

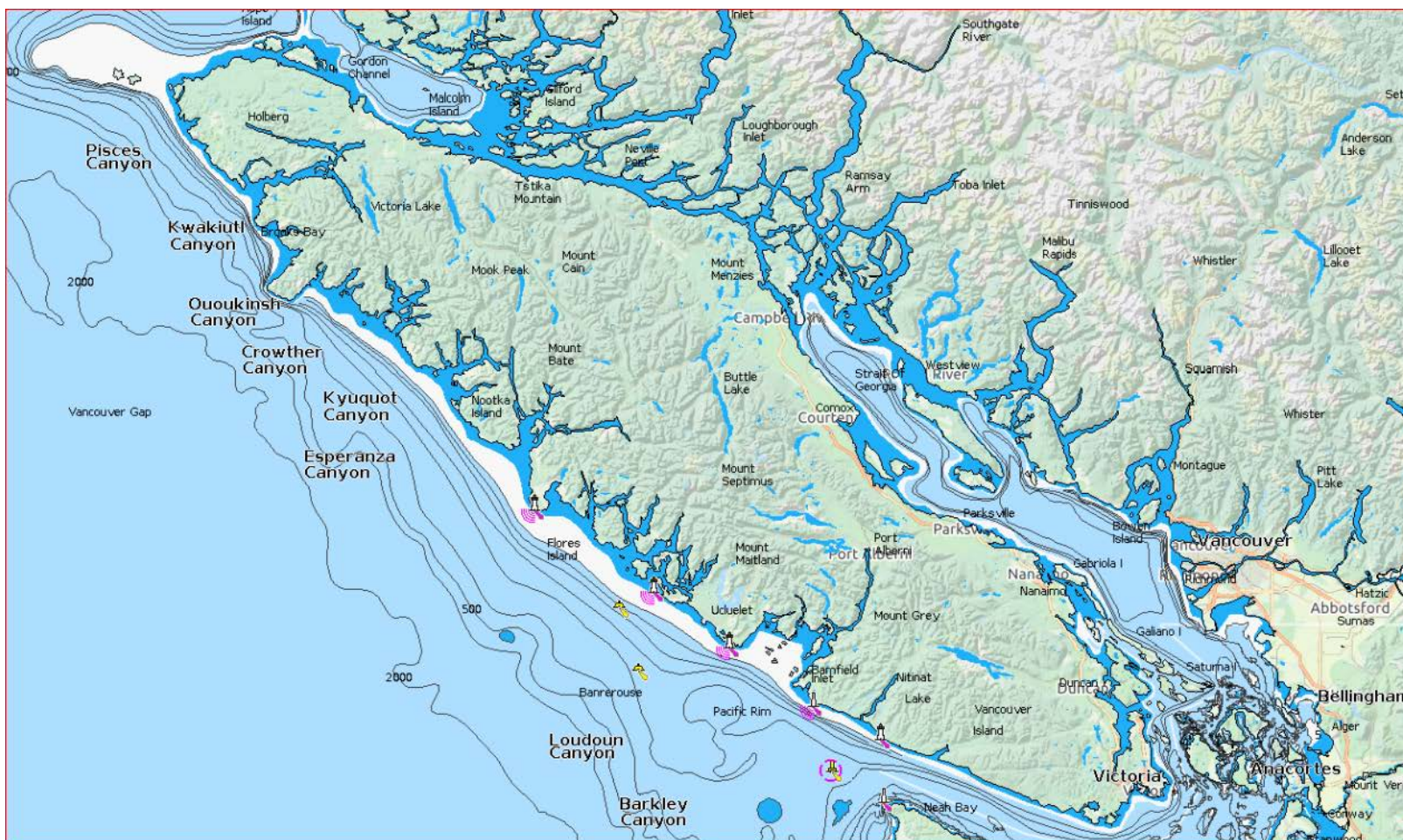
Seven

My purpose is not to polish the won gold medal but, I compare the SOL *Vancouver Island* race to climbing one of the tallest seven mountains in the planet.



It has all the ingredients to be the toughest SOL regatta:

- 1 - Light or almost no Wind at all;
- 2 - If/when it “blows”, it is constantly shifting;
- 3 - Narrow main Island channels;
- 4 - Large number of mini Islands (even in the SOL simplified chart) not only waiting for you to pay a visit (aka BBQ) but also offering the skippers
- 5 - several waterways and routing alternatives;
- 6 - False sense of release after passing Scott Islands (NW Island tip) and turn South for the Downwind Leg to Victoria - when you think the “nightmare” is over... it won't get any easier approaching the FL;
- 7 - Very demanding on concentration all along the race duration plus several nights in a row erode even the strongest minds.



Charts *Navionics* courtesy(<https://webapp.navionics.com/>)

Another tough trace in the SOL calendar is the *Santa Monica RONMIEL* regatta, coincidentally both sailed with the same boat, as SRC in this year edition opted for using the *queen* of all SOL boats: the TP52.

Would have we used the primordial SOL sailboat; we were still racing by now.



TP 52 SuperSeries, Cascais 2015 (photo by the author)

In resume two mountains already *climbed* - Canaries (2017 edition) and Vancouver races.

Suggestions

From the fleet - *Fastpassage* Skipper - came a suggestion for future editions: divide the overall race path in several legs and round the Island in clockwise direction.

