

Lisbon to Cape Town 2020

Continuing with my 'when things go wrong, though you do the best you can; a stress-relieving note may help bonk become a better man' policy, here are the elements that contributed to what I was hopeful at one stage could have become my second ever Ocean triumph morphing into a not entirely disappointing but nevertheless infuriating P6.

As we gybed down through the Canaries, I was aware that more than likely I would be looking to cross over to the Brazilian coast at some stage or other, however feeling confident that heading south first was the quickest way to get there.

And so it proved, as together with a small number of others, including Leelu, Dingo, Go4It and appelkrat I think, I gybed west on was it day 4, or 5, in the general direction of Tristan, to gybe south again once to the west of said island.

bonknhoot was in the lead of this group, whilst another, including DIKKEHENK and Jawz and eventual winner Mullionman, who had all crossed west almost straight away out of Lisbon, were a good bit behind to the north although admittedly further west.

There now followed a first three or four days of infuriation, as my router advice hopped about from one WX to the next, sometimes suggesting further gybes west and other times hooter angles heading south, or even east of south on port. I followed these sensibly only half-heartedly but still lost ground. With only two or three WXs left before a Doldrums crossing was going to be attempted, I adjudged the router was likely to have made up its mind and I went for a slightly more easterly than normal crossing, but the router changed its mind again and I was wrong.

Thought 1: err to the west for a successful Doldrums crossing.

Thought 2: try not to sacrifice VMG to leeward when working south down the coast of South America.

Once out the other side, the mind over router battle continued, but more subtly. The issue now was how wide to arc your route to Cape Town. I fared better here, although I did not think enough in terms of where the ST Helena High was going to be another blue-tinged patches. If I had, I might have kept SKOVSER behind me or even caught de DIKKEHENK, although I did gain a few places on some others (Renegade, nordee). So, less so than before the Doldrums, I still found myself changing my mind on best route from one WX to the next, normally by only a few degrees, but occasionally by 10 or more. Enough zig-zags in other words to add unnecessary (in hindsight) miles to my route.

Thought 3: try to focus more on how fast the dominant/relevant weather system is moving and how that is changing from one WX to the next.

Thought 4: investigate sources for historic multi-year average gribbs, and see can they give you a steer as to when and how much to deviate from the routed course using latest WX.

But 6th, 4 seconds behind SKOVSER wasn't shabby, so I can't complain. Lying 4th in the OCC after 3, and obviously 6th in the RTW after 1, gives me all to play for. Onward then, to Le Transatlantique next!

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