

Round New Zealand 2019 - Leg 2

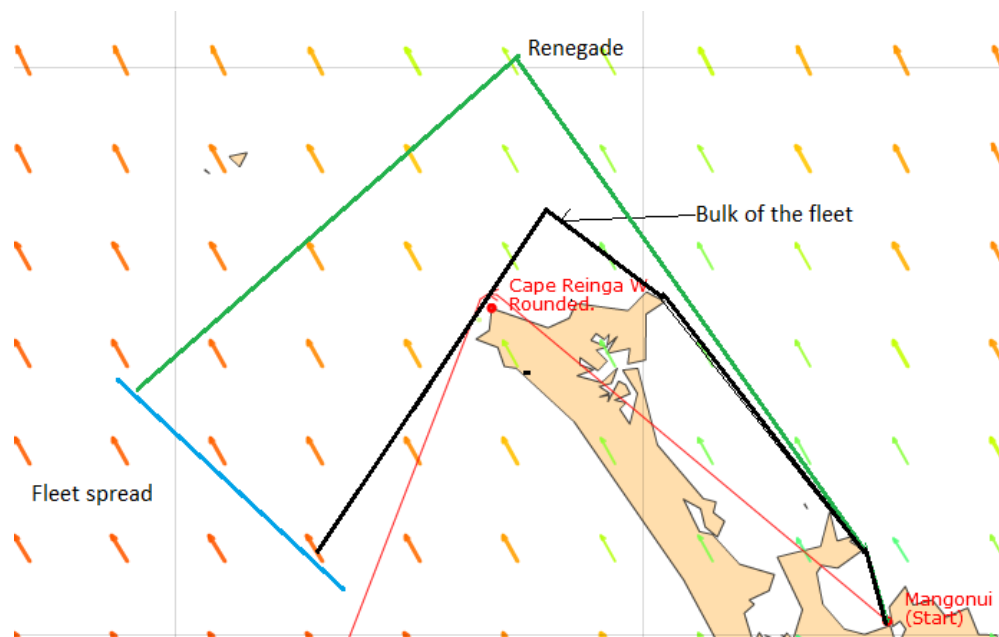
Renegade – February 2019

I have been SOLing for a long time and this is my second win ever. Again, it depended heavily on some good luck which came in the form of what I perceived as initially a bad break at the start. Over the years I have adopted use of qtVLM as a router but still do a fair amount of SOTP with Wx Inspector. However, with off deck time being long for me I find that qtVLM is the best solution for setting a route to steer during those times. Sometimes it's very useful, and if winds are stable you can safely miss a few Wx in the overnights, and I usually miss both the 11:30 PM and 5:30 AM or (04:30 and 10:30 WX).

So, with start set at Sunday 17th February 23:00 UTC (7 PM Eastern US time) I was going to be offline by then. So I set a course after the 5:30 Wx and signed out.

