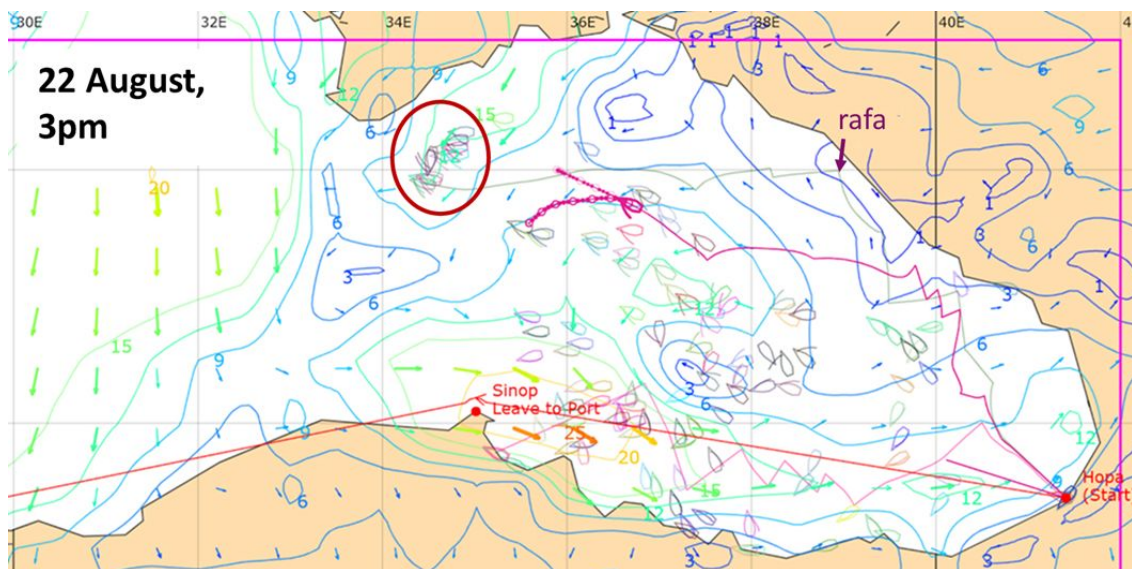


I heard how this race is one of the most iconic on SOL. At first I didn't really appreciate the hype about this race. That is, until I joined it and did the race itself.

The "Sail around Turkey" can be broken up into several parts:

- Mini "ocean race" across the Black Sea to Riva
- Bosphorus and Dardanelles Channels, with the Marmara "interlude"
- Relatively straightforward journey from Tavsan adasi to Samos (Mark placement pretty much fixed this route)
- Weaving through the Dodecanese islands to reach Antalya
- From Antalya, a straight run to the finish (not necessarily with nice winds though)

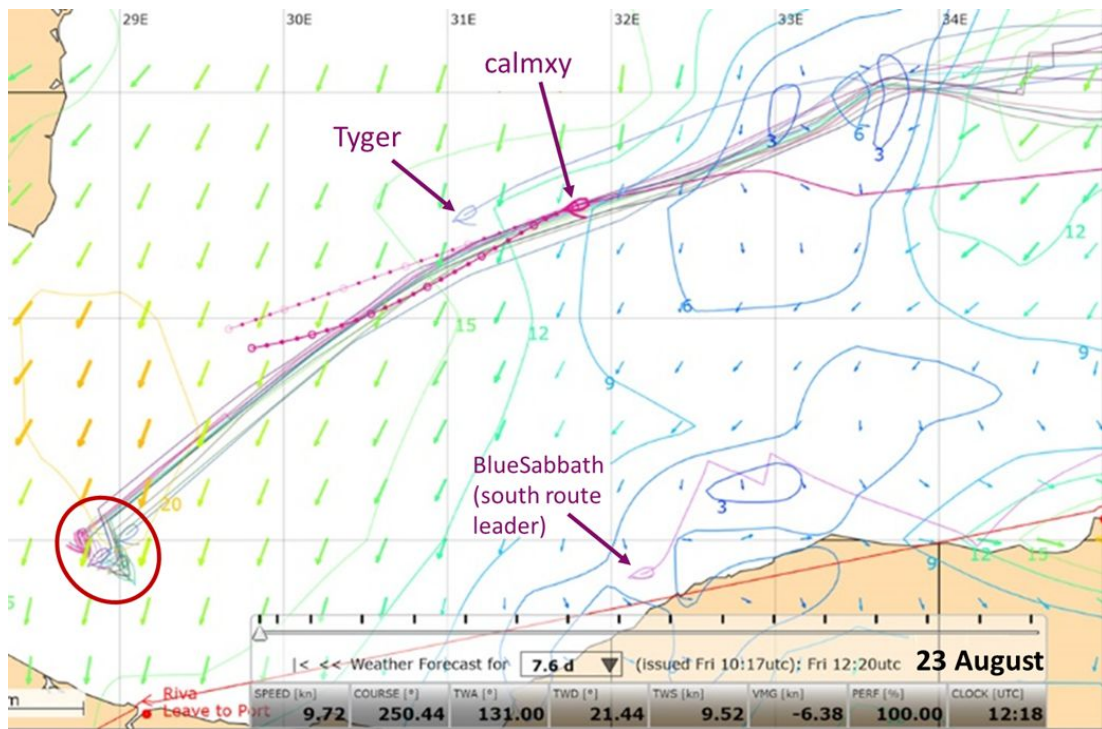
.Most of the marks are unable to be missed, as they were on the Turkish mainland. The exceptions were the marks from Tavsan asadi to Samos (these two being Greek islands) and Antalya (the only mark at sea, to make going south of Cyprus less viable; after all, this is a Sail Around Turkey race). It's important to note that Black Sea and the area of the Dodecanese islands did **not** contain missable marks; this enabled more diverse strategy for these parts.



