

A3 2016 - Leg 6 - Airlie Beach to Cairns

Two segments, equal in distance, very unequal in time!

The start at Airlie Beach was pretty early. I set an alarm, but slept through it. I'd set a couple of delayed commands the night before, just in case. The good news was that they fired correctly, and I was safely out on the water. The bad news was that I was the wrong side of Double Cone Island. A quick course correction put me back in the direction I wanted to be heading, but I had lost a bit of ground to the leaders. It wasn't a big gap, but I sometimes find in these races that once you slip back, the gap keeps increasing as you search for wind, and the leaders find it.



Double Cone Island – Left, right or in-between?

I spent January 18th heading out to sea, waiting to gybe back in to Magnetic Island. I went a little further east than the main fleet, finding more wind and a better angle while sacrificing distance.

After the gybe, it looked as though real life might come into conflict with SOL life, as the predictor was indicating that we'd be rounding Magnetic Island while I was in a meeting. I set some DCs again, and hoped that I wouldn't find myself on a rock somewhere. They must have went well, because as we headed out to sea again, I was chasing the leaders in about 12th.

Then the winds gods got a little drunk...

The sprint turned into a marathon as the winds got light and flaky. The fleet spread out as we searched for breeze. Each weather update put the advantage on a different boat. As we finally approached Green Island, (and as the winds continued to die), I found myself with *rafa*, *aner59* and *DIKKEHENK*.

Even the last 13 miles would not make themselves easy, as the continuing light air had us gybing our way in to the finish. Rafa would take the race, but perhaps I could still steal the silver. I aimed down the line as far as I dared, gybed as early as possible, and tried to slip past *aner59*. In the end, she got me by 2 seconds. Still, a far better finish than I expected after my day one challenges.

As I say, a race in two segments. The first 130 nm took 14 hours, while the second 150 mile section lasted almost 30 hours. Thanks to the SOL team for all your hard work.

-longreacher

January 21, 2017