

After a 2 year apprenticeship and a couple of podiums recently I was delighted to achieve every SOLers' dream – a win!

This was a race in two parts for me.

The decision making part on the second leg NE to Middleton Is. and a race S to the finish – the running scared part.

Leg 2 to Middleton Island.

A big fleet rounded the first mark heading NE as we approached the Unga Is. group. The main part of that fleet broke away and headed more E offshore of the archipelago, the balance including Billy headed through the passage just S of Unga.

At the time, my routings were marginally favouring this more direct course which led as a consequence past the S coast of Kodiak Is.

None of my decisions on this leg were influenced by taking a gamble, playing a hunch or anticipating the weather.

I was #2 but the most northerly boat that counted: the nominal #1, JasonA was not in a good position in the lee of Kodiak Is.

Based on a marginal difference in routing times, I decided to continue NE, more directly to Middleton Is. whereas Franci, StingF1 e.g. headed E for later northing to Middleton. The route I took was a natural consequence of the position I was in and happily, it was favoured by subsequent Wx.

The upshot was that I rounded Middleton Is. with about a 35nm advantage on the field!

Running scared.

I felt like Bambi with a pack of ravenous wolves behind. I didn't expect to stay in front for 2500nm but we set off.

Reaching and running limited the chasers' opportunities to exercise their skills and aided by some Wx which gave me opportunities to sail into rising winds I was able to slowly extend the lead on my constant #2 StingF1.

A few blue holes on the track S were moving fast and never really a factor. I managed my lead for 10 days, didn't commit any monumental blunder – and had my first win. Happy days.

I acknowledge the time and effort put into SOL by the volunteer administrators. Congratulations on a job well done and sincere thanks to all of you.

Billy /November 2016