



(Right): Race organisers are hoping that the next America's Cup will be as scintillating as the last one.
Photos: Abner Kingman

against each other. This pressure is amplified by the fact that the competition is one of the oldest trophies in international sport, having a history of more than 150 years.

The competition's legacy is reflected in its global popularity. Last year, 190 countries broadcast the competition, with close to 25 million views on YouTube, and even a concert series to accompany the challenge. Typically contested between a single defender and challenger in a port, last year's race was one the most tightly fought battles, with Oracle Team USA coming back from behind to steal the title from challenger Emirates Team New Zealand in San Francisco.

For the 35th edition of the race, to be held tentatively in 2017, six teams have entered the America's Cup World Series. This course of qualifying races in venues around the world will narrow the field down to two that fight for pride, glory and everlasting sporting legacy at the next final, reported to be either in San Diego or Bermuda.

The "Bluewater Classic", or otherwise known as Sydney Hobart Yacht Race, attracts some of the most iconic names in sailing, fuelled by an almost perverse desire to be challenged by wild conditions with high winds and unpredictable seas. The race sees a strong international presence, especially from Australasia. A short race compared to other classics, time is tighter and mistakes more pronounced, with race winners typically finishing



anywhere from two to three days, with a record of around one day and 18 hours.

With a length of 628 nautical miles, the Sydney Hobart Yacht Race is shorter than other famed races, but it is an icon of Australasian sport. After a spectacular start in Sydney Harbour, the challenge traverses the Tasman Sea and southeast coast of mainland Australia, the Bass Strait dividing the mainland from Tasmania, and then finishes by going through Storm Bay on the way up the Derwent River to Hobart.

This year, an international fleet will head to Sydney Harbour to start the race on Boxing Day. They will be hoping to repeat the classic race of last year, a hotly contested challenge with 22 international entries and 15 new boats going head to head in a race pitting 94 entries against each other.

Known for having unpredictable weather, Sydney Hobart is a race that tests the most hardy of seamen, but is also famed as an egalitarian race that takes in yachts of all sizes from 30-footers to 98-footers, and crews from weekend amateur club sailors to stalwarts from the Olympics, America's Cup and Volvo Ocean Race. While time is of essence, the race attracts plenty of seasoned veterans. In 2008, 86-year-old John Walker became the oldest skipper to race to Hobart, retiring after the finish, having completed the cross straight competition 25 times. This record for oldest skipper was matched by Syd Fischer

Big money and celebrity surrounds the competition.