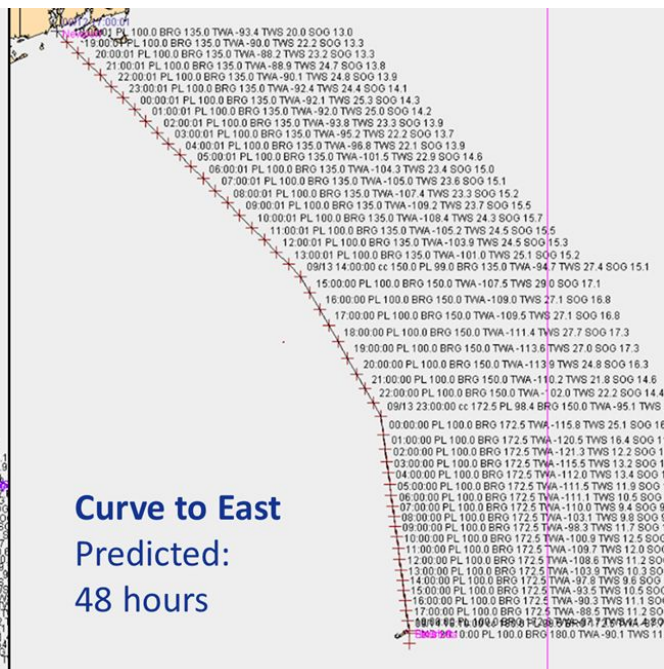
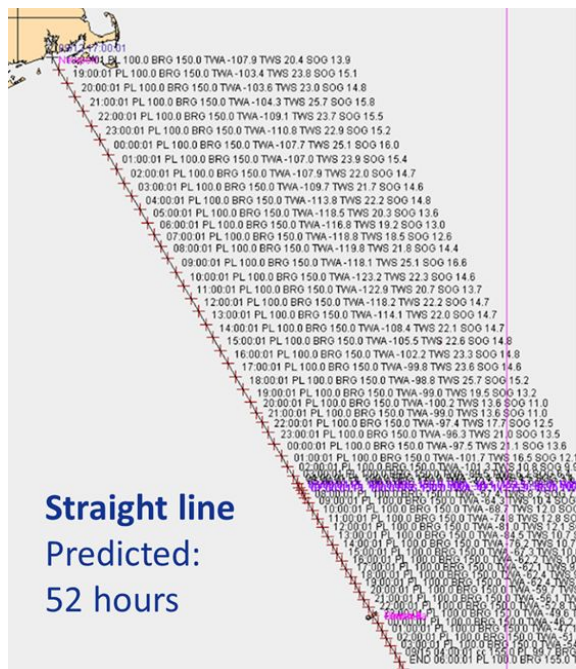
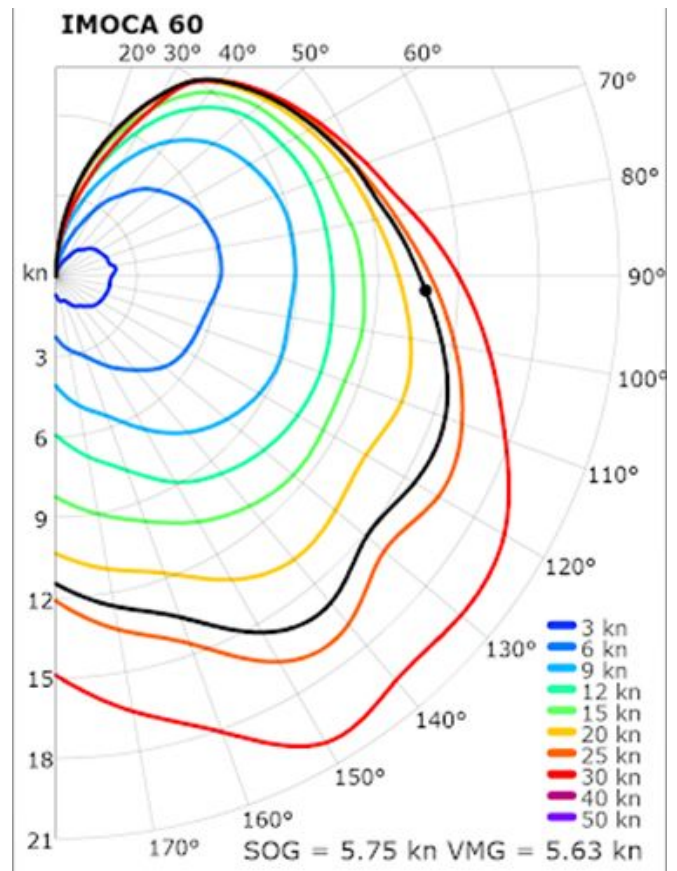


During the practice, there were weak headwinds for anyone who left Newport shortly after the race opened. Perhaps for this reason there was no Practice Race.

The boat polar also presented some challenges. At low wind speeds (~3 knots), the polar has many bumps, almost making it look durian-shaped; at many speeds, there is a hole in a polar which can also make racing more interesting (since you generally want to avoid sailing at those TWA angles).

