

## Tristan TIMED Race 2014

Around the time when the Tristan timed race opened a storm with wind speeds in excess of 40 knots was passing over Tristan da Cunha. The prudent mariner would seek shelter in these conditions, but this is different in virtual sailing. And there might be no shelter in a place called Inaccessible Island. Therefore I decided to start early on midnight on September 4th.

The SOL server has delayed my start time set with a DC by 5 seconds, which I don't quite understand, because I keep the clock of my computer synchronized with the nifty NetTime tool from [www.timesynctool.com](http://www.timesynctool.com).

Because the wind behind the storm centre was predicted to back, my router suggested to start on starboard tack initially. But she doesn't know about the performance penalty that comes with an extra gybe in 40+ knots. I started on port tack instead with an optimal TWA of  $-156^\circ$  and intended to reach Tristan da Cunha with just one gybe.

As I was approaching the gybe point I investigated the wind on the next leg with AGage's WX inspector. But then I made a rather stupid mistake. Instead of gybing late in order to take account of the backing wind I got the sign wrong and gybed early. I had given up hope for a top finish in this run when the predictor line pointed at solid land.

My first thought was to sail deep, but because the TP52 polar is not particularly flat at these wind speeds I quickly changed my mind and chose to accept the penalty of two extra gybes. But I didn't gybe immediately. Instead I proceeded on an optimal downwind TWA towards Tristan da Cunha. Close to the shore I gybed back to port, and the performance dropped well below 90%. Because the next leg was just 2 miles long, I had hoped that I could gybe back towards Tristan da Cunha before the performance had recovered to more than 93%. That was indeed the case. The third gybe came when the performance was still less than 93% and therefore that gybe did not cost any more. So in effect the penalty for the premature first gybe was one extra gybe, not two.

The following course around the headlands of Tristan da Cunha's north shore was a sequence of several short (about 2 miles) legs with substantial course changes in between, each one closer to the wind. That meant my performance did not reach 100% until I had passed the easternmost point of Tristand da Cunha and was on a close hauled course towards Nightingale Island.

Once past Tristan da Cunha I wanted to tack towards the west. That's when I committed the second unforced error, because I tacked before I was clear of the island. I had to pinch for two and a half miles, and that really felt slow. Fortunately the next tack south towards Nightingale Island was spot on.

The last leg of the course was a reach towards the leeward end of the finish line in winds decreasing to about 28 knots. When I crossed the line and checked the result I was astounded to find myself on a podium place, because of the errors I had made. Obviously the choice of my start time must have been pretty good.

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