In a certain way I can understand it but, in IMHO it we'll ruin by far the charisma the actual format has.

From this corner I reiterate two-in-one suggestions, not only concerning this particular race but the used sailboat, to know:

A - Organize an OD 52 Series sailed with the TP 52;

B - Include the SOL *Vancouver Island* race in the 52 Series.

Special ones

No, they aren't the sailing versions of José Mourinho. By the contrary.

Without any prejudice to the remaining brave competitors that went along and cut the FL, the following Skippers/boats made my life really hard:

- *Rafa*,
- Andrew / *Kipper1258*;
- Patrick/ *Patrick70119*,
- Finn / *Bimmer*.
- *CelemansRKN*.

I'm grateful for the privilege of having with them a good fight in the field, in particular from SOL *Light Winds Master*, Rafa. Each one of those Skippers could have brought home the desired gold.

Sailing

Somehow this race resembles me the timber rafting technique.

Yes, mainly in the first half of the race you try to flow North as fast as possible (1 - 2 Kts in "fast forward" mode) surrounded by a large quantity of equals along the narrow available waterways.

Avoid land and just flow the best you can.



Credit: <https://blog.lostartpress.com/2013/07/01/walnut-timber-from-arkansas/>

In this first chapter, Andrew / *Kipper1258* found out the right path ending the up-North Leg with light years of a more than comfortable margin to the followers.

I never thought that after leading 2/3 plus of the race, Andrew went in the final to miss a more than deserved top Podium position.

Never I did, and sure him also.

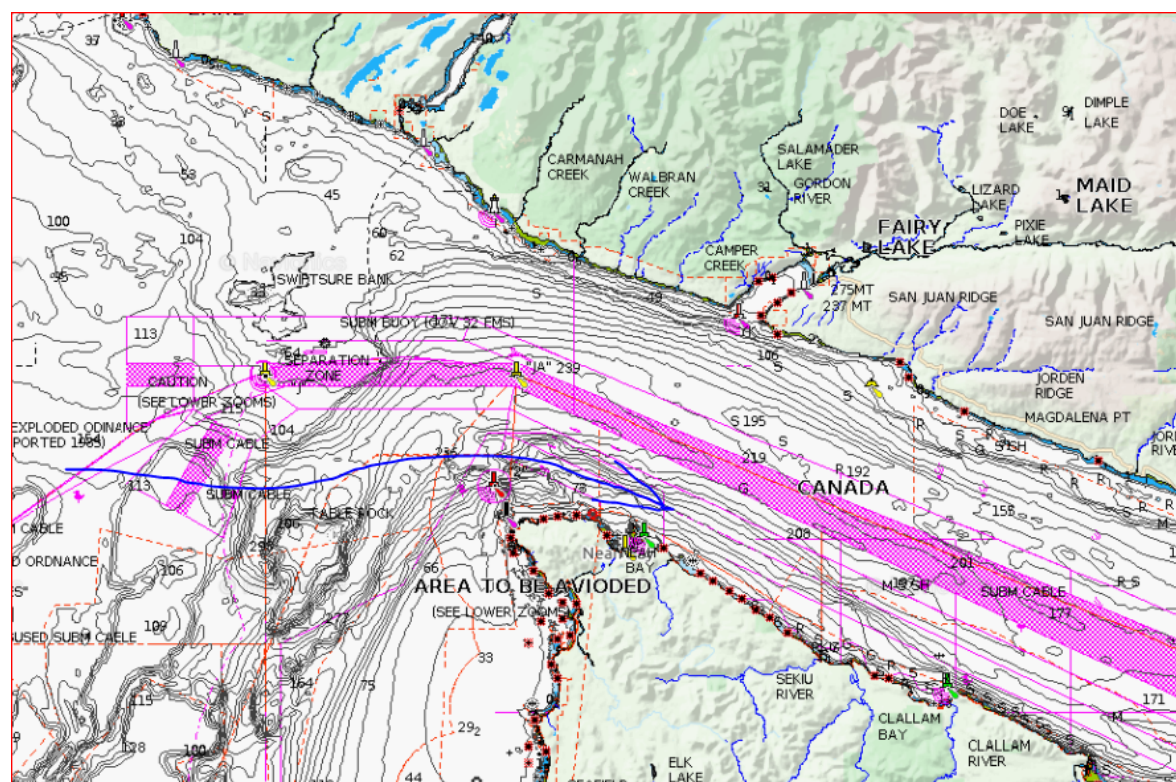
After the initial turmoil, I left *Scott Islands* passage around #6 - #8 position, if I recall it right, and the Downwind leg offered some changes to recover a little more, at least to get closer to the leading group competing then for the remaining Podium positions, as Andrew was happy & lonely bound South in his way to Cape Flattery, in the Juan de Fuca channel entrance.

It was a matter of choosing the right Gybing points, inside the good WP zones and take advantage from the never ending Wind shifts.

