Madden-Julian Oscillation: Recent Evolution, Current Status and Predictions

Update prepared by
Climate Prediction Center / NCEP
January 5, 2009

Outline

- Overview
- Recent Evolution and Current Conditions
- MJO Index Information
- MJO Index Forecasts
- MJO Composites

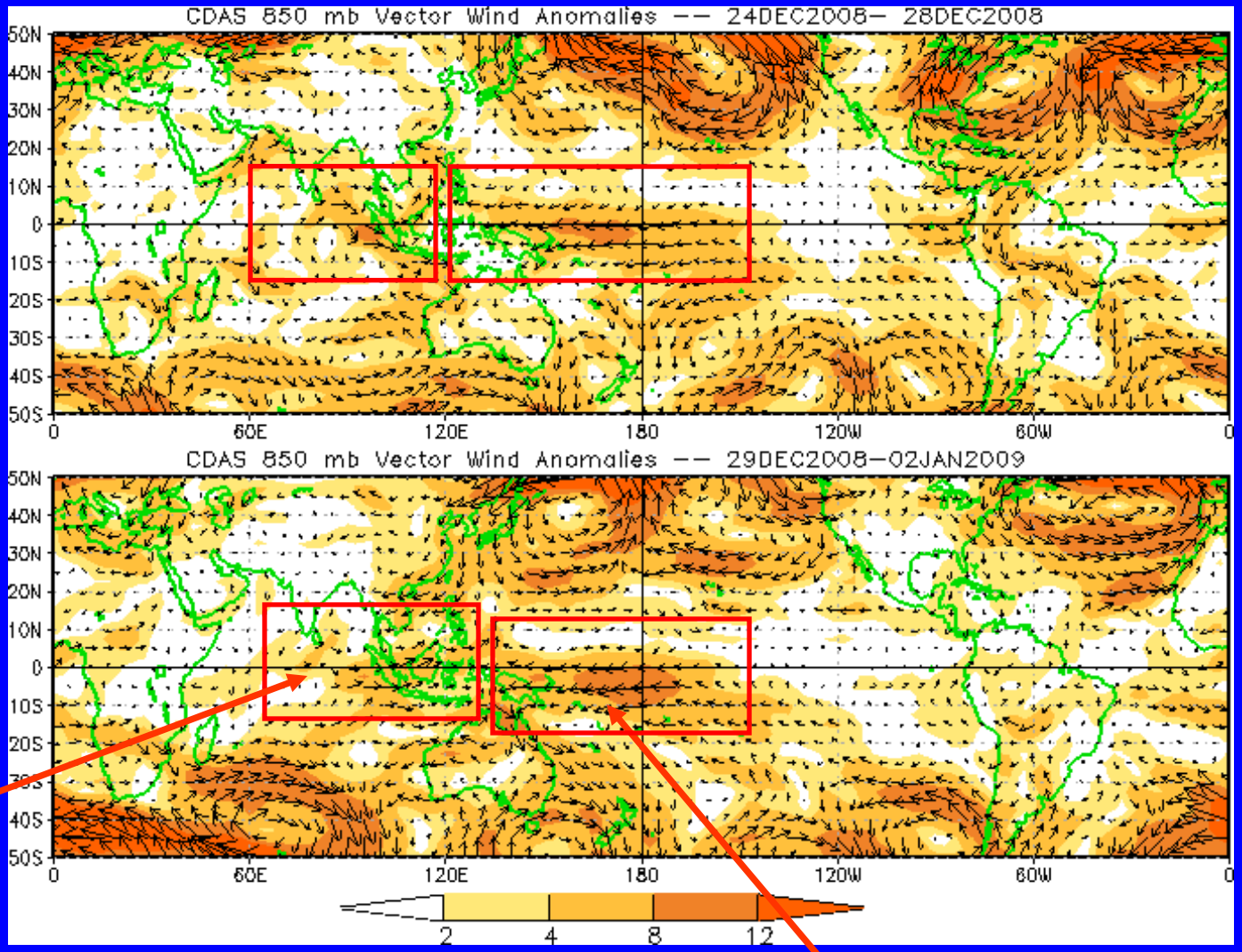
Overview

- **The MJO remains weak.**
- **Although some MJO model forecasts indicate a stronger MJO signal shifting eastward during Week 1, this is most likely related to a combination of higher frequency variability and La Nina related tropical convection. It is not expected to continue into the Week 2 period.**
- **Based on the most recent observations, it is expected that the MJO will remain weak during the next 1-2 weeks.**
- **Minimal impacts from the MJO are expected during the next 1-2 weeks.**

Additional potential impacts across the global tropics are available at:
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/precip/CWlink/ghazards/ghaz.shtml

850-hPa Vector Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

Note that shading denotes the magnitude of anomalous wind vectors



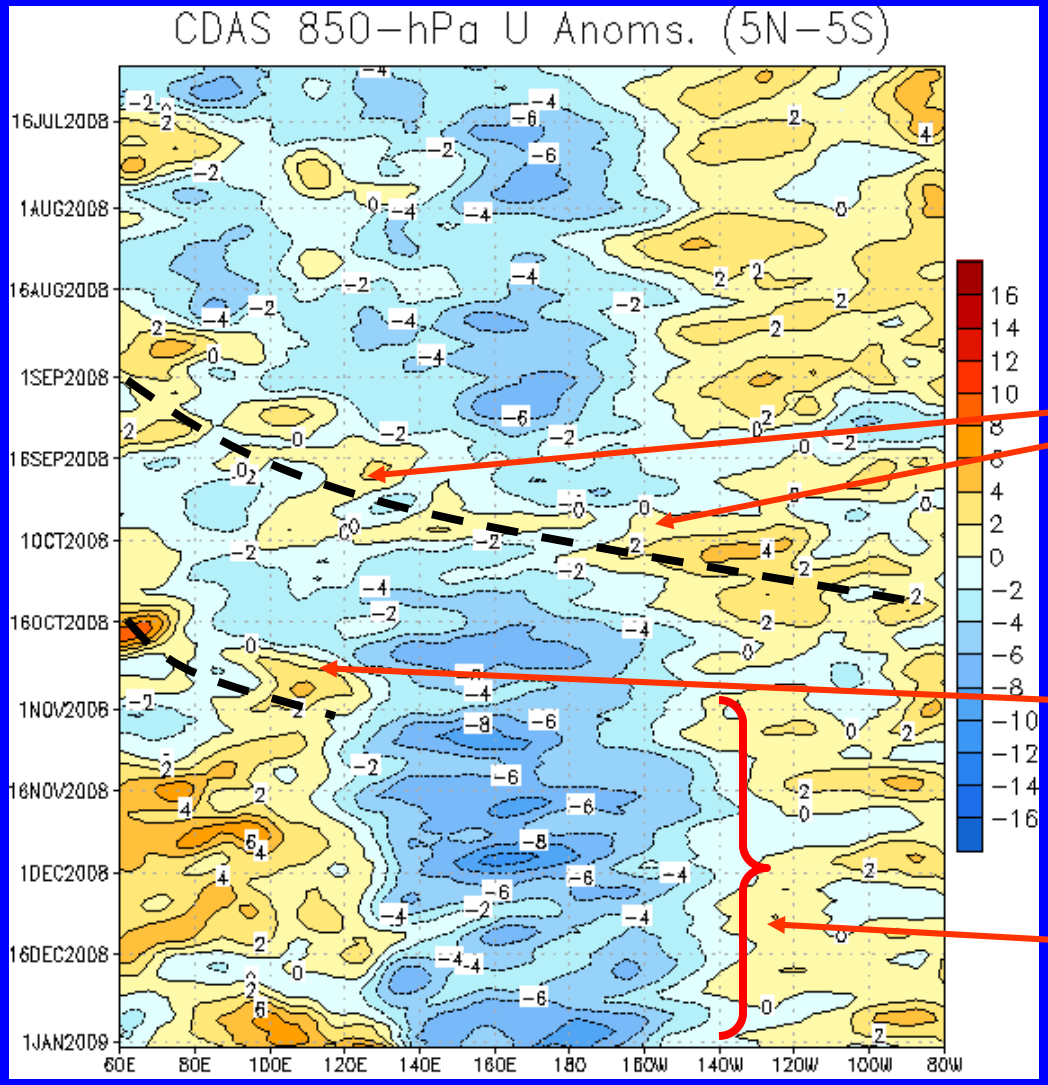
Westerly anomalies across the eastern Indian Ocean and western Maritime Continent and have shifted slightly eastward during the last five days.

