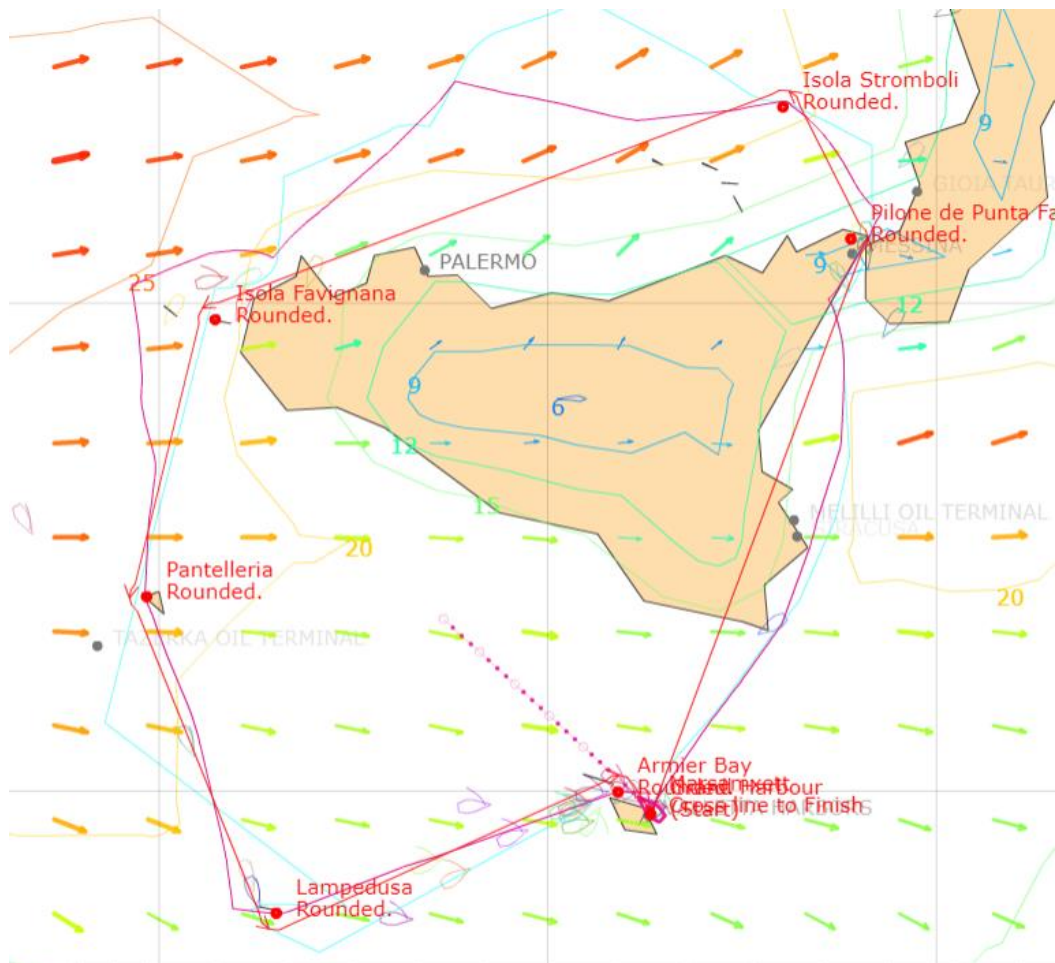# Valetta Sprint 2019 Race Report

A 588 mile Sprint?

In my early Sailonline days, I would often marvel at front line competitors, Brainaid, Rumskib, Rafa, Winston, Ita10267, AGage and a host of others. They would be solidly in front and then suddenly take off on what seemed like a total mistake. They would lose 75 positions, but two days later they'd be back in front having gained 75 + 1. I had no clue how they did it.

On quite a few occasions I would manage to hold podium places – invariably not at the Finish Line but somewhere in the race. Placing first is easy. It's finishing first that is the hard part.

The Valetta Sprint was a 588 Nm trip around Sicily from Malta and back. The race course can be seen for reference in this screen dump. The winds somewhat match the conditions of the race.

The purple track shown is that of the winner. I also included Rainbow Chaser's track,
in blue, to honor her long standing contribution to our platform.