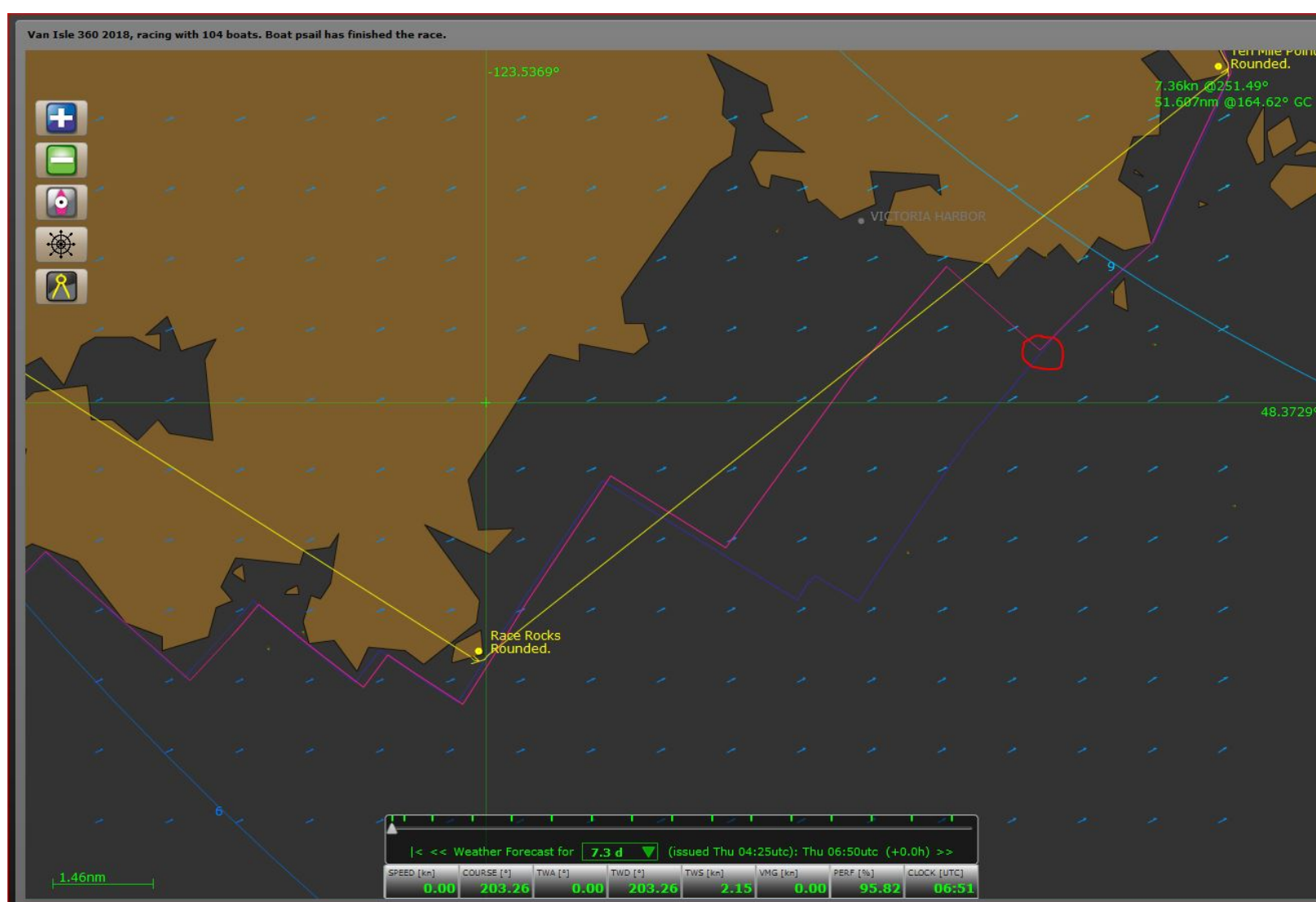
This South passage is usually made close to the left side of the Channel (our back turned to upstream), or closer to South entrance side.

One of the first routings I've made for the Downwind leg, gave precisely this (almost trivial) solution - blue arrow on the picture.

However, the last one I've used to make it, put the TP sailing on the opposite side, to the North, and keeping close as possible to the shore till reaching the *Race Rocks* mark.



