

The Rustler 36 has an interesting polar:

- with TWS above 15kn and above 60°, wind speed and direction don't affect boat speed much
- close hauled, she's irritatingly slow
- in the blue, she's going nowhere

Obviously, the best route is the shortest one, following GC course. Unless it leads into a headwind. Or into the blue.

In 161 days of GGR there was plenty of the latter, and even with qtVlm help it was hard to decide if go around or run in and wait the wind to change. Start avoid too early and you make extra miles in vain. Too late and you are captured, with no way out. In some occasions I have used WxInspector rather than indicated qtVlm route.

Additionally, we have all but usual wind conditions. In any of my races so far (and I have sailed them quite a few, not just in SOL) from Europe to Cape Town, competitive route didn't pass near African coast, with Dakar sightseeing. No sign of doldrums and St. Helena's high by both Equator passing, on return we had quiet in trade winds latitudes and Azores low instead Azores high!

I have started GGR 12 hours late, but because of weak wind in the Bay of Biscay a gap wasn't too big. Right after Dakar I've turned south, beating. In the middle of south Atlantic I've crossed course of a leading group at P12, approx 1 day ahead Dingo. So it stayed 'till Storm Bay.

I have started Leg2 1 day after Dingo, 1.5 h after ij and nearly 5 h before Confiance. No surprises all the way to Limit GGR Mark, but then things began to happening. I have pulled to the south harder than ij, who took more direct route to Cape Horn. Reaching Race Box Limit, my decision showed better, and I overtook him. Dingo got stuck in the blue and his huge advantage shrank.

After Cape Horn Dingo went to center of the Atlantic and fail. ij and I kept trying outmatch each other, with a changeable luck. Mine was better and I managed to stay in front of him 'till the end.

The only question remained was meeting point with Confiance50, who has taken more westerly route, faster but longer. When we have met near the Azores, my lead was 0.3 NM and I managed to kept it to the end. And in my subconscious there was voice of Giles from his "Italian Team Academy lessons: 'Cover! Always cover...'

And after 231,845 minutes of sailing, difference was less than 5! What a race!

Congratulations Confiance and ij and thank you on a great match. Also to all other SOLers, especially SOTP navigators.

Must mention Mullionman. First time on SOL and with nearly 4 days late start, his excellent navigation and bold move going straight north after tip of Brazil brought him finally almost Podium, and with a pinch of luck it could be even more. Congratulations, hat down!

Thanks SOL Team for organization this tough but exciting race. And provide us ability to set our courses even through the hardest storm and go to bed, knowing mast would still stand in the morning. Unlike IRL GGR racers that have been dismasted: Are, Abhilash, Gregor, Loic, Susie... so far.

To IRL GGR skippers I wish safe return to Les-Sables d'Olonne, and to all SOLers Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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