

Log Pedro Blanco - 2015

Offshore Hong Kong is starting to become a lucky racing area for bonk! P1 in the Kettle, yesss, and now P2 in another overnighter, this time in the waters East rather than West of the bay.

As the race started, another version of bonkhoot had already been out on the water for more than a fortnight trying to weave her way from northern Luzon to Auckland, and things were going quite well there with about two days to go. Was it A2 who quipped in the chat: "Sleep is over-rated"? Surely, if I just stayed awake, I could get a podium place in one or the other?

I'd be lying if I said I am glad it turned out to be the one rather than the other; both would have been preferable. But the saving grace, that it wasn't the other, is that I would have been writing for a week to produce a semi- (at best) intelligible report of what went on, if it had been, and the myriad good and bad major and minor decisions that led to the result that wasn't. And bored you all silly.

Pedro Blanco then; easier to deal with. A beat, a run, a group of islands, another beat and a broad reach.

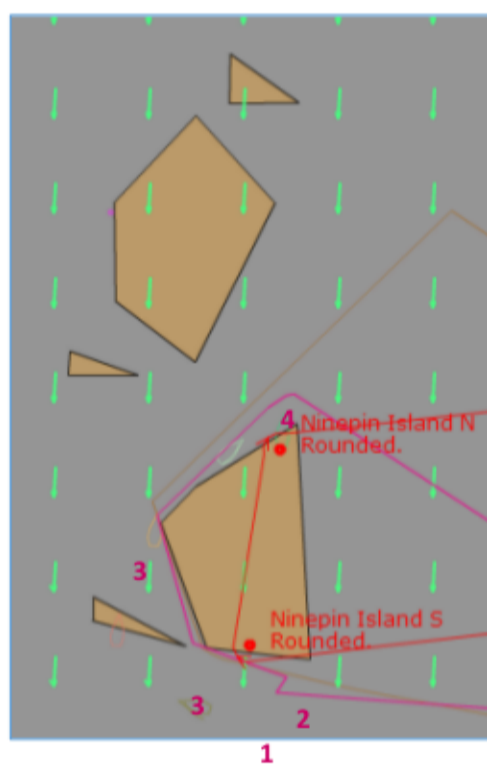


The first beat was straightforward. A beeline on starboard tack into a header, clipping a couple of capes, a tack one side or the other of an island or two and a romp into the mark on top of the Pedro Blanco. This mark was so big, you couldn't actually see the rock. Maybe the local fishermen had recently blasted it off the face of the earth entirely or map metaphorically. Be that as it may, at the rock or what is left of it, bonk was there or thereabouts. And so were the usual suspects, including outlaw!

<http://www.hkoutdoors.com/our-changing-world/pedro-blanco-over-fishing.html>

I DC'd a gybe set onto a (slightly) hot starboard CC to take bonk North of the rhumb line into a lifting but slowly dropping breeze. When others started to gybe back onto port early to return to where there was more breeze, I followed, and then gybed for the Ninepins, where we all arrived some time in the early morning. I made some mistakes here, as I was quite distracted by the SWR where I was working hard to break back into the T10, after having wandered rather more East than most into lighter airs than smo and the rest of the leading group (as it turned out: that wasn't so bad at all, and in fact in the end I cashed in too much easting too early, but hey hoh, back to the Ninepins).

The screenshot shows bonk's track and you can see what happened. Now, note the wind arrows are all wrong: at the time the wind was more or less blowing from East to West, and not out of the North (the Finish conditions).



1. an inexplicable course change to NE
2. a correction
3. two ragged roundings
4. a slow (several commands in sequence) wearing round onto port tack, which magically (honestly, no idea) knocked bonk's performance loss from 92% back up to 99%!

But others fared worse, and in particular my commiserations go to outlaw, who must have hit a pin on a DC after which another DC freed him again and set him off on port tack never having rounded at all. He corrected it eventually, and finished the race in P35, having lost more than two hours! Chapeau. Hütchen. A sportsman.

Back to bonk's race. Heading SW with the rest of the fleet looking for more wind, a strange thing happened. Somebody tacked back in towards the coast. It was Kenza, as it turned out making the winning move, but nobody followed. Kenza SOLs a bit intermittently, but when he does, he tends to win, so this was worrying. After maybe an hour, I decided to follow. And then, next time I looked, rafa had disappeared, but according to the leaderboard he was ahead of me. No he wasn't. He had tacked underneath me. Literally!

Far in the distance, our predictor lines were indicating a big sharp header in Pinghai Bay. Kenza would be there first, but rafa and I were travelling faster. But then Kenza started to point up, holding at least  $10^{\circ}$  higher on our almost matching courses, and that was it. rafa tacked early for the layline whilst I carried on further into the bay and tacked to leeward and barely ahead of Kenza. For a while, it looked like rafa had got it right, curving up on a tighter TWA in stronger winds. But, as so often, it turned out that sailing further into the header was 'the right thing to do' (there's an election in the UK soon, so I'm borrowing the phrase from a political broadcast).

At the rock the second time, it was Kenza, bonk, rafa one-two-three, with two c 0.3nm gaps keeping us apart, which is how it stayed, but, of course in the SWR, rafa hammered bonk. Tight race, thank you all.

bonkhoot / March 2015