Seriously, I did not expect to win this race. I wasn't even there at the start at 15 UTC. I had made a routing for the first leg and convinced myself that intervention wouldn't be necessary for the first 12 hours. I wasn't there for the WX at 4:30 PM and in fact didn't check in again till late in the evening. Much to my surprise I was somewhere in the Top 10 with a good chance of gaining a few positions. I could see that the following morning and the passage of the Messina Strait to round Pilone de Punta Faro would be demanding and play out in dying winds.

Half an hour late for the morning WX, I found Rafa, Knockando60, Hirilonde, Beliberda and Batatabh around me, and Bimmer was catching up fast. Let the fun begin.

I have accustomed myself to tweaking the routes proposed by Qtvlm. Very often, one may find one or two minutes even after optimization and simplification. I tweaked and tweaked again and was spewed out of the narrows without hitting land.

The strategy that proposed itself to me was that time-honored and often quoted maxim of getting in the lead and staying there. My main concern was that being in the lead within the first third of the race probably would be an indication that I had done something wrong (cf. 2nd paragraph above).

Since I was already there, there was not much I could do except to cling to the hope that I could hold on and hold out. To the proponents of the strategy, let me mention that staying in the lead is harder than getting there. It is easier to be the hunter than the hunted. Particularly if there is more than one hunter. Knockando60 and Beliberda were all over me from different directions and Rafa sailed a close second with all the confidence of a man who is used to winning. The distance between the four of us was in the hundredths of a mile.

I passed Isola Stromboli within a hair's breadth and was ready to fast forward to Isola Favignana with my router set on the mark. All was good throughout the night. However, the next morning it dawned on me: The Finish line is not at Favignana! What if … what if I were to make a route to the mark beyond it? To Pantelleria.

Sure enough, the router said to pass Favignana well out to sea. I thought back on all the big names I have seen going off in odd directions to lose 75 and gain 75+1. Being first, I had nothing to gain and everything to lose.

Echoing in my mind were the words of a real life skipper and friend of mine barking out: "There is no point in sailing away from the island you are sailing 'round!"

I had images of hitting a baseball into the bleachers, and decided to go for the long shot. Within seconds Rafa and Beliberda followed suit, whereas Knockando60 considered the option and discarded it just like Bimmer.

What followed was an illustrious demonstration of a fleet split between going for the upcoming mark or the one beyond it.

I had envisioned a setback of 75 positions but it ended up only about 7 before I returned to leading the fleet with Rafa right behind me in the hiss of my wake.

The rest of the race was rather eventless albeit not effortless. I was concerned that I could not be there for the last gybe, but Wolff took over 30 minutes before the finish and shared the laurels.

That same evening I went to bed at 8:30 PM and slept for 12 hours.

Leaderboard for Valletta Sprint 2019

Valletta Sprint 2019, racing with 132 boats.

Rankings: SYC ranking

1-50 51-100 101-150

Rank	Boat Name	Boat Type	DTG	DBL	Finish Time (UTC)
1	Mouthansar	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:10:41
2	rafa	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:15:21
3	Beliberda	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:20:18
4	Go4iT	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:29:40
5	Hirilonde	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:33:53
6	Chipspitter	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:37:13
7	Sebensa	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:37:37
8	knockando60	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:42:04
9	Bimmer	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 13:51:05
10	YorkshirePudding	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 14:04:13
11	BS1	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 14:08:36
12	azur	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 14:10:28
13	FR_ILNOKI	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 14:18:13
14	brandystrega	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 14:23:24
15	Blackpearl	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 14:31:47
16	Tyger	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 14:49:43
17	acushla	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 15:03:08
18	Garagiste	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 15:07:11
19	clash	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 15:15:01
20	MaryCeleste	Ker 40	0	0	2019-11-07 15:21:00

Congratulations to all the hardy souls and sleepless sailors who finished the Valetta Sprint 2019.

Lessons learned in this race:

- Dare to envision yourself winning.
- Don't be afraid to lead the fleet.
- Do not cling to the lead if doing so will make you lose.
- Do route to points further than the one ahead.

Thank you for a great race and thank you for racing SOL.

Mouthansar