

Log Superior Lights - 2019

Our polar for a SOTO30 features a big dip in windspeed across the 100 TWA to 140 TWA range once the wind strength goes into double digit knots, providing an opportunity for SOLers to 'hop' from tight angles to wide angles, as they change their virtual foresail from jib to gennaker and back again, all at very little performance penalty.

A similar smaller dip exists when the wind strength is in single digits, but in the 70 TWA to 90 TWA range, but this one turned out to be quite irrelevant in this year's race around the Lights of Lake Superior, as the breeze was on all race long.

'Hopping' is a delicate art. Your router (if you use one) will give you a good guide on when to 'hop', but less so on what your optimum angle will be, and there are no easy tools to help you either. So, eyeball or sums are your two options.

Nowadays, it is my standard habit to first route my race with 'avoid coasts' off. On this occasion, when I did this before and then again after the start, I found Qt was suggesting a route straight through the Apostle Islands which amazingly more or less avoided colliding with any of the various coasts. I fine-tuned and got a solution which looked pretty damn good to me.

As it turned out, arch-rival WRmirekd found a similar good-looking solution, perhaps with a pimple less or slightly better cheekbones. I am not sure, but as we exited the islands by tightening up round Sand Point on the tip of Outer, he may have been just ahead. It was going to be another war of attrition, and with a dinner commitment that evening and IRL racing commitments on Sunday, I was going to miss more WXs than just the 02:40 a.m. one's courtesy of nam-awip's American timekeeping. Not auspicious.

But our shared hubris was quickly disturbed by goo'ol Kipper1258, who, perhaps for an easier life, but more likely after some exhaustive testing had opted to go north of the Apostle Islands altogether in just one 'hop', and well before my dinner appointment Kipper had gone into a handy lead.

Approaching Michipicoten, a few gybes were going to be necessary, which I was going to have to do blind by DC, before completing the approach behind the keyboard again. I lost a bit here, but not as much as the unfortunate Kipper1258 who turned to round a bluff that fraction too early (probably on DCs and fast asleep) and went ashore for a prolonged BBQ.

Heading south away from Michipicoten, Mouthansar had also caught me up, and at the turn round Caribou Island Light, I was (back) in P3, which despite my best endeavours is how it stayed. It might well have got worse, as approaching the second passage through the Apostle Islands, I had to rely on DCs again, allowing myself the aforementioned distraction of some IRL racing on Cork Harbour, which, only four-up in an X-335, went well enough for my lady owner and her crew. Recognising that we were just a bit under-crewed for the blustery F4, we sensibly kept the spinnaker in the bag all race, but got the tide tactics super right to come in a handy fourth after handicap.

Life's for living, which includes SOLing!

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