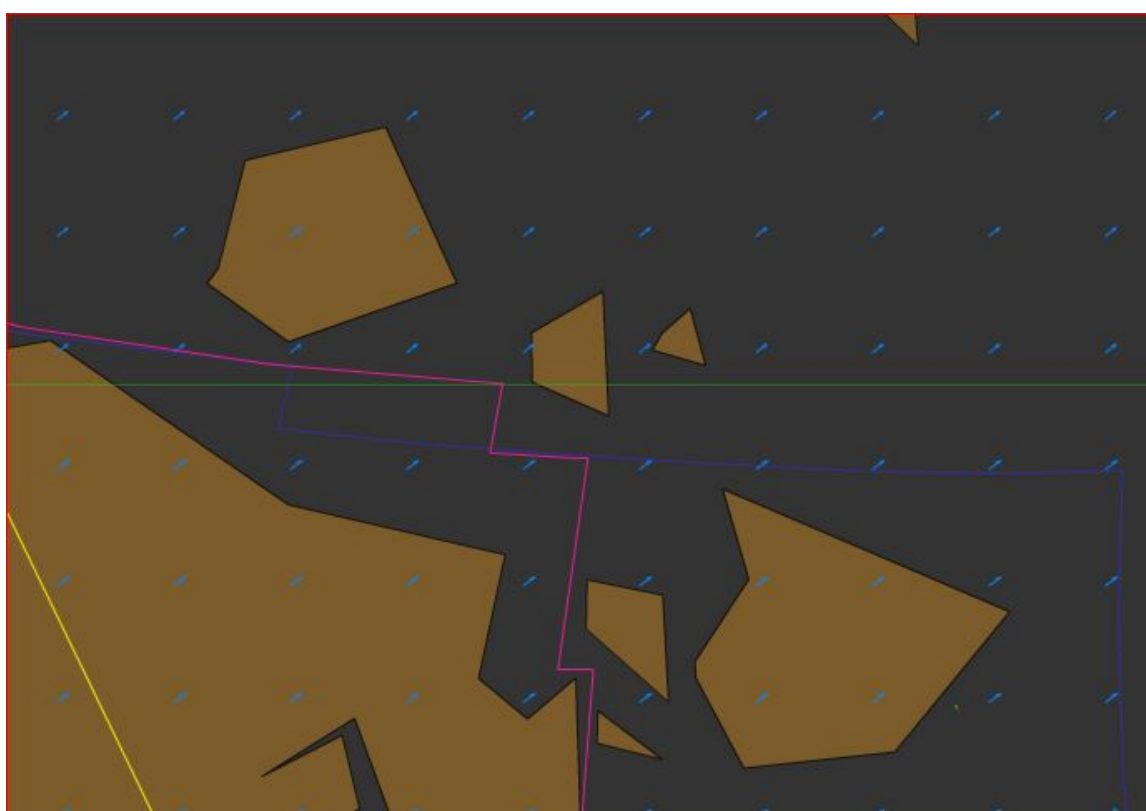
By then the gybing duel in the front pack had just popped with a strong promise to be kept for the penultimate night. Next picture shows (red circle) the exact moment where I've managed a millimetric Leeward gybe in front of *Rafa* (path in faint blue) 4,85 nm before rounding *Ten Mile Point* race mark. He kept the Leeward control position, and I had some 1/100 of better (TWS;TWD). Andrew went for that night (time here) with only two gybes, which made him lose top position.