Easterly anomalies continue across the west-central tropical Pacific during the last five to ten days.

850-hPa Zonal Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

Westerly anomalies (orange/red shading) represent anomalous west-to-east flow

Easterly anomalies (blue shading) represent anomalous east-to-west flow



Time

Longitude

Easterly anomalies prevailed across much of the eastern hemisphere from late June into August.

Beginning in September, anomalous westerlies associated with the MJO shifted from the Indian Ocean across the Pacific.

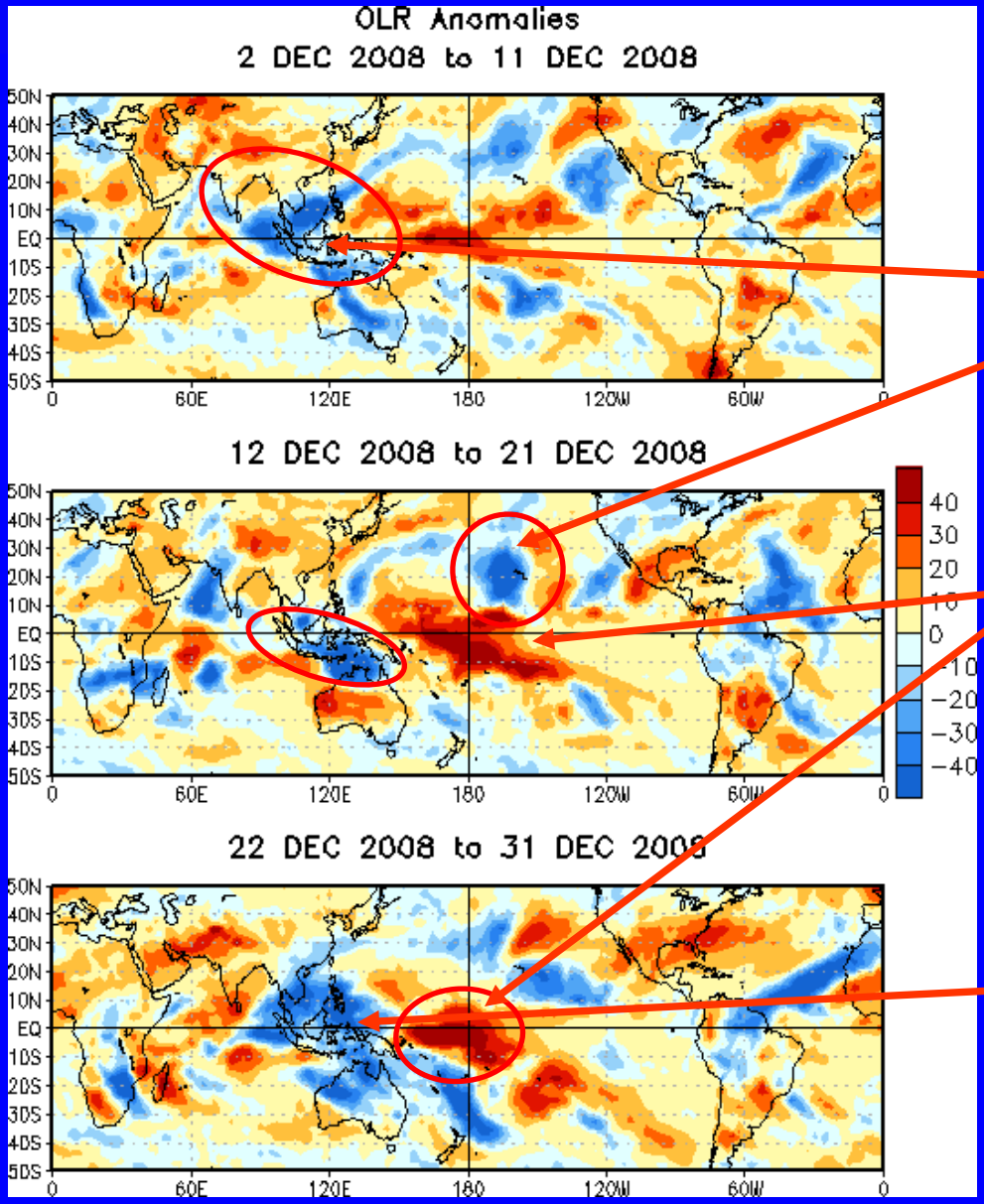
These westerly anomalies reentered the Maritime Continent during late October but eastward progress stalled.

A persistent pattern of westerly (easterly) anomalies stretching from the Indian Ocean to the central Pacific Ocean has been in place since November.

OLR Anomalies: Last 30 days

Drier-than-normal conditions, positive OLR anomalies (yellow/red shading)

Wetter-than-normal conditions, negative OLR anomalies (blue shading)

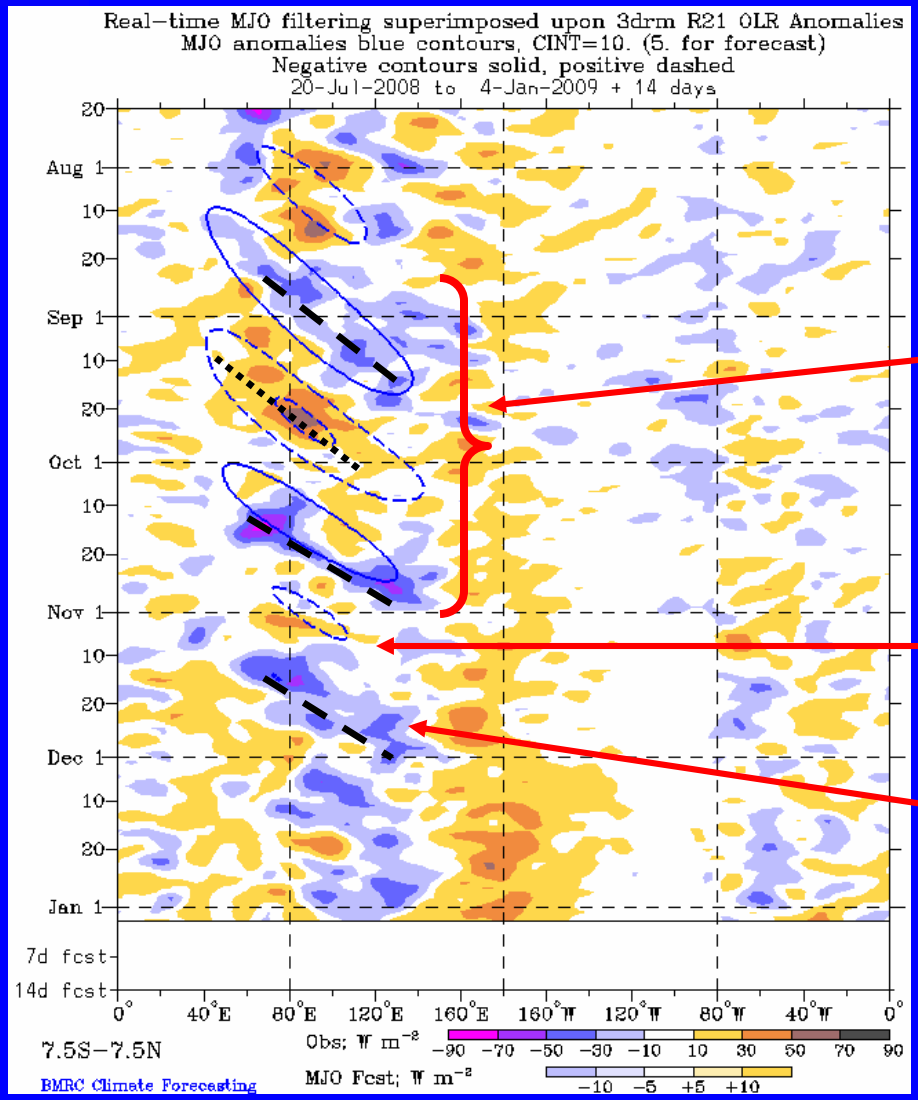


During early to mid December, enhanced convection was mainly confined to portions of the Maritime Continent, near Hawaii and areas in South America.

