

Here is the recipe for an evening of camaraderie:

Get together with a Sailonline friend. Eat well, drink some and sail a sprint.

Wolff's menu was smoked salmon in tortilla wraps. Plenty of it.

Starting already at 16:00 UTC we had to push our plates aside and get with the program: Circumnavigating Isla San Lorenzo in a 13 mile sprint in Farr 30 monohulls.

Pretty much like driving to the bakery on Sunday morning in a Formula 1 car.

The initial stretch to weather was a bit challenging. Setting a course that would most certainly make you hit the island and believing the wind would bear away requires trust in both the weather gods, the next WX (at 16:30 UTC) and acute judgement of how close you can pass the brown blemishes.

From opposite sides of the dinner table, we agreed that TWA -37 would do the job provided we shield our eyes, went outside for a smoke and not lose trust in our shared endeavour.

Taunts and challenges were exchanged. There was a good feeling in the room. The kind of feeling you experience with solid friends who'll challenge you, make you do better than you thought you could and support you when you couldn't. We were both fully expecting this joint effort to pay off in joint kind ... as in: If we're not in front, at least we'll be close to each other and compete. "Let the games begin at the first corner".

It was not to be. Mouthansar roared off the start line at full speed. Wolff kinda stuck there. Although we started simultaneously, I was in front and Wolff came off the line as 43rd. We are not asking anyone to explain this, but it put quite a damper on the friendly joust we had planned for the evening.

The dessert planned was more pancakes. Not tortillas - sweet pancakes with ice cream. We both realized that that would have to wait. This race was quick and intense. Cutting corners too close for comfort was and is the name of the game for sprints and the only real challenge besides that was getting the gybe right before El Cabezo.

I'm kind of primitive with regard to such decisions. When routing is no aid, it is seat of the ants and this time I got it right with a layline produced by the compass tool. El Cabezo was overshot by a margin but the threat from behind, including the threat across the table from me, was manageable, i.e. my blood pressure was still well below 200/150 and my pulse was around 90. When Wolff suggested an EKG I pretended not to hear him.

After caressing land like the meeting of tongue and ice cream on a hot summer afternoon, it was really just a matter of keeping the wind off the bow and hitting the finish line as high as possible. I have seen fellows aiming for the dot at the end of the line and miss it by a pixel. Therefore, I erred on the side of safety.

Wolff told me to fold the one remaining tortilla and stuff my mouth with it to control my glee. He came 8th. Just behind me, five seconds between us, was Beliberda. Thank you for keeping my adrenaline flowing, Beliberda. I know you wanted the win and you deserved it. I just sort of blundered into first place ahead of you. In third place, my highly esteemed Sailonline friend, Robert1 of Sweden. Congrats, Robert1. Let's meet some day.

I also wish to congratulate the rest of Top Ten and all the 62 sailors who started and completed this superb little Saturday evening adventure. I do so wish there were more of these short races. It's an excellent way to keep your skills honed to the max in events that will not get you divorced or cause you to lose your job. They could be staged in all three relevant time zones consecutively.

Usually, I am so much 'there' in a race that I do not remember much afterwards. I am all on the speed, the wind, the land, the VMG, the VMC and the polar. The rationale of my last decision is lost in the preoccupation with the next and I cross the finish line without knowing what exactly I did besides cut corners closely.

What I take with me from this race and what still sits well with me is the joy of racing not just against but with a friend sitting in the same room across from you. It doesn't really matter whether you are 1st or 62nd. There are so many races in a race and they are all challenging and enjoyable.

Race. Make friends. Don't ever gloat, but support your friends and the thrill of sailing.

The pancakes were fantastic. I needed the coffee for the two hour drive back home.

I'll host the next sprint. My dining room table seats eight.

Thanks for the race, friends.

Mouthansar/December 2018