

The wind blowing down the Portuguese coast all summer long is called the Nortada, which surprisingly means north wind! Sometimes it blows a little stronger, sometimes it moves a little further offshore... yadiyada, yadiyada, as I noted in my report last year.

I first became aware of said Nortada in 1978, when Finn Lyden (that was hoot, my helmsman) and I Ford Escort van-topped the new 470 – a Parker hull which I'd collected from the yard in Boston on The Wash in East Anglia that very early Spring and fitted out at home – from Cork to Cascais, picking up a spinnaker from Cheret in La Rochelle on the way, and camping on the Spanish-Portuguese border when we found it to be closed when we wanted to cross round midnight.

We were into cool sailmaker logo's. Our white sails were by Musto & Hyde, who used the red silhouette of an FD as their trademark, which of course Musto without Hyde still uses to this day for their sailing (and riding and shooting and ...) clothing brands, and Cheret got the vote for our spinnaker, because we liked their Olympic Triangle, Sausage & Beat to Finish logo, and because they had a very day-glo pink as a colour option. Surprising by the way, how many sailmakers of that time ended up as tailors; Murphy & Nye another that springs to mind!



Anyway, when we got to the Clube Naval de Cascais, a few days early, the East Germans were already out on the water practicing. In grubby orange overalls they didn't look like much, but when we went out onto the course to race it became clear that the GO letters on their mainsail meant more than just Germany Ost, and that they were members of a significant majority that were faster than we were. However, there was this ever-strengthening breeze – Force 6 and beyond – the further out to sea you went, and of those very many that were faster than us, very many just avoided getting into it, keeping to the east on the beat (fair enough) but also on the run (470s are a bit wobbly downwind, especially when gybing in big seas in a F6). So, since we generally had fallen back into the bottom five by the time we had to run downwind, for us it was “no option” and we gybed out to sea every time, thus saving our blushes a little, usually picking up twenty places only to lose half of them on the last beat to the finish. Oh well... but both the K (nowadays that's GBR) entrants finished behind us overall, which was quite important as we were from Ireland.

Oh, yes, Murray Jones, later to be a member of the afterguard of several winning AC campaigns, and Andy Knowles, a trainee solicitor, from Kingdom Zealand won those Europeans by a distance, registering three bullets straightaway followed by a bevy of minor places as they added some caution to their gameplan. Our paths were diverging even then.

That dormant local knowledge stood to me as it did last year for our SOL TR, so naturally I went out sea on the downwind leg from Buggio to Espichel, deftly gybing my Tri 60 without incurring too much Performance Loss, for both my runs, but with the good fortune of mucking up my first attempt (it's a challenging course!) but not my second, which was the opposite of what rumskib and Kipper1258 did. The top of the final leaderboard all got that second run in early over the extended TR period, and though better wind threatened from time to time, NOAA in the end never delivered. Which was a pity for all concerned.

Thank you all for the great racing.