



# Silver fern flies high

Emirates Team New Zealand has made history by winning the America's Cup for the fourth time

After a delayed schedule, Emirates Team New Zealand won the 36th America's Cup on home waters in March 2021, fighting off the spirited Italian team Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli to raise the famous Auld Mug. It took seven days and ten races for the Emirates Team, representing the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, to claim their seventh point and confirm that their relatively small nation of five million people punches way above weight in yet another sport – sailing.

True to form, Auckland's weather played a part ahead of Race 10, with the breeze barely existent. After a 30-minute delay, winds picked up a little and the race got underway. Both teams wanted the right-hand side of the course and jockeyed for position in the pre-start area, with Emirates Team New Zealand tacking just before the boundary to stay high. Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli found themselves in a right-hand shift and were unable to tack across. Racing in AC75 class high-performance foiling

monohulls, New Zealand's boat *Te Ruhutai* was locked into the right-handed breeze and gained the early advantage. The solid and confident start was followed by the perfect execution of a strong strategy, forcing the Italians away from the right-hand side and gaining a seven-second lead into Gate 1. The hosts extended their

**Above: Emirates Team New Zealand and Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli battle it out in Auckland for the 36th America's Cup – the oldest trophy in sport**

advantage to nine seconds into Gate 2, travelling 41 knots to the Italians' 39 knots, but Luna Rossa needed a split if they were to find a passing lane on the downwind leg. Team New Zealand hugged the right-hand side and defended their position well, increasing the gap to around 300-metres and 27 seconds, securing more freedom on racing lines with it. By Gate 4, that lead was more than 500-metres and 37 seconds – all the Italians could hope for was a mistake. But New Zealand stayed solid – as they had done the ▶



whole tournament – and ran out winners by 49 seconds, lifting the oldest trophy in international sport for a fourth time, with a 7:3 victory.

Contested on the inner Hauraki Gulf off Auckland, the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron was the America's Cup Defending Club, having beaten Oracle Team USA in Bermuda at the 35th America's Cup in 2017. The Challenging Club was Circolo della Vela Sicilia (from Mondello, a northern borough of Palermo, Sicily), whose team won the selection series – the 2021 Prada Cup.

**Above: Emirates Team New Zealand celebrate their defence of the America's Cup title Right: The Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron stuck perfectly to their strategy to beat the challenging Sicilian club 7:3 despite low winds**

The challenger series ran from January over five weeks with Ineos Team UK winning first seed. Luna Rossa Prada Pirelli (seeded second) beat American Magic 4:0 in a semi-final series and then beat UK in the final series 7:1.

Next time out, the 37th America's Cup will be raced between a yacht representing the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron and a yacht representing either the UK Royal Yacht Squadron Racing, or a yacht representing another

non-New Zealand yacht club that wins a challenger series, such as the 2021 Prada Cup.

The venue is set to be announced by 19 September 2021, with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern saying her Government will support hosting the Cup again in Auckland in 2023. However, there are rumours that the race could be held in the UK, Europe, Middle East or Asia, with media speculation confirmed as accurate by the CEO of Emirates Team New Zealand. A possible option could be a one-off, head-to-head match between Royal Yacht Squadron Racing and Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron around the Isle of Wight in 2022. The UK Royal Yacht Squadron has not won the America's Cup since the very first running of the famous competition in 1851 around the Isle of Wight.

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