

When this race first opened, I headed east to round Punta del Este first and then return to start for the Practice Race. I had anticipated that since this round trip would take 36+ hours, I would accept the fact that if a Practice Race did come up on the first day, I would have to forgo it. But I suppose this could be seen as practice for the open water sailing in the Atlantic Ocean. Turns out that the marks were indeed set, but for whatever reason the Practice Race that day was cancelled. I came back in time for the second Practice Race... only to fall asleep before setting a DC to round M6 and return to Start, thus resulting in yet another DNF.



With 21 hours still to go before the race start, I headed up the Uruguay river. Normally, due to the way map tiles are rendered, many rivers simply do not appear on Sailonline's maps at all. But this one had navigable water for around 75nm upstream, all the way to Fray Bentos.

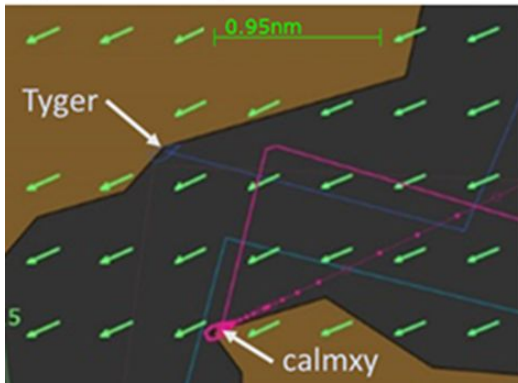
The mouth of the Parana river wasn't available. However, if it were fully available, it would have been possible to use the river route to reach Rio from Buenos Aires. Not the race finishing mark of Rio, but somewhere inland in Greater Rio. This is due to the watershed of most rivers having a single mouth (near Buenos Aires in this case). Of course, the actual race would be via the Atlantic, which is much more fun. But I suppose if you did get all the way there, you could call it an honorary finish. Some of the rivers far upstream are a few metres wide for long stretches, which carries the following implications:



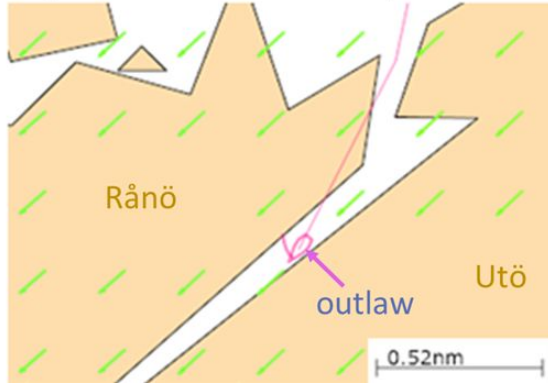
- Routing, for the most part, would likely be just finding the correct branch to follow
- The command in such stretches of river would simply be its COG, except for tacking to keep TWA above 5° (there is no space to perform wider tacks or gybes)
- Generally, winds will be consistently weaker and less predictable than those offshore
- At certain river bends, it may be a viable strategy to SLI-jump, and depending on circumstances you could have dozens of attempts to still come out ahead (runs contrary to what is intended on Sailonline or otherwise)
- IRL, your "boat" would probably be more like a sampan, since a Riptide 50 might not fit in the narrowest sections

- Such a “race” would be absolutely hell, even compared to Bosphorus/Dardanelles (Sail Around Turkey) and the channel between Rånö and Utö (Mistli’s BBQ)! Note that in Mistli’s BBQ, outlaw didn’t really gybe in that particular channel.

Sail Around Turkey 2019
(Dardanelles)



