

Race Report

Santa Monica RONMIEL Regatta 2018

I started this race on a whim. After an hour or so racing I zoomed out and realized that this is the crazy one that they send us around-and-around several islands. This is one it's guaranteed long sleepless nights for days.

Why am I racing? I asked myself. Oh yes, there is a free bottle of rum at the end of the marathon, and there is something about donating money to help children. Ah! That sounds good, I am in.

As it turned out, I've sailed this very same race 6 (six) times before. Six times! And this was my seventh race. This alone should be proof that I have several screws loose in my head.

Not only I sailed six times before, I have won once in 2014 and held the course record of 5 days 0 hours 2 minutes and 48 seconds on a TP 52.

This reminds of my days of real life sailing when after some races I used to swear that I would never step again on a racing sailboat only to run right back onboard for the next race.



Commemorating the 2014 race win with my Brazilian flagged boat "zero".

"Bonknhoot" won the 2016 race under very light wind. It took him over 7 (seven) days to finish. Imagine! Unfortunately, he didn't sign up for this year edition, probably he is still reeling from that experience. LOL.

For this year edition we had great wind during the entire duration of the race, and because of that the course record for a TP52 has been broken! It now stands at 4 days 18 hours 6 minutes and 39 seconds. One of these days, perhaps, the TP52 will break the 90' Monohull record. LOL.

Race history:

Santa Monica RONMIEL Regatta								
Race	Distance = 1185 nm	Winner	Starting Time	1st to Finish	On Course			
					(days)	(hrs)	(min)	(sec)
	90 foot Monohull	ita10267	Apr-05-2011 10:00	Apr-08-2011 23:24	3	13	24	53
# 562	90 foot Monohull	rumskib	Apr-19-2013 10:00	Apr-24-2013 16:43	5	6	43	10
# 685	TP-52	zero	May-01-2014 8:00	May-06-2014 8:02	5	0	2	48
# 813	TP-52	peskasail	Apr-09-2015 13:00	Apr-15-2015 11:59	5	22	59	33
# 930	TP-52	bonknhoot	Apr-10-2016 13:00	Apr-18-2016 0:03	7	11	3	41
# 1042	TP-52	psail	Apr-19-2017 10:00	Apr-24-2017 22:21	5	12	21	46
# 1137	TP-52	Zoe	Apr-09-2018 16:00	Apr-14-2018 10:06	4	18	6	39

Ok, enough of history, let's go to the race report.

This race was mostly about time management. You needed to be awake, and in front of the computer during the islands turns. There was not much to do on the long legs between the islands. Most of the action happened during the turns. The only exception was the last leg, we get to that later.

So, the way I looked at this race was as a series of very short races with some rest time in between. I organized my schedule to be awake around the islands and sleep during the legs in between, regardless of what time of the day those turns happened on my time zone. As Murphy has said, the turns all happened around 2AM to 4AM on my time zone. So, I behaved like a night club worker, sleep during the daylight hours and work during the night. LOL.

As I write this report I am slowly readjusting my internal body clock to my normal schedule. Night is meant to be in bed, sleeping. LOL.

We had great competition on the first leg to 'Hierro'. Slowly, though, sailors started to fade away, certainly due to exhaustion. We lost 'rumskib' early on, and 'psail' half way thru the race. Too bad, since these two are past winners in this race and off course strong contenders. (After a long BBQ, 'rumskib' went back to finish the race. Cheers mate!)

‘Zoe’ got to ‘Hierro’ on top of the leaderboard and despite being well awake and, on the computer, I jumped the gun and sent a turn command a hair too soon and POW! Hit the rocks. Boy! When am I going to learn?

It was a short hit but enough to bring down the performance loss to 80% and loose about 10 places.

Between ‘Hierro’ and ‘Tenerife’ we lost several boats and ‘Zoe’ was back near the top. ‘rafa’ and ‘Kipper1258’ were battling for the gold almost side by side, a little back was ‘LastCall276’ and ‘Zoe’ 0.22 nautical miles behind. At about 10 kn boat speed, I was 1 minute and 19 seconds behind ‘LastCall276’ in fourth place and, 2 minutes 44 seconds behind the leader.

As incredible as can be, these same four boats maintained the pace close together for the next 2 plus days. Going around the islands like lemmings following each other.