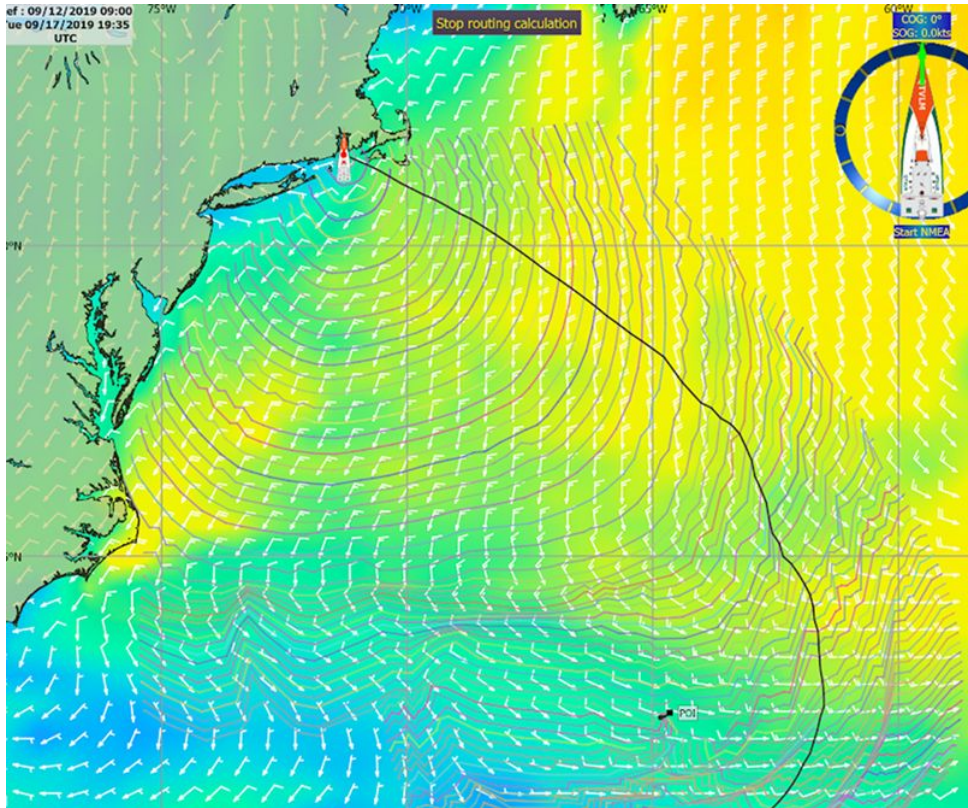
Luckily, at race start, there was a patch of strong winds from the west, that was present at the time we started and would follow us as we headed to the finish. Or at least it appeared to be that way. The part of the polar we used (12+ knots, TWA of 80° to 110°) lacked these holes. And without any marks or islands in the way, completing the race with a single COG command of around 149° looked tempting.

I decided to run the DC checker for that command, just in case.



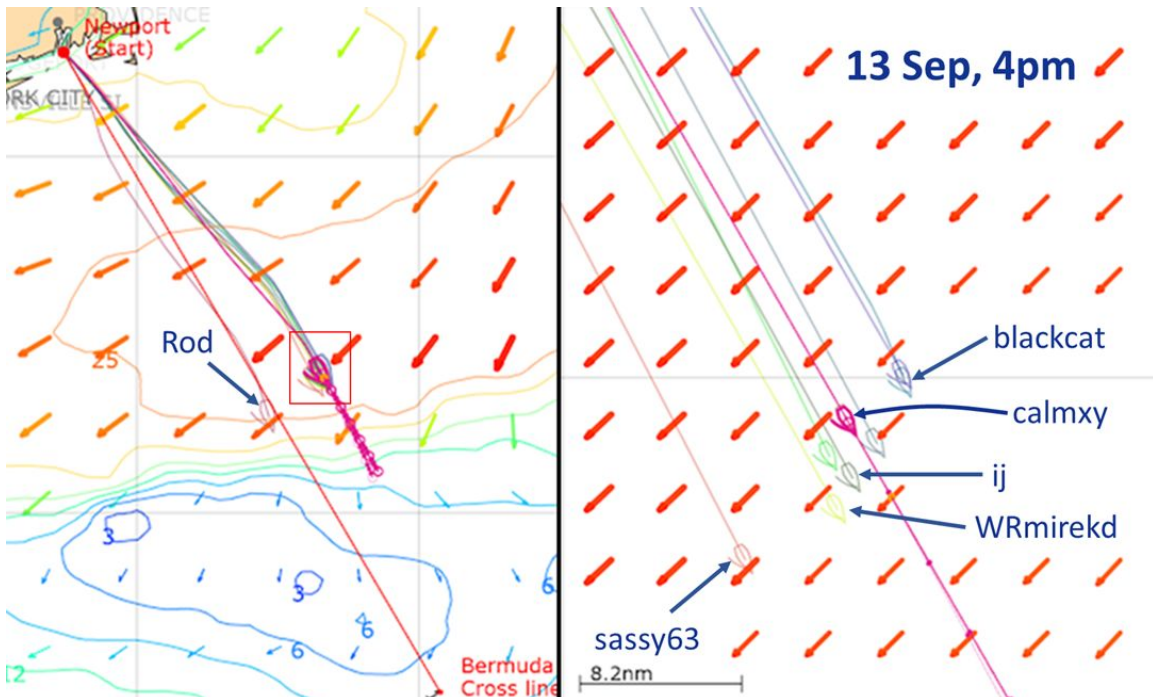
The left DC checker output represents the single COG command. It appears to be optimal... at least for the first two-thirds of the way. Apparently (at least on the starting Wx), our boats will outspeed the strong crosswind and bring us into a patch of much weaker headwinds. Not to mention that slight deviations, each one saving a few seconds, will almost certainly exist, thus making for an incredibly closely packed fleet. In some sense, these easy, straightforward and relaxing races can be among the most difficult to actually win.

