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 America's Cup

# 'It's not that we dislike the Aussies, we just want to crush them'

## Foreign News Service

SAN DIEGO — The scenes at the San Diego Yacht Club as Dennis Connor, their most famous member, swept over the finishing line in Fremantle this week to win back the the America's Cup would undoubtedly have been regarded as a disgrace by the New York Yacht Club.

With not one black tie in sight, hundreds of members crowded into the parking lot, and on to the club's wooden waterfront terraces for what began as a barbeque and ended as a beery free-for-all as Stars and Stripes captured the fourth race 'live' on cable television.

They came in shorts and sneakers, in baseball caps, dressing gowns and pyjamas.

"This party was always going to be a special one," said one member who couldn't remember his name or where he had left his car.

And in victory the magnanimity towards the opposition was a little limited. "We don't dislike them Australians," said one member's wife, "We just wanted to see Dennis crush them completely. And then rub their noses in it."

Sitting on the club's terrace, looking out over the bay, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the geography of San Diego has played an important part in the development of the competitive drive. The yacht club stands beside one of the largest naval bases in the world, full of gun metal grey vessels bristling with weaponry.

Seafaring in San Diego is inextricably linked to the concept of blowing other people out of the water. But it is not only the Australians that San Diego wanted to beat. It was also the domination of American yachting by the East Coast tradition of the New York Yacht Club.

And the difference is a vast one. There is nothing social about San Diego sailing. The parking lot is filled with Chevrolets and Oldsmobiles and even pick-up trucks. In New York it's about BMW's and Mercedes and social allegiance.

Plans have already been drawn up to make the Cup itself visible to the American public. "We're not just going to lock it away in some wardrobe," said Tom Wilson, the club spokesman. "We're going to organise a road show and take it round museums and other clubs."

The Australians in San Diego somehow managed to be philosophical, despite the large amounts of salt being liberally rubbed into their wounds.

"It's like attending your own funeral," said Ken Bursen, from Australia's Channel 10 News. "But the best thing that ever happened to the America's Cup was when we won it. Now everyone's interested in it. It's not just a rich man's sport anymore."