

At the start there was a low leaving NZL behind, a clear 'rich get richer' scenario. That and the need to hug the coast until Mercury Island meant an inevitable all-nighter, I did sleep from about 1600 to 2000z. Going past the islands is classic practice race stuff, and I managed to reach Cape Colville in front. (or dead last, if the leaderboard were to be believed).

The biggest problem when leaving NZL is that no one knows how far south we can go. It ultimately took six days to hook up with the big low, far outside any reasonable forecast. It appears however that going too far south doesn't pay. My goal was to at least stay above 60S.

Very early on when we were still trailing the first low, going harder south would give better TWD and VMC (to CH), while a bias north would give better TWS and boatspeed. I was inclined to err on the side of boatspeed.

I chose to go north of Mercury Island to keep the north option until the 0430 wx. Dingo and javakeda followed the same path, most of the fleet went south. Unfortunately the other boats in my group had a BBQ party, that and a less favorable wx pushed me back to the coast in line with the fleet.

At 1630 north looked a bit better again, and I split north. 'Split' only amounts to a few degrees course change, it does add up though. Most boats dived much further south than I had expected. After two days of riding out the low and going thru the following ridge, I was on the north edge of the fleet, with ita10267 as the closest dangerous boat 25nm away. Very very risky. A bad wx could put me far behind.

The next few days are about managing the gap, while hoping for the best. I did feel more confident when the course went below the GC line, the risk of getting burnt decreases a lot. About four days in, the wx I wanted. A low pressure system moving underneath the fleet creates an impassable barrier at 55S. The south boats are now forced to line up behind me. JACKPOT!!!

Once I finally enter that low (the wait for the predicted weather to actually happen was agonizing) it's just go fast until the Horn. Along for the ride, and what a ride this little red boat pulled off, with two days over 500nm! Quite easy at the front, while the fleet was less lucky, only seven boats reached Cape Horn unscathed. My lead at the time a bit over an hour (down from 3h before I hit an ill placed windhole), that would do. Past the Horn it's just cover, cover, COVER, don't allow any split to happen.

Congratulations ita10267, bigbull, ghibli, aner59, RICOTINA and rumskib who managed to hang on, very well sailed. Thanks everyone for racing!

/outlaw