

The Tall Ships Races 2016 - Race 1 - Antwerp-Lisbon

I started sailing this race because of the school holidays and I had spare time on my hands so I thought I would sail the race. I studied the boat Polar before the start of the race seeing where the VMG points were and to see how the polar could perform in the wind conditions ahead which helped me plan my route for this race as well.

The race started and I was so excited as it was my first proper SOL start in approximately over a year. All was going really well and I got a phone call to tell me that I had to go to a sponsorship meeting for my sailing so I decided to set DC's and to go to my meeting. I got back and I was still in line for an amazing position coming up to "Ushant N".

Later on in the race approximately half way through the race I was coming 12th place and the Top SOLers went offshore for wind pressure and speed...and now it was time to make decisions....Go offshore for wind pressure and speed...or....go inshore for the angle but much less pressure. At this point I followed my gut feeling and I decided that I would take the risk and go inshore for the angle.

I was at one point going a speed of 0.50kts and I was at this point starting to think that I had made the wrong decision (as I always do) but I looked ahead at the weather forecast and I positioned my boat as best as I could for the angle of the stronger wind coming through just as you would in reality hoping for the best.

It was the 2nd last night of the race and I saw that there was a notice on the top of the sidebar of the racing screen next to the chat icon and so I read it and saw that the 1st non-member boat to finish would win a free 1 year membership and I was the first non-member boat...at this point and I was over the moon and I didn't know how to react to this great news!

As the race was winding down I was really pleased to see that my decision of going inshore was correct and I was on my way with Alexandria and Billy to the finish line for my 2nd ever podium finish. This was both Alexandria and Billy's first podium finish and congratulations to them both for an outstanding performance in this race!

There were some setbacks in this race as I had to do my sailing training during most of the days which meant that I would be missing a 10:30 utc WX change but I set DC's to the best of my knowledge and it seems to have paid off. My aim was to be there at every weather change to see how the wind angle and pressure was changing at each of the WX changes so I could find a pattern in the weather to predict my route for the future of the race.

I honestly wouldn't have been able to do this if it wasn't for the awesome team at Sailonline.org and for the amazing competitors who are all so friendly and I am truly blessed to be a part of an awesome sailing family here at Sailonline.org.

I remember when I first joined Sailonline in 2012 I came stone last and it was from that day forward my goal to be on the podium for a Sailonline race. Many people don't know that I am just an ordinary everyday kid who is only 17 years old and I am still a school student but that hasn't stopped me from getting my goal of being on the Sailonline podium for a race and you should never give up either as nothing is stopping you from being on the podium and nothing is stopping you from achieving your goals whether they are virtual goals or reality goals, always work towards them little by little and you will eventually achieve them.

So if I was to give advice to anyone today I would say that you are never too old or young to achieve your goals, always follow your gut instincts as they aren't just gut feelings for no reason and always do what makes you happy. I usually set a goal before the race starts whether it's a position I want to finish in eg. Top 20 or someone I want to be close to or someone I want to beat at the end of the race. (This is your personal goal and you don't have to tell anyone else your goal) every race you should make your goal more and more of a realistic and do-able challenge for yourself and you will then realize that you are getting better and better.

Thank you so much to Rafa for the awesome 1 year membership I am eternally grateful and thank you to everyone else who have sponsored memberships in the past and in the future as it is truly the best feeling ever and it is such a confidence booster receiving such an awesome prize.

Never give up and always believe in yourself because if you can believe it you can achieve it, there's a famous quote that says "Shoot for the moon, if you miss it's alright you'll still land among the stars", nobody (not even the Top SOLers) ever came to Sailonline and magically just started winning straight away, it takes time and always believe in yourself and you could be on that podium or you could be achieving your goals virtually and in reality.

Thank you so much to everyone in my Sailonline family and I hope to see you all on the water in the future. Good Luck! To each and every one of you for your future voyages!

Kind Regards

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