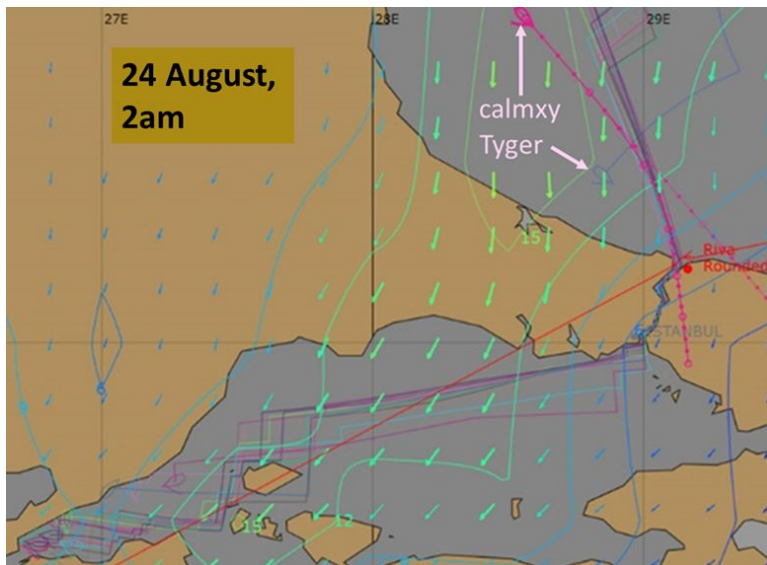
The Black Sea winds (especially on the eastern half) appeared to be unpredictable with many windholes; where strong winds occurred, these were often headwinds. Traditionally, I have not done well at ocean races. I may have a few top 10s and even a couple podiums, but my best result for an ocean race (or similar length) prior to this race is 44th.

My choice of strategy here, if given my way, would be to follow WRmirked, Dikkehenk and similar, preferably all the way to the finish. This is because they are more likely to find a near-optimal path to Riva. However, due to work commitments, that would obviously not be a viable strategy. So the next best thing that could be done was to take Dikkehenk's kind advice to use the "Krim" route (northern route), and use DC checker to set appropriate DCs.

All possible routes were tried. By 22 August, it was evident that the fleet had spread all over the eastern half of the Black Sea. But there was one cluster of 13 boats (including rafa), some 100nm WNW of my boat then, which had managed to get such a commanding lead. These boats had gone further north than I did at the start and hence got more favourable winds. They would (along with Bimmer and hew565) keep much of this lead all the way to the finish.

