

I was looking forward to this race, partly because it's one of a couple of local races in the SOL calendar for me, and also because Andrew (Kipper) was racing IRL onboard Ragtime. In fact it was only three years ago I sailed the reverse of the course with a friend on his North East 38 helping him bring her back from an extended stay sailing around the Barrier Reef.

Kipper and I had discussed a bit about local conditions, particularly tides and local currents, and had been watching the weather for quite a while beforehand. And indeed the weather did really blow in a few days before the race start. Being winter here, light to blusterly westerlies are common, but this looked like being a strong southerly for the race window.

The early part of the race, navigating ones way through the shallow sand bars of the northern entrance to Moreton Bay is always a challenge, and the top ten boats had started to eek out some slim margins over the rest of the fleet by the time we left the coast off Caloundra and headed north for the run up the outside of Fraser Island. From there it was a bit of a procession until the rounding of the Polmaise Reef mark.

At that point, with the SSE blowing, the myriad of islands, large and small, off this southern section of the Barrier Reef, produced a few quandaries as to the quickest way downwind to the line. A fading breeze to the line added further complication. Giving away early mileage, rumskib and I stayed north of first Barren and the Great Keppel Island, but a good angle and more pressure out to sea gave us a slim margin at the finish over those in the fleet who had stayed south and sailed the shorter course.

Commiserations to Kipper, as Ragtime tore her mainsail off Caloundra early in the race and had to retire.

Dingo 07.08.2016