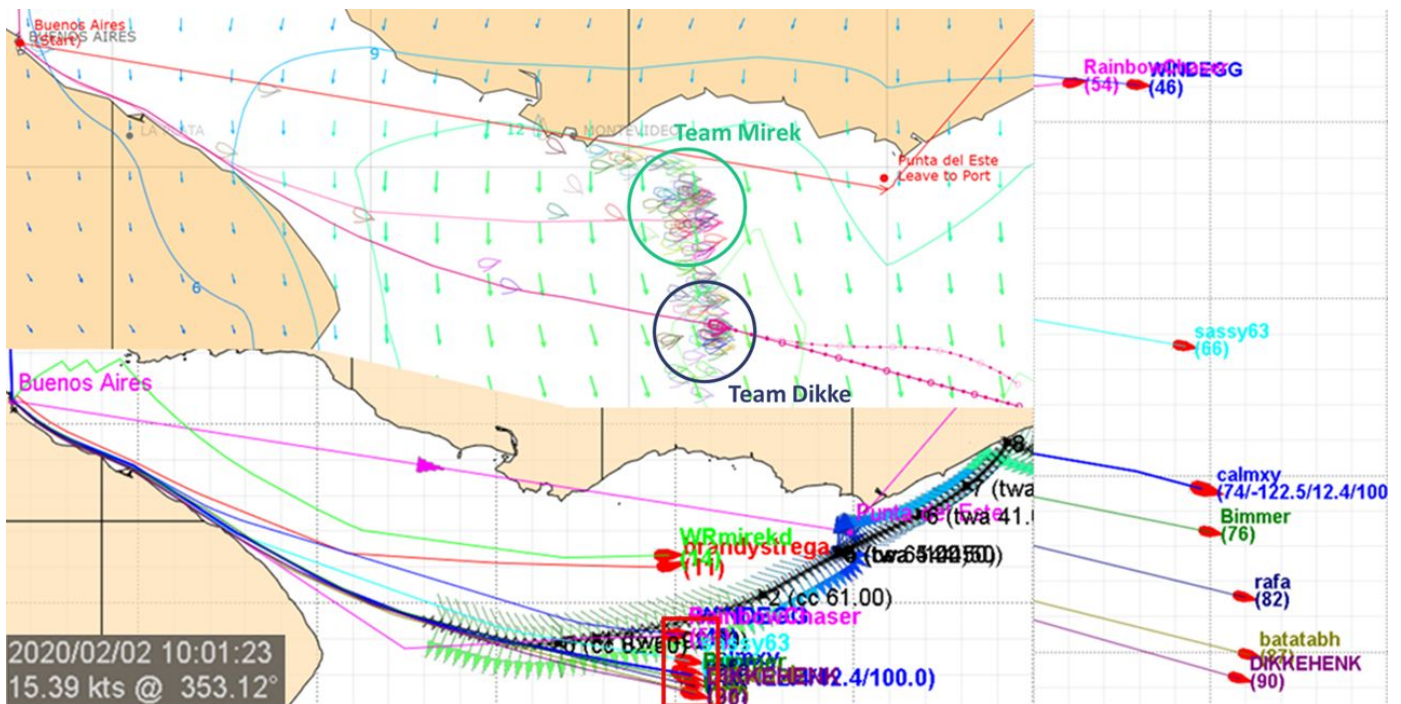
Mistli BBQ 2019
(between Rånö and Utö)



I must really thank ij, kroppyer and the rest of the dev team for their dedication setting up the HTML client, as it enabled me to sail more accurately even when I’m not at home.

Specifically, the Flash client doesn’t work on the iPhone, and the mobile web client provides very limited information (i.e. doesn’t tell you if you are about to sail into a windhole; unable to edit existing DCs - not to mention outright unavailable if non-SYC member). With the HTML client, I can SOL much as I would do at home, except for odd screen proportions due to the iPhone’s relatively small screen.

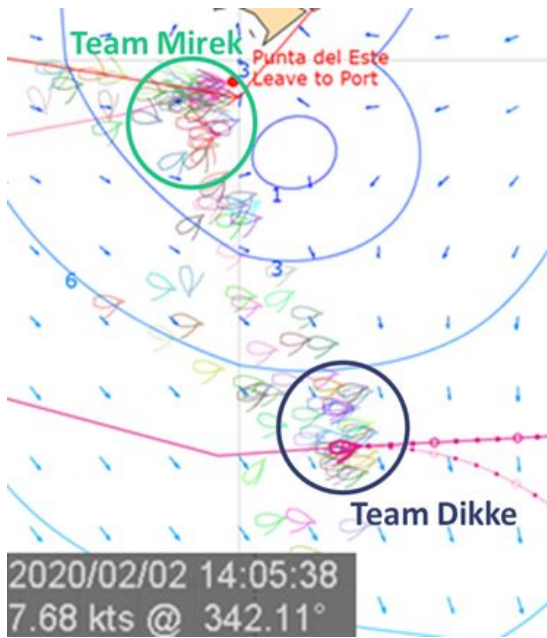
As I had to urgently take care of my grandparents on the night of Race Start, I was unable to use Kipper’s tool, as that could not be run on my iPhone. The intention was to wait for Towback so that I could at least use that hour to set a good first command. Unfortunately, that was not to be, as next thing I knew, there was daylight coming from the outside.