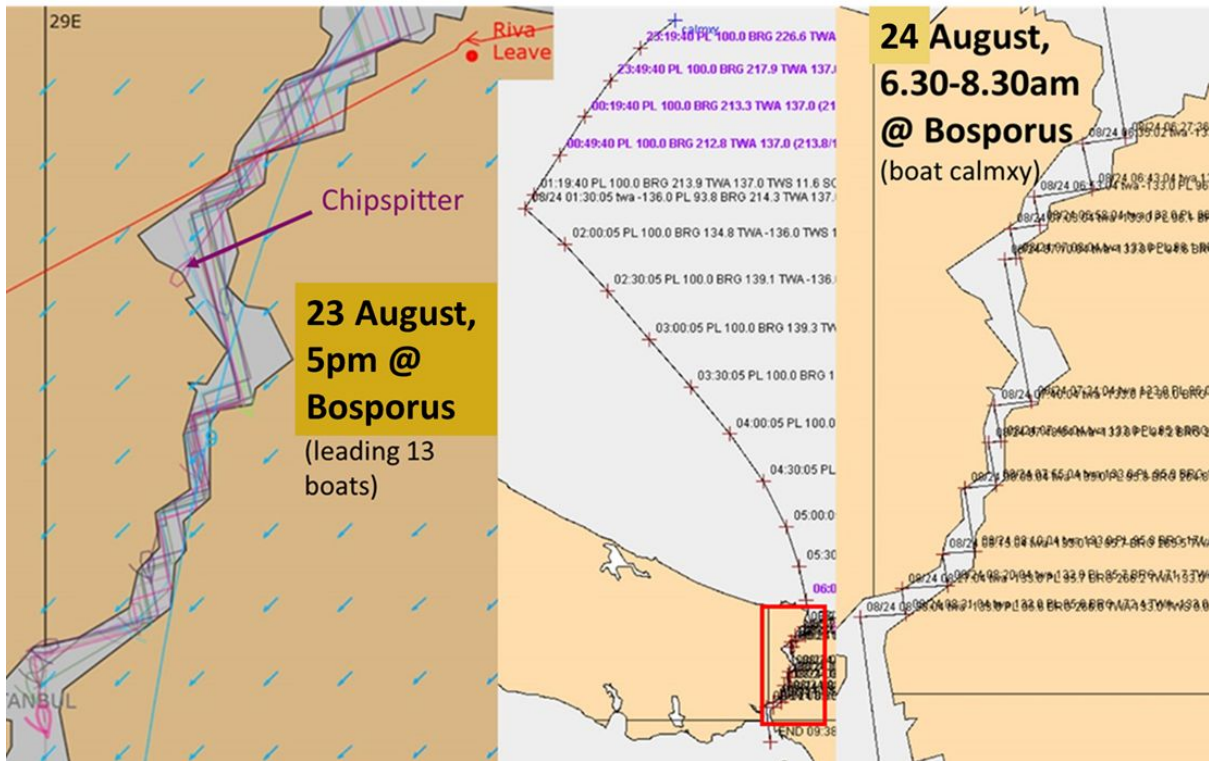


By midday UTC on 23 August, I had finished "rounding" Sinop. From there, a consistent breeze from the NE would bring me to the Riva mark. I would reach there in 24th place, some distance ahead of BlueSabbath and Fallabella (the leaders of those who kept near the Turkish coast). The two of them would later on catch up to me.

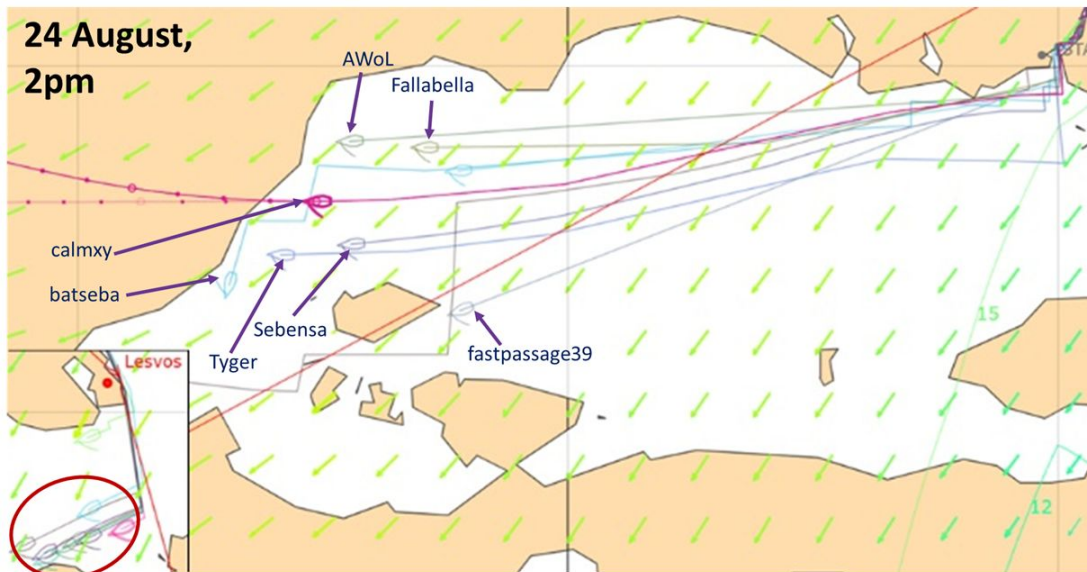


At this point, it was clear that (at 13-15 hours behind) I won't be catching up with this leading group, already at Dardanelles when I am still 4 hours adrift from Riva and Bosphorus. But there were a number of boats that were slightly ahead and slightly behind me. Interestingly, even the exact list of nearby boats went through some variations. This kept the competition to get 16th place intense.

