

This was one of the most exciting races for me so far, and that means several years of racing here at SOL. Winning certainly influenced this feeling, but the race itself made this so enjoyable.

It was like numerous sprints, all connected together. Each one being a totally separate entity connected only by the fact that how one finished the last one decided where they started the next. Like most races the fleet started to spread out a bit during the first portion. But in this race at least 10 boats stayed within striking distance just about the whole race and at every mark. Each leg was like a puzzle. Do I try to stay to weather to avoid tacking later? Am I going to have to tack later anyway so bear off and go for some speed now? How do I handle the quicker windshifts and set up for the inevitable tack or gybe? When can I leave my boat auto TWA or CC and actually sleep? These were all decisions I had to make over the course of the race. Sometimes I made a different one than rumskib and we still rounded the next mark with the game server not knowing which one of us was leading we were so close. Unlike some races, this one had variable strategies that worked at the same time. I once watched the lead change between myself and rumskib several times in a short period with neither of us changing our course.

I was fortunate to stay within striking distance the beginning of the race, then lead at most of the marks and points after that. I find staying in the lead one of the hardest things to do. With rumskib, rafa, Henrys, Jaws, whiskeytangofxtrot and longreacher constantly trying different and very viable courses and I have to decide who, if anyone to cover, or whether to simply sail my own strategy. So I worked on my strategies tempered a little to avoid going off on a tangent too far from the others. Basically I spent the bulk of the race making sure I didn't get lost while trying to eke out those precious hundredths of a nautical mile that usually separates the podium and even top 10. It was a heart breaker for me when rumskib overstood his mark and tacked on a DC and grounded. I calculated that I had him by as much as 0.2 nm and would get to maybe even beat him after 4 days of head to head. Or lose to him by something similar and be just as happy to have been capable of giving him a hard time for 4 days.

Hirilonde /November 2015