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Press Release

The Game Plan.

Both teams headed out to course C onto the Hauraki Gulf today with the same game plan. Keeping it simple - and just focusing on the next race. In what has become a roller coaster of extreme emotions for everyone involved in this 36th America's Cup presented by Prada, that may sound like a tough call - but for the defender and challenger it is all about focusing on the next move, the next call, and then the next move after that.

For the eleven athletes onboard Emirates Team New Zealand who headed out on the water, the last leg of the race today is light-years away. Performing in such a pressure cooker environment is normal for the Te Rehutai crew, who thrive in the cauldron of America's Cup, Olympic and round the world races, forging nerves of steel and an absolute reliance on the group around them. As flight controller Blair Tuke commented. "To turn that round in race 8 was just massive for the team." With two wins from two races yesterday, Emirates Team New Zealand were looking to pile the pressure on their opposition - one race at a time.

Race 9.

After a delay in racing waiting for the breeze to stabilise for Race Course C, there were elbows out on the water by Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli, and though it was close, they led up leg one, protecting their lead at every opportunity and using their high mode in the critical and close moments. Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli were first around the first windward gate, but it was tight - just one second separating the boats, who rounded and accelerated downwind at 43 knots. The Italians were just ahead on leg 2, and with Emirates Team New Zealand close behind, an aggressive match racing move by Jimmy Spithill on board Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli at the bottom of the course reminded the crew onboard Te Rehutai this race was far from over, as they were pushed out wide, rounding the bottom gate 100 metres behind the Italians.

As we saw yesterday in Race 8, nothing is certain in this event, and with changeable weather conditions forecast to arrive, Peter Burling and his team held on, staying in the fight, chipping away and reducing the deficit to 78 metres. Again Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli rounded the top gate in front, doubling their lead to 142 metres on leg 4, but they knew they had a fight on their hands as tension in the voices of co-helmsman Spithill and Bruni revealed. Splitting at the bottom gate, Emirates Team New Zealand headed back up leg 5, and were tacked on the middle of the course, and so peeled off to look for clear air on the right-hand side of the course - then gained from a right hand wind shift which was the game-changer in this race. For Burling and his team, this allowed them to accelerate towards the final top gate, but for the Italians it was simply not what they wanted, as they were headed by the shift – and you could hear it in Jimmy Spithill's voice. For the crew onboard Te Rehutai, this was the opportunity they were looking for – and they seized it, rounding the final top gate in front, turning down towards the finish line at 41 knots, quickly extending out to a 500 metre lead to take Race 9 by 30 seconds, and lead the regatta 6-3.

For co-helmsman onboard Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli Jimmy Spithill, it was another tough moment, with just two words for his crew as he crossed the line. “Sorry boys.” His co helm Francesco Bruni expanded on their race loss. “Yes unfortunately, we did let it get away – but chin up and keep fighting, as we know we can win races. No surprise we played very elbows out today, particularly at the bottom of Leg 2. They were overlapped behind us and so couldn’t gybe, so we stretched out a little there. It was a fantastic race and no big regrets. No change to the game plan, its about picking the right shifts at the right time.”

After the win, Emirates Team New Zealand helm Peter Burling remained calm and focused on the job at hand. “It was a pretty tight race and one little right shift decided it for us. I think we did a good job at the start – it’s good fun racing and great to be back on course C, and having a really good battle with a good team. We will keep fighting and keep trying to win races. This team has been in this position before, and so it about keeping improving, keep moving forwards. That race was close, and so we know we are going to have to sail well in the next one.”

With weather conditions shifting across the racecourse as the time limit expired, the race committee were unable to run the second race of the day, and so we go into tomorrow with Emirates Team New Zealand leading the event 6-3. With the winner the first to win 7 races, tomorrow will see a massive day for both teams out on the Hauraki gulf in this extraordinary 36th America’s Cup presented by Prada.

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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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