Dry conditions have prevailed near the Date Line during the entire period.

Convection has intensified during late December across Indonesia, northern Australia and the western Pacific.

Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR) Anomalies (7.5°S-7.5°N)



Time

Longitude

Drier-than-normal conditions, positive OLR anomalies (yellow/red shading)

Wetter-than-normal conditions, negative OLR anomalies (blue shading)

(Courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology - Australia)

Moderate MJO activity was most evident from late August to early November as enhanced (suppressed) convection developed across the Indian Ocean and shifted eastward during the period.

The suppressed phase of the second MJO cycle in late October and early November was not as strong.

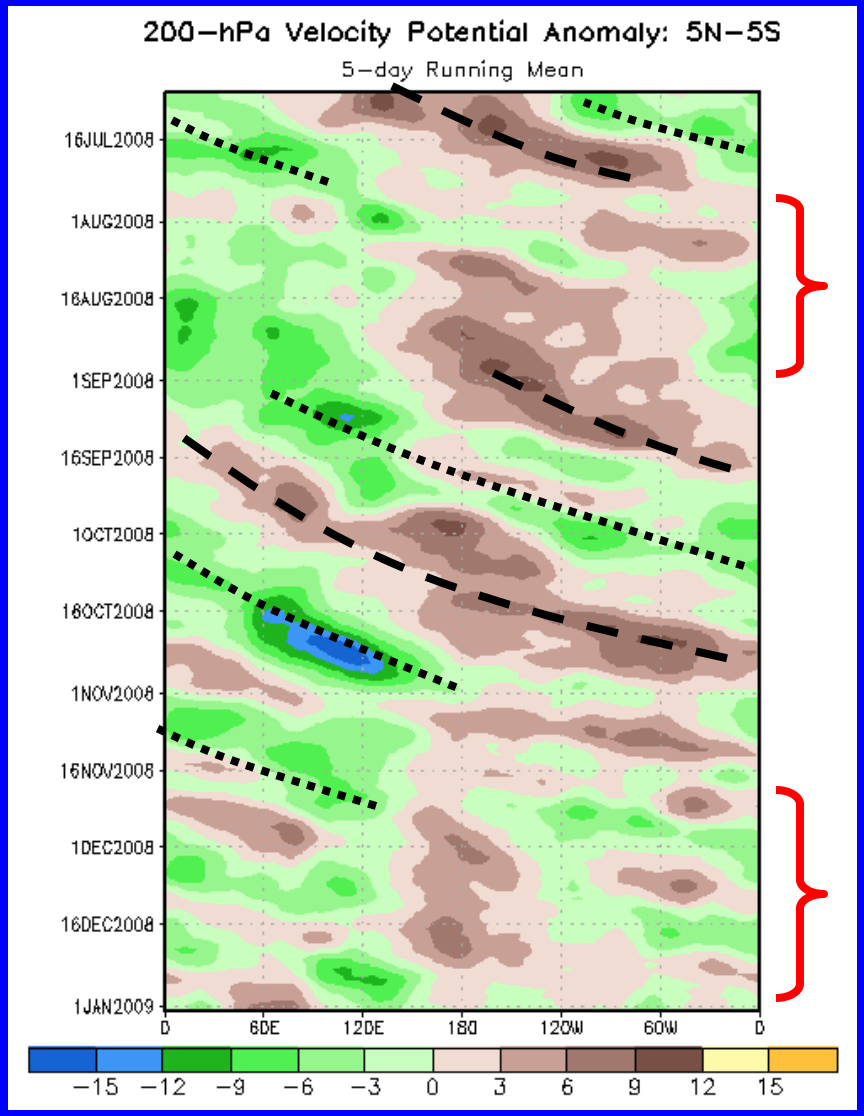
During late-November, enhanced convection shifted across the Maritime Continent before the MJO weakened.

In December, anomalous convection has been stationary and consistent with La Nina conditions.

200-hPa Velocity Potential Anomalies (5°S-5°N)

Positive anomalies (brown shading) indicate unfavorable conditions for precipitation

Negative anomalies (green shading) indicate favorable conditions for precipitation



Time

Longitude

After MJO activity in July, the MJO was weak during August as a more stationary pattern of anomalous velocity potential was evident.

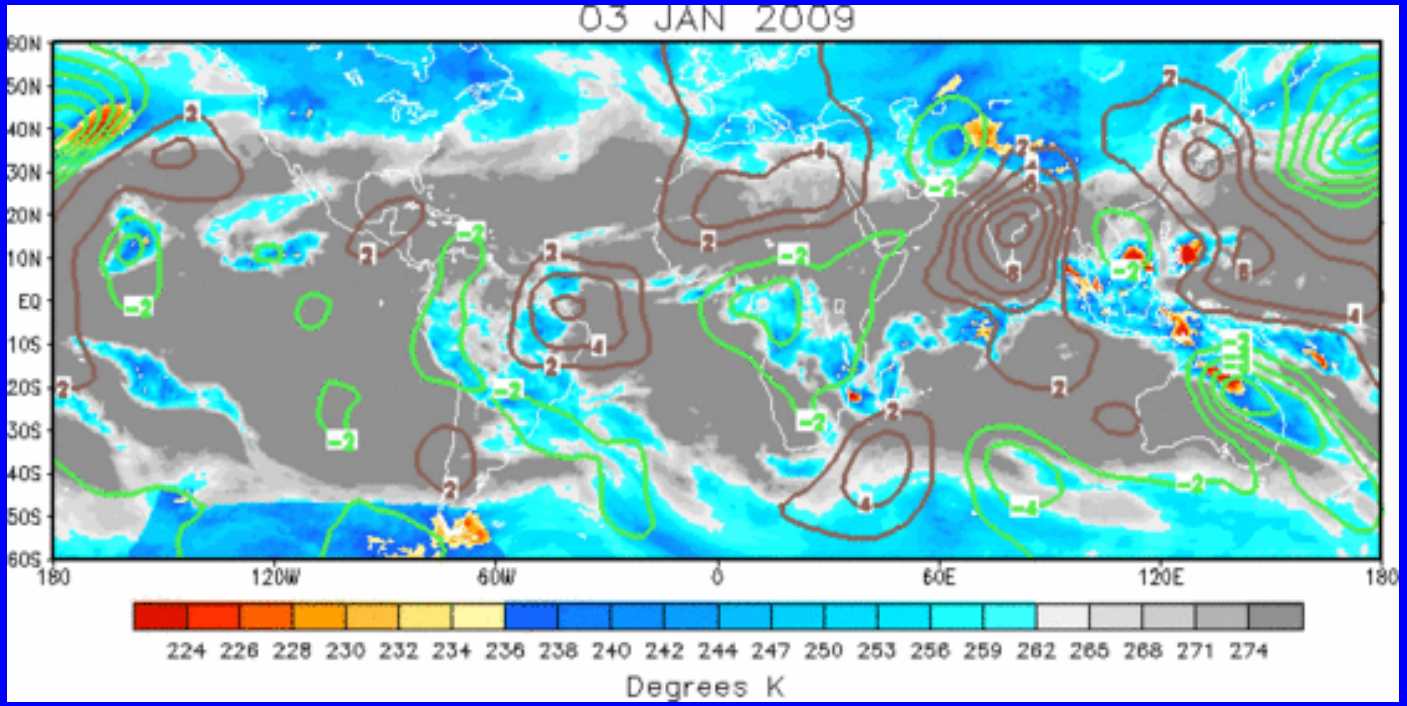
The MJO strengthened in early September and eastward propagation was observed from September through October.