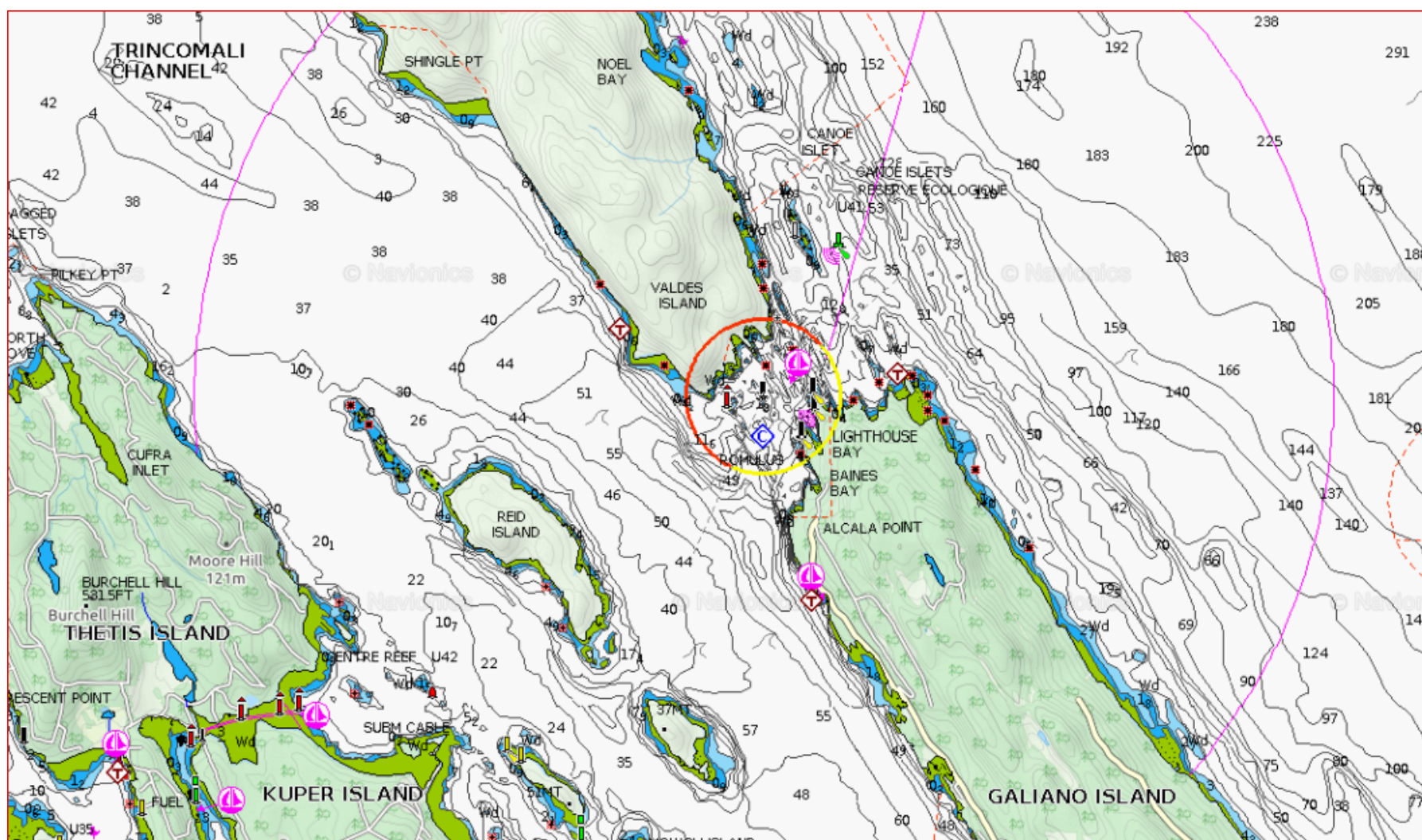
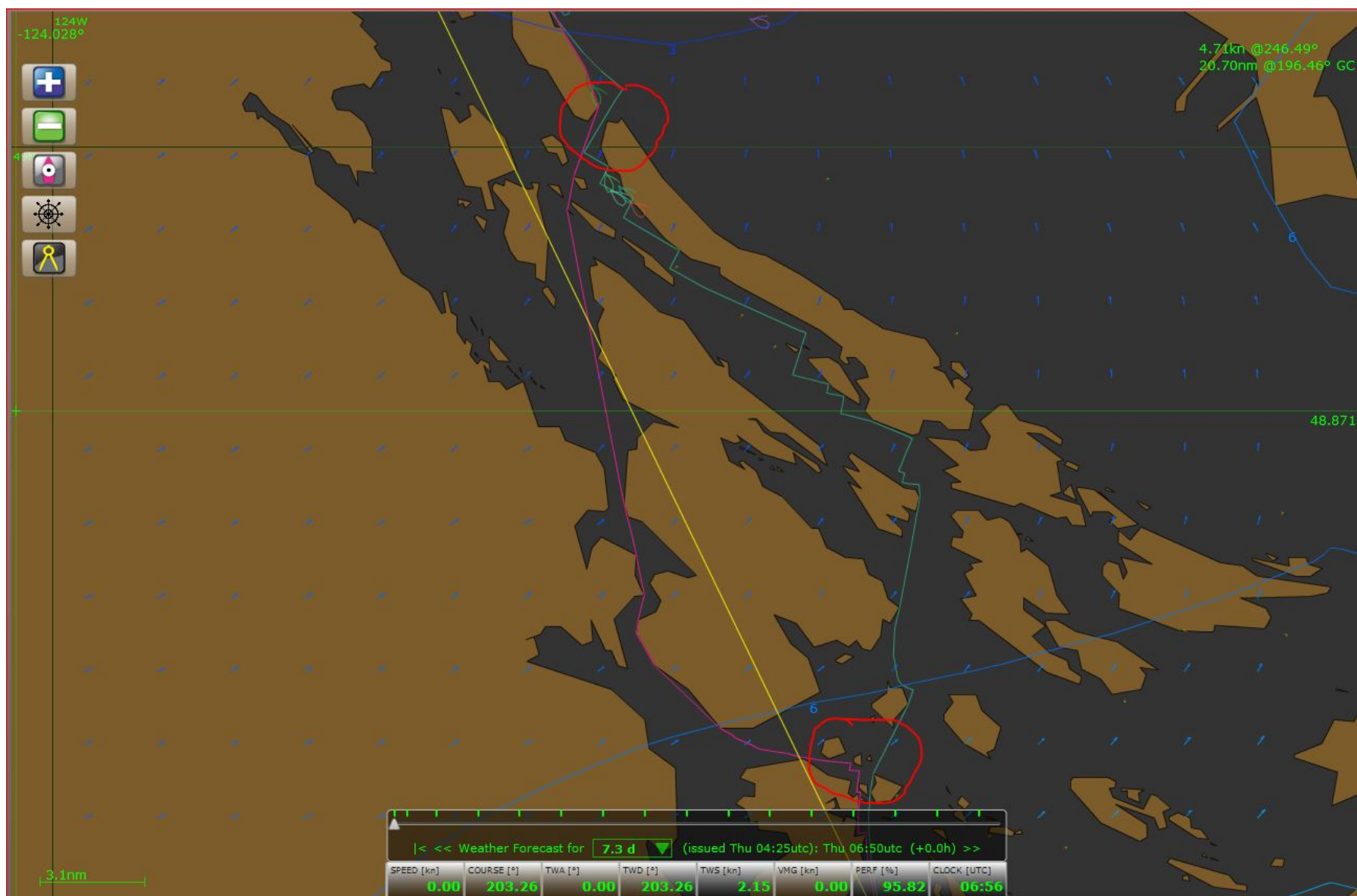
Just after rounding *Ten Mile*, I broke with an inside tack, while *Rafa* continued N/NE. That was the first critical race move.

Andrew didn't broke and, by then, kept trailing *psail* to North.

In the following daytime we kept tacking inside whenever was needed to keep closer to the shore line along the *Saanich Peniinsula* shore with better WP/TWD, and, in spite of the extra negative VMC, we managed to slowly gain distance and especially position on the remaining top fleet, something that was measured by more than 1 nm (note: we were sailing then under BS = 1,30 Kts) in the crossing paths between *psail* and *Rafa* - red circle in the next picture and zoomed image.



