Aegean Rally II

This race started at 0100 hours in Southern California, but there was no way that was going deter me from entering. The race had it all:

- The course seems simple enough:
    - Sail south from Piraeus
    - Round a couple of islands to port
    - Come back to the mainland to finish at
      Sounio
  But the islands you had to round were not the only islands in play
  … to say nothing of the mainland headlands on the sail south.

- What made the course even more interesting is that SOL is using High-Resolution winds. Regular GRIB files resolve wind data to, at best, 0.25 degrees – roughly 15nm between data points. SOL's HiRes winds resolve to 3nm or better. Moreover, the winds regenerate hourly, not every three hours.

  The net result is that you can see wind-shadows from volcanic islands.
  You can see the diurnal sea-breeze / land breeze effects.
  You can see the full subtlety of the real winds
  … and, if you are good, you can use those winds to your advantage.

- And many SOL skippers are good and do exactly that.
  These races attract the best skippers in the virtual racing world. Actually, most top SOL skippers sail [and race] in real life. I am thrilled with a Podium Finish in this race – especially against these skippers.

- Race prep for me started with identifying [LatLon] key headlands on the mainland and on coastal islands. OK, I have my charts and can see the headlands. But SOL has its own map. I spent a fair amount of time translating headland locations from SOL maps to the charts I was using for routing.
  Best to do that ahead of time.

- Further race prep included generating a 'custom' polar for my use in the Expedition routing software. The custom polar comes from reworking and reformatting the Brainaids "Detailed Data as CSV" file.

  Using routing software in a race like this is problematic.
  Sometimes it helps.
  Sometimes it sends you on a snipe hunt.
  But I want to know what 'Exped' is thinking.
  Moreover, I use Expedition for IRL routing.
  If Exped has a 'virtual' problem I want to know about it.

In this race:

- At the start, the 'near shore' route was preferred on the sail south.
  Kenza and peskasail found a way to dominate.
  [Note to self: I need to understand how they did that.]

- The 'run' from Agios Dimitios on Kythnos to Peperi illustrated that finding the fastest route to a downwind mark is seldom as simple as setting a course for max VMG downwind. Unless the mark is dead downwind, I expect to pinch a little on the short leg and foot a little on the long leg. Javakeda used three gybes to kenza's one sailing to Peperi. The light winds held the PERF penalties down for the gybes and javakeda made up some ground with that tactic … but not enough.

- On the passage from the south end of Kea to the finish TWD backed by almost 30 degrees while TWS fell from a mid-channel high of ~6kts to 4.6kts at the finish line. The best route was going to bow north for a better reaching angle in the light airs at the finish – but how far north? Kenza went north of javakeda – giving up ground at first but gaining it back at the end for the win. Nacrr did the same thing to peskasail and Ghibli to garner the final podium position by one second.

Blend into this that we are sailing side-by-side [*bord-a-bord* for you, kenza] with IRL boats who are racing the same course and the same conditions. The client display when the two fleets merged after the start was spectacular. Kudos to Joanne and Markkus for making that work.

Bottom line:
HiRes winds make for more realistic racing.
And realistic races are more interesting and more fun.
Can't wait for the next one.

javakeda / July 2015