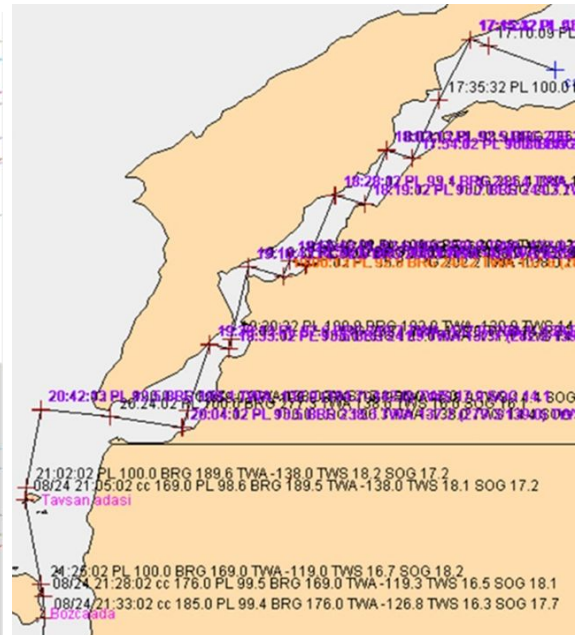
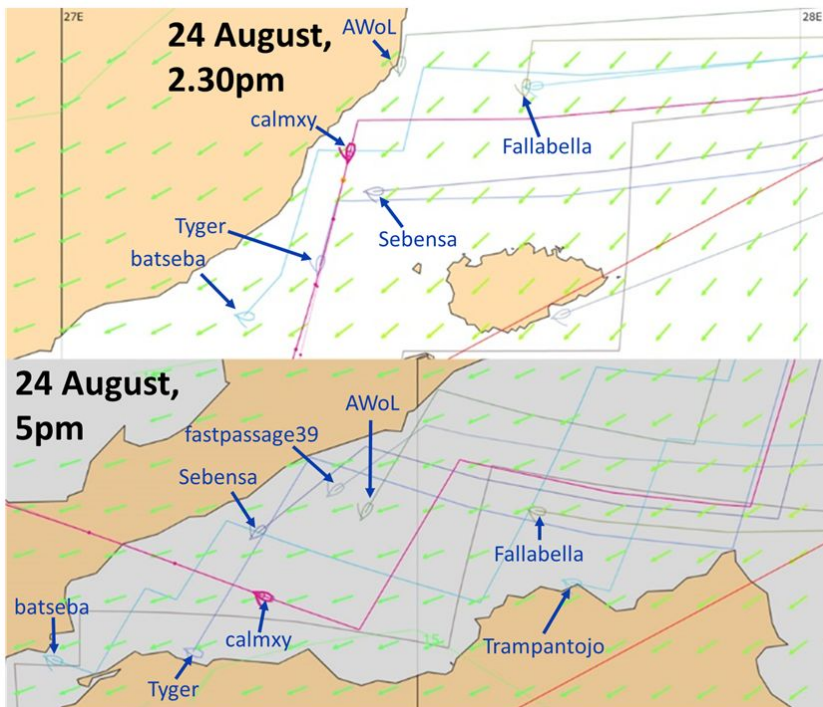
While setting some DCs to try to get through the Bosphorus strait, I noticed Chipspitter's BBQ. That BBQ was short but it was a reminder that this would be the start of a whole slew of BBQ's in this channel and also along the rest of the race course. As of race close, 5 boats (ranked #107-111) were still BBQ'd in Bosphorus. Luckily, on Sailonline your boat is unaffected by other boats and their BBQs (other than obviously your rank improving), otherwise those who took too long to get through the Black Sea could literally get trapped behind these BBQ'd boats in Bosphorus and/or Dardanelles. Now I understand why some interpret it as the sailing "gateway to Hell".



For me, to get through the Bosphorus Strait required 10 pairs of max downwind TWA gybes. This is more commands than what most PRs will need, despite the two taking roughly similar lengths of time. But just spamming these gybes randomly would be unlikely to work, as you could get stuck around where Chipspitter BBQ'd (given the wind direction, the port and starboard TWA 133° commands would both head into land around there). Still, the tailwind afforded more flexibility in setting the DCs; a crosswind would probably require COG commands and clearing optimally would need to turn exactly at each headland.

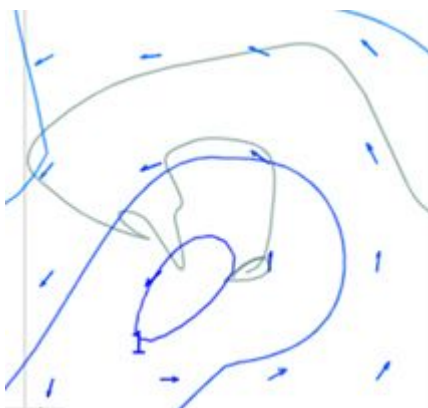
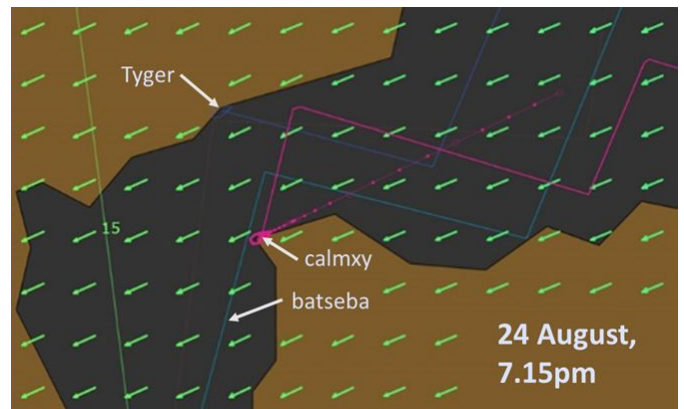


Avoiding a BBQ in Marmara was relatively easy. But it also afforded a range of viable commands that could present overtaking opportunities. The winds were stronger towards the north-east and south-west parts of this sea. Specifically, near the west, the wind gradient made it such that it was best to sail on the 40.5°N line, so a gybe that enabled one to stay as close to it as possible would be ideal (it wouldn't be practical to gybe multiple times due to performance loss in the relatively open waters). If executed well, I could overtake Tyger and Sebensa for 17th place. Unfortunately, the gybe took place too soon so I missed out on the best of the winds and hence ended up 18th at this point.



