

The theory is simple. Go for the E-winds of the South-Atlantic High and continue North over the doldrums into the influences of the North-Atlantic High which can be rounded nicely to Newport. So going from close hauled to reaching for most of the leg. The exact course was decided on the forecasts we get from the platform. One little problem, to get to these strong winds we needed to go through a big barrier without wind.

From the start Jepsom choose to go S immediately, I decided to go NE for a while and than go E as hard as possible. When I got there I could not see a way to cross this windless zone. I saw a possibility more N. But when I reached the spot where I wanted to go E, I saw that that window was closed but also that we could actually make it downwind to Recife.

All of the topsailors went earlier on E but got stuck without wind.

At Recife Kenza, Peskasail and Hmm had an advantage of about 35 miles. Jepsom was the best of the few ones that made it through coming from the SE.

Bonknhoot was close to the leaders and Aner followed me closely. When I looked at Newport for every wx-update I guessed that we should approach as much Southerly as possible because on the direct, shorter route you would have to sail a very long part with variable and light winds. So I planned a gybe for the night as we were taken too much E in my opinion.

When I woke up I saw that Bonknhoot and Aner also had gybed. Aner and myself had stronger winds and were able to close the gap almost entirely with Bonknhoot. 130Nm behind the group with all the topsailors was following the same route. And coming closer little by little. When we arrived at the Caribbean which had strong winds I saw a good angle that would even allow us to pass East of Puerto-Rico. And the wx-updates became better and better. So I gybed to pass below Tobago, something that wouldn't be possible for our pursuers because the wind was backing, with Nacrr leading. Bonknhoot, already past Tobago saw my move and said he was hesitating and wished me luck. Aner59 replied, "I am gybing before Tobago too, against my router's advice". A bit later MikiCe and Mrbill also went this way before this window closed.

So Bonk gybed much later and saw his advantage on us shrink to almost nothing. By that time we had a better view on the weather until the finish and it looked great. We were about 550 nm S of the leaders. Jepsom leading replied at one of my chats that I looked very happy down-south. I told him that Aner59, Bonknhoot and myself had decided to take the podium. We had plenty of wind in the Caribic and we would get another burst in the Sargasso. Jepsom thought I was joking, I did not know for sure but I was very hopeful, let's say dreaming ☺

For days already I was behind on Bonk and Aner. I knew we had to go slightly E in the Sargasso Sea to get more wind. Bonk and Aner went as close to The Dominican Republic as possible, with less wind, to gain E. I tried to pass more in the middle between Puerto Rico and The Dominican Republic and later with more wind overtake both, I had nothing to lose. But it didn't work. But I was still in contact. We overtook everybody and were now leading.

Another attempt to take the shorter route failed and brought me in danger of losing my third place. MikiCe and Mrbill were closing the gap and the peloton was very near. But Aner59 and Bonknhoot were gone. Later Bonknhoot must have had some issues because while always well in contention suddenly was too far behind Aner59 to challenge him for victory.

Very little wind for the last 500nm. We could find some near the coast. I decided to stay along the coast as long as possible. But Nacrr and all the big guns were now only 20 miles behind and still closing. Mrbill soon got caught but MikiCe was hanging on. Just before the arrival an unexpected windshift almost brought me in trouble. Everybody was congratulating the podium but I knew I had to anticipate if not Nacrr and Miki would have taken my third spot. Nacrr must have been concerned that I would lose this spot because he warned me over the chat which I appreciated. For me this was a very early morning arrival so I did not sleep much but finally could save my third place. I was 8 miles behind Aner and had only about 2 miles on Miki and Nacrr

I am very happy, considering this is the SWR, everybody was here. When you look at the top20. I had lots of fun and Bonknhoot and Aner59 are real gentlemen, I was honoured to sail with them and enjoyed every moment.

Finally, just one thing. I do not use routers, I just like to think and calculate a bit myself. I only use the wx-updates from the platform and some boatdata from Hmm. I want to encourage and represent a lot of others that sail this way. It has advantages. When you are beaten by a routed: normal, when you beat a routed: you're a winner (and where you're the winner he's the.... ☺)!!

And of course, you're unlikely to win races but with some experience you can come close and have a lot of competitive fun.

But I will never condemn routed skippers, they are more complete. They gather all parameters and skills, and are the modern high-tech competitive sailors of these times. And I understood that some of the SOLers are able to compete with the best navigators of the professional sailingscene.

Thank you to everybody that make sailing on this platform possible and congratulations to everybody that made the finish of this long leg.

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