Since mid November, the subseasonal activity has been organizing on a faster time scale and the MJO has been weak or incoherent.

IR Temperatures (K) / 200-hPa Velocity Potential Anomalies

Positive anomalies (brown contours) indicate unfavorable conditions for precipitation

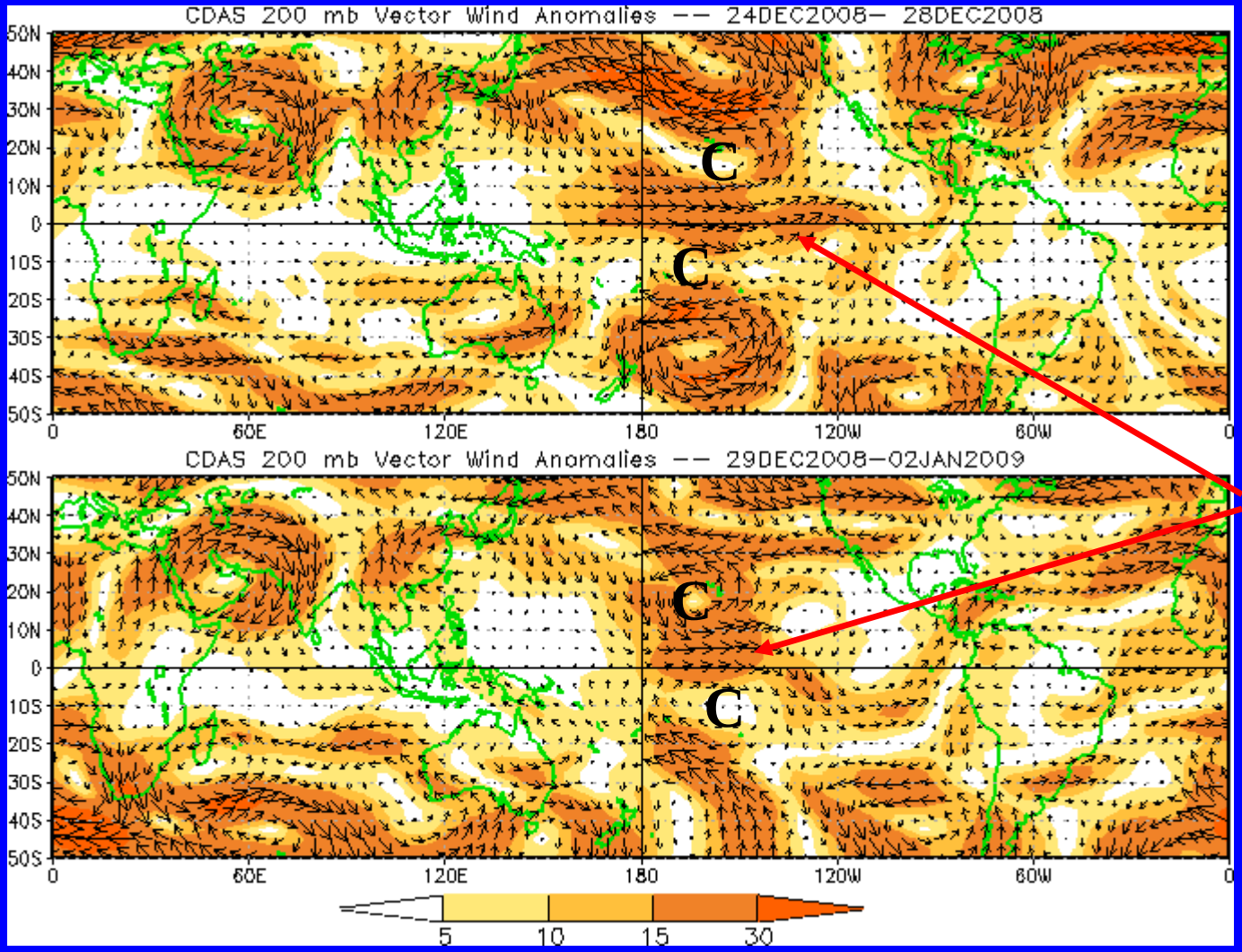
Negative anomalies (green contours) indicate favorable conditions for precipitation



The velocity potential pattern has become quite disorganized with only minor areas of upper level divergence evident.

200-hPa Vector Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

Note that shading denotes the magnitude of anomalous wind vectors

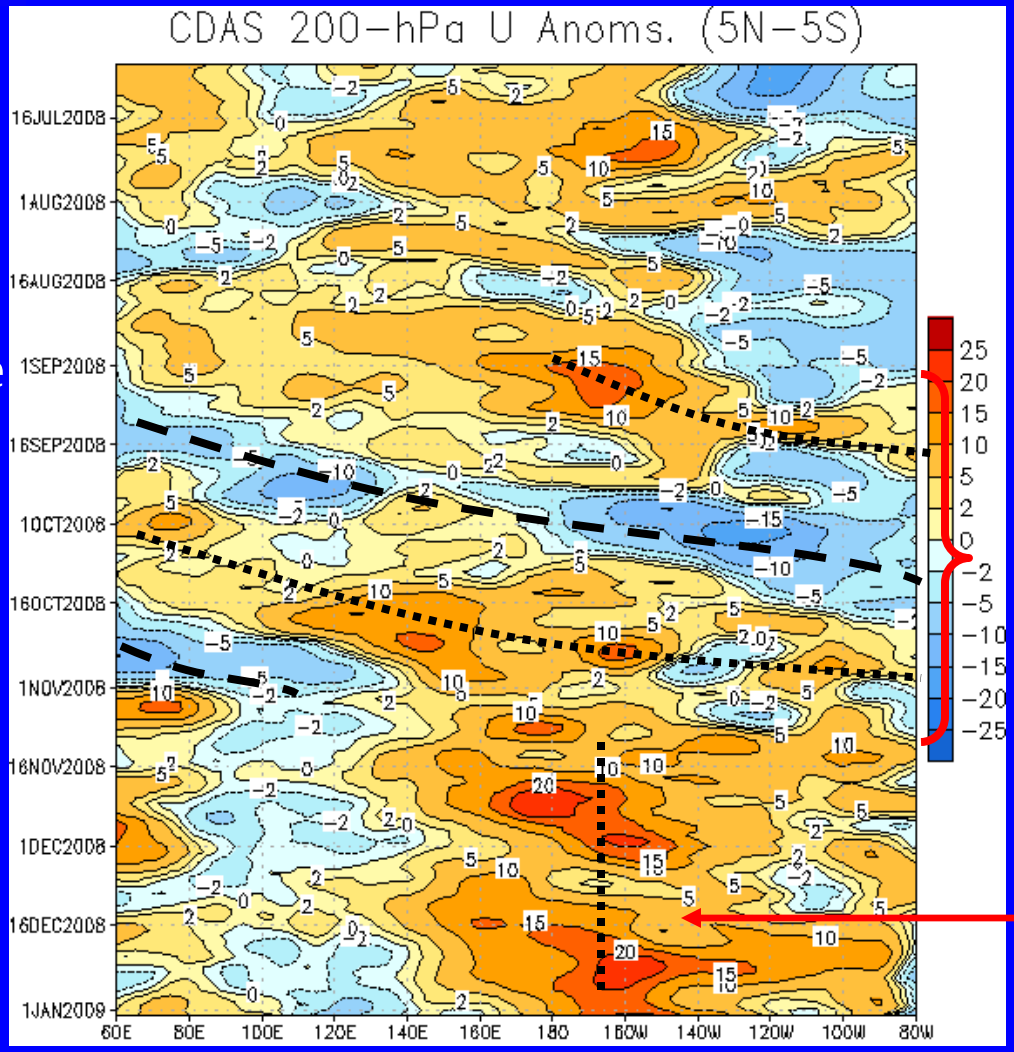


Westerly anomalies remain over the central Pacific Ocean during the period with cyclonic circulations straddling the equator near the Date Line.

