

Our summers on the Great Lakes of Michigan are short, so I have been away from SOL for a while. This race looked like a perfect way to get back on the course with the SOL sailors. It started at 16:10 local time, and since I had to help a fellow sailor work on his boat very early the next morning, my intention was to sail for a while and set some DC's and hope for a top 30 finish. It did not turn out that way.....

It was a pretty straight forward race; many of the legs were "point and go." The first leg provided some challenge right from the start. The Young 88 takes a long time to get back to 100% after changing direction. I decided to go right to save 1 gybe, but there was a very slight wind speed advantage on the left. Some of the top SOL competitors went left, and I immediately was concerned. Then, those that went right with me, were gybing early- but I hung on as long as I could and still pass to port of the small island. As we approached the gybe for Gannet Rock, I was pleased to find myself cycling in the top 5, sometime in the #1 position. My plan to set DCs was falling apart fast, if I hoped to stay in the top 5, I would need to be at the computer for each mark rounding.

The leg to Tarahiki was not quite a straight line and it required a slight course change at the eastern most point of the island. The rounding was interesting, trying to stay as close to the island as possible. Karaoke had a great rounding, bonknhoot and I were a "bit" wide.

The next 2 legs from Tarahiki to Motupotaka, and Motupotaka to Flat Rock were also straight line courses with a header on each course. My normal course, when I can sail a straight line is to do it, especially if I am getting a lift. With a header, this time I sailed an AWA course. I was able to set a fast course that seemed to work. Since I don't use any routing tools, I don't know if it was faster, but by the time I rounded Flat Rock I was cycling through the top 3.

Before rounding Flat Rock, I again had visions of setting the course to the finish and finding my finish position in the morning. However, with the top 5 so close, I knew I had to get up one more time to fall off a few degrees as we passed the island just before the finish. It wasn't much, nor was it a huge speed increase, but I knew my competitors were going to be awake and making the move, to stay with them I set the alarm for 1:00AM and took a nap. As we approached the finish, the top 3 boats would take turns as the leader. I saw that karaoke and bonknhoot would spend more time in P1 than I would, so for me to win all the stars had to align at exactly the right moment.

As it turned out I was 3rd, 4 seconds behind karaoke and bonknhoot and only 9 seconds ahead of NZL_Scotsman. The top 10 were finished with less than a minute separating 1 from 10. Congratulations to everyone in the top 10.

Looking back, where could I have found 5 seconds to make the difference between 3rd and 1st? I really don't know. I do know if I had not been awake at each mark rounding, or course change, I would have struggled for a top 20.

Finally, like we always do on the water, thank you to the Race Committee. Your hard work at setting up these races allows us to sail and have fun.

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