

Talk about a race of attrition! I had a feeling things might go from bad to worse as I looked at the grib files in the days leading up to the race. ETAs were rapidly pushing out from one day into one-and-a-half and then two. Sure enough, by race start winds had dropped right off and were expected to lighten even further, with 360 wind shifts thrown in for good measure.

I think we ended up being on the course for around 64 hours for an average of something around 2.5 nautical miles covered every hour.

A combination of insanity, patience and endurance is the only way to deal with that circumstance. Things happen in slow motion on the screen, and bad choices or inattention can be costly.

The first leg was pretty good, considering I had a 3.30am start, though I lost 5 minutes through some bad DCs after I went back to bed. That time of night is not too good for course planning! On the next leg north, nacrr held his more southerly starboard tack and it paid off handsomely for him. By the time the fleet crossed he had a good lead and none of us were good enough to peg him back.

Then began the northern slalom, again during the night for me, and it was impossible to grab more than a few minutes of sleep at a time. Tacking down the channel was only made bearable by nibbling chocolate and brewing coffee after coffee. To test the patience ever further, each new grib seemed to add another 4-6 hours onto the ETA.

By the time we reached Lyo, I knew we were in for a really long race, and to make matters worse my birthday party/bbq/music jam was planned for the full day starting just before lunch. Then began a nerve wracking 6 hours where I had DCs set, but I knew we had to sail near the coast, and through a WX. I could check on my phone occasionally but it is really hard to tell what is happening on that small iphone screen with the SOL app. Mercifully, the 360 wind shifts had cleared and the wind was building.

By the time I got home I was surprised to see I'd held my place through half a dozen tacks and had narrowly missed the coast. My wife dropped in a couple of tacks on the iphone for me while I was playing music! I just asked her to punch in alternating TWAs of 46 degrees and hoped they'd cover the wind conditions. She saved my bacon, and was a cool hand on the tiller!

Congratulations to nacrr, what a great sail! And to the others in the race, I hope we all managed to get a good sleep in the next night! Congratulations and well sailed too. I noticed with some irony that the wind filled in the next day!

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