

Mistli's Birthday BBQ Race 2019

This was the eleventh annual running of the Mistli Birthday BBQ Race and I do believe that my #10 finish is one of my better ones. Having first started racing on Sailonline in 2009, well, I say “racing” but, for those who remember my arrival on the platform, you will probably recall a lot of energetic zigging and zagging getting me precisely nowhere, I do tend to know what to do, although rarely manage to do it! I owe my current understanding of the process to many SOLers, you know who you are, who counselled that, unlike certain other point-and-click sailing games, Sailonline really does require it's skippers to understand how wind navigation works and, slowly but surely, I made progress...at least I now know what I should be doing, even if I don't often do it!

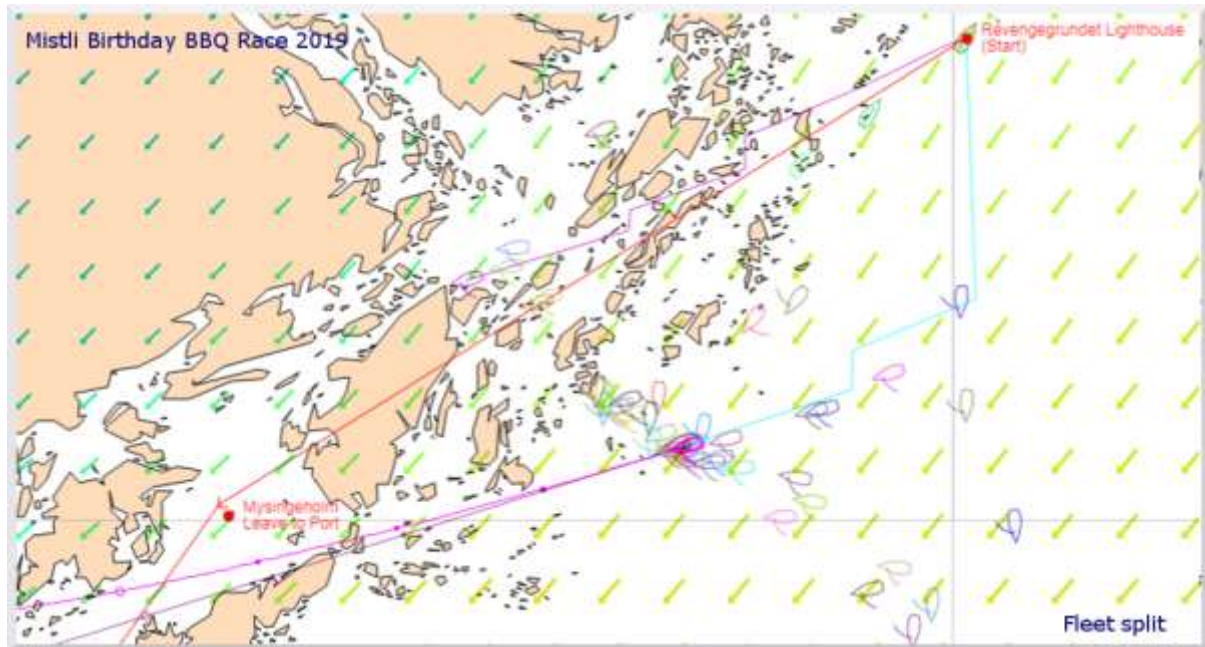
Life and circumstances can interfere with one's best intentions to race well, we all are familiar with that, and so it mostly is for me.

BUT

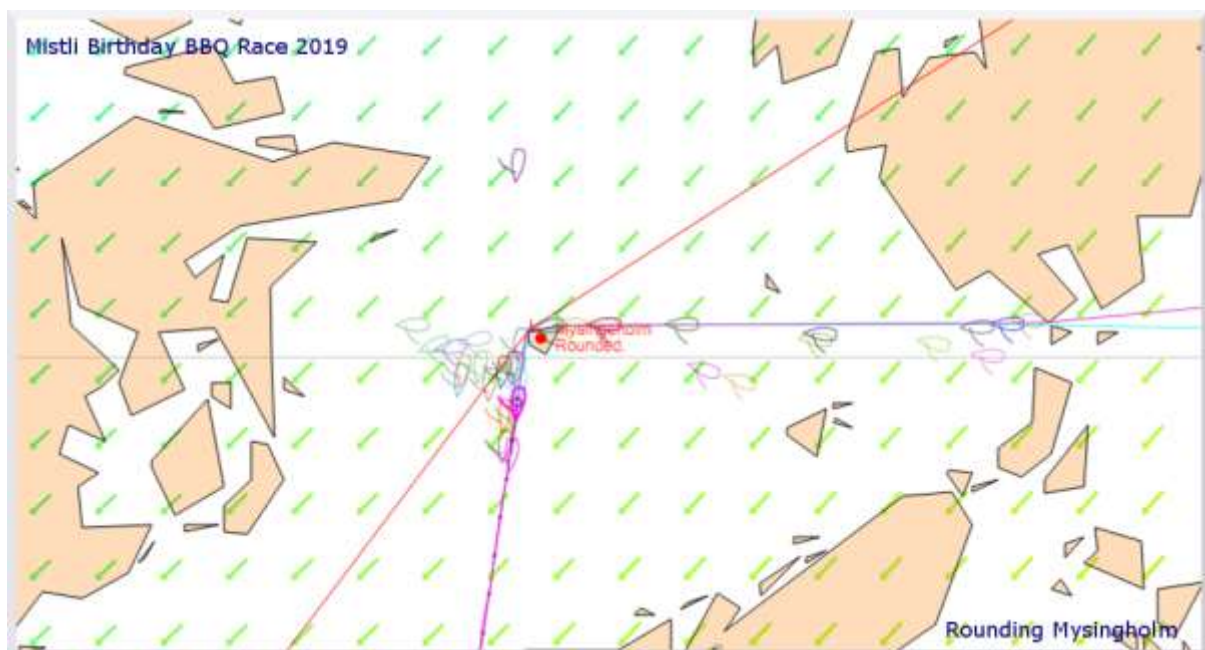
This year, the 2019 Mistli race, with its helpfully strong winds, made it unquestioningly possible for me to sit at my trusty ageing laptop and do my best. These days I remains mostly SOTP (aka Seat Of The Pants aka non-routing) and for me, racing in the Stockholm Archipelago, most definitely requires me to bring my Practice Racing A game. Practice Racing is something I commend to all newbies to Sailonline – even if you can't join in the races themselves, just use those pink dots (“marks”) in your own time to practise that Max Zoom and mark rounding/cornering that comes in so handy for archipelago events! It is also fun, particularly if you like understanding how wind interacts with obstacles, the land and the sea which is now brought home for SOLers by Sailonline's introduction of HIRES (NOAA's wrfems model) winds for appropriate races. If you spot that HIRES winds are being used, then make sure to increase the density of your wind arrows or barbs and you will really see just how the wind is curving around islands – that is, of course, if you have time to sit back and admire the view! Some races, like Mistli's offer a few opportunities for a breather but never very many!

