

Log Santa Monica – 2016

This was my third time racing for that famous bottle of rum. The Santa Monica is the sort of SOL race I particularly like, as it doesn't go on so long, that you either lose interest for a while, or find your IRL interfering with your attention over a longer period of time. At the same time it rewards careful helming – optimum VMG watch, tight cornering, judicious use of TWA vs CC – all make a difference, and there are stretches of open water where the use of a router definitely has an impact. Bit of everything, great! Bit like Up Helly AA, only longer and arguably better (more open water) and my 'like' of both shows in my results – “drie keer scheepsrecht”!

When I wrote my first report, best pleased with finishing 4th back in 2014, I confessed I'd never been to The Canaries. That's been well and truly remedied since then, and I've been there (by sailing boat) these last two Novembers. Just Las Palmas, mind. Nevertheless, racing online I have a keen appreciation of how vast the ocean is in between those rocky, ruddy brown lumps of igneous stone on which people live, and how quickly things disappear below the horizon. About which, more later.

To the race then. As we left Santa Monica it was clear it was going to be a light one, and immediately there was blue goo to negotiate midway across to Frontera. Quite a number of us chose to cross the goo on a diagonal SE to NW line, and Bimmer read that best of all, whilst rumskib ignored the possibility and went straight. Bimmer, however, had lost a bit of distance exiting Santa Monica bay and so as we started our first series of turns, I had the smallest of leads from rumskib. I have lost track of time but many hours of high precision match racing now followed until we hit open water again leaving the NE tip of Tenerife for a run to the S tip of Fuerteventura.

I lost a bit of ground straightaway, and, but for the fact that rumskib probably carried on W that smidgin too far during the night on port gybe in towards Fuerteventura, I would have forfeited the lead. It was now short tacking all the way N along the coast. When rumskib made a mistake, I extended my lead to a whole 0.2nm. Meanwhile, Lou was shortening the gap to the two of us inexorably, rock hopping as only he can, and said gap had dropped to c 0.5nm. It was going to be a long race.

Coming away from the top of Fuerteventura, it was time to run my router to see how best to get S La Palma. It looked to me like it was going to pay to keep well N of a lot of blue goo that was going to fade in and out either side of Tenerife during the passage. I went for that and kept bonk close-hauled on a NW course. Four hours later things were not looking good, and it wasn't till I hit my imaginary tack point that my VMC started to exceed those of the rest of the fleet. By a lot. Whoop dee whoop. It was a proper horizon job.

About two hours ahead, I was now bound to encounter different weather to the guys behind, so covering was not really going to be possible, which reality caused me a few palpitations towards the end of the last open leg from Selvagem Grande down to Las Palmas, with the fleet deciding to stay N of a big hole midway between Gran Canaria and Tenerife, which I had opted to go S round.

But all was alright on the day, and I had the pleasure of getting to bed at a not wholly ungodly hour, eheh. Rests me to thank TheHorn immensely for putting on this race for us every year and the prize of a bottle of best Ron Miel rum. I will enjoy it. Remember unicef.com!

bonknhoot /April 2016