Seven pairs of max downwind TWA gybes would take me through Dardanelles. Well, nearly. One of the gybes would be at a TWA slightly smaller than the others due to the shape of the channel. Much of what applied at Bosphorus, also applied here. Some boats went for the straight-line COG command to try clearing as much of Dardanelles as possible, though at the expense of speed. Sadly for them, they BBQ'd before clearing the channel.

I was awoken by the BBQ horn and I found that I had BBQ'd near Canakkale! It was only later (around the time I finished Dardanelles) that I realised that Tyger and Sebensa had also BBQ'd roughly where I did, just on the opposite shore. batseba had avoided the BBQ here and hence was able to build the lead over us. So I had indeed overtaken Tyger and Sebensa, just not in the way that I had expected.

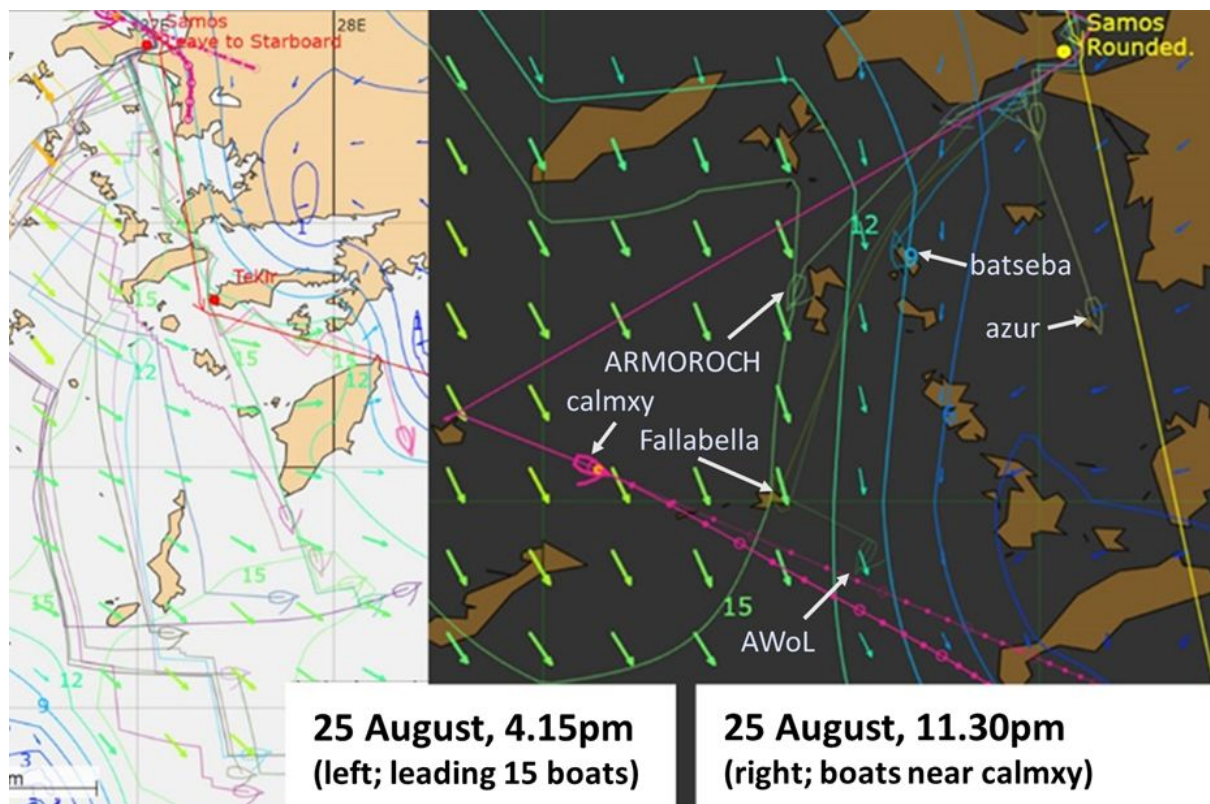


At around this point, the boat in rank 40 had just entered the Bosphorus Strait. This put them around as far back from me as I was from WRmirked then. Meanwhile, back in the east Black Sea, there were a few boats still trapped there. I wonder if this boat, for instance, was trying to outdo RainbowChaser as the "goddess of windholes" or, having read [WRmirked's Shetland report](#), going for the special prize of "fanciest route". Too bad the path disappears after 2-3 days; indeed, they started disappearing before anyone even left the Black Sea :-)

The next part (to Samos) was quite straightforward. While possible to miss these marks (unlike all marks prior to Dardanelles), the strategy is at least pretty straightforward as it involves rounding islands in alternation, with no real alternatives possible. I was able to get into 16th place by the time of reaching Samos, perhaps 15 minutes ahead of batseba.

