

Race Report - Carib Rum Run 2018

*When I was young,
I used to play a pirate
roaming Caribbean back and forth,
forcing enemy captains to surrender,
firing cannons instead of hail,
setting ships ablaze
But now I just sail
Caribbean back and forth*

The prevalent winds from SE made this race mainly an exercise of losing height as fast as possible. In the whole race, TWA tends to be large. Only for a short period of time a weak HP caused enough disturbance to the prevalent wind allowing TWA to become slightly smaller than 110.

There are three bays on the course with marks in bays to round and a few waypoints forcing the sides which certain islands need to be left. The winds tend to be stronger on the open sea implying that the bays marks become points of a forced gybe to escape the low bay winds as soon as possible. Quite straight-forward setting.

The winds are better West of the direct route to the first island waypoint. As some gybes will be needed anyway, I will be sailing there. My start is ok and I'm well positioned in my group. The direct going boats soon start to lose distance compared with our group due to worse wind speeds. The forementioned weak HP lays on our path to the first island temporarily causing a TWA hick-up to do a good pass-by.

At the first island, I'm in the group of three boats in the lead. Height shedding continues taking advantage of the limited wind direction variations. Next comes the first bay mark and I've managed to build a small lead to RedPearl and slightly larger lead to aner59 who were in the group of three boats. I normally take corners tightly but conservatively enough to do it safely, this one also. RedPearl seems to turn clearly earlier that often occurs when I compare with my ultra-safe roundings to maneuvers other skippers execute. Thus, I expect most of my lead to be eaten away due to tight angle in these bay roundings. However, the turn is too early and I've secured even stronger lead now.

A small island stands in the way of the optimal route from open sea north of big islands to the open sea on the other side of them. The winds are slightly better on the southern side. In addition, the wind update is expected to occur right when we are passing that island. As we are sailing close to the maximal downwind angle, picking either side may have consequences if the weather update favors the other side by wind direction change. The better wind speeds seem a safer choice although that implies less height shedding for a while. Only me and aner59 sail towards the southern side while the others choose the northern side. The weather update slightly favors our route.

The next bay comes up and I've managed to slightly increase my lead but that only becomes visible near the mark as aner59 takes a more direct route. Further open-sea bay pair follows and slowly manage to grow more and more lead.

There was less wind earlier on the route towards the finish line which would have made route selection slightly more tricky but now the winds have picked up also there. Thus, sailing to the finish also requires a similar zikzak pattern to south as the two previous legs between bays. Unless there is a dramatic change in the weather from the forecasted, my lead will be enough and catching up any will be hard for the runner-up boats.

The last part towards finish line is a curving path due to lower winds near the finish line. Aner59 again takes a more direct course than me or any other nearby boat and I start to wonder: What he is after and how he intends to shed all that extra height? The better initial angle allows him to climb to my side though and to be mathematically closer to the finish than me but with all that extra height, it is a red herring. Also, he never reaches so far my side that bearing to his boat would be equal to the angle of the finish line. Only a very dramatic wind shift could help him but then wind shift to other direction could just as well cost him his second place and even podium. Nothing significant occurs on the weather front. The payback time for that extra height comes and I can finish with a relaxing lead. Aner59 takes the second place and RedPearl who was able to quickly recover from that earlier missed mark fills the third place on the podium.

-- ij.