

RTW 2014 – Leg 6

This was an interesting race for many I believe. Personally I wanted to secure a spot in top 10 in the overall RTW 2014 rankings. I succeeded in this goal, and as a byproduct the small boat Dana1 got its first podium finish. Success in this race didn't come easily. There were many points in the race that I thought closed the door on my options. At those points all you can do is to set your best course/DC's, close the lid, and come back with high hopes 6 hours later, only to be dealt some more pain ☹️ But in this race there were more of the good moments we all like.

A few days prior to the start I did a router exercise and it looked like the first week would be spent heading N/NE towards Newfoundland with a few turns thrown in. This turned out to be the case for the most part.

A surprising number of boats headed out on a more easterly cause and we heard their despair in chat during their days of pain in the blue. Some of them did make a miracle comeback later on.

Around day 5 I saw an opening to head E/SE in the OZ forecast. It was a narrow channel of favorable wind between blues. I didn't take it and neither did many others. The same option was there in the next wx and then I threw my game plan of sailing it safe (RTW Top 10 overall was the goal) and keeping close to the main pack out the hatch. So I turned, and 6 hours later there was nothing but blue ahead. So I turned back NE to join the northern fleet and as expected was now several hours back. Failure.

So, on we pressed and passed fairly close to the tip of Newfoundland. Now the spectacle of a massive blue wall was starting to show on SOL screens around the world. Having already forgotten my failed attempt a few days earlier I decided that now would be a great new opportunity to leave the pack and head south of the wall. Router promised a small reward of 5 hours over the leaders of the northern fleet. Problem was that the reward was on the other side of the pond. In other words, at the unreliable end of the forecast. Short term mostly pain was promised. But I didn't like the idea of continuing on several hours behind the pack. This Steinlager boat, as we now know, is a slug and a half, with a flat polar in almost all conditions. So I went SE again. Some boats followed, including nacrr. But nacrr lost faith and headed after the fleet. I didn't want to do it for the second time so I pressed on focusing only on short term 24/48 hour wx's for a few days.

Prior to the wall nacrr and many other boats joined the route diving under the blue wall. All looked good. But then the mighty blue wall turned out to be more like a thin blue screen. It did not move with the boats going through it as I had expected. So suddenly a large number of boats were on the east side of that traitorous blue there was two more numbers after it. Distance to leaders >100nm. This SE direction turned out to be a good thing.

New a wx a bit later and yet another new situation. Boats coming from S now had a nice wind angle and boats coming from the opposite direction were trapped. I soon realized that I was in big battle with nacrr and rafa. Briefly there was a prospect of Solaris diving for a win from deeper S. But a shift in the wind direction stopped that advance.

Nacrr was not able to hold on to lead as he was forced to tack before we passed some headland. Then rafa went for boat speed and I was suddenly upwind of him and in a position to cover him as we turned towards the finish line at the bottom of the bay. However, there was one big problem. There was another headlands we had to pass before really turning toward the final stretch. Night fell in EU and nacrr and I headed to get some sleep (in different beds I assure you). I had an alarm set and woke up, then decided to wait a minute before actually grabbing my laptop. Next thing I knew it was 30 or 40 minutes later. It was too late, Rafa had made the turn, I overstood, and same thing happened to nacrr. So second it was. Tried a desperation move before Finish line for more boat speed. It nearly cost 2nd place.

Nice work by rafa!

Thank you all, it was a great series around the world.

September 2014, Dana1