

# Evening Echo SPORT

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## Beware the frightening spectre of the puddles



**Robert O'Shea**

**THE LONGSHOT**

DID you feel a mite short-changed by our concentrating solely on sporting predictions on Tuesday?

It is time to cast our eye further afield today, to the world of climate, entertainment, high finance and other such cubby holes of civilisation.

Could this bad weather follow us into the new year?

There were over 46 million puddles recorded in Cork last year, down 600,000 on 2012. Who counts all these puddles? You don't want to know.

We are confidently predicting that the sun will split the stones again this summer, and the exact moment that will happen will be on June 20 at around 11.45am.

Set your alarm, other than that, you will not be needing any suntan lotion.

It's going to be another exciting year on the celebrity front, with a raft of new ones emerging and others fading away.

Several people will have babies and several thousands of other people will buy magazines to see these people posing with their offspring. The cosmic ballet goes on.

This is the year we are going to see the end of facebook.

Not that it will disappear, rather it will be increasingly colonised by un-hip people (if you are reading this you can certainly count yourself among that number).

Women posting feelgood messages, posing with their high-heeled feet in a silly circle and telling each other they look "fab" (Whit whoo!!!) in pictures is the death knell for the social network.

There will be brief celebration in Leinster House when it is revealed next December that Christmas consumer spending has increased fivefold when compared to the same month in 2013.

Brief, as they will discover they were actually comparing it to July.

So that's that. One final prediction: something more sensible is certain to appear tomorrow.

**Recommendation:** Kansas City, New Orleans, San Diego and San Francisco can win the first round of NFL playoff games this weekend, a 30/1 treble with Paddy Power.

# Derry's display a boost for sailing



**TOM MacSWEENEY**

## SAILING

**IRELAND'S** sailing reputation has been enhanced at the start of a New Year with the success of Derry City's entry in the Clipper Race.

For the first time this round-the-world fleet took part in the Sydney to Hobart Race, a tough, gruelling and very challenging 628-mile battle from Australia to the finish line in Tasmania.

Skipped by 31-year-old Sean McCarter from the Lough Swilly Yacht Club and with Dublin Garda Conor O'Byrne from Balrothery as Watch Leader the Irish Clipper 70 entry, named Derry-Londonderry-Doire, won its class in 3 days, 16 hours and 42 minutes of sailing.

The crew has various levels of sailing experience, some had relatively none-at-all before they signed up and paid for their own passage on the Clipper Race, which previously visited Leeside and in which Cork then had an entry.

This year's Sydney-Hobart Race, which began in blissful Australian Summer conditions on St Stephen's Day, ran into a southwest/westerly gale in the Bass Straits, notorious for this weather.

As the gale built the Derry boat was neck-and-neck with another Clipper yacht, Henri Lloyd, which has been setting the pace in the Clipper Race series itself. However, Henri Lloyd was forced to retire from the race to Hobart with a rudder problem.

On the final stage up the Derwent Estuary to the finish line at the Hobart Waterfront the Derry yacht's speed dropped off as the wind died and, frustratingly, they saw their competitors hold the wind pattern behind and creep ever closer.

A NEW nationality rule could be introduced to the next America's Cup following the dramatic turnaround in last year's series when British sailor Ben Ainslie's contribution to Oracle Team USA led to them snatching victory from the Emirates Team New Zealand representing the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron. The Americans had been faltering and the Kiwis were within one race victory of winning the cup when, in an astonishing

turnaround Oracle, brought in Ainslie and made history by winning at the death. But now it is being suggested that a nationality rule should be applied. Interestingly it was Oracle's Chief Executive, Russell Coutts, who suggested this in an interview with Yachting World magazine. This would restrict teams to sourcing their crews from the country they represent. Other changes are proposed for the America's Cup,



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A 17-mile lead was being wiped away, when Doire got the benefit of a light, flukey wind and recovered to gain a lead of 14 nautical miles.

Sailing can be tense and frustrating in these conditions as a crew wonders why wind power seems to have deserted them, but favoured those closing-in.

Desperate work with the sails, taking advantage of every puff of the flukey wind, benefited Sean McCarter's charge and she moved ever closer to the line as crowds onshore watched the enthralling battle.

"A nail-biter," said Skipper McCarter, "a game of cat and mouse. At one stage we opened out a gap, then the tricky headlands and is-

lands of Tasmania saw the pace slacken and the boats astern close up. The final miles to the finish line in the dark were very tricky."

Derry-Londonderry-Doire crossed the line at 5.42am local time.

As well as gaining class victory they placed seventh in the IRC Division overall, competing against some of the best Australian and international boats in the total fleet. A great performance.

Henri Lloyd still leads the Clipper series overall. Derry-Londonderry-Doire has moved up to sixth of the 12 yachts racing.

Another Irish involvement in the race was that of Barry Hurley from

Cobh, one of Ireland's top solo sailors now resident in Dublin, who led a crew from the Royal Irish Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire, in the race and finished sixth in Division 3, 27th overall, comfortably in the top third of the fleet.

The race was won overall on handicap by the 50-footer Victoire owned by Sydney surgeon Darryl Hodgkinson. Sailing with a spinnaker up in 40-knot winds the boat had a "Chinese gybe" at one stage, heeling violently.

"The spinnaker exploded and we got very wet, but she righted herself quickly. We should have had a smaller sail up in those conditions," Hodgkinson said.

# New restriction for America's Cup

## SAILING

aside from moves to reduce the costs of competing in an effort to encourage more nations to be represented in what Coutts says is "the pinnacle of the sport." San Francisco's Mayor, Ed Lee, wants the city to host the event again, though there is opposition because financially it did not reap the benefits expected. Financial figures apparently show that the racing and associated developments generated up

to \$550 million, falling far short of the \$900 million predicted. That is in addition to city's taxpayers having to provide \$5 million, funding that some city officials believe could have been better spent elsewhere.

● Before the gales struck later on St Stephen's Day Monkstown Bay Sailing Club got in its traditional Christmas race for dinghies and Kinsale Yacht Club had thirteen cruisers for the Gunsmoke Bell Trophy, which proved an encounter

of a very close kind when corrected handicaps were applied at the finish. The race was won by Tom Roche in Meridian, by less than two seconds from the Godkin/O'Donovan combination in Godot. Tony O'Brien's White Tiger was just four seconds behind Godot in third and the sponsor's boat, Sammy Cohen in Gunsmoke III, only 24 seconds further back in fourth place. The Monkstown dinghy race was won by Charles Dwyer in a Laser.