200-hPa Zonal Wind Anomalies (m s^{-1})

Westerly anomalies (orange/red shading) represent anomalous west-to-east flow

Easterly anomalies (blue shading) represent anomalous east-to-west flow



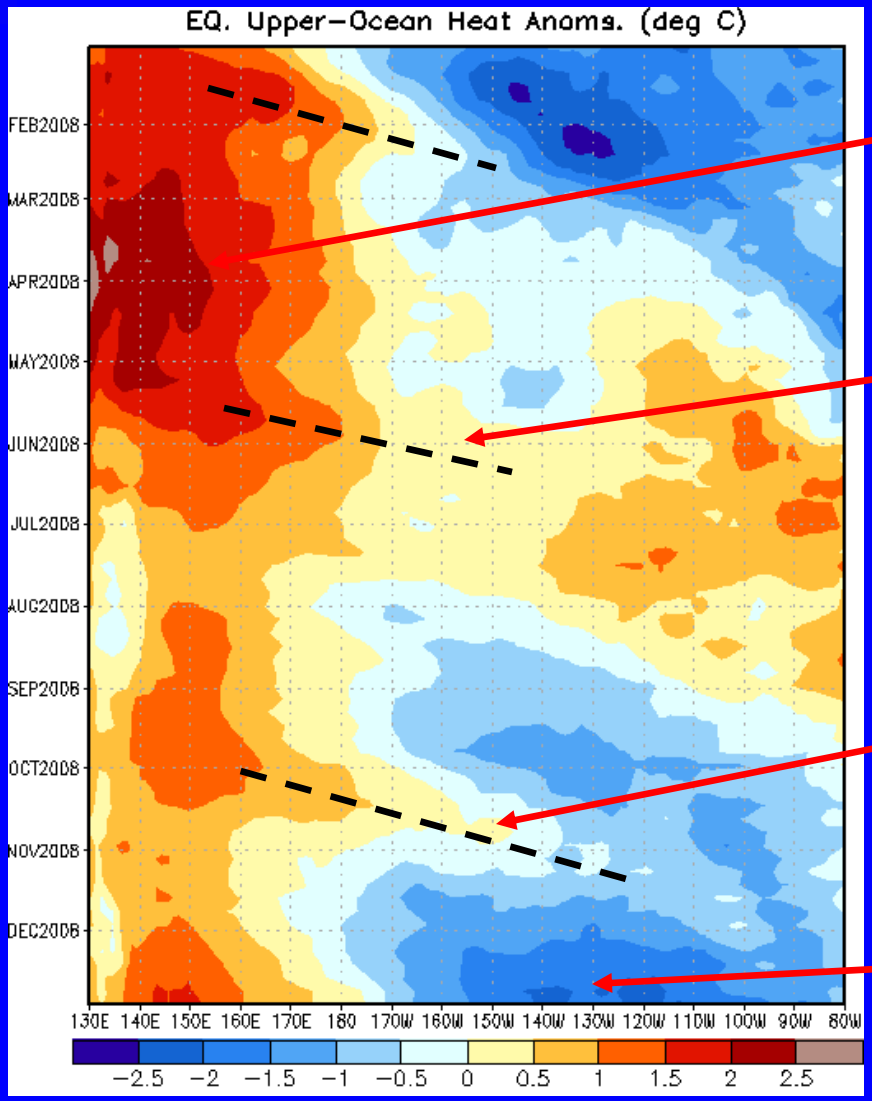
Time

Longitude

Westerly and easterly anomalies associated with the MJO activity shifted eastward during September and October.

Westerly anomalies strengthened markedly in mid-November near the Date Line and have persisted into December. These anomalies are consistent with La Nina conditions.

Weekly Heat Content Evolution in the Equatorial Pacific



Time

Longitude

Beginning in February, increasingly positive anomalies developed across parts of the western and central Pacific but have since decreased.

During June and July 2008, positive heat content anomalies encompassed much of the Pacific basin.

During August 2008, negative anomalies started to develop east of the Date Line and have increased and expanded eastward. There was a pause in this increase during October as a Kelvin wave shifted eastward.

During November and December, negative anomalies increased across the Pacific.

MJO Index -- Information

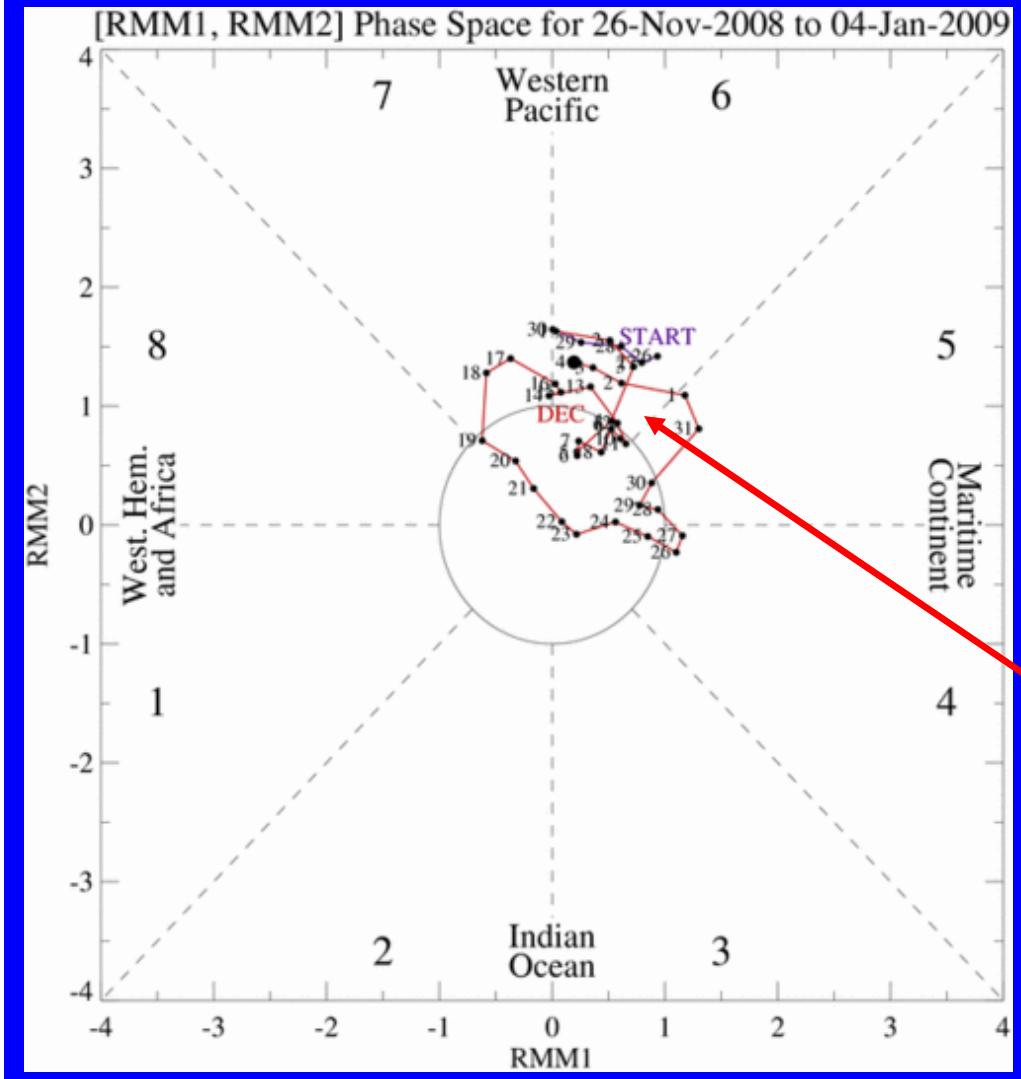
- **The MJO index illustrated on the next several slides is the CPC version of the Wheeler and Hendon index (2004, hereafter WH2004).**

Wheeler M. and H. Hendon, 2004: An All-Season Real-Time Multivariate MJO Index: Development of an Index for Monitoring and Prediction, *Monthly Weather Review*, 132, 1917-1932.

