

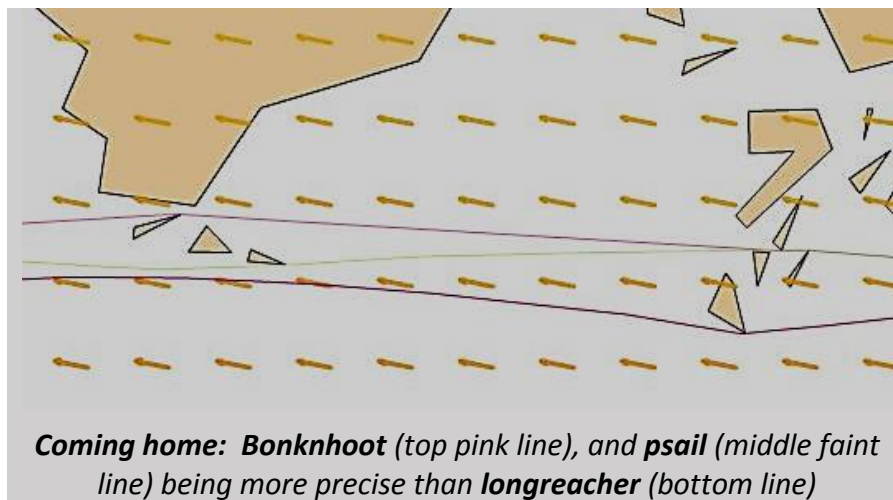
## The Vineyard Race 2017

This was my third crack at the Vineyard since joining SOL in 2015. It's a race that I look forward to each year, but always falls on Labour Day here in North America, and we seem to generally be out enjoying the last long weekend before school starts. This year, the local weather was cold and windy, so I found myself with some time to fantasize about sailing a Santa Cruz 52 through Long Island Sound.

For all my planning and preparation, I actually missed the start by about 10 minutes. Fortunately I'd set a provisional DC a couple of days earlier, which had me going in more or less the right direction, albeit a little north of the main fleet.

My plan was to travel south of Plum Island. Much of the fleet stayed north, which meant that I had to reach across approximately 100 boats to get where I was going. Fortunately there are no protest flags in SOL, or I'd have been buried in them. At Plum, a small group of us threaded the needle and headed for Buzzards Bay Light.

I benefited significantly from staying up late to run the SSANZ race on Friday night, this allowed me to catch the 0430 weather update, and set an accurate DC to make the Buzzards Bay Light rounding. When I woke up the next morning, those of us who had stayed south of Plum on the way out were in good shape. We rounded Block and made our way back across the Sound.



On the final leg, we hugged the Connecticut shoreline. **Bonknhoot** and **psail** did a better job of it than I did, and got some separation on me. By the time we got to The Cows mark, **bonk** was clear and away, and I was in a dogfight with **psail**. I think **psail** had me by a few seconds at the last rounding anyway, but my

conservative rounding cemented my relegation to 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

As always, thanks to the SOL team for putting this on. It's always fun to race against a real life fleet. This time in particular, the SOL boats and the IRL boats were a good match. We virtual types get to hug shorelines a little tighter and travel over shallow bottoms without consequence, but this race was a good validation of the Santa Cruz polar and the weather engine.

-longreacher  
September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017