

Christmas to Christmas 2018

Go4iT has sailed this race for many years and has always taken the route through the Indonesian or Philippine archipelagos.

This year, using the 16 day forecast that is available through saildocs with qtVlm (read the manual); a southern route below Australia was suggested until just a day before the start. However the last Wx before the start routed me north and so, slightly relieved not to be trying that far longer route, I set off.

This Volvo V70_v4 takes, in my experience, a long time to recover its speed after a tack or gybe so in qtVlm I give it between 10 – 14 minutes when routing although I only programme about an 8% loss of speed at each manoeuvre (more in strong wind) as can be observed in the race map. These settings seemed to keep me with the northern fleet for the first week as we started to approach those irritating SLIs which would be nice to visit on holiday but not when racing. In this context I can only express my sincere appreciation to Kipper1258 for his AGL programme that tells me when Go4iT is lined up for an unwelcome bbq!

About a week after the start, during which I had been using the standard 7 day Wx forecast, the saildocs 16 day forecast was suggesting a routing through the Indonesian archipelago. So I set an intermediate mark south of the archipelago, split from the Northern fleet and started to work my way south.

I was fortunate as the winds in the eastern part of the archipelago were both of reasonable strength and not on the nose – for once. I emerged south of the archipelago in about 35th place but 4th in the eastern fleet with open water between me and Christmas Indian Island.

It was then a race of using wind shifts to maintain my place or even to challenge robert1, if I dared, for 3rd place in the eastern fleet. Some four days out from Christmas Island I was quite content being placed in the mid-30s when I noticed some light winds lurking for the Northern fleet that would have to beat to the finish. My hopes dared to rise as a moderate fleet improvement seemed possible.

Just 12 hours out from Christmas Island I was still lying about 35th some 60 – 70 miles behind the leaders to the north and about 20 miles behind the Eastern fleet leader Garagiste. Others indicated that I might be on for a podium but such seemed just not possible to me as I was too far behind the Northern leaders.

But then the winds in front of me strengthened, freed up and gave me a fast reach into the finish at Christmas Island. Those 30 places disappeared very quickly as the Northern fleet was so bunched – they fell like nine pins!

So not only had I beaten the northern fleet into the finish but I had overtaken robert1 for third place.

I enjoy my SOL racing and I thank all those others that work to make it so much fun and so friendly.

Richard/Go4iT

24th December 2018