

Rationale for SOTP

I was intrigued to see this epic on the SOL calendar, with a sub-section for “sotp” boats. As I generally sail “sotp” & usually only route overnight, as I like to read prior to retiring, and thus miss the 22:30 wx and catch the 4:30 wx an hour or so late, due to taking my early morning walk around the golf course or along the beach. The polar for the Rustler 36 with its generous span of sailing angles, with little speed differential, confirmed that “sotp” could prove not too onerous.

Leg 1

The course to Cape Town was via a set of gates in the Eastern Canaries requiring crossing the Bay of Biscay. Not easy, by the time we reached the gates the leaders were ahead of Sebensa by about 18nm, and gradually bearing more SE. Abeam Monrovia Sebensa was about 72nm behind on a more SSE'ly heading. A few boats held more Westerly, including the eventual winner of Leg 1, Dingo.

A while later the split occurred, with the leaders heading inshore and a few of us going away from the coast on a SW and then a Southerly heading. I was wary of the inshore winds using the slider, it showed inshore winds turning SE thus placing the eastern boats with winds “on the nose” as far as the 7day horizon reached. This proved decisive.

Abeam Cape Town, and much further West, the small western fleet, led by Dingo, held a lead of some 300 nm, as they gradually rotated SE to pick up the good westerly winds at 40deg S, and below, to reach the gates at Cap Aubert.

Sebensa stuck to the GC line as far as possible all the way to Storm Bay, ending 8 hrs behind Dingo, in 4th place, and second “SOTP” boat. Sebensa had a few tussles with rafa, Hew & festinalente on the way, to keep my attention. The bulk of eastern fleet were some way behind

Leg 2

First of all, many thanks to the SOL admins, who manually transferred all SOTP boats into leg two listing, as the client was unable to handle this exception automatically. Where would SOL be without the often unacknowledged engine room crew!

After the mandatory 90min lay over, sailing resumed, having to sail south of Stewarts Islands, north of Bounty Islands and Limit GGR, before attempting to follow the GC line to round Cape Horn 2,900 nm away. Due to the course limit at 58S, the GC line ended at about 126W, where after Sebensa bumped along east for about 1,700nm.

Sebensa then made the first of a number of mistakes, that I can recall, by easing up towards Cape Horn too early, thereby losing valuable angle, for days.

The next decision was east or west of the Falklands. I noticed some boats that went west or through Falklands, which did not seem to work too well. I had already committed to east anyway.

Then some days later, after sitting going more NNE as best I could, I noticed mullionman, tyger, ij leelu22 etc. hanging more west of me, and Dingo recovering steadily and the error became apparent. I had got too greedy going a tad more east. The doldrums had stumped me a bit.

Turning for home, abeam Gibraltar, Sebensa again erred by going a bit too “wide” turning to the finish. Tyger did not.

And so, behind the routing boats of Leelu22, Confiance50, ij & Mullionman, came Tyger & Sebensa some 48mins later than Tyger. Tyger was about 7hrs behind the winner after leaving Storm Bay. Not sure what his elapsed time was, as I have no idea when Tyger left Storm Bay.

In retrospect, I think overall, the winds were kind in terms of direction & speed, Sebensa managed to evade the worst of the Highs, as they never suddenly appeared after a wx, thank goodness.

Again, I need to thank the SOL backroom crew who makes SOL what it is.

Sebensa/December 2018

