

Carib Rum Run 2016 – Race Report

Aaaargggghh me hearties, this Fluffy pirate has won his first race!

I think I have had a lot of luck and just a small amount of skill in this race, just enough to get across the line in front of rafa – a seasoned SOLer.

The start to Bacardi Pick-up showed the usual spread of courses pirates had picked. rafa and I sailed almost the same course which proved to be the quickest. Rafa did a better job just before the pickup and I missed the mark, requiring an “unwinding” of my route to round the mark. I was then in 3rd place, about 2 minutes behind rafa, the leader.

I think the front runners got a bit of extra pressure which reduced just behind us, and the fleet started to stretch. The front runners all followed about the same course until Isla Saona, where some (incl. rafa, Slimy, me) went through the straights, and some (Dikky, Mrs_Cheng) went outside. Those that went outside lost a bit of time here. I made up a bit of time to rafa on the way to Brugal Pick-up, and was second in the race, only a mile behind. Rafa gifted me the lead at Brugal with issues rounding the mark, and I ended up 1.8 miles in front. For the first time in my SOL career (not long), I was coming first in a race!

The next leg to Appleton was a reach with a series of gybes along the way. I usually miss the 2.30am weather update, and I think there must have been a wind shift noticeable at that time as most (all?) of the front runners gybed about an hour before me. When we crossed again I was behind rafa again, in close contact with Slimy and Dikky. It was then a slow slog to make up time to the leaders before the Appleton Pick-up, and in the end the 3 front runners rounded it within minutes of each other: Slimy, rafa, then me. Slimy went a bit wide, rafa nailed the rounding, and I was in between the two ☺

Rafa, Slimy, and I match raced (with Dikky in the mix too) the last leg to Cancun. As I noted in the race chat at the time it was now a lottery as to who could call wind shifts and route the best to the finish. Rafa looked like being an easy winner until he (and others) made a short gybe SW. That gave me a chance as I sailed straight on, Slimy beside me. The two of us sailed very close to each other, crossing each other's path, sometimes one, sometimes the other in the lead.

I saw a time where I could give up a small amount of course for a decent gain in distance over Slimy and took that. Luckily that worked (and stuck). Rafa was now some distance away and it looked like he would eventually be able to come in on a hotter (faster) angle to the finish.

By the weather update just before the last required gybe (my first and only 2.30am weather check), it looked like I would be able to sneak in about a minute before rafa, but he would be closing the entire last reach.

Kipper's Cat had to steer me to the finish as I was called elsewhere to pillage (take my daughter shopping). Luckily the cat did a great job and got the rum dropped off first – what was left of it ...

This was a very interesting course, some island dodging, some fine work required to round the pick-ups, and ocean racing where choosing the right time to gybe or tweak course could make or lose minutes. Thankyou to Rainbow Chaser for a great design.

Thanks to all at SOL for being such a fantastic community. I'm glad I found you.

schlumpi787 /September 2016