Then I checked with QtVlm for the generalised fastest route, and with the Imoca boat polar, it generated this rather unusual output that somehow wrapped around Bermuda and the finish, without actually reaching the finish!



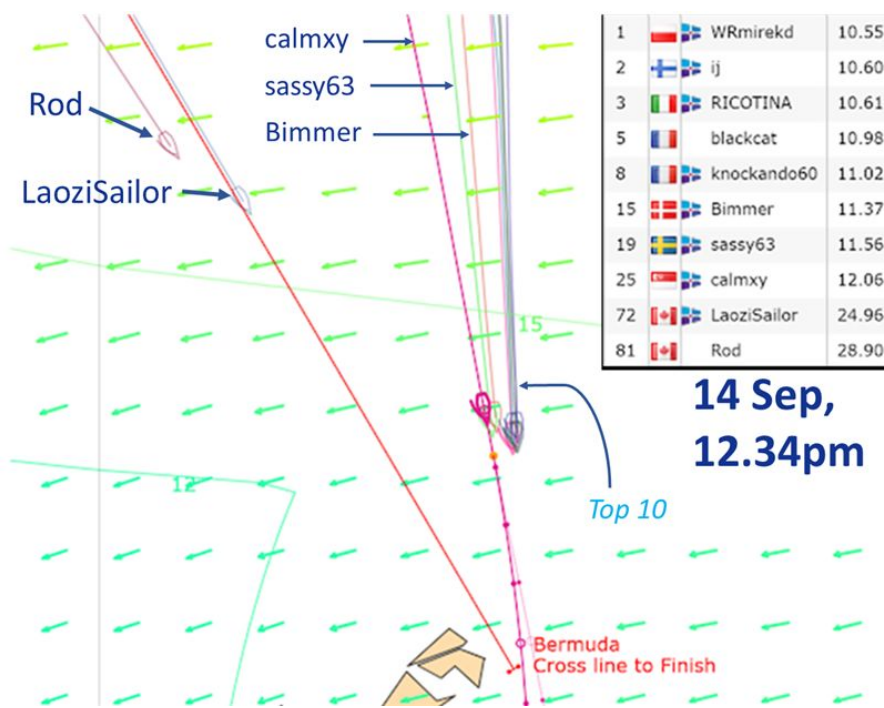
This brings about the point that you should “always question QtVIm and your instincts” that someone kindly mentioned in a past report. Nonetheless, it was quite apparent that one should head somewhat east of that straight line (by how much is for the skipper to determine). The DC checks at right attempt to simulate a route based on QtVIm’s output. At that point, it appeared to give a 4-hour advantage over the straight line even given the rather crudely set DCs for the “curve” (it comprised just 3 COG commands).

There was a plot twist, like what I mentioned in the chat: although the Wx update for the straight route went through a windhole at first, each one thereafter reduced the impact of that windhole, to the point where the direct run to the finish would be unhindered, at least in terms of TWA angles. It would also cut down the time to finish by some 3.5 hours. But the single COG command will still not win. Wind angle shift and stronger winds towards the east (although less pronounced in difference than before) still favours the curved route.



Consider the Lockyer Beacon E to South Cardinal part of the [Brisbane race](#), and (as WRmirked mentions) how even over that short distance (around 2 hours), making an ever-so-slight curve into better winds can shave off those precious few seconds, which in turn can make or break a race. With the strong E to NE winds where our boats were, this race would behave similarly, only stretched over 20 times the length and a suspense element from Wx updates.

I paid relatively little attention to this race due to work commitments, thus limiting the amount of fine-tuning that was done to save a few more minutes on-course. Even then, when zoomed out to see the whole course, it appears that my trace approximately matches that of the top 10. It's only when zoomed in that differences become more apparent, particularly the part near the finish where I executed less of a curve than the top 10.



Doesn't seem like much but those 8 mins longer translated to a rank #25 at finish (which is actually tighter of a finish than the Wellington **Sprint** - I finished 8 mins late there too, but ended rank #17).

LaoziSailor and a couple others actually executed the single COG command strategy. Impressively, they weren't all that far off the pace, reaching the finish in 45.8 hours. For comparison, WRmirked and the top 10 finished in 44.5 hours. Well done to all who completed the race!