- **The methodology is nearly identical to that described in WH2004 but small deviations from the BMRC figure are possible at times due to differences in input data and methodology. These typically occur during weak MJO periods.**

- **The index is based on a combined Empirical Orthogonal Function (EOF) analysis using fields of near-equatorially-averaged 850-hPa and 200-hPa zonal wind and outgoing longwave radiation (OLR).**

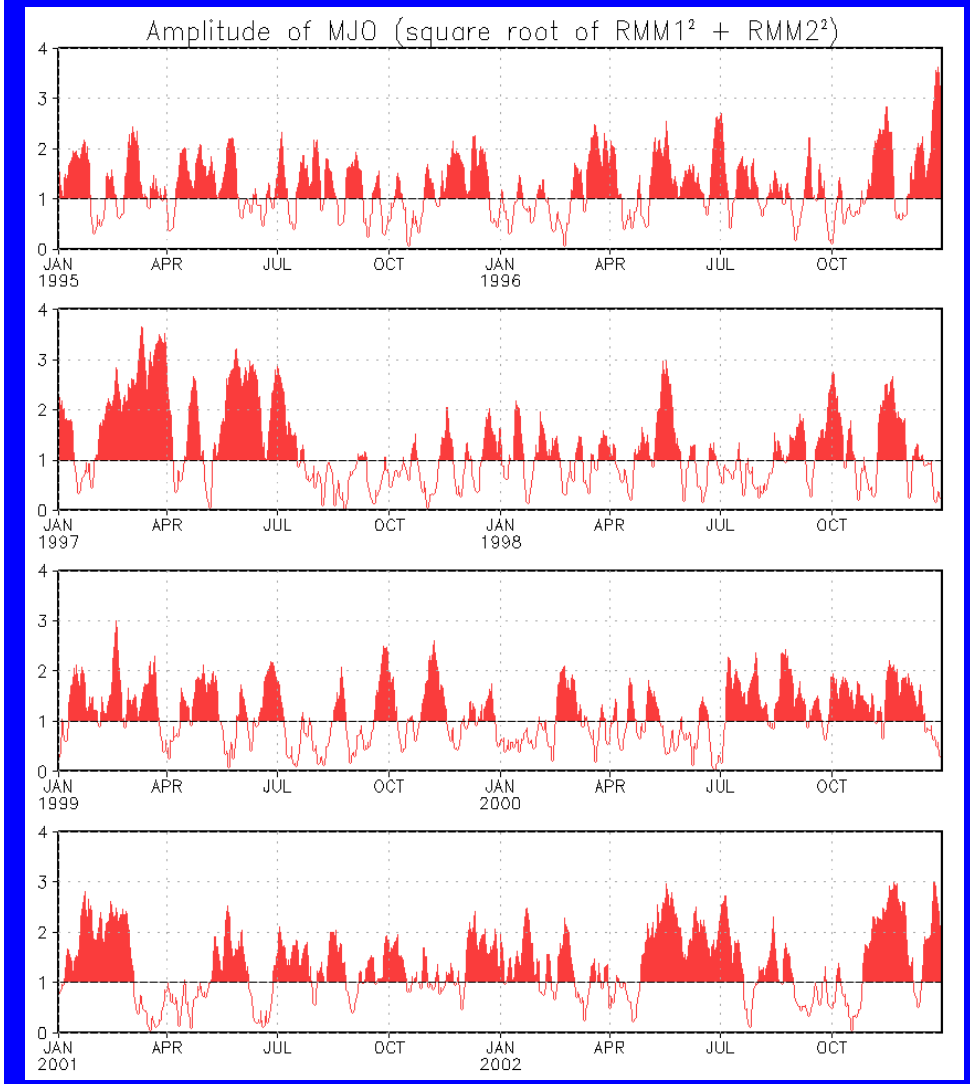
MJO Index -- Recent Evolution

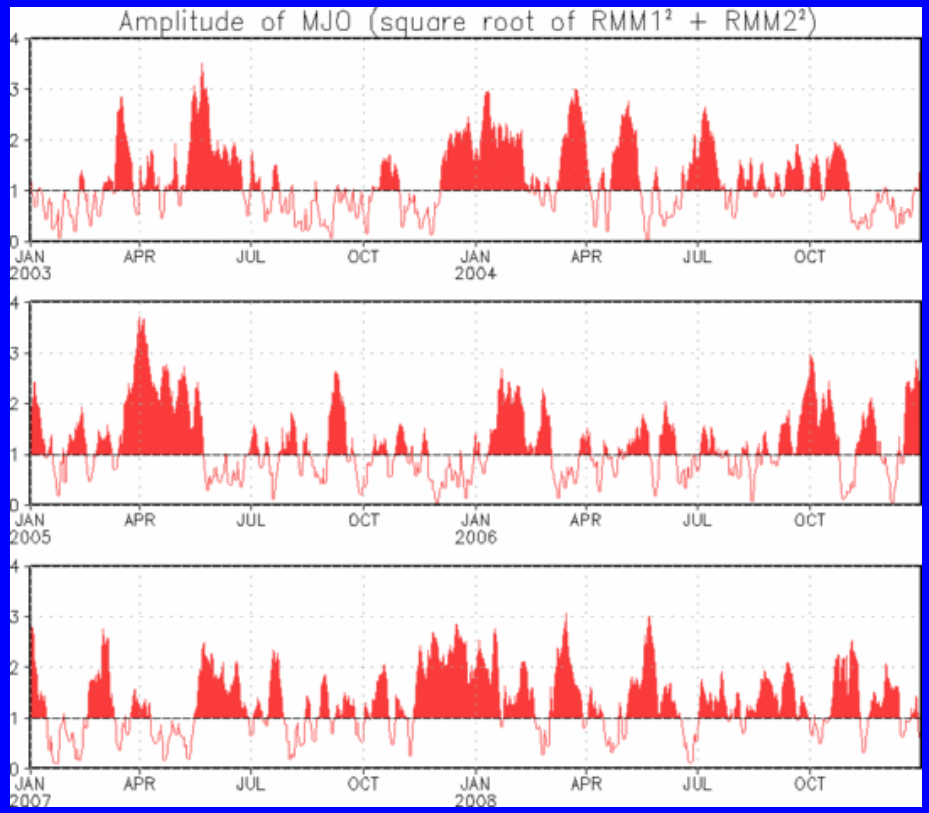


- The axes (RMM1 and RMM2) represent daily values of the principal components from the two leading modes
- The triangular areas indicate the location of the enhanced phase of the MJO
- Counter-clockwise motion is indicative of eastward propagation
- Distance from the origin is proportional to MJO strength
- Line colors distinguish different months

The MJO index indicates moderate activity during the last week, but it is most likely that other modes of tropical variability are influencing the MJO index.