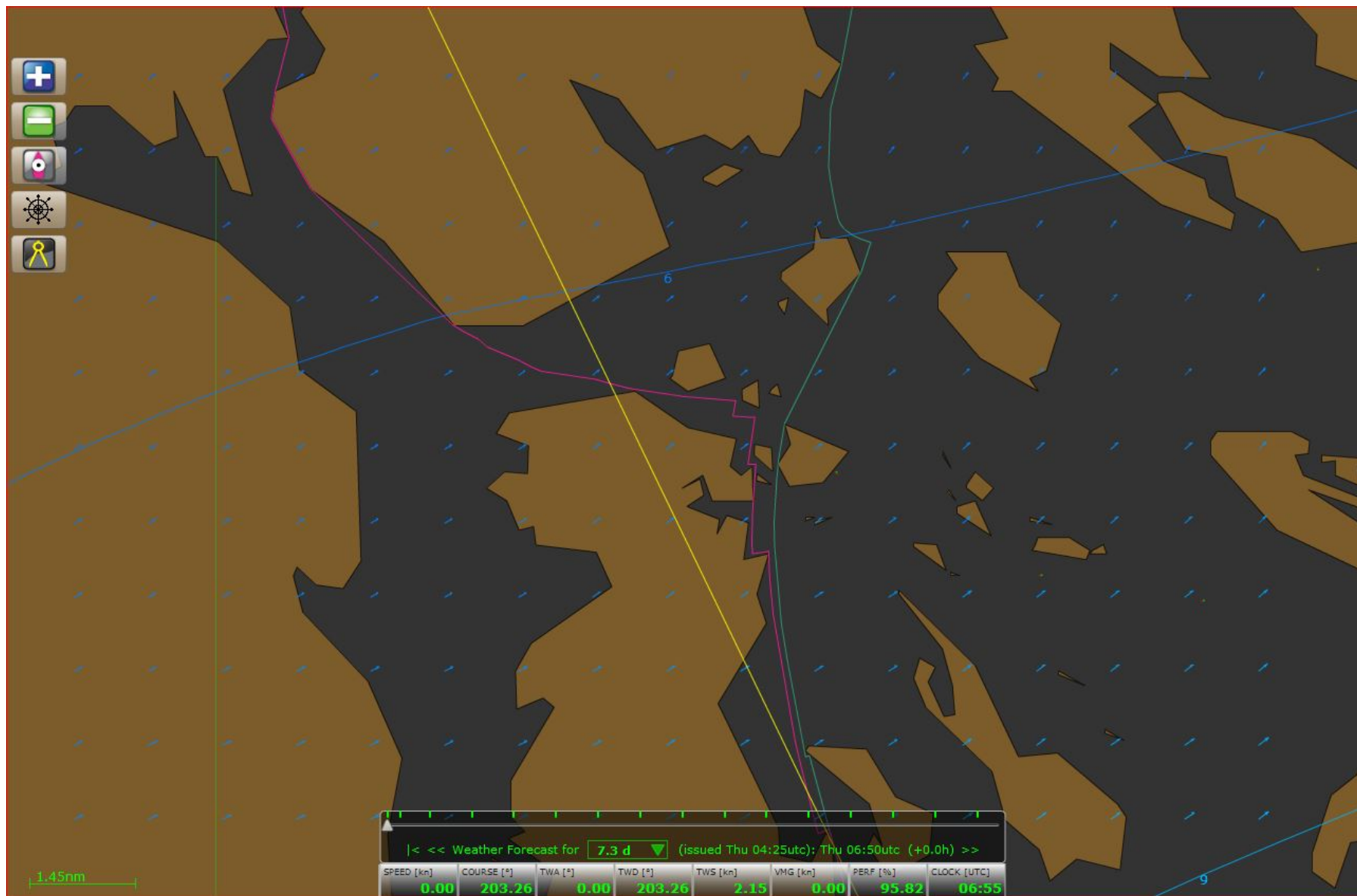
Only in the late afternoon of the last day, while re-routing with the 16:30 hrs WF the morning route (not a new one), I found out the final path to the FL, **unequivocally** along the left side of the race rhumb line till the *Porlier Passage*, i.e., rounding *Saltspring Island* by the East side, not so trivial but proved to be the winning strategy.



