

Prior to the Quahog race opening, I had 7 podium finishes. They are:

[Colin-Archer](#) (SYCCH 2019)

[Visingsö Runt](#) (SPRCH 2019)

[Cape Horn Timed](#) (TRCH 2019)

[Mistli's BBQ](#) (Sprint-like)

[Seychelles Sprint](#) (SPRCH 2019)

[Yates Timed](#) (TRCH 2019)

[Martinique Sprint](#) (SPRCH 2020)

This weekend proved to be an interesting one. We had the Toulon Sprint that started 21 hours before this race, but the addition of this Quahog race meant that I would get two (relatively) short races in one weekend!

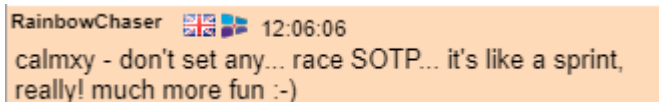
In terms of turnout, it was quite impressive, with more boats registered for this race than even the Golden Globe Race, although the number of boats that finished was less than that of the Golden Globe Race (567 in leg 1, 463 in leg 2; 236 finished that race).



There was a Practice Race the day before the actual race here. Unfortunately, this clashed with the Toulon Sprint that started at 4pm UTC the same day. My guess is that RainbowChaser must have been too optimistic about what the 4.30pm Wx would bring for that race. Perhaps if the leaders finished that Sprint just before 7pm UTC, then the Practice Race would have been better received. To be fair, that Wx did improve, just not by enough.

Racing one Sprint (or sprint-like race) competitively demands all your attention; it is simply not practical to race two Sprints live at the same time. Since I was prioritizing the Toulon Sprint, I set all delayed commands necessary for the Quahog Practice Race. The different timing of the North American Wx meant that I could set those commands under the correct Wx during the Toulon Towback. This led to my 8th podium finish in [Toulon](#) and finishing around 2 minutes behind RainbowChaser in this Practice Race.













I didn't really pay attention to this race thereafter, since the winds became conducive for a more competitive run in the Tristan Timed race. It was only around 12.05pm UTC that I remembered about this race; by that time, the Towback had already occurred so there was no freely exploring the map. Well, at least I didn't miss the start.

I was about to load Kipper's tool to test more delayed commands for the actual race, when RainbowChaser said this in the chat:



RainbowChaser   12:06:06
calmxy - don't set any... race SOTP... it's like a sprint, really! much more fun :-)

Legend

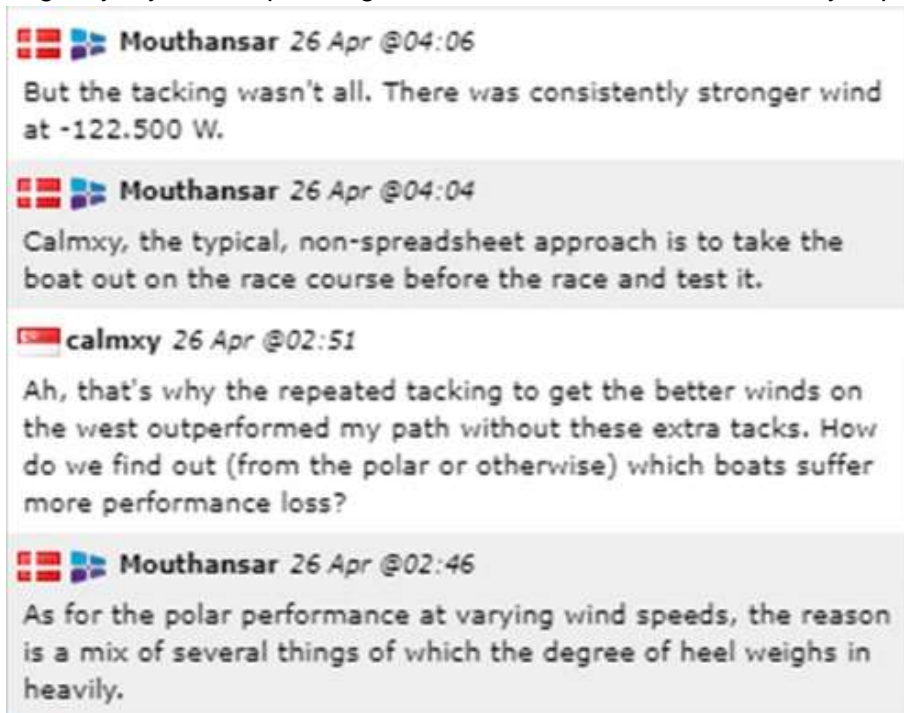
-   calmxy
-   Starship
-   rafa
-   RainbowChaser
-   SMcInnis
-   Kipper1258