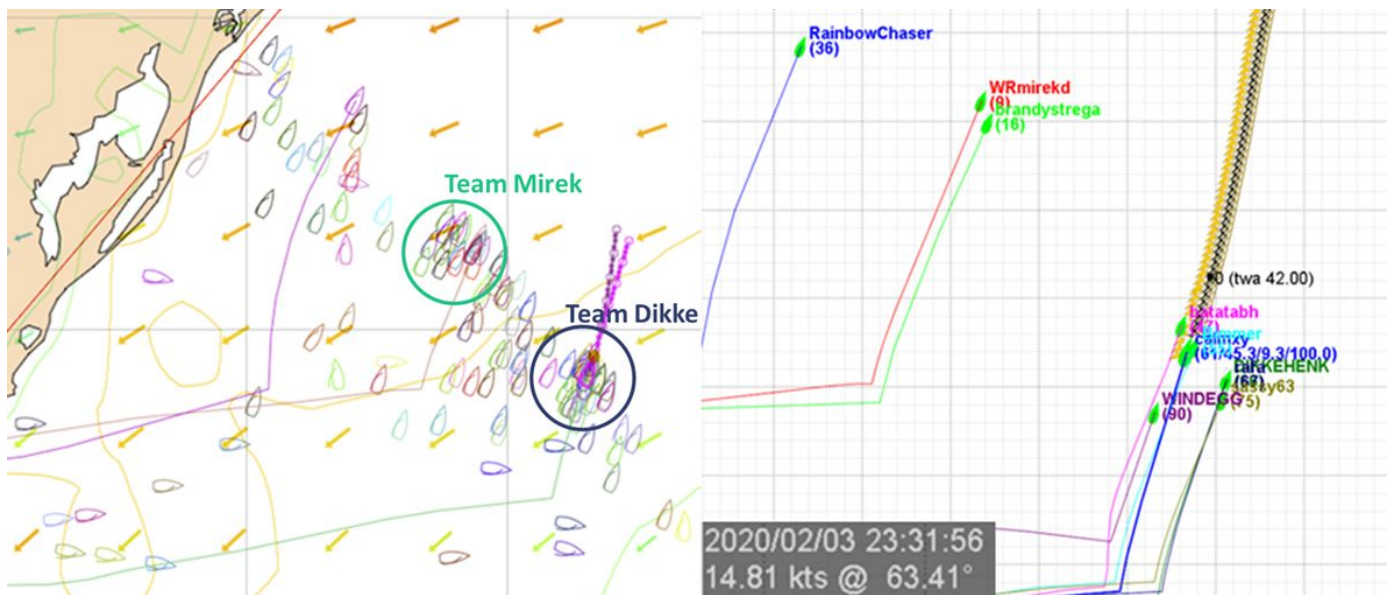
The fleet split into two rather distinct groups, with a scattering of boats in the middle. I shall refer to them as **Team Mirek** and **Team Dikke** respectively, named after two of the best SOLers. Notable SOLers of **Team Mirek** included: azur, knockando60 and (at least initially) brandystrega. I had intended to set commands to follow **Team Mirek**, but my starting DC (TWA -47°) meant that I ended up with **Team Dikke** instead. Well, I guess it could have been worse; I could have BBQ’d within Rio de La Plata and effectively forfeited the race.

