That was some race! What started off gently enough as we picked our way up through the Windward and Leeward Islands soon became arduous as we worked our way across the northern shores of Puerto Rico gybing downwind and close to shore, requiring long hours of vigilance to stay off the rocks.

No sooner had we cleared Puerto Rico than the same scenario repeated itself along the southern shores of the Dominican Republic. By the time we cleared the southern headland and Isla Beata, I was getting pretty sleep deprived.

What then followed was a couple of days of gybing down a wind lane in the easterly trades along the 17th parallel. I have never really sussed how best to balance gybe penalties against TWS and TWA penalties either side of a wind lane, but in this instance I used some Predict Wind TWS contours to get an updating picture of the wind contours and set my gybes accordingly.

At least that was the plan, but a couple of oversleeps saw me miss a couple of planned gybes and lose a mile or two to the leaders.

The WXs seemed to regularly flip between favouring a more northerly course out of the wind lane and up to Cancun and a more southerly one. As the critical WX approached where I figured we would leave the 17th parallel and reach north-west to Cancun, I found myself lying to the north east of most of my rivals. I took a punt on the WX flipping as usual which meant I guessed it was the turn of the more southerly route coming up at the next WX. Though it meant taking a hit, I short gybed to get myself south west of these competitors, and luck went my way, with a more southerly route favoured.

For the long drag home, this south-westerly position relative to most of the leaders gave me a favourable angle to regain what I had lost in the gybe and helped me move up from 6th into second place at the finish.

Very occasionally I get some things right. : ))))

Congrats to PetrM for a masterful race, and to all the SOLers for a good fun Pirates' Race. Now, for a rum and a long night's sleep.

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