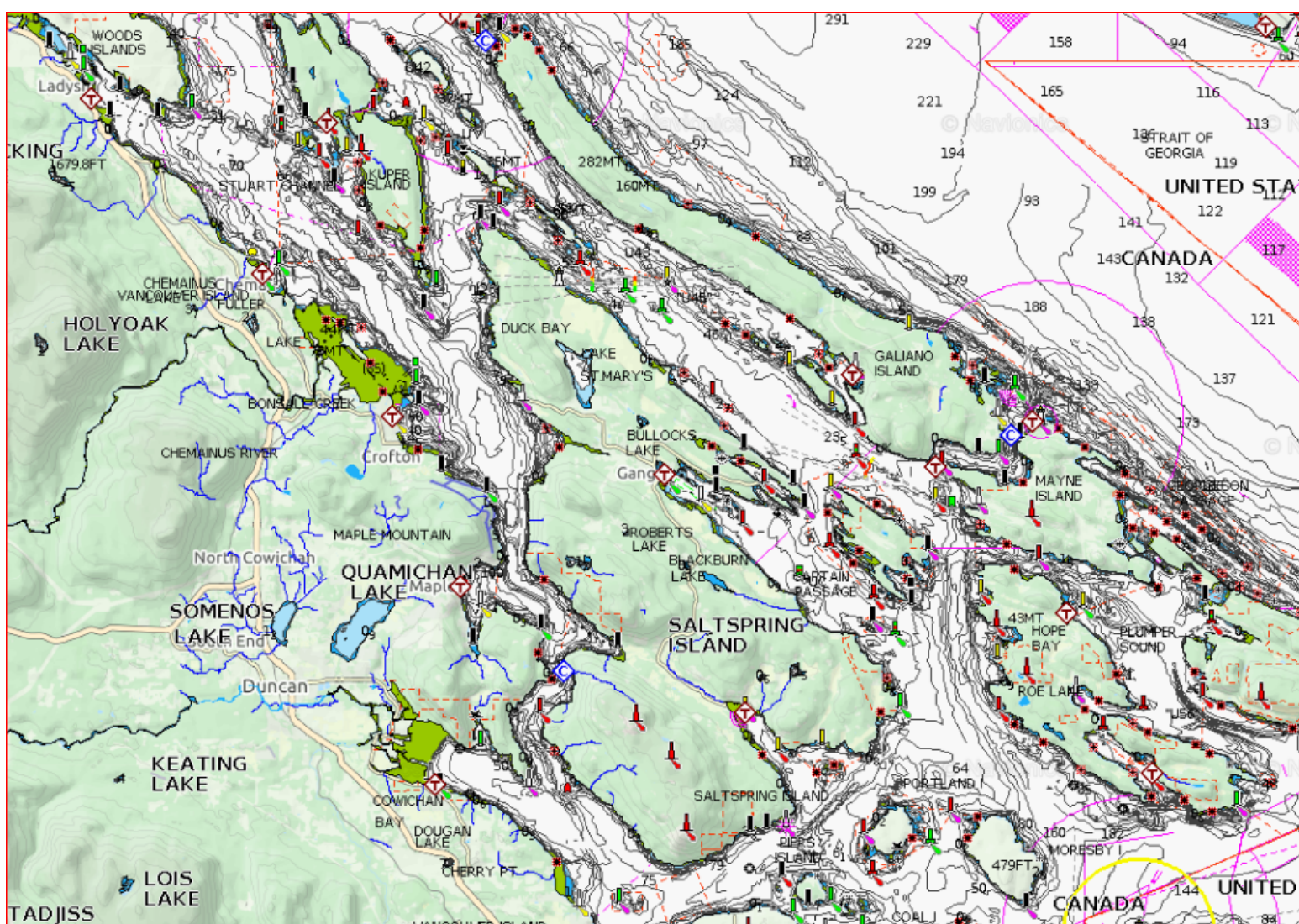
Porlier Passage

Before reaching the end of the Peninsula and even before *Rafa* made a tack to East, Andrew / *Kipper* (light blue in the following picture) decided to broke with *psail* and went NE (!?).

At that moment he was #2.



It was an odd situation because, *psail* closer contender (*Kipper*) went away to the wrong field side, the other (*Rafa*) which was on the “wrong” path came to the god one.

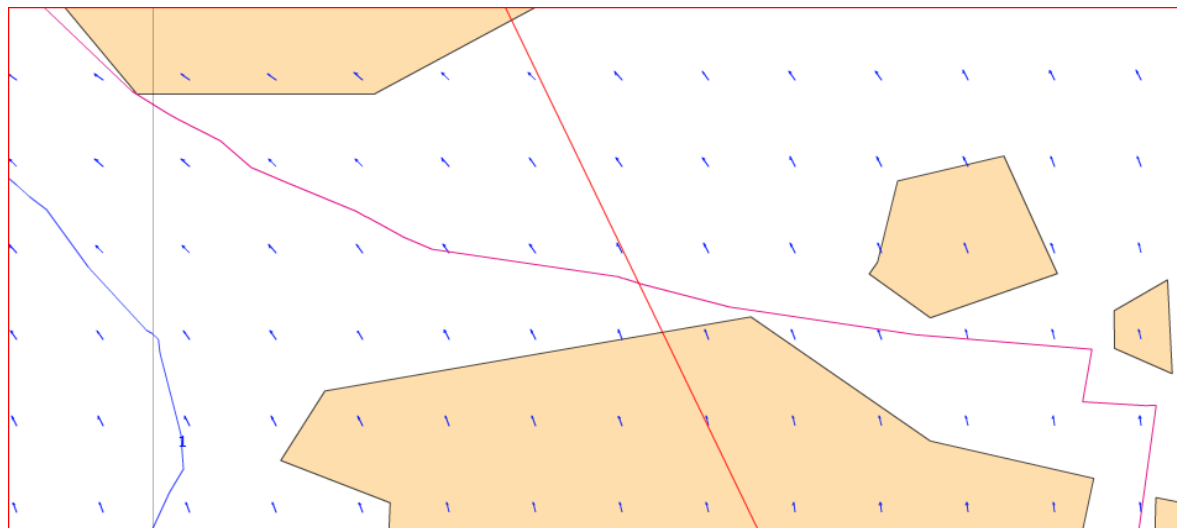


The second critical moment was played around *Saltspring Island* where a patch of low Wind, boomerang shaped, went moving South and after West and it was about to entrap the West side boats for quite a long time.