I deliberated for a bit about returning to **Team Mirek** before deciding that I was better off just keeping with **Team Dikke**. The likely reason why these two groups were so distinct was that the Wx on 2 Feb was such that both routes were (almost) equally viable; if routed with QtVlm or similar (and the finishing POI set to Rio), slight differences in the starting and ending

points could change this result. For both cases, QtVlm suggested to tack at one point, then make one more tack near Ilha Grande to get to Rio.

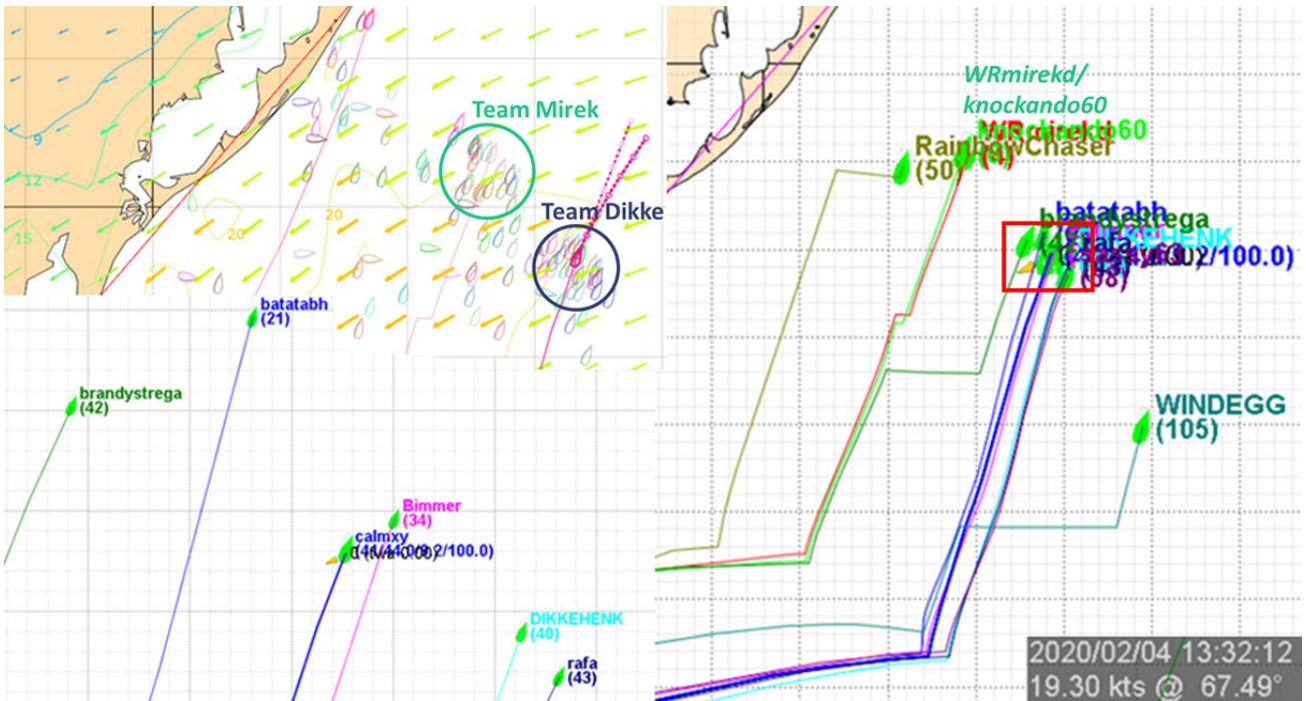


Approaching Punta del Este, there was a windhole that was due to arrive around the time that we were to round that mark. This windhole travelled in a southwest direction. **Team Mirek** rounded the Punta del Este mark closely, probably on the basis that the distance was shorter and the windhole did pass relatively quickly. **Team Dikke** rounded the Punta del Este mark considerably further offshore and avoided the windhole, but would have additional distance to reach Rio. Would the stronger winds and faster TWA angle be enough to offset the extra distance?