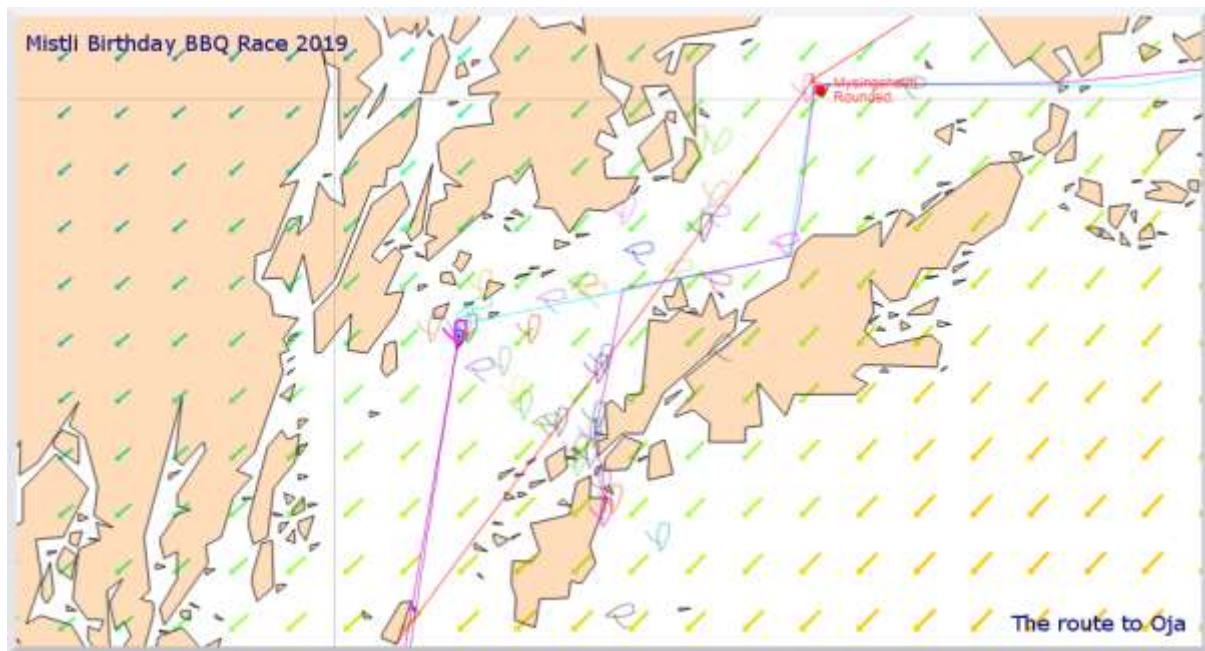
Sailonline's Seacart polar is a delightful one but, like all multihulls, tends to take a significant performance hit with every gybe or tack, particularly, of course, in strong(er) wind conditions. On this basis, I decided to start Mistli's race by heading out into the Baltic on a TWA before zooming close in to see which access to the inner channel would bring 'Chaser to Mysingholm.

As you can see from this first “Fleet Split” image taken not that long after the start, pretty much every choice of course was chosen – the more you zoom in, the more small islets seem to appear!



The rounding at Mysingholm was busy, and, remembering various tactics used by others in the past, I toyed with the idea of taking the narrow channel out to sea (as outlaw did) but chickened out and instead stayed inshore.





The run to Oja was pretty straightforward, I kept to VMG and made as few course adjustments as possible while I began to think about the rounding and then the Oja to Trosa leg. Over the years we have experienced a wide range of winds – occasionally strong but frequently light and fickle - and these have allowed me, back in the pack, to see what others have chosen in front of me and trying to add my own twist! This year, with the NNE winds continuing to blow pretty constantly, there really were no major tactics required – the run-for-home and our virtual BBQ was pretty much dictated to us and all we could do was keep a close eye on minuscule adjustments.

Many congratulations to our podium and to the others in front of me and, of course, *gratis po fodelsedagen* to Mistli who, with her family, also raced with us and, despite a celebratory birthday lunch in reality, all managed to finish within the top 20!

Here's to next year.

RainbowChaser /November 2019