

Hook Island Sprint 2015, 11th April 2015

The timing for this sprint race was perfect for me. Start on a Saturday afternoon and finish expected around 23:00 GMT. Free weekend and no late night sailing!

Although this was a PYOC (Pick Your Own Course) race, the western route through the Whitsunday's passage always seemed the best option to me. So, my initial plan was to go south through the passage, tack east to go offshore leaving Pentecost Island to port and then some tacks to approach St. Bees from the northeast.

The race started and I was quite surprised to see some boats going northeast to take the offshore route. Maybe the east option had some chances... it all depended on the 16:30 wx. The immediate problem was the first leg south. To go for better angle and approach land through the passage between Long and Pine islands or go for better pressure to keep the boat in the middle of the passage between Pine and Dent islands. I decided to keep my options open until the 16:30 wx.

When the 16:30 wx arrived, it clearly favoured the west option and changed completely my initial plans. Approaching St. Bees from the west was now the best route.

I made a first tack a bit early in search of better pressure and I lost some time. When we passed the cape at the south of Conway National Park I had some boats ahead but I was close enough.

The key to this race was the approach to land after the cape. I chose a wider angle for more speed and tacked earlier than the other boats which chose to go closer to land. Here the new weather model (WRF) made a huge difference with steeper gradients and angles. I think that only rafa was ahead, maybe WINSTON_4, but I had a small advantage - more pressure. rafa tacked early in the shift which was a bad option and WINSTON_4 and I kept on for almost 2 more miles.

In my last tack to port to I managed to pass in front WINSTON_4. All that was left was the last tack to find the perfect layline. I managed to tack in the right spot and it was just a matter of not making a mistake in the last small turn. I didn't!

This was a great race, with a lot of tactical options. The WRF weather model made things much more interesting.

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