

Kipper1258 Capetown to Hobart Race Report

This was my fourth race and the first one I used a router (qtLMV). I was hoping to finish in the top 20, but exceeded my expectations by finishing 3rd. I did not get off to a good start, gybed too soon (by about 10 seconds) shortly after the start and ran aground (I tend to do that regularly when the cat's at the helm). By the time I got sailing again I was down to 80% performance and behind the fleet. But a long way to go.

It looked like the strategy was to get into the Roaring 40's as fast as possible. The router confirmed that, and the first couple of days I spend going there.

Once in the 40's, I was watching a few of the good boats, rumskib in particular, and we appeared to be travelling similar courses and reasonably close. The defining moment for me in the race came in the middle section, where I gybed across and ended up in the middle of a 40 kt low on my own which dropped back to 30 kts very quickly either side of me. I was going about 2 kts faster than the other boats and picked up about 15nm in the process. After that, I simply followed the routing to the bottom of Bruny Island. There was one other major tactical decision to make. Nearing the western part of Australia, the router was jumping between heading north and staying south. I decided to stay on the southern track which, as it turned out, was the right way to go.

The final challenge came in that there was a change of course required at Bruny Island to make the finish line. This was going to be at 1 AM in the morning. I had worked out (thanks to Billy) that there was a clear line from Bruny Island to the finish line, and that the bearing from the finish to Bruny was 172 degrees. So, I had calculated all my DC's, worked out the exact time to enter the COG to the finish and entered the bearing 172 and handed the helm over to the cat. Based on my past experiences with the cat, and that I was in third and likely to stay there, I decided to get up and check on how the cat have steered. The good news was that my DC's had worked out perfectly, and the final change of course timing was looking good. I was just about to hand the helm back to the cat when I realised my error. A similar one Billy had made a few hours earlier and taken himself out of 5th position. The bearing was meant to be 352. So close to snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

I also introduced my 15 year old daughter (DirtyRat1402) to SOL, and we worked her boat together for most of the race. I stopped the coaching about 36 hours before the end of the race, and at one stage in those last hours, I thought she was going to beat me. However, that did not happen and she finished a respectable 4th. Unfortunately, we appeared to have breached the SOL racing rules in the way I coached her, and DirtyRat has ended up being disqualified in a protest. We used the same set of DC's each Wx for simplicity's sake, which is a breach of the boat sitting rule.



This is DirtyRat and her crew in real life. We won't talk about the spinnaker trim.

An interesting race in which I learned heaps about SOL, the rules, the importance of routers, how to use them and some key strategic decisions. And finally, a bit of luck also counts.