

A TALE OF TWO HALVES

Yes, the title of this report draws shamelessly from Dickens's "A Tale of Two Cities", and it also refers to Bonkhoot's "Two Halves", a report the Dutch skipper published in 2015 in Solfans (<http://solfans.org/blog/routing/qtvlm/two-halves/>) that I happened to read during the race. But I think it is appropriate, since my feeling is that I raced two races: one from Plymouth to Land's End, and the second from Land's End to the Isle of Islay.

Pre-Race

I did not have the time I wanted to prepare for this race, due to work, so I did the best I could. I realized that the first leg (Plymouth-Land's End) would take place in close-hauled conditions and fresh breeze, and that it would be important to accurately play the shift along the coast between Plymouth and Looe in order to get the best combination of boat speed (Bsp) and True Wind Angle (TWA). Unlike some of the previous races, I did not examine the polar diagram in detail.

The Race: Leg 1

After reconciling myself with the fact that I would be unable to be in front of a PC for most of the leg, I decided to be conservative. I would do my best to "survive" and see what would come next. I succeeded, although I made some mistakes down the road. An early one was miscalculating one of my tackings, forcing me to correct the next one via the mobile app and end up a bit too much to the leeward of the fleet while we were sailing to Lizard.

There would be more problems to come. I ran out of DCs, so I had to switch to "SOTP hand steering mode". In the end, I managed to avoid bbq'ing and staying in the top 10, even though I dropped down the order through a few more steering errors – I think I was eighth by the time we left Lizard on our starboard quarter.

The approach to Land's End would involve another multi-skipper tacking battle. I think I tacked north a tad too late, but the decision was still good enough to get me closer to *sassy63* and *Sadlersailing* while we were rounding Land's End.

The worst was behind me, I thought.

The Race: Leg 2

I was still in SOTP mode, so I set sail directly towards the eastern tip of North Ireland.

I finally managed to get back home and, with some time in my hands, I went about analysing the situation.

First, the router offered a suggestion that seemed to confirm my previous decision.

Then I disengaged the "avoid coasts" feature.

The new suggestion was clearly better than the first one, and it took some time for me to fully understand what was going on.

In short, footing away from the direct route would allow me to make the most of the lift caused by a temporary backing of the wind. If the timing was right and I paid close attention to the weather changes, the move would pay off.

It did. Combined with the fleet dispersion, I made it to second place, more or less halfway between an unassailable *rumskib* and a very combative *javakeda*. The American and I tried to find a way to pass, but we could find nothing.

All in all, I was quite happy: all's well when it ends well, isn't it?