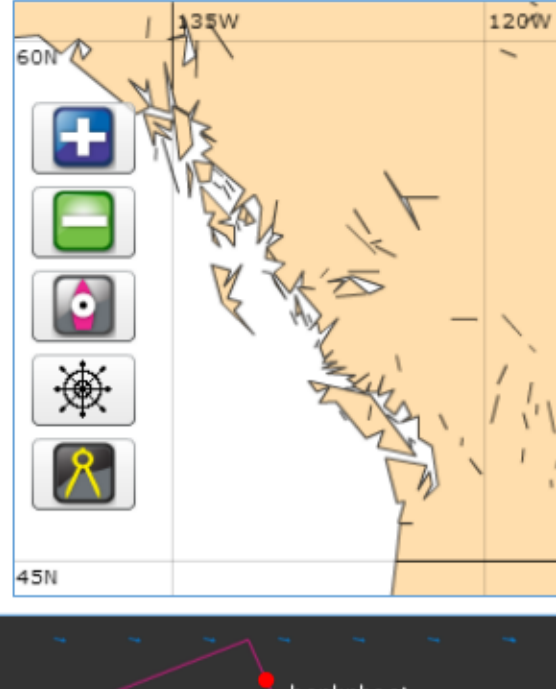
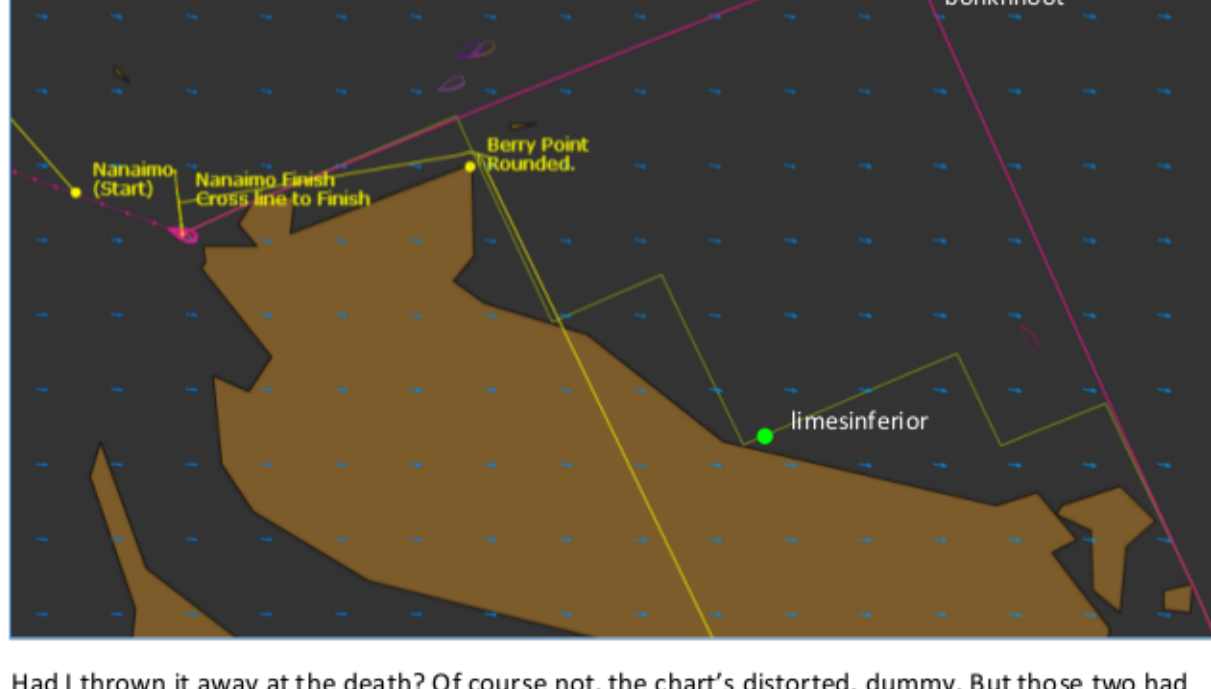


Zoom out far enough on your SOL chart and you will find that virtual life at the high latitudes of Vancouver Island is just a little distorted. What IRL is square, is a rectangle with aspect ratio 2:1 on your chart, courtesy of a cylindrical projection.



