



December 22, 2020

Update: Emirates Team New Zealand

Prada Christmas race... runs out of puff.

The one-day PRADA Christmas Race was the last opportunity for Emirates Team New Zealand to be able to line up and measure themselves against the other Challengers before the main event next year.

A knockout regatta saw #1 ranked Emirates Team New Zealand matched up against #4 ranked INEOS Team UK, the winner of which would go through to race the winner of #2 ranked American Magic & #3 ranked Luna Rossa, to decide the winner of the PRADA Christmas Race.

Course A was selected by Race Director Iain Murray as the most likely location on the Waitematā Harbour to make the most of the light and fickle forecast, which had the wind dropping off as the day progressed.

Racing got underway on time, a 15.12 start in 8-9 knots, more than enough breeze for the AC75's to get up on their foils and fly into the prestart. INEOS TEAM UK entered on port and could not cross Emirates Team New Zealand, the kiwis allowing them to sail across the face of the start line, before engaging in their final approach to the start.

Both helmsmen, Burling and Ainslie were more interesting in staying on their foils and preserving their speed than engaging in any prestart arm wrestling. A slight drop in pressure saw both boats late for the line, well back for the start at the gun.

Emirates Team New Zealand on the right just managed to lay the leeward end of the line, but INEOS TEAM UK could not, and tacking onto starboard struggled with momentum, falling of the foils and handing Emirates Team New Zealand a clear advantage, allowing them to pull out a 500-metre lead in a matter of seconds.

It was an uphill battle from there for the British, crossing the right-hand boundary and getting a penalty which only compounded their misery.

Without looking back, Emirates Team New Zealand were up and off. With every fraction of data logged from these boats, there were no complex algorithms needed to confirm the relative speed difference was significant today - the naked eyeball confirmed that Te Rehutai was sailing at more than double the speed of Britannia at times, and frustratingly for Ainslie and his team there was more pain for the British, when Emirates Team New Zealand managed to lap the INEOS TEAM UK just as the breeze died to below 7 knots, forcing the kiwis to round the 3rd mark off their foils in slow-motion, beginning a close downwind displacement race not only with each other, but also against the clock to beat the 45-minute race cut off time to the finish.

The clock won the race, and the race was terminated with Emirates Team New Zealand just a few hundred metres from the line.

Emirates Team New Zealand flight controller Blair Tuke remained positive despite the outcome, "To begin with it was all good, we had a good start and were sailing the boat nicely in some really light wind - and don't forget that every second we race these boats we are gathering valuable data. Sadly in the end it dropped off a bit earlier than expected, and we had to low ride all the way down wind. Gutted not to make the time limit - but plenty of positives and valuable lessons learned."

The terminated race would be the last bit of action the PRADA Christmas race would see as the breeze shut down, and put an end to Emirates Team New Zealand's' racing until the first race of the America's Cup on March 6th..

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maxon Group is an Official Supplier to Emirates Team New Zealand. We follow the progress of their journey as Defender in the 36th America's Cup campaign, March 2021.

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