

I decided to submit a race report because it might be the only opportunity I ever get!

I first raced SOTP and continually got annoyed at the way the better performers often went by a less direct route but always ended near the front. How did they do this?

I decided that I would have to try routing and found Kroppyer's invaluable "Introduction to QtVLM" on the solfans website and taught myself by using that and the other resources available through the links on the SOL Homepage.

I study the weather and use QtVLM.

I don't use a "Wind Inspector", am not technically savvy when it comes to e.g. VMC and VMG but recently I have started referring to the Boat Polar in QtVLM for the best Upwind and Downwind VMG which I am learning is handy for SOTP situations.

Whereas some smart, experienced and knowledgeable sailors can do well sailing SOTP I have come to the conclusion that you can't regularly do well (especially in ocean races) without routing, nor can you win only by routing. Only routing experience can teach you what a router can and can't do. If you haven't tried it - have a go.

Routing led me to believe that keeping offshore from Spain and Portugal would be the fastest route to Cabo Raso TS. After the start, two groups formed, one along the rhumb line to Cabo Torinana and the other more westerly and offshore, at 1030UTC on the 15th I was at the rear west of the offshore group which was about 44N level with the south coast of the Bay of Biscay.

Routing after the 1030Wx on the 15th changed my thinking in indicating that an inshore route to the finish would be fastest. I was not convinced that the inshore routing was not a "one hit wonder" so decided to stick to the offshore option for a couple of hours and do another routing which I did and which still indicated that inshore was the fastest course. I did not want to wait until the 1630Wx which I thought might leave me overcommitted to the offshore route but I was still not convinced of the inshore route. In an inspired act of indecision, I decided to take a middle course which would allow me to still go inshore or offshore at the next Wx and lose little time. As it turned out this decision put me on the podium. At the time winds were 20+kn, the middle course gave me a great wind angle, good speed and I ended up further south and ahead of the inshore group - who had been ahead of me - and ahead of the offshore group which I had been part of.

From then it was simply a matter of finding the line in company. Always a few nm behind Alexandria (hoping he would falter) and beside Patrick.

Billy