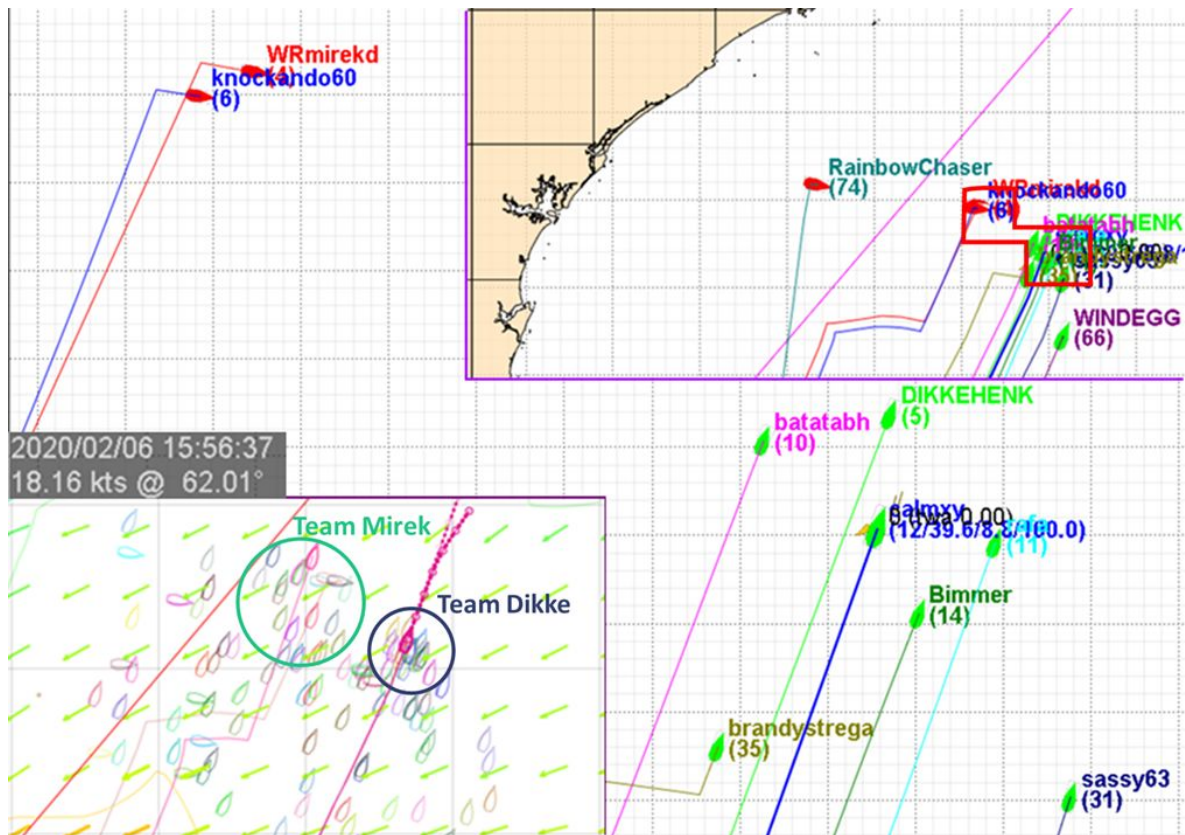


Team Mirek generally made that tack around 22 hours after rounding Punta del Este; **Team Dikke**, around 26-27 hours after rounding Punta del Este. A few made one or more tacks to enter the strong winds sooner, but it proved to not be optimal since even in 15-knot winds, the boat speed in upwind conditions would already be near maximum. My tack (set on DCs) ended up firing around a half hour too early, but I believed it would still be workable without the need to perform more tacks (which would be less efficient given the wind direction).