On the long stretch between ‘La Palma 2’ and ‘Lanzarote’, ‘rafa’ sailed the rhumb line when we three sailed well south for better angle. Because of that, ‘Kipper1258’ took the lead and both me and ‘LastCall276’ were able to get closer to ‘rafa’. At the ‘Alegranza’ turn ‘Kipper1258’ was ahead of us, close but comfortable ahead. Sleeping time for me until ‘Selvagem Grande’.

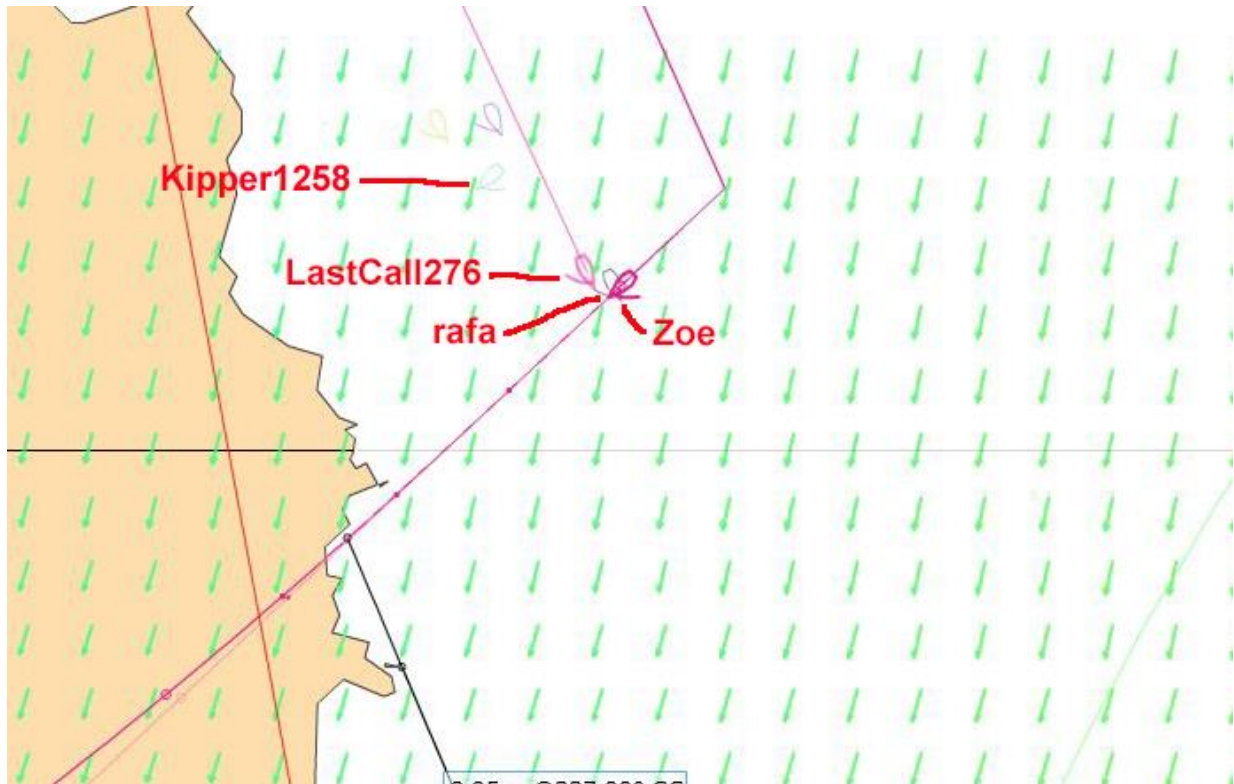
Just after turning ‘Selvagem Grande’, ‘Kipper1258’ for some reason gybed left (East) and we continued West. Likely he was away from the computer and unfortunately for him that gybe cost him the race. (We all being there!)

It is no secret that a few months ago I joined the Qt club, (Thanks Joao/psail for all the help). I still don’t use the NMEA automatic Lat/Lon inputs and I have no plans to use it. I like to input my coordinates by hand. But, still, there are times when the Qt does not work for me and I revert to SOTP sailing. Qt is not an answer to win races, but just another tool in the tool box. A powerful tool I must admit!

This last leg was the only leg that the new Weather came well different than the prediction and caused a need to change the game plan. It was strange too, that the Qt router wanted me to go East and my gut feeling told me to keep going West.

So, after ‘Selvagem Grande’ I disregarded the Qt outputs and it was all SOTP. To be precise, I had ‘AGage Angle Tool’ opened and because we were all so close together I used an Excel spreadsheet and the tp52.csv spreadsheet to calculate with better precision the correct VMG downwind. So, let’s call it SOTP Plus, or SOTP+ for short.