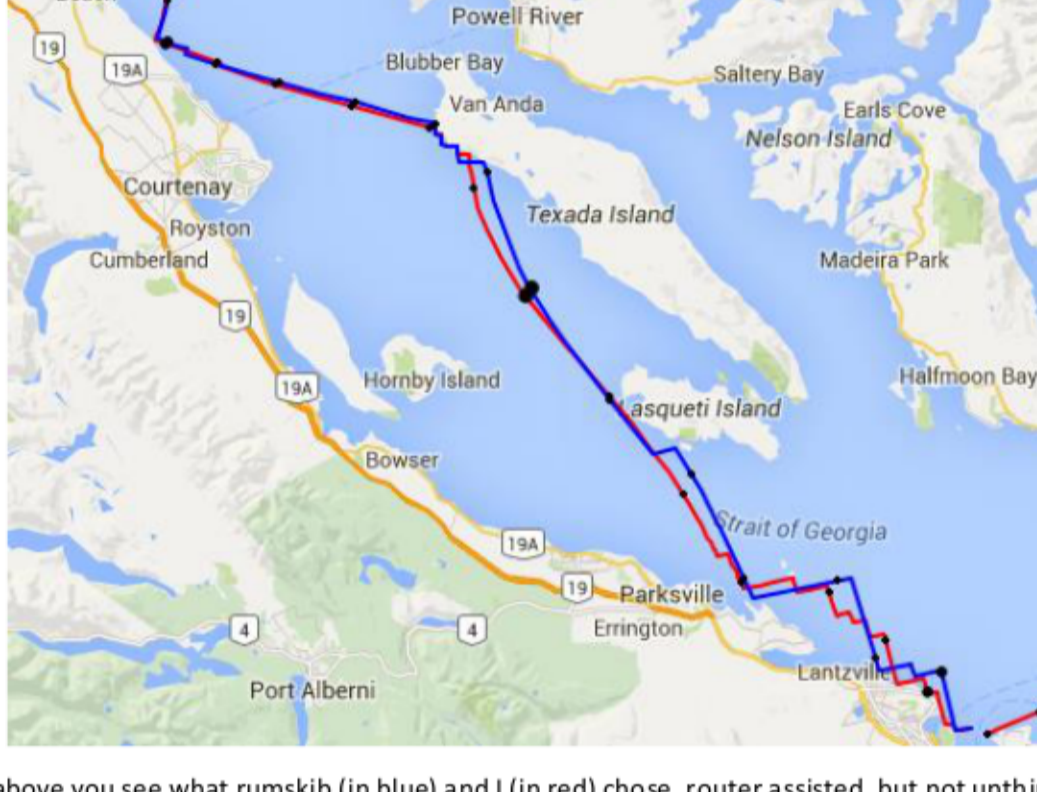
But after a working man's week of being zoomed in and zonked out (from sleep deprivation) that quite slipped my mind, when, after a brief cat nap (I'm retired so I can sleep when I want), my alarms (plural) woke me and I, switching on the monitor was confronted by the scene below (shown redacted by the march of time). I had forgotten to cover, SOL said I was 4th (it would, wouldn't it!) and limesinferior and longreacher neck 'n neck were under the shore in 0.3 kn (10%) more breeze. Eek!



Had I thrown it away at the death? Of course not, the chart's distorted, dummy. But those two had more wind and when I tacked for the line, turned out it was from a header onto a header, and I had to pinch. Still concerned, but with confidence resurgent, I watched the DTF's count down, and quickly calc'd I still had it by about a mile. Not a lot, mind you, when at times, my lead had stretched beyond a half hour (when we were going slow) and 6nm on the water (when we'd been thundering downwind in 25kn of cold air mass coming down from Alaska). But, after 610nm of sailed distance at an average boatspeed of 5.4kn (you can work it all out, just import your boat data from hmm's <http://sol.hmm.iki.fi/sollog/boat/931/changeboatname/> using Excel's 'From Web' menu under the DATA tab), this exhausting, masochistic, life-shortening SOL epic was mine. It had been hard fought for.