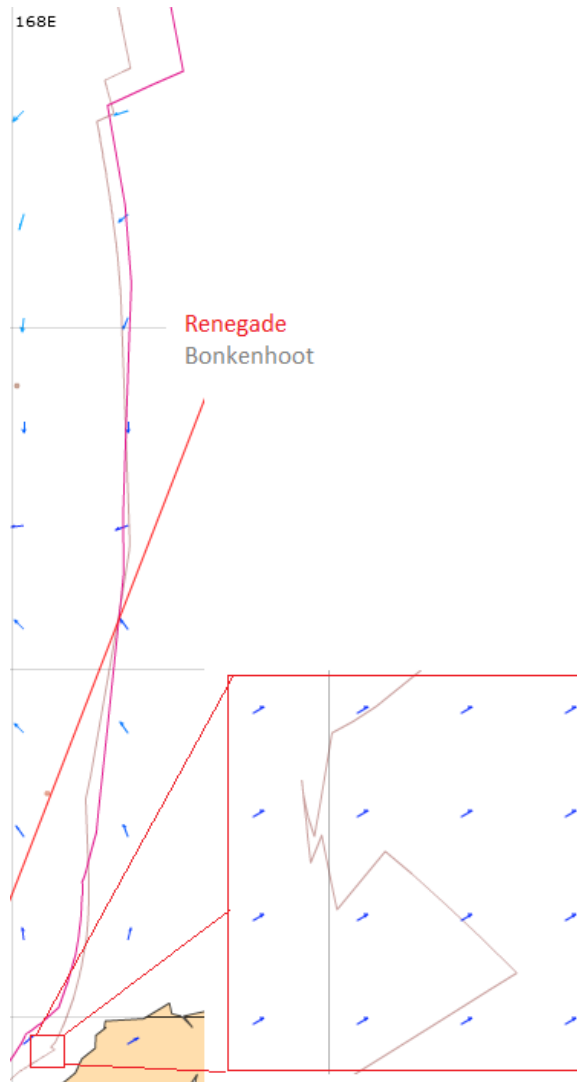
Initially we had to head North to go around Cape Reinga, and qtVLM selected a route going far north, more north than I thought, as I had envisioned a series of 20 or so tack/gybe maneuvers to skip along the top to minimize the distance sailed. That was not what it presented, so I checked the winds and thought, okay, maybe it's trying to minimize the perf loss or with the winds it could see a single tack/gybe well North would allow us to pass Cape Reinga without a crash (as happened twice to me in leg 1 ☹️) So, since I had already blown leg 1 I thought I'll more sail than race this series and so a safe passing would see me moving the next day and not stuck on the rocks again. So, I went with it.

I was quite shocked to see that almost the entire fleet did the same thing but had taken a much closer rounding and had cut it very close to land and was already much farther south, but also more East. Renegade was far to the NW and on the fringe of the fleet vanguard. See image below I mocked up after the race as I didn't screenshot anything during the race.



This turned out to be very good once I analyzed the situation. Because the winds were stronger, and I had a bit more speed, and I had already cleared the area of blue goo sitting in the way of the SE boats, so they would eventually have to come West to clear it. The next day confirmed my guess, as I got online and found some really great SOLers were much closer to me now. Bonknhoot was the closest at about 8 NM SE of me, and Kipper several others were lurking not much further. So, on we went and the following day Bonknhoot was to my NW, Kipper was off my stern and I had cut SE over night and overtaken many of the NW boats by a small margin. Lyric had been in the vicinity since night one and I was comparing locations daily, first off to my NW, then to my East, then back West again. It soon became apparent that I would become the leader at some point as I was a little ahead of the West boats and the East boats, although more south were entering the blue goo and would lose significant boat speed.

Daily I found boats had switched from either W to E or E to W relative to Renegade, and I found Bonknhoot about .38 NM right behind me one day. So close I had to almost go to max zoom to find him. You can see our tracks below, and he keep switching sides on me, which made me feel like I must be missing marginally better angles and I fully expected to be passed during my off deck time. But Renegade was still P1 and so I opted to make the 04:30 (11:30 PM) Wx when approaching the coast to try to keep ahead as a matter of competition, I MUST give my best. At the Wx I ran my current DC's again in AGL to check them and noticed a sudden shift East then back West, that would spell disaster. A lucky save for Renegade.