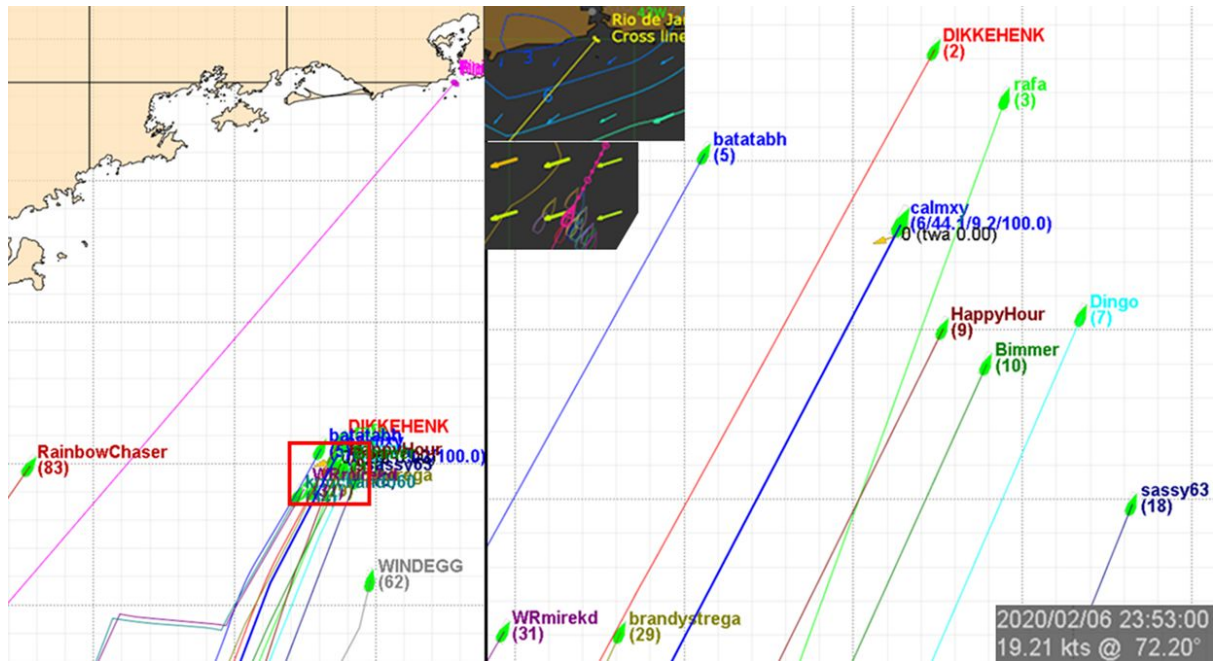
Here, it would be approximately 3-4 days of close-hauled sailing in 20-knot winds before reaching Greater Rio and a possible tack to the finish. Thankfully, the offshore Atlantic winds remained relatively stable throughout the race; they only really weakened the day after we reached Rio. One could set a single TWA command (around $+43^\circ$) and finish the race without further inputs, but it would result in a rather wavy path and considerable wasted time. The key for these 3-4 days was to use the Wx to determine when to sail COG and when to sail TWA, to gain the most speed without shedding too much height (specifically, TWA had to be at least 38°).



Over the next two days, several boats left Team Mirek at different points, making several tacks to join Team Dikke. Most kept with their respective group or remained at the relative positions to these two groups. At this point, it remained a close call as to whether WRmirekd or Dikkehenk would win the race, and also by how much; this largely depended on what winds the Wx brought on 7 Feb near Rio (the weaker winds there were less predictable). Perhaps they would even share the podium.