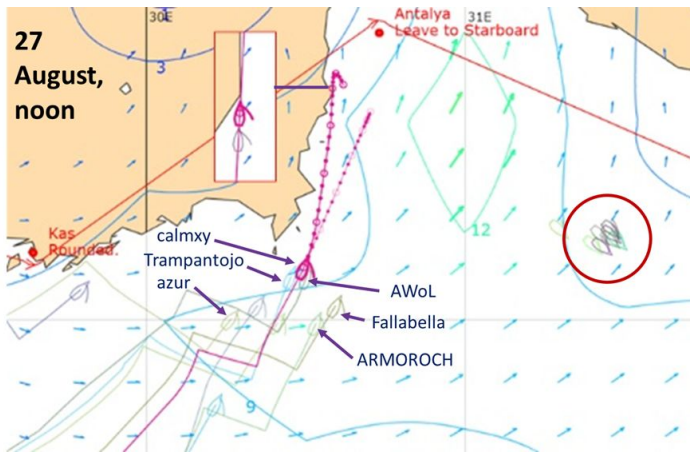
In the meantime, I watched how the leading 15 decided to tackle the next section. Some like WRmirked and HappyHour went for the shorter route closer to shore (weaker winds) while others like Dikkehenk went significantly further south (stronger winds), down to around 34.7°N or so. I can't really speak for them but hopefully at least one of them uploads their report so we can view from their perspective.

The winds at Tekir can be quite favourable... only that it's usually the case when nobody is nearby, such as during much of the 14+ hours between me and the leading boats. If the winds are favourable, going near Tekir would be the clear choice. But by the time I reached Samos, the winds near Tekir had died again, so I would have to make a choice much like what the leading boats did.



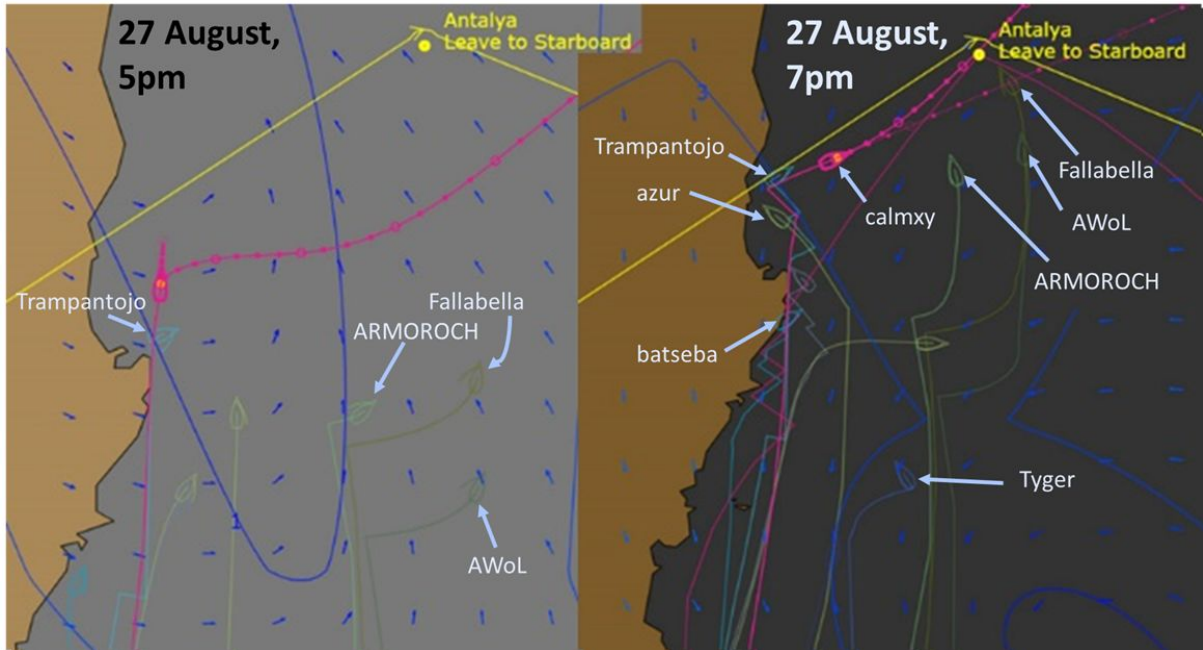
My intended path was to travel near the max downwind TWA that would result in a neat curve between Patmos and Leipsoi, which would provide a nice trade-off between strong winds and extra distance travelled. I would then sail roughly at 35.1°N until directly south of Kas and use a TWA to curve nicely to Antalya. This is the route that many nearby boats opted for; azur would follow HappyHour's decision and stay close to Tekir.

However, tragedy struck: for some reason, one of my DCs failed to get sent, thus sending my boat all the way to Donousa. Hence, although the actual BBQ wasn't all that long, it added around 3 hours to my expected finishing time (based on DCs to just east of Karpathos). I had to improvise and hope for the best.



Coming up the coast near Kemer (towards Antalya), I hadn't yet BBQ'd, but the path that I was on looked perilously close to land. Would this be my third BBQ of the race? Looks like this will be a close one. I opted not to cut boat speed to avoid the BBQ and hope for the best. Thankfully, it cleared.

