

Rondje Texel - 2014

Although born in Holland and having lived there for a period during my working life, I had never been to Texel. Terschelling yes; Foehr, Sylt, also, but never to Texel. Thanks to SOL, I now have.

Launching multihulls off the beach clubs along the Dutch North Sea coast is a popular Summer pastime and every year the same series of racing weekends hosted by different clubs draws huge fleets of 200 boats or more for what is generally champagne sailing. I'm sure you can picture it: macho guys with sunnies and chests that used be hairy but are now clean-shaven and oiled (fashions change) and tall girls in crotch-splitting trapeze harnesses and not much else pushing their NACRAs, Hobies, Darts, Tornados and indeed F18s out through the surf, clambering aboard and heading out to the start line. Rondje Texel is the Fastnet of their season and it was entirely appropriate that SOL was there, virtually and hence avoiding any displays of – I'm guessing here – wrinkly flesh.

The weather forecasts for the two races SOL had scheduled were for very stable 14kn airs from almost due North, which were going to take our F18s on Saturday and our SeaCarts on Sunday round the island in respectively c 2hrs and c 3hrs. Wind strategy was not going to be an issue. Knowing your polars, steering (two hands on the tiller!), and minimising tacks and gybes were.

So at 15:00 UTC on Saturday a sizable group of us headed out to sea on starboard from the start line off the Westerslag. One of us from this group was going to be first to the lighthouse and timing the tack onto port would determine that. It's always best to err on the side of caution judging a layline and I overstood by about a degree, which was good enough for a top ten rounding. But then ... working feverishly, I altered course down a little, then went to BrainAid to check speed, distance and time to the round down to the VC buoy, to discover when I returned that the tide had gone out... I was on Texel... panic, typed in a CC that drove me further onto the beach... finally, I was free but performance of course was down to less than 90%. I raced on, and it was nice to see Rafa being complimented for the idea I would have shown him: to run deep from Buoy B to Buoy C at Oudeschild rather than gybe twice! Back in the mid 20s, it worked for me also, but with just a few more corners and a short beat to the Finish there was not much more to be done.

More subtle had been sailing high on a 102 TWA earlier on the reach across to the VC buoy, and then dropping down to TWA 118 when it could be made, thus avoiding sailing through the F18's polar dip, which was how I at least managed to not fall into the 50s after my beach party.

Sunday brought more 14kn Northerlies, but we were now going to have to sail the SeaCart, which, given that it does not point at all at all, is very appropriately named. Nevertheless, the SeaCart in a straight line is also very fast, and tacks and gybes were once again going to be taboo. With no polar dip, snaking would however not be necessary. Simple.

So out to sea we went again, now at TWA 54, yes that is fifty four. I overstood by half a degree, didn't beach and was dicing with Outlaw and Svein for the lead as we gybed down the run from VC to Oudeschild B. At C, I ran on just a little allowing Outlaw get a 0.02nm jump. But then... disaster area ZO (Zuid Oost)... went over it instead of round it... turned back and rounded properly... performance down to sub 90%... struggle struggle... P18, which together with P21 on Saturday was just a little frustrating to be honest.

But well done Rafa, Outlaw and the rest. Steady hands.

/bonknhoot – June 2014