MJO Index – Historical Daily Time Series





Time series of daily MJO index amplitude from 1995 to present

Plots put current MJO activity in historical context

Ensemble GFS (GEFS) MJO Forecast

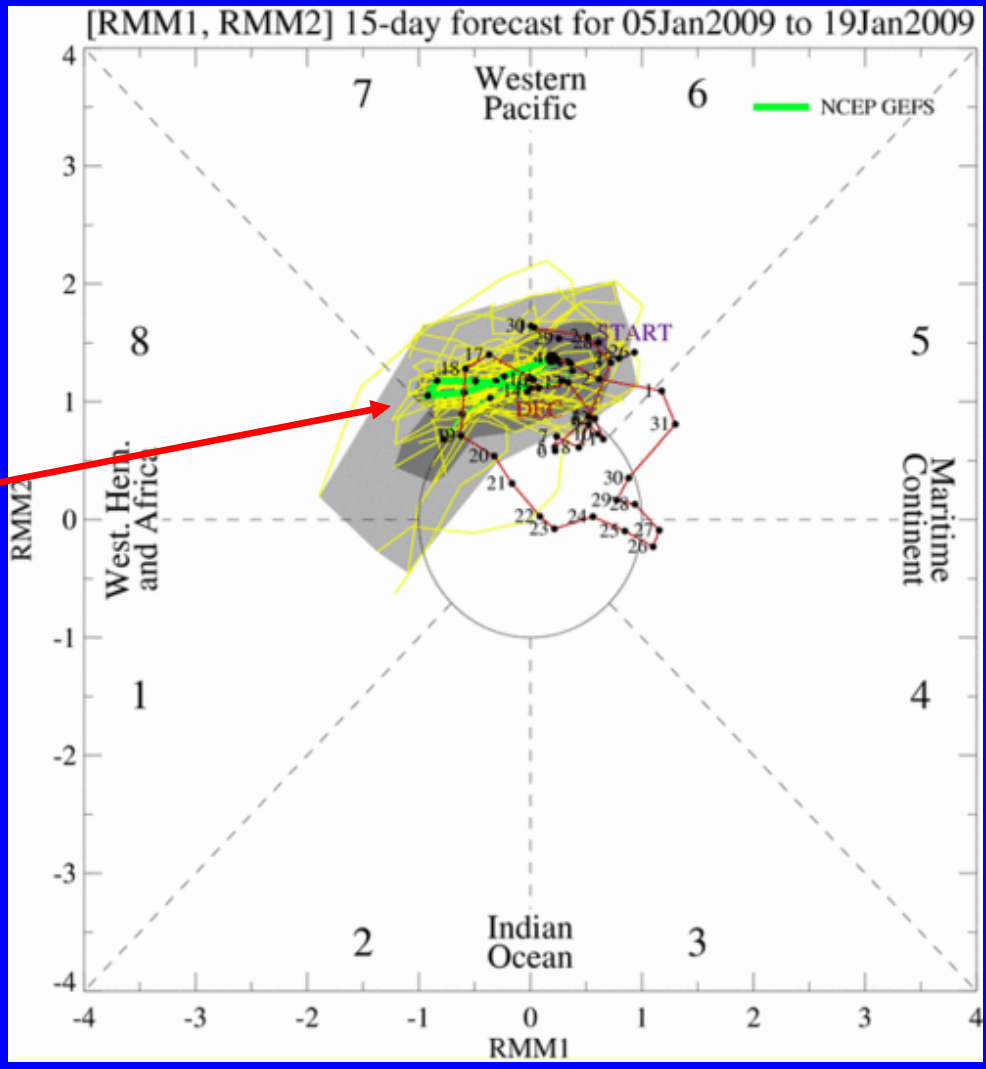
Yellow Lines – 20 Individual Members
Green Line – Ensemble Mean

RMM1 and RMM2 values for the most recent 40 days and forecasts from the ensemble Global Forecast System (GEFS) for the next 15 days

light gray shading: 90% of forecasts
dark gray shading: 50% of forecasts

The GEFS forecasts predict a MJO signal to shift eastward across the western Pacific during Week 1 before weakening.

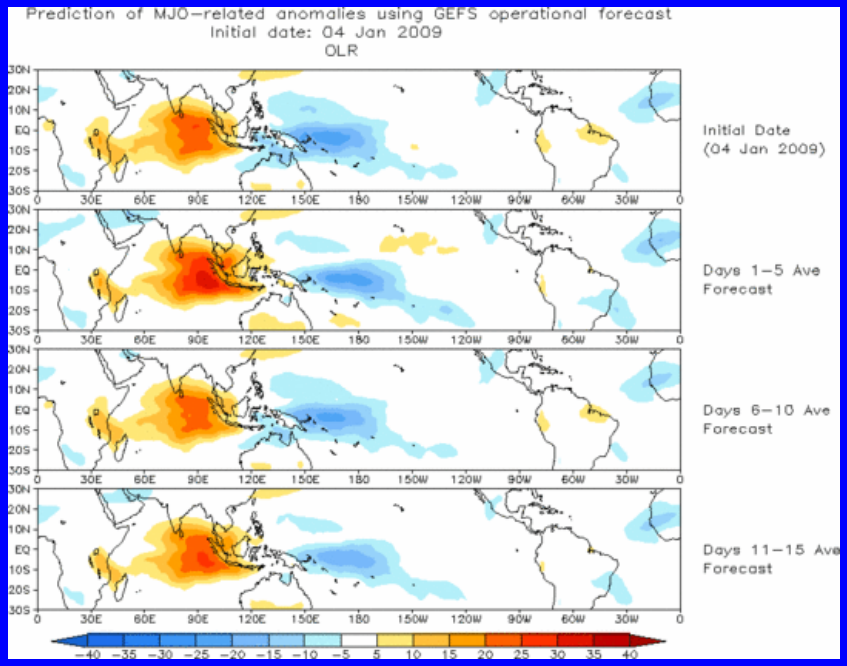
This signal is most likely related to more transient tropical variability rather than a coherent MJO.



Ensemble Mean GFS MJO Forecast

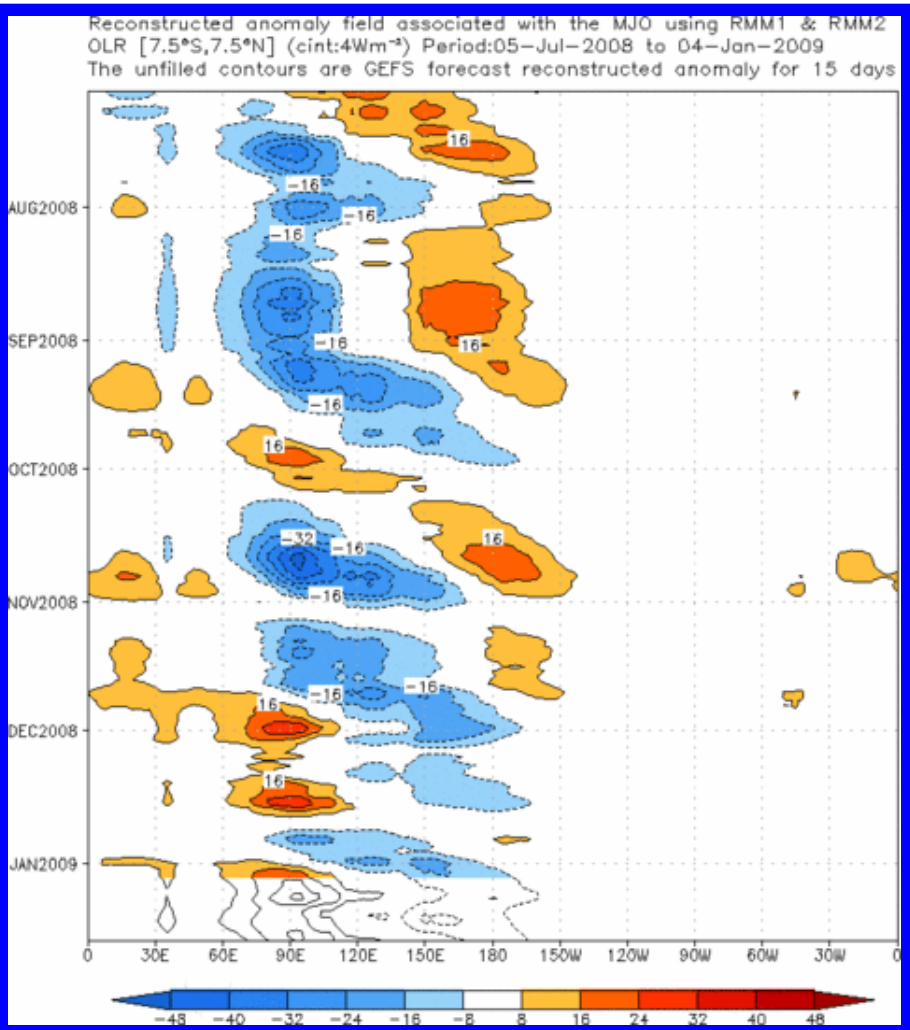
Figures below show MJO associated OLR anomalies only (reconstructed from RMM1 and RMM2) and do not include contributions from other modes (*i.e.*, ENSO, monsoons)

Spatial map of OLR anomalies for the next 15 days



Suppressed convection is forecast across western Indonesia and the Indian Ocean during much of the period. However, the pattern of anomalous convection is overdone by the GEFS and convection more typical of La Nina is likely.