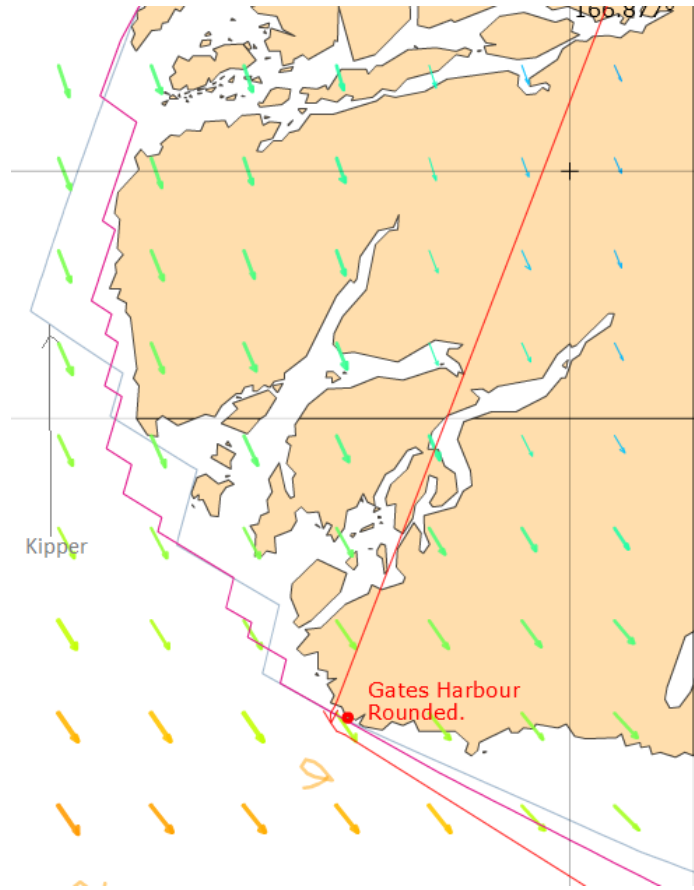


The next day I wondered where Bonk was as he was not close, and what had happened. I noticed the track and knew he had got hit with the unexpected Wx update. Unfortunate. But Lyric was very close, and Kipper and now Wolff had joined the chase, and the heat was on. No time to waste. Lyric had moved West into heavier winds and I was along the coast with Kipper and Wolff. In moments like these my non-sailor really shines, and I was not sure what to do. Should I go more west to cover Lyric or stay my course along the coast for a close rounding???

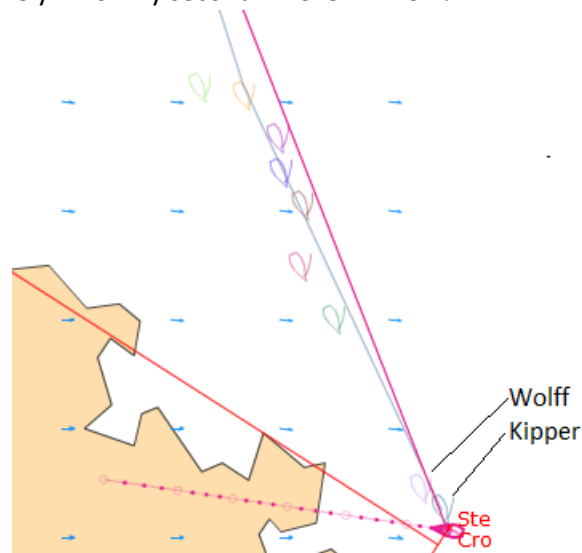
So, I emailed the professor (Piero, aka Winston_4) to see if he had some advice for my unfamiliar position as the rabbit.

Quickly, he calmed me with 'stay the course', and keep Renegade in between the finish and Kipper/Wolf, Lyric was already too far West to be in it, even though Lyric was P2 at that time. Then he went to bed and I didn't get to ask my next question about how many tack/gybes to do along the coast as qtVLM loves those, but the boat doesn't much like perf loss so many times. So what to do???

I decided to modify the qtVLM route to include less frequent tack/gybes. The next day I compared Renegade to Kipper now P2. He was much better at that. Our courses along the coast below.



As you can see, Renegade still absorbed a lot more perf hits than Kipper, but was still ahead, and the finish was almost a straight course to a final turn to the line. Even with dead winds in the middle and my missing the 10:30 and 16:30 Wx by 45 minutes there were luckily no surprises (I was on CC course to be safe) and in slow winds my only fear was Kipper might have an updated course around them for an 11th hour pass. When I got back online for the final turn it had not happened. So I made the turn, and set a DC course for the line. When I got back online for the finish surprising the lead had extended and Renegade was safely in for my second P1 ever. Whew!



What a great and exhilarating race this was, and very unexpected for me, and how very challenging it turned out.

Thanks all for memorable experience as the rabbit.

David / Renegade