Finding myself home alone for two weeks from 29/4 last, I needless to say went and double-checked the SOL calendar. There was a lot on, including this Van360, which I had not done before. When it opened, and I'd entered bonk, it struck me that this neglect was perhaps the wisdom of the unknowing. Completely off the point, this wisdom of the unknowing reminds me of a quote I came across about one Alan Brazil, once a centre forward for Ipswich Town. 'A true bar-room philosopher, Alan resents "so-called experts" more than anyone, because somehow they never seem to agree with him. Clearly, they must have no "common sense".' wrote Taylor Parkes reviewing Alan's 2008 book "Both Barrels from Brazil" in When Saturday Comes (<http://www.wsc.co.uk/the-archive/42-Media/4560-hard-talk>). I'll digress no more, other than to say that on entering bonknhoot, I had now perpetrated the reverse, the "folly of the wise", aka hubris.

It was going to be gybing downwind to start with. My good SOL friends bimber and psail had helped me to finally install QtVlm 5.3-1 and get the NMEA proxy working. What I had given up on before – getting a position feed from SOL to Qt – proved now to be a doddle. There was relatively open water for the first stretch up to Campbell River. Which way to go?



Well, above you see what rumskib (in blue) and I (in red) chose, router assisted, but not unthinkingly so. Straight to the Van Isle shore out of the blocks, short gybes finding a balance between angle and pressure up to as far as Parksville, and then a long sweeping curve across to the Northern tip of Texada for some more short work along that shore and then back across to Van Isle on a now much headed wind on starboard tack. With Qt for the first time in my SOLing showing me my actual position versus her proposed route, life had definitely got easier and – note, each black dot on hmm's chart is an hour sailed – I'd been able to tank up a fair bit of sleep in two spells of four hours straightish line sailing. Mrs. bonk was away, so I could sleep or stay awake as I pleased.

And so it was that, as rummi and I bounced off the beach south of Saratoga at 06:30z on Tuesday morning, I had built up the slenderest of leads on my oft-times nemesis. We had been racing 13.5 hours and put some 62.5nm of ground behind us, that's an average VMC of 4.6kn, and the proper blue goo was yet to come. It was going to be a long race. It made me wonder. Who had dreamt up this race in the first place? Was or is it held IRL?

I did a search and found: <http://www.vanisle360.com/wp/about-2/history/>. Yep, it's a real-life IRL (excuse the hidden tautology) event, but is raced every second year, and will next be run this time next year. But IRL it is a staged event, which to be fair, if you are going to race it in a SOTO30 is not a bad idea, as really the only place to have a kip on a SOTO is on the rail clipped on (see below).



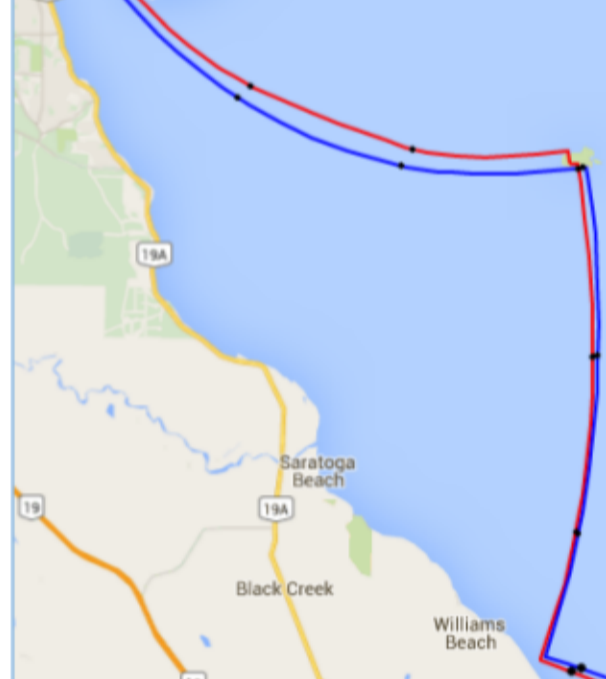
And RainbowChaser informs me, originally, the SOL version of the race was an initiative of SOLer 76Trombones, and in its first guise in 2011 was in fact over three legs, and indeed with the idea of buddying the IRL event in mind. This is what the race description for the first leg in 2011 said:

'In this first of three races around Van Island, race your Seacart the 146nm from the "Bathtub Racing Capital" of Nanaimo through waters once described as "one of the vilest stretches of water in the world" on our way to a stopover in Telegraph Cove.'