Time-longitude section of (7.5°S-7.5°N) OLR anomalies for the last 180 days and for the next 15 days



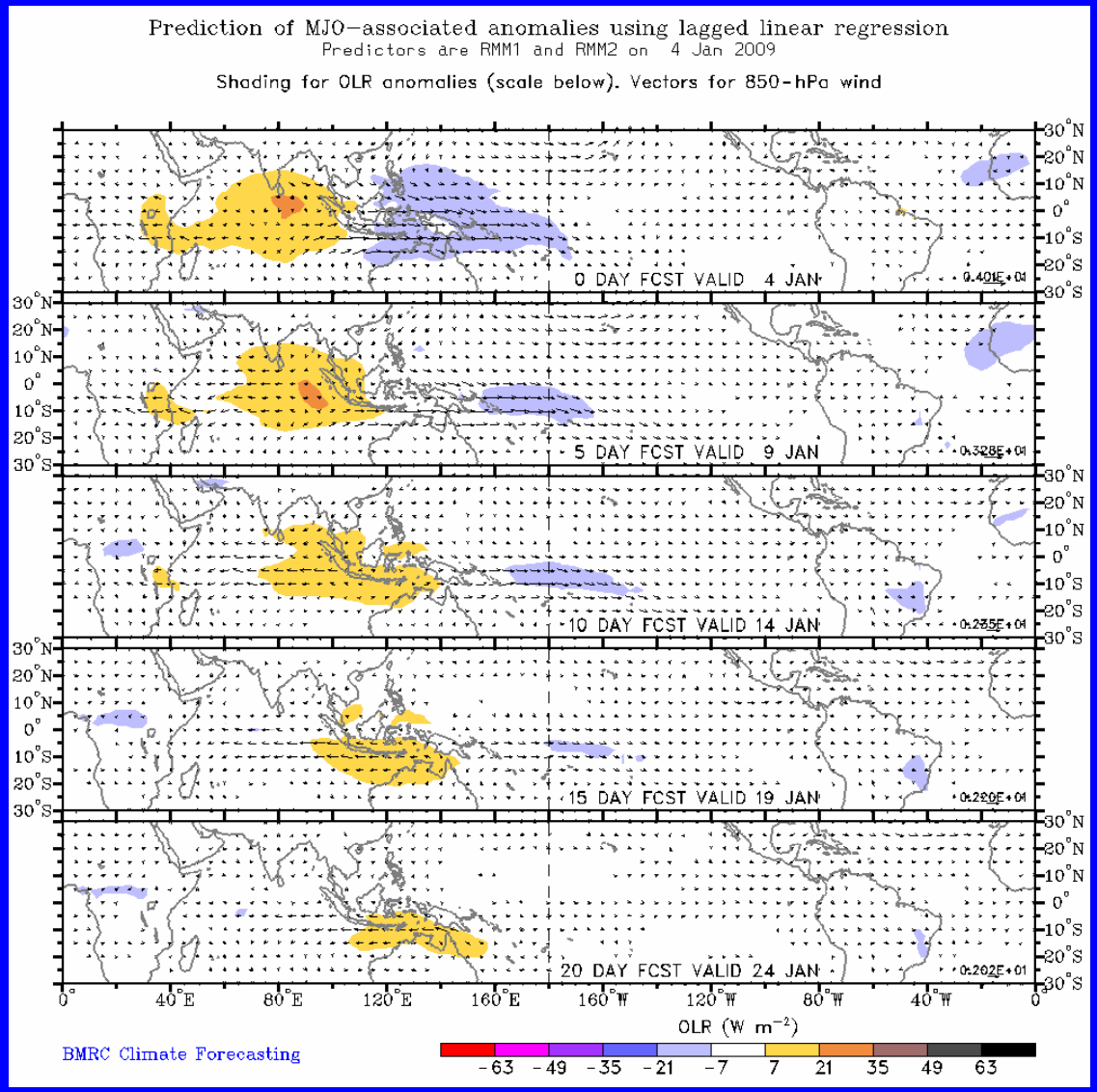
Statistical MJO Forecast

Figure below shows MJO associated OLR anomalies only (reconstructed from RMM1 and RMM2) and do not include contributions from other modes (*i.e.*, ENSO, monsoons)

Spatial map of OLR anomalies and 850-hPa wind vectors for the next 20 days

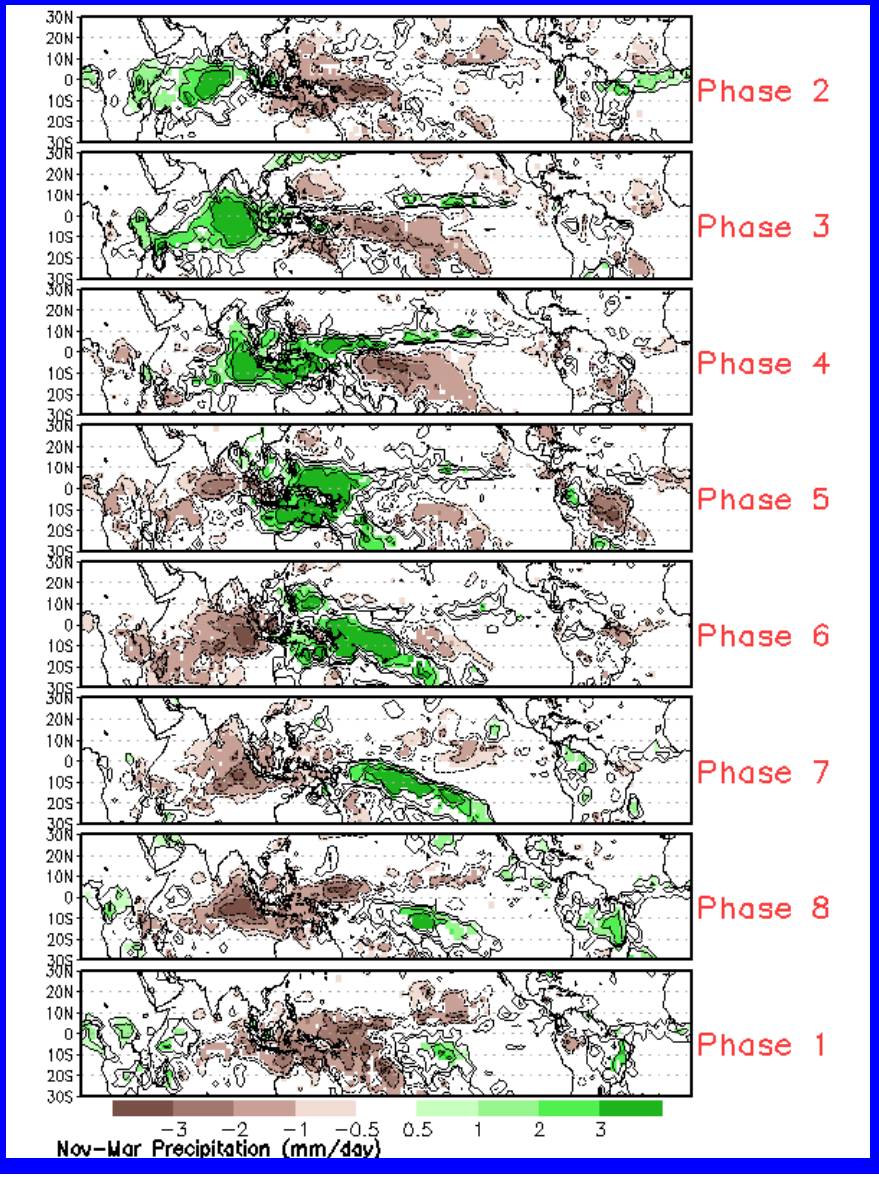
(Courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre - Australia)

Suppressed convection associated with the MJO is predicted to shift eastward from the Indian Ocean towards the Date Line as it weakens.



MJO Composites – Global Tropics

Precipitation Anomalies (Nov-Mar)



850-hPa Wind Anomalies (Nov-Mar)