

Do I watch the real start from North Head or do I start with the SOLers? The Solers won; I couldn't trust myself to set the delay thing right. 9.30 local time here in Auckland and the fleet is off; 143 real yachts and 180 SOLers.

I'm not working today, I'm at home glued to the laptop switching between the live race tracker, live streaming and the virtual race. My boat 'Amante' is now heading north past Rangitoto in the top 50 (about my usual position) and I look out my window to the harbour. There is a huge line of yachts heading out to Tiri Island and Vodafone the ORMA 60 trimaran is just smoking past them at 32knts. Close behind is Beau Geste doing 22knts on the tracker and Giacomo the VOR70 is chasing her hard. Amante is slopping around in their wakes at 8.2knts.

There's another dot on the tracker even further ahead; an unofficial foiling kite board who started a bit earlier and he's doing over 20knts. Man is he keen to do 119mls standing on that. Perfect conditions for records to fall especially Vodafones.

Amante passed Kawau Island, a favourite fishing spot of mine but I'm glued to the laptop today; I'm in the top 20, this race is getting serious now. The wind is backing around to the south slowly so I set a TWA that takes me up to the Hen and Chick islands about 2 hrs away. Vodafone has passed Cape Brett averaging 28knts; those guys are having a ball and ahead of last years record time, the Kiteboarder is close behind them.

I do a couple of jobs around the house that I promised to do last week. An hour later when I check my laptop Vodafone's finished the Coastal Classic in 5hrs 13mins breaking her record by 28 mins. The guy on the foiling Kite board's also finished; he'd have to be the tiredest man in Russell tonight. I also have a look at Amante plugging away at 8.3knts and I'm going to hit the bricks on the Chicks if I don't make a slight tweak. I'm in the top 20! The boats in the west are slowing now as the wind goes south. You have to love these virtual charts, just don't touch the brown stuff like my mum told me, so I sneak through a gap that I wouldn't take a dingy through.

I set a TWA to clear Cape Brett in 3hrs and there's nothing else to do but go to the boat club and have a few beers with some old salts.

My day is just getting better and better; when I return home dinner is ready (I'm late) and I'm just in time to clear Cape Brett in the top 10. Dinner gets cold as I get serious and I pick my way through the Bay of Islands using TWA's and following Rumskib. Of course the party's already started for the real boats in Russell, Beau Geste just pipped Giacomo, 40 boats are already in so I pour myself a rum to help them celebrate and eat a warmish roast.

I'm not allowed my laptop in the bedroom since I started SOLing; the missus reckons the light from the screen wakes her up when I adjust my boat so I stay in the kitchen close to the fridge. I'm happy, a rum in hand and we're 5th on the last turn to the finish; Rumskib's still leading but its real close, 1/100th of a mile between the next 3 boats. Sip, sip, sip and then Amante crosses the line.....3rd!!

Amante / October 2014