

769 Ornö Runt Timed Race

Due to persistent low pressure over central Europe the weather situation for the Ornö Runt race was unusually stable with east-south-east winds between 12 and 18 knots almost throughout the whole race period. In contrast to other timed races there were no clearly defined time windows for a record run attempt. Because it was not possible to compensate for small mistakes by choosing the perfect time for the run it was more important to sail a flawless race.

I was already familiar with the course, because we had raced around Ornö twice in May as part of the sprint championship series. This time it was not necessary to beat through the various small islands surrounding Ornö thanks to the different wind direction. So everything was looking like a drag race around the perimeter of the island along the shortest course possible.

The only place where I had chosen a different route was immediately to the south of the first mark. The shortest path leads between two small islands and requires two course changes in short succession. These are difficult to time exactly right, and because I had crashed into the second island in May, I opted for a marginally longer course to the West of the islands this time.

I wanted to do an early run, but did not find the time until Friday evening at 20:30. That allowed me to compare my intended course with that of other competitors. We all seemed to agree on what the fastest course would probably be.

The race started with two straight line legs along the north-western shore of Ornö, followed by a short beat to the first mark. Because I could almost fetch the mark, the second leg of the beat was very short. I had to turn around the Ornö 1 mark in two or three steps. This is more expensive performance wise than doing it in one manoeuvre, so I lost a little time there. The run along the eastern shore of Ornö was straightforward, requiring only small course changes. Because I was distracted by the rounding of Isla Perez in the Gasparilla Raid race, I was not paying attention at the rounding of the second mark in the south-east. I immediately changed course to the next headland in the west, but that put the boat on a course outside the optimal downwind TWA angle. Fortunately, the J-30 polar is very forgiving in this respect, so the loss was not too expensive.

From the southern tip it was straight line sailing again, first to the Ornö 3 mark in the south west, and from there (because of the advantageous wind angle) to the downwind end of the finish line. Despite the small errors the first run was quite successful, but I was certain, that it would not persist over the weekend.

I had intended to do an other run Saturday around 16:30, but some real life activity got into the way. Quite a few boats had started around that time, and when I got home around 20:00 my previous result had dropped from place 2 to around 20. Luckily the conditions were still favourable when I started again at 20:30. In fact, they were a little better than the day before. The wind was slightly more to the south. That was not so important for the first two straight line legs, but the third leg from the northern tip Ornöhuvud to the first mark at Ornö 1 was a close reach instead of a beat. This meant a slightly shorter course and allowed a much better mark rounding than the day before. Along the east coast I followed the same course than previously. But after rounding the Ornö 2 mark in the south-east I wanted to leave the small island immediately to the west to port. At the time that path looked a little shorter to me, but it required two successive course changes. The second one was a little too late. That avoided the island with the Ornö 2 mark on it, but in order to avoid the next island and two extra gybes, I had to sail at a TWA of 179.9°. Therefore I am not convinced any more that this course was in fact faster than the slightly longer one to the south.

The remaining course was again easy straight line sailing, just as the day before. Because second placed Neuroman started a few minutes after me, I think the conditions during this second run must have been the best of all race days.

In a way I feel lucky to have won this race, because my original intention was to start four hours earlier.

rumskib /November 2014