‘rafa’ and ‘LastCall276’ over-extended and gybed a tad later than me, and ‘Kipper1258’ was now coming back from his easterly leg. When we all crossed path, ‘Zoe’ was ahead of the group! That was an unexpected surprise! But, also kicked my blood pressure in overdrive. (Don’t tell my doctor.)



From that cross to the finish line it was a gybe ballet between us three. I was constantly fine tuning my ideal VMG as the wind speed was slightly changing.

Also, the wind was slowly shifting East. So, the game plan was to be gybing as close to the island as possible even when the wind was lighter there.

Full concentration for not crash the rocks and for not letting ‘rafa’ position himself between me and the island. I had to keep him east from me at all times.

To me, that final six or so hours was one of, if not the best SOL experience I’ve ever had. I was sailing among two sailors that clearly knew what to do and were both very ready to overtake me on any minor mistake I made. It was a fantastic fight to squeeze as close near the island as possible to get a bit more angle.

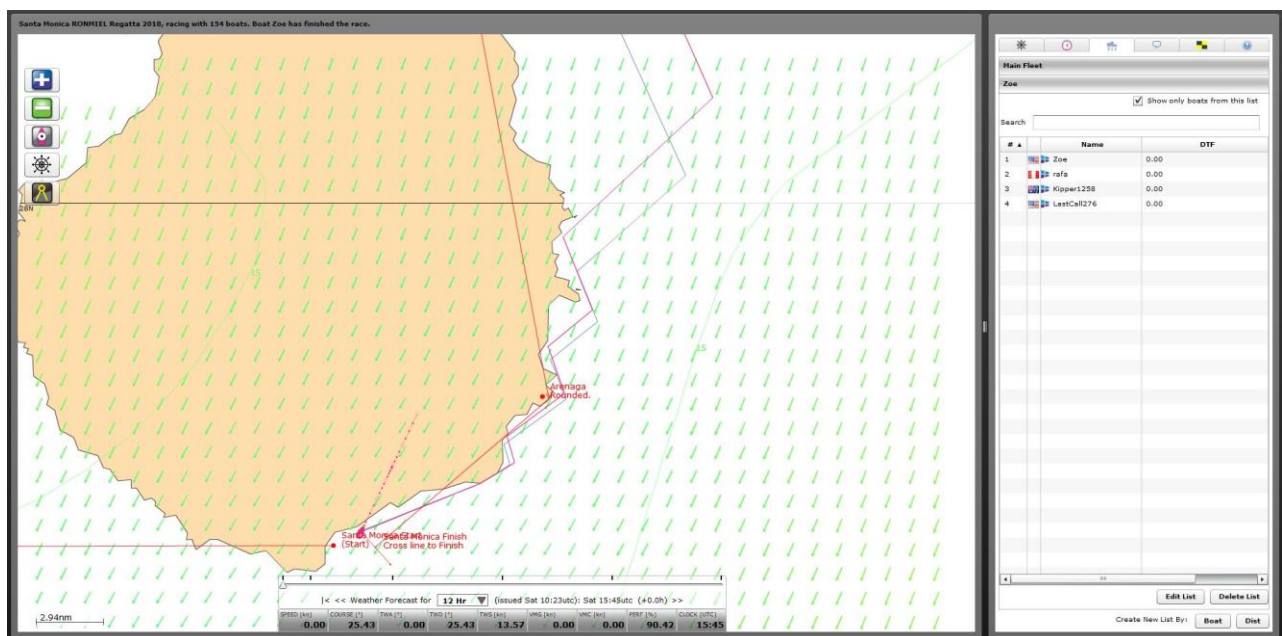
‘LastCall276’ crashed the rocks and lost the train. Now, it was just ‘rafa’ and me. Blood pressure rising!

Part of the reason for my stress was because I was feeling bad for once again take the cake out of rafa's mouth at the last minute of the race.

Back in 2014, 'rafa' was leading for most of the race. That was 4+ days in the lead. Unexpected he crashed during the 'Alegranza' turn, just for a few seconds, but enough for me ('zero' at the time) to overtake him and win the Rum. Then, just last weekend, I won the sprint race just 3 seconds ahead of him.

And now, here I was crossing the line in first place just 5 seconds ahead of 'rafa'. Oh man, I don't know what to say.

All I can say at this moment is that I am extremely happy. 😊



Gybe ballet between 'rafa' and 'Zoe'.

Thanks to all sailors who participated. See you again at the 2019 RONMIEL.

Antonio / Zoe