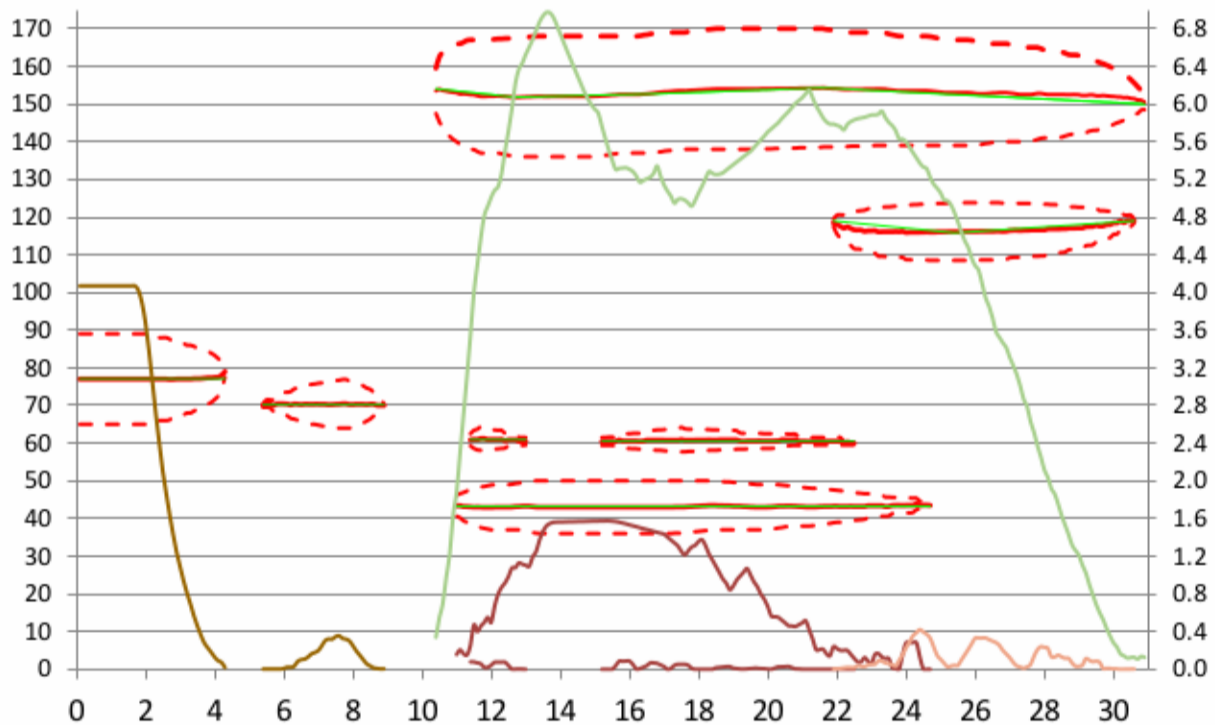


It's been three months since last I felt the urge (as always driven by my delight in a result achieved) to contribute a race report to the SOL homepage. The more careful readers of my jottings will recall I waxed into a range of Corkonian superlatives to describe that magnificent, iconic SYC/SOL buddied classic, The Vineyard, mentioning in passing that a vocal yachtie friend of mine who goes by the name of Maurice "Prof" O'Connell would have categorized it "mighty" and qualified it as "tremendous" (note the "i" and think lilting southern Irish accent).

Well, the Key Lime Pie-gatta is not a bad old race either, but, and I blame "Prof" here, over the days that it ran, my attention to it was less than it might have been. Not that more attention would have changed the outcome, given the form Alexandria is in at the moment. And Dingo too is a hard man to get the better of.

No, the reason I bring it up is because over on the other side of the Florida Peninsula "Prof" had put an entry together on behalf of Conor Clarke, like yours truly another sometime denizen of The Emerald Isle, for the Melges 24 Worlds. So what, you may well ask? Ahum, they won, from a field of 74 boats, including a strong fleet of Italians and of course many Americans (shades of SOL, eheh). Of those 74, exactly half, including Conor's mighty Embarr, a mythical white horse and the Celtic demi-god of the waves, were classed professional, having one or more ISAF Group 3 sailors on board. Making up the numbers then on Conor's steed were Aoife English, whose father Joe, sadly no longer with us, skippered NCB Ireland around the world in 1986, and two "Young Americans", David Hughes and Stuart McNay, who earlier in the year had finished 4th in the 470 Class in Rio. Aoife, aka "Bearla", like "Prof" and this reporter hails from Cork, an independent people's republic on the south west coast of Ireland. Munster, who have a handy rugby team that famously beat the All Blacks in 1978, is in Cork too! People with names like Hughes and McStay inevitably must have some Irish ancestry in their blood, and Ireland also is part of Cork!! So, it was a famous Cork victory and I was much distracted.

What about our Pie-Gatta then? Not least because our chart of the Keys quite ignores the fact that there is a highway that joins them all up, it was a tricky little race. On top of that, our Mini6.50 is a hoppy little thing, as you can see from the graphic below.



I think I got the hopping mostly right, but – I guess it was the second night (in Ireland) – I managed to wander a bit further West than necessary for the approach to Key West. Nevertheless, I rounded in the top 10 but outside the top 3. From Key West, it was upwind all the way to Largo. Pressure and angle were oppositely inclined, and with the keys forming a barrier that you could break through at irregular intervals but through gaps and channels that the router (working in 5 minute jumps) might miss, it was going to be hard to call. I got the first few tacks in just right, and with rafa having missed the mark and having to go back and bimber going ashore for a BBQ, I quickly enough got bonk up into 3rd place.

But could the race be won? One third of the way to Key Largo, a switch over to the waters north of the keys was going to be necessary. I simulated various passages through the gaps between the keys and decided a pass between Marathon and Fat Deer would be quickest. Annie, Francie and Rummie agreed with Bonkie, but we were all wrong, so bonknhoot stayed 3rd.

Great racing, Thank you all!