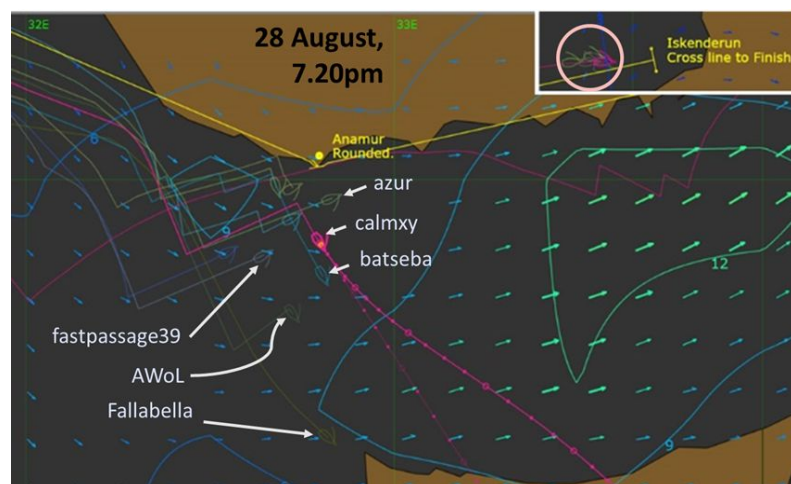
Most of the nearby boats, including Trampantojo and batseba, went close to the coast and make a tack towards Antalya.

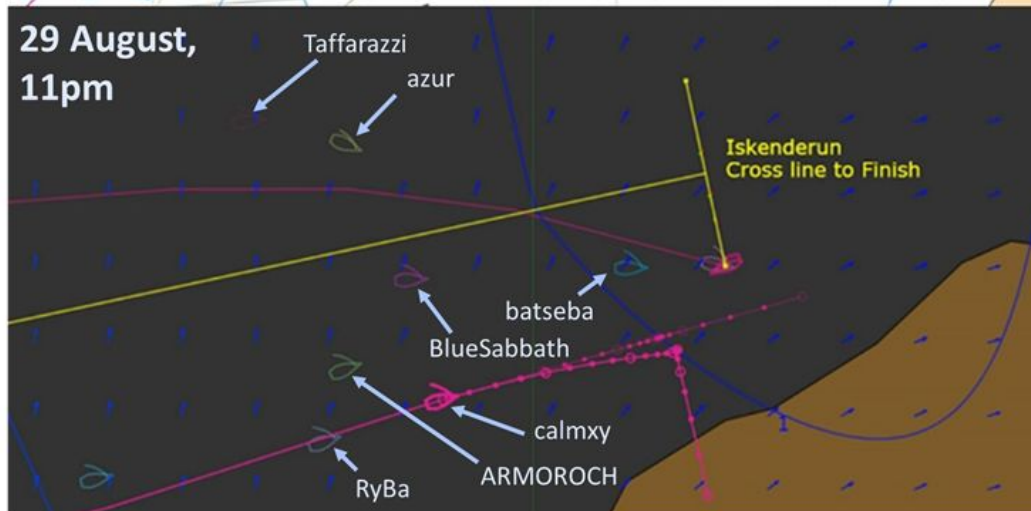
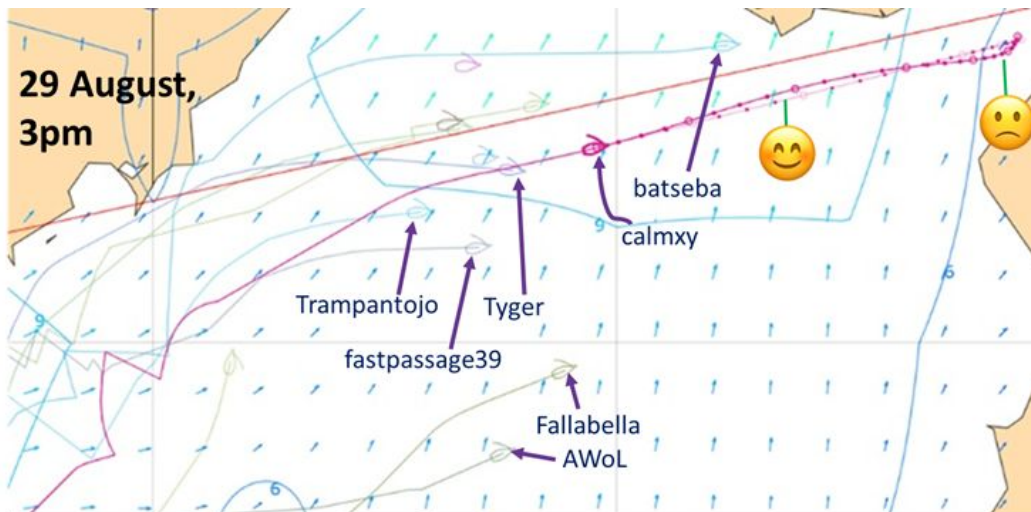
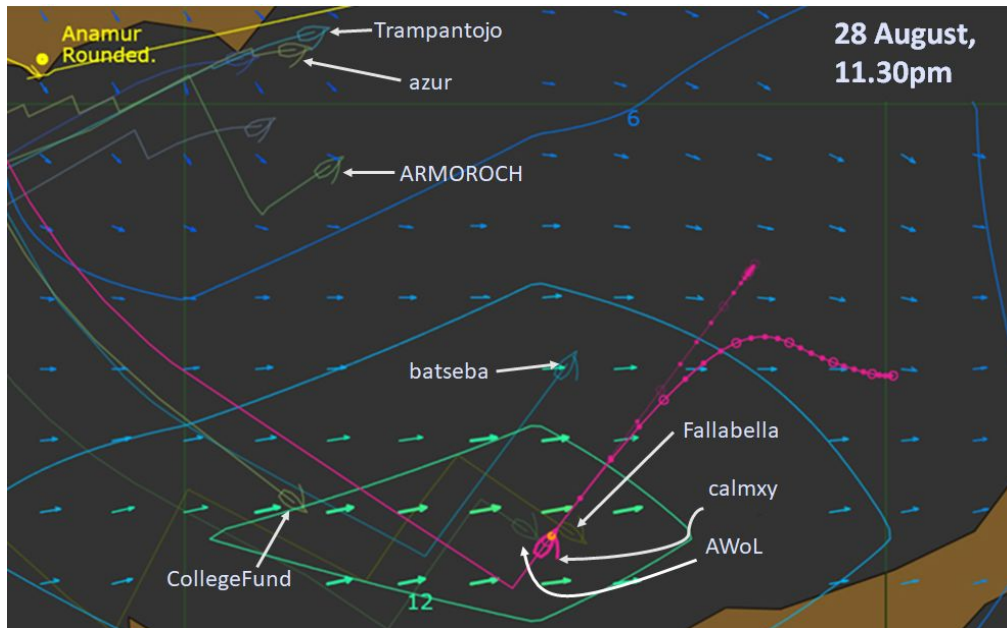


