

Around Vancouver Island Race

Analyzing the race course and the forecasted weather conditions it was clear that this race would demand a lot of dedication since, right after the start boats, would have to sail endless hours upwind in a very narrow passage with very light wind. It would be very difficult to do effectively. It started on a Saturday I was staying home, so I decided to give it a try.

My strategy for the first part of the race along the narrow passage was to make the least number of tacks in order to minimize the loss of performance when tacking, which meant tacking always very close to the shore with the corresponding risk of grounding and losing time. These meant almost permanent attention.

I sailed thru the long passage and got to the northern tip of the island after "only" 66 tacks, quite less than what many of my competitors were doing, and after grounding only 2 times (as far as I know), for a very short time.

At that point I was first in the ranking and had a comfortable lead over my immediate followers MSejos, Trampantojo, Greatskua, Karaoke, all of them from Spain, and FortAdams (who might also speak Spanish?). Starting the downwind leg towards the south of the island in fair winds I believed it would be fairly easy to administer my lead for the rest of the race. But I was wrong. As we approached the south of the island the wind speed started to decrease and the boats on my stern, with more pressure, closed in gradually. When we got near the southern coast my lead had practically disappeared.

My close competitors seemed all to have different strategies in the light unsteady winds towards the southern tip and I did my best to try to cover them all. There went another 20+ tacks in this process.

By the time we got to the southern tip I had a small lead but, for the last part of the race, a new challenge awaited us. In reality two challenges in one: we had to find the best route towards the finish line thru the archipelago in unsteady winds, and at the same time administer the big concavity of the boat polar. Fortunately, after some dubious minutes, I managed to deal adequately with both and conserved my lead until the finish line.

It was a difficult and tiring race; very little sleep. I congratulate not only my closer competitors and companions in this journey, but also everyone who completed the course.

Do it again? Sure, but not shortly please...

Rafa

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