And that was that; instead of testing a huge number of DCs in the remaining Towback time as I tend to do, I only set the first one to round the Rose Island mark correctly. The legend above depicts the boat traces that are shown in subsequent images (except when I'm in the lead, in which case it becomes the colour of the highlighted "leading boat"); for most of this race, all other boats were hidden from view.

This race was not particularly difficult to sail SOTP. The winds were consistently stronger in the southeast and there was little wind shift until after the Patience Island mark was rounded. Hence, choosing which side to tack or gybe (when required to sail too much into the headwind or tailwind for the rhumb line) was pretty obvious. If a wind shift were present, then sometimes the wind shift can outweigh the faster wind/boat speed.

Of course, if there is land in the way of the idealized tack/gybe location, some modifications have to be made. This would usually take the form of tacking/gybing multiple times along the

coastline. I remember somewhere at the beginning of the Pacific NW Inshore last April, when I kept to the east side of the channel to minimize the performance loss incurred. Then I was wondering why my boat kept falling behind, to which Mouthansar kindly explained:



Yes, that was around 11 months ago (and it seems at the time of the Quahog race, he was no longer an SYC member... what a shame). Since then, I have observed how he, along with other top SOLers, tacked or gybed repeatedly in certain situations, be it getting the best winds along the coast, or in ocean races, to keep within that narrow band of optimal winds.



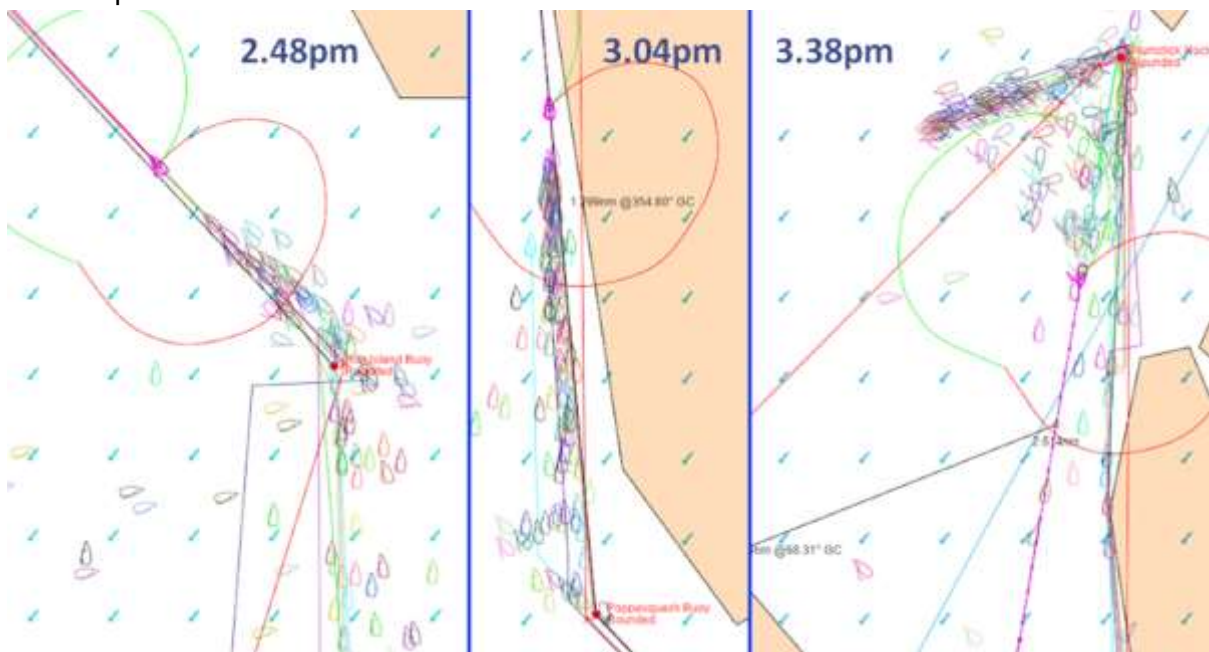
Based on past observations, I determined that I should tack eastward when my next tack back to the north could take place 3 minutes later. This would avoid incurring too much performance loss while getting the extra winds efficiently.



