

This race began a couple of days before the start, with a pre-race analysis of the possibilities, so I could get familiar with them. I call this “pre-processing” – an attempt to save time and cognitive resources during the race proper. An important part of it is getting familiar with the polar diagram, as I think you cannot really go very far without getting to know the subtleties of the boat.

About half an hour before the race, I checked the routing with QtVLM 5.3-7 and set the DCs to the drag race to West Ushant. It would be after that waypoint that the race really started, so I needed time to make up my mind about whether to go inshore or offshore.

The offshore option looked like a no-brainer, but a detailed analysis of the routing suggested the inshore option might be competitive. As I am not as experienced as the competition and a few notches below many of them, I decided to “play guerrilla”, and to the Portuguese coast I went. I was well aware that I would be sailing in light to very light winds for some time, but I hoped the better angles later would offset that. A lot of work would be needed: every weather update would have to be taken into account. The couple of gybes I had to do off the coast of Galicia was a result of that close lookout, and it payed off, allowing me to avoid the wind hole off Vigo and eventually leading to control over the inshore side of the race.

Winning came within sight after I realized that the offshore flotilla had to gybe away from the Portuguese shores and the small high that was keeping the two “races” apart and their pressure might not be enough to compensate for the better angles inshore. Still, it was only after the final gybe towards the finish line that I told myself “ok, you are about to win it, just do not do anything stupid”.

I would like to thank SOL and all the SOLers who took part in this race!