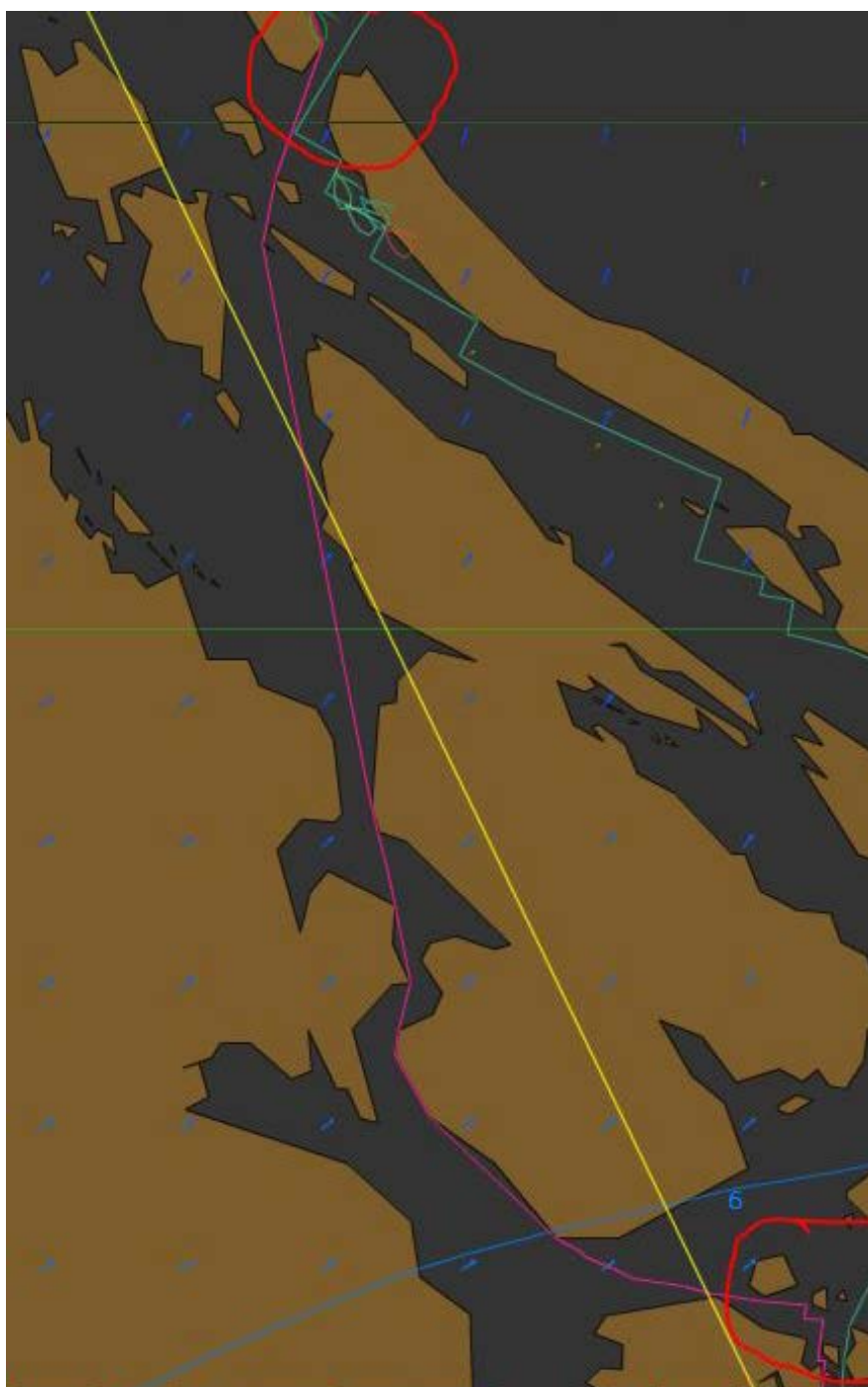
In the afternoon re-routing I saw that coming, probably *Rafa* also but, apparently, Andrew didn't (?).

Small

When *small details are the devil*.



Before entering the SE tip of *Saltspring* I even had time for putting the very fine routing in action "snaking" the TP under the Polar hoops (yes, at TWS = 1,0 - 1,5 Kts it hoops) "sucking" all available energy to stretch the initial distance to *Rafa* (0.7 - 0,8 nm) to more than 6 nm reaching *Porlier Passage* alignment (by then *psail* was making BS = 6,40 Kts).



That last routing also confirmed the possibility for making an almost perfect geometric path between the rocks vertexes in tune with the prevailing right Wind shift for making the final jump to the "outside".
In a word: perfect!

The final miles were sailed with me bunking confidently the late night uploaded DC's were good to round the last two race marks, so my apologies for not thanking at the time to the SOLers podium greetings.

Last words to my friend Andrew, moreover related with a brilliant article written and posted by our common friend Jan / *bonknhoot* in a *SOLfans* web page: <http://solfans.org/blog/uncategorized/confessions-from-the-canaries/> .

Probably what I found out during the last race routings could, or better, should have been also seen by Andrew and, probably the race outcome could have been different. He knows what I'm referring about.

So, in part I owe Andrew and Jan the present Podium. Thank you both.

Congratulations to Finn / *Bimmer* and *Fastpassage* on the remaining Podium positions and by that order.

Thank you SRC/SOL and all SOLers that made justice to this epic regatta.

Over from here & Out into the next one.

Lisboa, 24.May.2018

João / *psail*