in good condition and comfortable.

Skipper Kothe was observing intense electrical activity and cloud build-up, and was concerned that the forecast of 40-50 knots was not reflecting what lay ahead.

By 1000 hours SOO had removed the main, lashed it to the boom and lashed the boom to the deck. They were proceeding under storm jib only.

At approximately SOO spoke to RCVF Eden on VHF, and was advised of 92 knots of wind recorded at Wilsons Promontory. The forecast they were given at that time nonetheless remained at 40-50 knots. (They did not hear Rager's call of extreme weather at 1235 hours).

At the 1400 hours sked SOO advised the RRV of extreme winds and conditions, (confirmed by Yendys). SOO was concerned that the BOM forecast relayed by the RRV was not indicative of the weather ahead. SOO also reported in the interview that they were uncertain of the duration and direction the storm would move.

SOO had a heavy weather strategy that was decided and discussed before the race. It was determined before the race and implemented as the rough weather developed. It consisted of reducing crew on deck to two, and keeping all storm boards in situ (amongst other things). *What about the halyards.* (After the sked SOO spent some time relaying for Ausmaid and Team Jaguar).

Halyards caused much damage to the coachhouse deck.