In the six hours of racing, there was a Wx update. However, since I was racing this SOTP, it didn't matter nearly as much, since there was no DC stack for the new Wx to possibly ruin. My guess would be that the impact of the new Wx would have been relatively mild, but I can never say for sure.

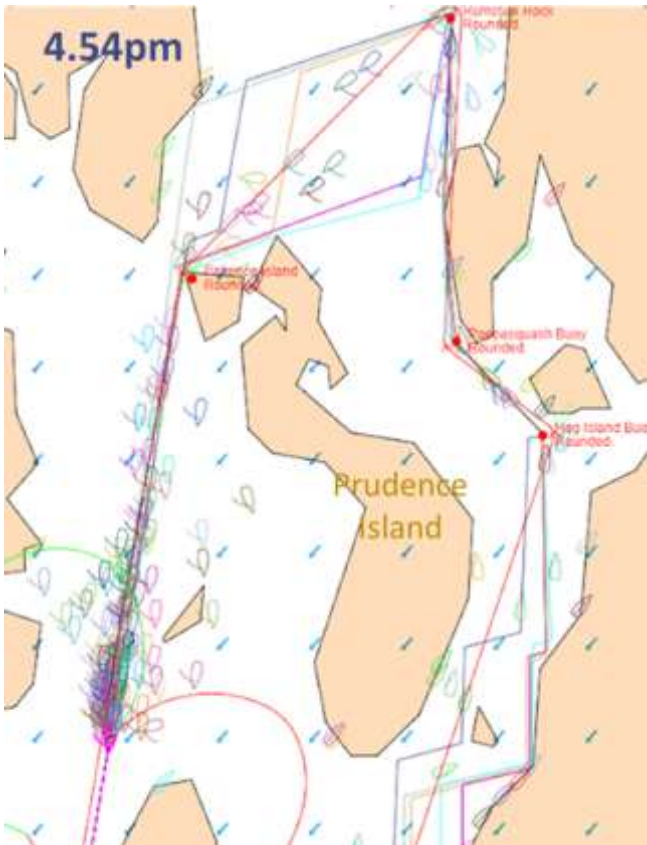


Up we went through Weaver Cove and into Entrance Channel. In real life, it would probably be impossible to squeeze the 300 boats together even under normal circumstances. In SOL, this wasn't a problem; there was no need to give way and lose precious time despite the limited space.



Given the large number of boats, especially since I didn't know a number of them (maybe they have extensive sailing experience in SOL & in real life?), I feared that I could miss the top 10 or even top 100 in this race. But I was ranked 4th as of rounding Hog Island Buoy. This was better than I'd expected!