Fallabella, Armoroch and AWoL went further to the east than I did. A quick analysis showed that two of them would be able to round Antalya before I could reach it due to their more favourable wind direction. Armoroch, being somewhat further behind, would break even with me. I had considered that route, but perhaps due to me having fallen behind from the earlier BBQs or the Wx being significantly different at the time of setting those DCs, I was destined to get trapped in that windhole's core for at least a while no matter which way I routed.

From Antalya to Anamur, the winds favoured a direct straight course for the most part. Here, once again there was a choice to keep closer to Turkey or head closer to north Cyprus for better wind. I decided to keep south for the better angle to the next part.

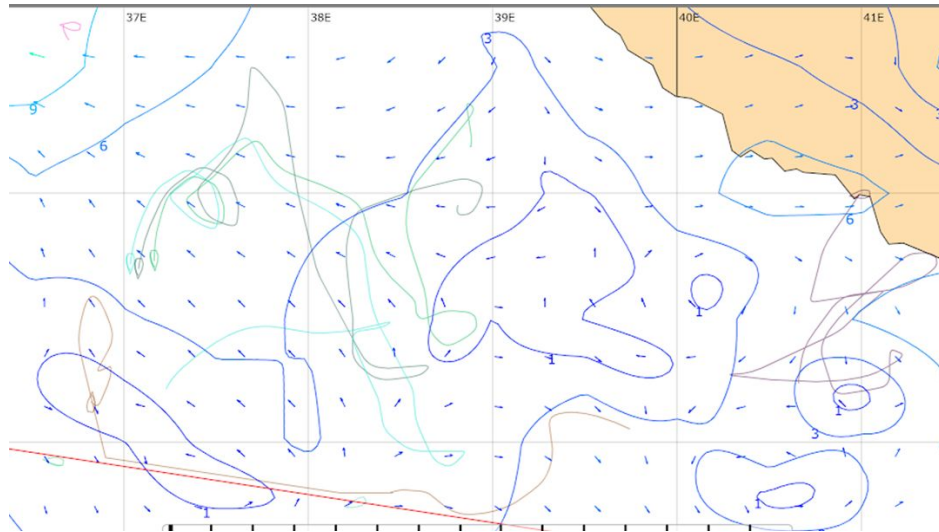
Some wind shift had taken place. I had executed a pair of gybes some 45min apart, which would result in my boat just touching the landmass if under the original Wx. Instead, the gybes made my boat target towards the southern part of the finish. Since the winds favoured those who aimed for the northern part of the finish, this gave batseba and BlueSabbath (who had been quite some distance back at Riva compared to me) the advantage and both of them overtook me.





After 8 grueling days of this, the winds looked favourable for a straight run to the finish... No, of course not. It wouldn't be Turkey if the winds cooperated all the way to the finish, right? Like Tekir, the winds can be strong at times... but at the time we were ~5nm from the finish, there was this massive windhole which we needed to thread through. It made for an intense finish, as the boats bunched together. azur threatened to overtake me in this final stretch, but in the end I came out ahead of them for 18th. This is probably my best finish for a race this length. Perhaps ironically for the 3 Turks who raced this course, only one of them

finished.



Just for fun, I decided to check out the east Black Sea after I finished the race. Looks like some others have seen that report and have decided to compete against one another for that "fanciest route"! Yeah, competition for that is quite stiff. Now if only this (in its entirety) became a timed race with an appropriately lengthened racing window... and a special award for most runs completed in that time.