

SOL probably only ever sailed the Straits of Malacca once before, in one or other edition of our very own Round The World Race, and we would have been through them PDQ. Our new buddy with Royal Selangor Yacht Club therefore provided an interesting new challenge, but some things were pretty clear at first glance: it was going to be light, there was more wind out at sea, and wind direction was going to be variable, both within a WX and from one WX to the next.

Starting at 12:00 UTC (08:00 in Malaysia) gave us 4.5 hours to get out into the breeze, blowing gently out of the south down the middle of the strait, but we'd be looking to gybe before the next WX; shame.

Smo and I and a few others decided to start on port gybe to get a bit more pressure straightaway, take the penalty for the extra gybe under the coast and then gybe again to lay the headland blocking our fastest route straight out. It worked for Smo, but somehow not for me, and Wolff (of whom more anon), opting for a start on starboard and just one gybe, squeezed in between us.

It was now a play between BS and VMG out to the gybe point. More BS got you out into more pressure quicker, more VMG got you to the finish quicker. A router is really indispensable for judging this, but not enough, as a lot of fine tuning of a resultant long DC series using AGL will generally improve your routed solution. And so it was, generally sailing hotter, I got bonk into the smallest of leads but carried her on further than doughty competitors rafa and Kipper1258.

I too gybed earlier than Qt had suggested, but not in a panic reaction to cover the early gybers, but more because going onto optimum TWA early and gybing onto optimum TWA, I reckoned I could cut the corner to get not the Qt proposed track slightly quicker. Wolff carried on further, and was the last to gybe.

The new WX now came in, and gave a sharper track back into land, benefitting the fleet aside. I hotted up slowly to still stay that bit further out than the proposed new track. Wolff also adjusted but less so. The bedtime WX gave the advantage back to Wolff, marginally, and so to bed.

All now depended on how close in under land to go before gybing again early morning. There was going to get more pressure under the coast, but later the wind was going to clock around to the north west, making the race in to the finish a fetch. I often route with 'avoiding coast' switched off, and on this occasion it learned that hugging the shore was not the way to go. But you had to go quite close.

This time it was Wolff who gybed early, to perhaps give me a chance, and for a while, bonk, enjoying the better pressure went into the lead, but with a flat spot in the polar a hop onto a slower tight angle for about 10 minutes was going to be needed. How would that work out? I tightened up and the lead shrank rapidly, and it was soon clear that before I'd reach my planned bear-away, Wolff was going to pass me back. I bore away early, but as I did so, Wolff went ahead, and try as I might, from that fraction in his lee I could not get him back. 11 secs, 1 server jump. Well done Wolff!

And huge commiserations to Starship, who surely would have added a new name to our long list of podium placers but for missing the line ever so fractionally, as did the more experienced rafa.

Great racing. Thank you Royal Selangor Yacht Club and Captain Marty for inviting us!

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