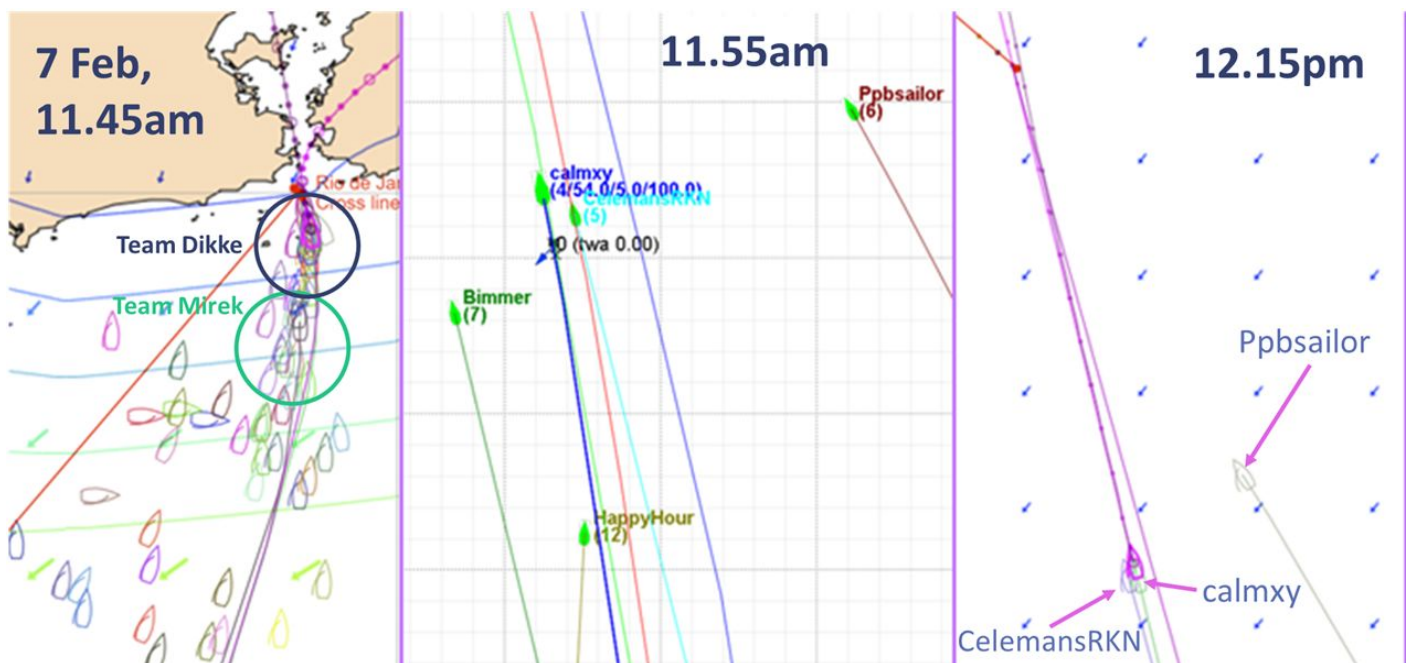


I didn't use QtVlm on 5 Feb, but did on 6 Feb. Compared to what was suggested on 4 Feb, I was now to sail directly for Rio without first tacking near the Rio coast. This was because the coastal winds at the expected time of arrival had changed significantly. Slight wind shifts relative to earlier Wx further reduced the available height that I could shed for more speed. When I saw Team Mirek as a whole making the second pair of tacks towards Team Dikke, I knew the game was up for them; they would join over an hour behind Dikkehenk.



That being said, I was far from safe. While Team Mirek may be well behind, I faced plenty of competition within Team Dikke itself. While Dikkehenk and rafa would fight it out for the win, I was around 28 mins behind and had a whole cluster of boats several nm to the east. I knew that while I was ahead then, it was still some 13 hours to the finish and they could have had enough height to overtake me. Additionally, 7 Feb was still a working day so I couldn't simply keep watching the race line on my iPhone. At this point, it looked very possible to finish 3rd or 13th or anywhere in between.

Amazingly, of the entire cluster, only Dingo and Ppbsailor were able to overtake me. The rest got close but didn't quite make it. Perhaps distracted by their meeting, Ppbsailor drifted away from the Rio finish and enabled me to overtake. It was a pity too, as Ppbsailor was also ahead of Dingo then and it could have been their first podium.



After coming back from work, I saw that the race was nearly concluded. I was in 4th place then, the podium having finished with comfortable gaps between them. That's before I noticed that Ppbsailor had corrected their course and, along with CelemansRKN, had a similar DTG as me. However, their TWA was faster, at ~57° and ~70°.

Ppbsailor overtook and finished 4th, while CelemansRKN and I kept trading 5th and 6th places for a while, with me eventually coming out ahead. Team Mirek starting coming in an hour after that, the best of whom finished in the mid-20s. Unfortunately, WRmirekd himself somehow missed the finish, jumped the SLI (often a stroke of good luck if no perf loss, but bad in this case) and kept going well into Guanabara Bay before finally BBQing. It's really not his day, is it. But I suppose having the gib of transforming water to wine is pretty valuable too.

Thanks for a wonderful race!

