

Far East Tall Ships 2018 Race Report

The race was supposed to feature real race tall ships but unfortunately there were challenges both technical and environmental preventing them to appear on our screens (once could have opened an external tracker but I never did). First the start was postponed by two days but even then SOL race started before the real ships that were now cautious to start due to the close proximity of the incoming typhoon Jebi which eventually brought a sadly devastation into Japan (but missing our race course).

The first leg of this course required careful navigation through an archipelago south of Korean peninsula. The most optimal route was blocked by the big Geoje island and south of it there was a number of small islands. I tried to find the best route but missed the correct combination that first went as close to Geoje as possible but then eased a bit to pass the next small island on south side. I had tried and checked how I could pass that last island north of it while coming from the more southern route but the angles were not good enough so I settled to go south of both. This cost me around 0.2nm.

The next challenge was how close to sail the peninsula as winds were much better far in the open sea and there were also two major wind shifts coming up so that the last part before Donghae mark had headwind forecasted. I chose a route in the middle, not very extreme to avoid extra distance to remain as one of the northmost boats. Those who tried the shortcut soon were in low winds and couldn't keep up. Luckily those who gained that small lead earlier went further east than the rest losing the closer-to-the-next mark advantage. I was in a good position but due to weather update favorable to those coming back from east, I expected them to again catch our middle group. I settled in for the night.

Once I woke up, I noticed that I had sailed too long NE before the first wind shift while the nearby boats had tacked much earlier. However, I also expected to be able to regain some of it because of the somewhat strange polar which sometimes worked for the favor of a boat lower in the wind if there was a better wind speed and angle there. I was able to reach Donghae mark as 4th. Or so I thought but it turned out that the leading boat missed the Donghae mark. Given that he had a solid lead, it was entirely unnecessary to perform the turn in such a risky manner. The former leader later retired from the race after noticing his error only after past the midpoint of the next leg. Other than that, the next leg to Yamato Bank mark was uneventful.

From Yamato Bank to finish, one could take slightly faster direct route but I opted not to sail so directly because the finish was still multiple weather updates away. The reason for my decision was that the direct route lacked any margin near the finish from the local optimum in polar near TWA 80; any unfavorable turn in the winds would be bad if others went higher into the wind. There was initially no restriction for gaining extra margin because winds were still from SW, instead, sailing higher meant also better speed but of course that route would be slightly longer than the more direct route. Most of the leading boats chose a similar route. There was a low wind speed zone to pass before sailing a nice curve due to changing TWD mostly in the TWA 80 local optimum to the easternmost point of the long finish line. Some boats chose now to sail much more east than our group. The low wind zone kept deepening on each weather update as we approached it. While I held a good position within our group

of boats, the grouping effect of that deep blue meant the boats east of us would be able to reach the other side roughly at the same time. With better winds after for those in east, I started to worry how many of them would be able to overtake. One for sure but the rest were not that far north yet so it would get close.

I carefully maintained maximum VMC course over the blue and sailed using the optimal point in the near TWA 80 local optimum until it was time to burn the extra margin. The margin turned out unnecessary as no adverse wind direction changes took place until finish. While sailing the curve, initially one other boat in our group was slightly ahead but later in the curve I started to slowly overtake. Now three boats in total had been able to get ahead east of us, however, the third only by a small amount, which our margin burning with more than 0.5 knots of extra speed would easily win back. The last weather update brings no noticeable change so that settles the final rankings: aner59 first, Go4iT second, me third, and knockanddo60 (the second boat from our group) as fourth finishing only 16 seconds after me. Congratulations.

ij /September 2018