Aye, as IRL, so in SOL, and the vileness was still very much to come, but some food for thought for SRC and Marketing perhaps.

A buddied race in legs?

Anyway, coming away from the beach, the wind was still abaft, but starting to move eastward, so that we could curve up to a gybe point right on top of an islet by the name of Mittlenatch, a nature reserve I read and one of many around here I should think, where the wind would start to turn the other way again, and eventually move to from ahead. Rummi held to windward of it and I put in an extra hitch to get me that bit further downwind, inside the new curve.



This new curve was tricky, and one of many consummate skills that rumskib has is crafting curves, and to compound things I judged mine poorly sailing too deep over the middle section on a shorter course in nm, but longer in terms of Δt, so that by the time we clipped past the tip of the Yaculta peninsula, rummi had the lead.

Passing Campbell River we were on a beam reach and with the wind continuing to turn there were now two options for entering the Seymour Narrows: sail a longer distance by luffing up to leave Maud Island at the entrance to starboard and then bear off, or sail a shorter distance with sails eased, beat briefly through the gap between Maud and the mainland and ease. I went for the latter option; rummi held to windward. Now I strongly suspect that rumskib's IRL sailing pursuits were already interfering with his online attention, but, whatever, it got me the lead back.



A reach and a hop (spinnaker drop) followed as the wind kept turning through West into the north, and by 18:00z on Tuesday we were close-hauled on starboard, but easily clearing the Van Island coast. Another bloody curve. No zzz's yet.

And still the wind clocked left, and by 23:00z at Chatham Point it was time to gybe again, and still no sleep. And on they clocked – the time and the wind, over South back into the East and beyond settling at around 330°, i.e. to dead ahead for the passage through the Johnstone Strait, out past Telegraph Cove (where on a previous occasion, the first leg had seen a finish, hint) and on out to the Pacific, where offshore there would be breeze.

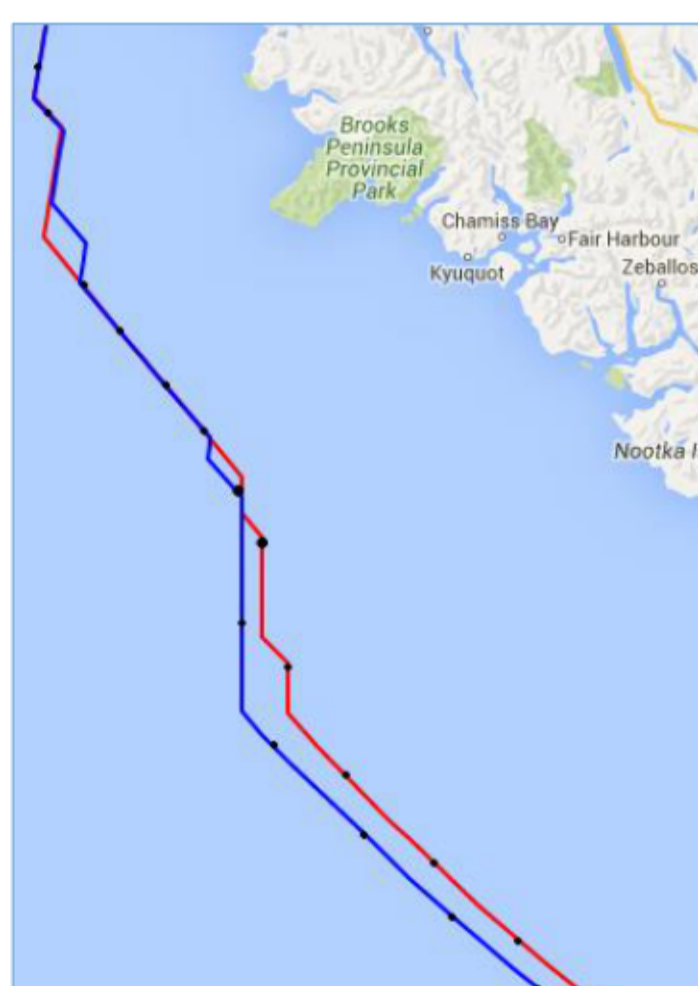
But that was still several days away and first there was some bouncing through the rocks off East Thurlow and then along the coast of West Thurlow. Keeping to the North of the channel was the paying strategy. Sleep was needed. rummi stopped for a first or second barbecue at some stage, and I took a 1 hour power nap on the tack from West Thurlow to Hardwicke and another later for the cross over to Kelsey Bay to pick up some TWD.



