

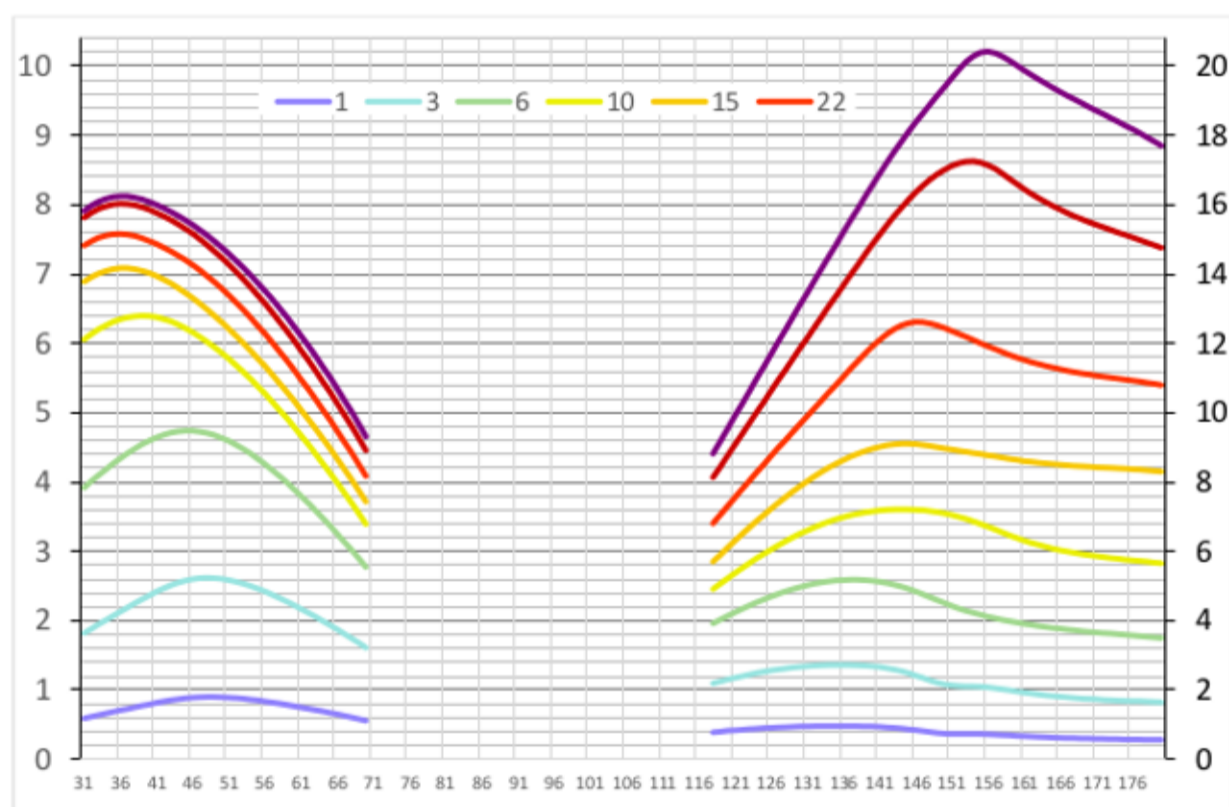
The Hong Kong to Vietnam - 2015

The races we buddy-up with the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club I must say are always excellent, and not because bonk sometimes does well. In fact, almost a year ago to the day, we raced Hong Kong to Hainan, also in TP52s, also in a strong following breeze from the North, and also it was close, but on that occasion, bonk got the nuances between angle and pressure just a little awry and limped in 14th, 9 minutes behind winner karriv.

This time, karriv was missing, but most of the other usual suspects were out, including kenza, 3rd to Hainan last year, but who IMHO has upped his game further since then, and of course the race was to Vietnam and not Taiwan, a bit further away.

OK, so it was going to be downhill all the way after rounding Tan Kan (easily identified from sea as it looks like a rusty old oil barrel) and it was also obvious that you would need to hang East a bit from the max VMG course to get inside the bend and best pressure for a lay on starboard through the Paracel Islands to the North Reef mark. Would this have been doable IRL, I wondered but cared not?

So, how hot should you go on port was the question. Well very, but not as hot as many did. This was a "SOL Cup" counter, and one of my preps for races like this is to run the router with WX updates every 12 to 24 hours. As expected every routing said "Go East" but how much varied quite a bit. Conscious of how downwind VMG become ever more sensitive to TWA as TWS increases above 15kn for the TP52 (see graph below) I opted for something not too extreme.



Imagine my delight to find myself just slightly ahead of kenza on checking progress an hour or so after rounding the Kan; an excellent indication that I had got it about right, I felt. Now in my blood is dinghy racing and this means I am not prejudiced against covering guys that are good, and with the aid of hmm's wonderful data centre, that is what I proceeded to do, until I switched my attention briefly to rumskib, which, inevitably, let kenza through.

And that was the race really – kenza 1, bonk 2, rummi 3 at North Reef – and so it remained, despite:

- some delicate shifts in angle and strength here and there which generally I read well enough,
- a little wobble onboard as a safety DC fired early approaching the turn to Nha Trang, and
- a few nervous moments switching 'hops' on the reach in to the finish.

IRL, it must have been quite a sleigh ride. Great course RHKYC!