

## Baltic Tall Ships Race 2015

In my first years on SOL I deliberately stayed away from races with square riggers, because I imagined it would be dull to race a slow boat that does not point at all. But I was wrong. The racing is as good as with any other boat, just not as fast paced and temporal changes in the weather become more important, because the boat does not move that much.

The routing before the Monday afternoon start of the Baltic TSR suggested to initially follow a southwestern course on a tight reach of 85° TWA towards the Gulf of Gdansk, then roughly following the 55°N parallel to the West, then with a distance of 10 to 15 miles parallel to the Polish coast until reaching 54°30'N and from there more or less downwind towards the finish off Rügen. No real upwind sailing in a safe distance from every coast looked simple indeed.

But in the long term the weather does change more than initially predicted. The 2230 WX on Monday evening brought the first signs of trouble. Before reaching the finish line the wind speed should drop below 3 knots and the ETA moved over 6 hours back. The 0430 WX on Tuesday morning was even worse. The ETA dropped more than 13 hours from Wednesday afternoon to Thursday morning. The reason was an area of low wind speed approaching from the North-West combined with a change of direction from easterlies to westerlies.

The initial game plan would lead the boat downwind of the finish. The alternative was to evade to the North passing east of Bornholm Island. It was not until the 2230 WX on Tuesday evening when the decision had to be made. Outlaw chose the southern option and gybed South-East towards the Oder estuary, while kenza, ita10267 and myself changed course to the North-West towards Bornholm.

At that time my router promised an advantage of the northern rout by almost 5 hours, but I did not really believe it. For once, it is not reliable in low wind speeds and secondly you can not trust the details a WX extending a day and a half into the future. Anyway, I would have been a nice journey following the east coast of Bornholm with all those nice little ports that are worth a visit.

The next crucial moment was the timing of the tack north of Hammer Odde on Wednesday late afternoon. I was trailing ita to windward and kenza to leeward. An early tack would have given me the lead, at least temporarily, but from past experiences in this boat I am reluctant to point as high as the Optimum Angles Tool suggests. I extended several minutes past the layline, and when I finally tacked I could easily clear the west coast of Bornholm. kenza had already tacked a little earlier, and ita followed suit shortly afterwards. They had a slight windward advantage, and in the end rolled over me on the long leg to the finish.

Congratulations to ita and kenza for a convincing podium finish, to outlaw and freudenoli for doing their best on the southern route.

Thanks for racing,

/rumskib

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