

My wife is a non-sailor, much less a racer — “how was pulling ropes today honey?” — so we do other things in the summer: build stuff, clean stuff up, chop wood, change the litter, take walks, cocktails, friends, etc.

Thus I am a wintertime frostbite racer only. Not in ICEBOATS silly, in 9’ Dyer Dhow’s in soft, near freezing, salty H₂O. So, when the Mamaroneck Frostbite (<https://www.mamaroneckfrostbite.org/>) Association’s 62nd season was cancelled a few weeks before its official end, it was the COVID-19 virus that brought me to Sailonline. I should also say that I’ve a slim set of connections to this race having lived in Australia in the late 90’s, been to Hobart and Bruny Island for gosh sake, and one of our MFA racers did the 2019 Sydney to Hobart in Ragamuffin II. I was psyched to try it out.

However, I did not measure up in this race having started a few hours late. I misread times but got as high as 124th then took my eye off the ball and nearly BBQ’d before having to tack back out to the rhumb line on the knocked course, about 50nm from the heads, sigh.

My physiological response to this synthetic race was a true synaesthetic experience. I could imagine feeling the helm of the wheel or tiller — what boat were we all racing? — to hold the sheets, trim the sails, feel the spray, chat with my mates; I wanted to see the whales and sea creatures on the journey, and spy a dozen boats around me as I seat-of-the-pants it up the leg, reaching in gigantic breaking waves.

I was constantly looking, to the detriment of my Work From Home locked-down colleagues in NYC, at the weather, at my polar, using the ruler, testing COG v TWA courses and, in the end, like during our ten to fifteen minute-long frostbite races, tacked too much, over thought it all, and didn’t settle in too well. Given the upfront pack and their tracks, I gotta believe most of them were waypointed and had read and well understood this paper on course optimization:
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.210.201&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

So look, I’m gonna do it again. Many in the podium group have been there before, kudos to their attention to detail, I hope to join them one day. And I can sense a terrific community built around a universe that, as you get up to speed, rotates into the 4-dimensional challenge we relish.

As we’re all going through a lot — we were first drop-kicked: Aussie fires and elsewhere, Trump, Brexit, gun violence, climate change, etc; then tossed into the maw of something entirely predictable: a viral pandemic taking advantage of an all too numerous and homogeneous host population — let’s keep our cheer up, keyboards sanitized, and drink glasses chilled!
Cheers, Yeah... righto!

wsguerin/April 2020