

For me it was very much a race in two stages. Heading to Mauritius I took a central option compared with the whole fleet; that is, not too far south but also well south of the coast. A day or so out of Mauritius it was obvious that some major decisions needed to be made. The fastest way towards India required staying well south of Mauritius, but a route back to the African Coast meant coming in close to land to round the Mauritius waypoint.

I used a couple of references for the decision. Pilot charts for the area are always my go-to for the most reliable average of wind conditions and they indicated a preference for the western route with reaching breezes most of the way for this time of year. I also consulted some cruising notes for people making the passage from the Suez across to India and South East Asia. They recommend making passages at this time of year to be clear of strong winds and cyclones. That was not really what I wanted to hear!

So in the end it was pilot charts (or is that pirate charts?) that helped in my decision making along with javakeda's analysis of the East African and Indian monsoons. Of course I did a little research of my own on those to check for curved balls ;)

The last few days were plagued by light breezes for the leaders, as we all bunched up, and that kind of sailing requires long hours at the wheel or a few days of advantage can evaporate in a few hours. It was a great race in the end, and interesting to watch such a widely spread fleet make its way towards home from the four corners of the Indian Ocean.

/Dingo