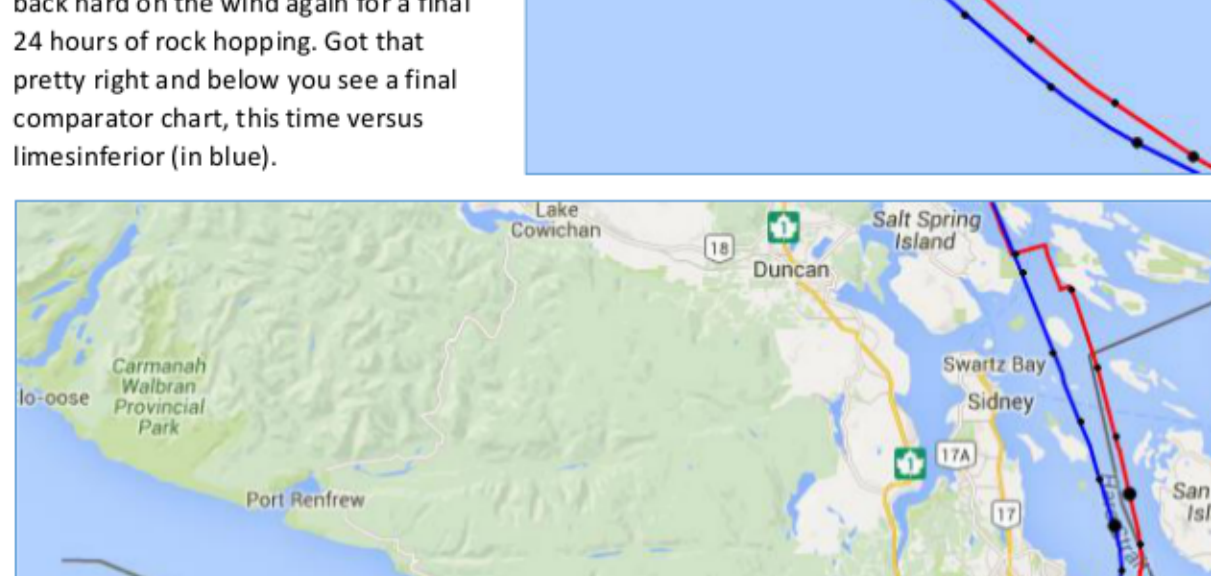
By rights my tracking charts should now switch to Wolff, who had come through least scathed of the vanguard behind me. I'll come to that when we get out on the ocean. Rests me to say, I did not relax when through other's misfortune I got a bit of breathing space. Anything could yet happen. Focus!

Luckily there was a 4 hour stretch on the same tack up the last part of the Johnstone Strait to Telegraph Cove. It was the middle of the day, but I got some sleep anyway, and then during the night I entrusted bonk to a series of DCs, making sure to give Cape Sutil a wide berth.

Clearing Cape Scott at 05:30 it was now a simple matter of sailing out to where the breeze was, a few gybes and then a broad soaking reach remarkably. Our polar for the SOTO30 sail discernably deep when the wind gets up and barely hits the 14kn PL threshold even when the wind gets to 25kn, so not only did we not have to gybe too much, we could do so with some impunity. Adjacent you see Wolfie in blue versus bonkie in red. Wolff kept West a bit more. Hmm.



Hitting the big wind first my lead grew, but coming back in for the final part of the race up the Straits of Juan de Fuca and Haro, it shrank again and even more. I got the entrance to Juan de Fuca wrong, but so did Wolff, bringing I 'n l (limesinferior and longreacher) more into it. The final deciding call was going to be how wide or tight to blue from Race Rocks up round Ten Mile Point and back hard on the wind again for a final 24 hours of rock hopping. Got that pretty right and below you see a final comparator chart, this time versus limesinferior (in blue).



What a race! Thank you SOL!! Thank you all!!! And thank you smo, for looking after the Cup so well.

bonknhoot / May 2016