

2018 Sundance Marine Melbourne Osaka Double Handed Yacht Race

This opportunity to join the ORCV and compete virtually and side by side in a Jeanneau Sunfast 3600 with the real racers including Roddo and his son, was not to be missed. Unfortunately, TC Iris disrupted the race for the race committee and real-life sailors.

Apart from the 19 Official entries I counted 62 Australian SOL entries in the 234 nominations. It was a great recruiting effort by the Victorians and roughly 30 of the 50 Australian newbies started, I hope they enjoyed themselves and will join us again in future.

We started in The Rip - not sure how that would go in real life-

The TWD was suitable to angle for a fast start for a short time and Billy rounded Wilsons Promontory in the leading bunch.

Sailing along the south coast and up the east coast past Byron Bay was straightforward routing with QtVIm. On such long races I usually download a 14 day Saildocs grib and route that to some sensible point then use the SOL Brainaid grib to route to a chosen point on the Saildocs track.

We sailed through the Coral Sea towards the tropics, the dreaded Doldrums and the Solomon Sea. We were early enough that TC Iris had no significant effect on us.

As we approached, routings through the Solomon Sea consistently preferred a track west of Bougainville Island so I had no hesitation in following that route and the leading group had a dream run in at least 5kn TWS all the way, (as I remember). Not typical Doldrums weather at all.

We could claim to be the "leading" group at that stage and as we headed north I started thinking "where next".

Osaka was still over 2000nm NNW. My simplistic theory was that to get to Osaka we had to go west but mainly north, it seemed that prevailing winds were favouring the northing so I concluded that I should do my westing at the first and fastest opportunity. I had worked my way west as it was and around the 14th April the Wx and QtVIm gave us some encouragement for a more westerly track, Dingo and I discussed this encouragement in chat and as I was eager for a way west I only hesitated for a few hours, thankfully Dingo hesitated for a Wx or two. As it turned out this was the decisive move for Billy. Wind direction and polar were helpful, I ignored QtVIm and sailed generally NW until I was about 30nm west of everyone in that leading chorus line and about 80nm east of the rhumb line. As I recall Chaos and rumskib were already at a similar longitude and approaching south of me. I am not sure where they had come from but I think also west of Bougainville but never so far east into the Pacific as our leading group.

In the next few days the more westerly boats advanced and I got to a reasonably realistic #1 about 8nm ahead of rumskib and Chaos. I was able to maintain a similar advantage all the way to the line. It was simply a matter of keeping alert, nervously watching my back and not blundering, until achieving a welcome and very satisfying win, in a long, challenging and interesting race.

Thanks again to the SOL Team and the ORCV for getting this co-operative project together.

Billy 24/4/2018