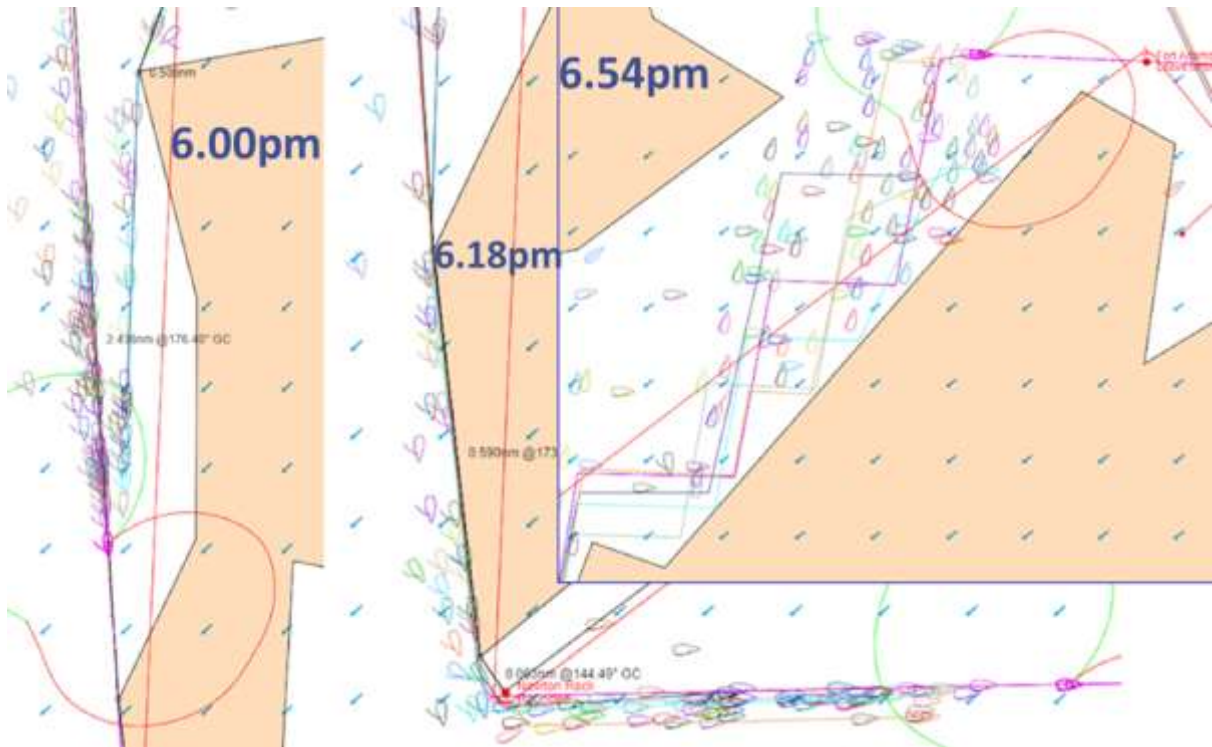
Some decisions, however, were not so easy to make when SOTPing. One of these was between Poppasquash Neck and Rumstick Rock. A quick glance revealed that the rhumb line had an average TWA of 37.7° , but the TWA for max upwind VMG was more like 39° . Tacking twice in quick succession was considered and would have been done if performance loss didn't exist (probably setting the two tacks as DCs around 10-15 seconds apart). Since that wasn't the case, I instead opted to pinch for this length while rafa and others did the tacks. It seemed like their tacks would pay off, but I reached Rumstick Rock first.



Rumstick Rock to Patience Island was quite straightforward, as long as I was careful with the gybing point so that I wouldn't accidentally run into the northern tip of Prudence Island instead. Many chose instead to keep further north, probably to avoid the risk of unrounding Rumstick Rock as what often happens when one rounds marks with too sharp of a hairpin turn.

Although Jamestown Bridge was an oddly placed mark in the middle of the channel, this wasn't a problem to round. But its placement allowed the strategic question of which side of Dutch Island to pass by. On one hand, taking the west route was longer and went through weaker winds; on the other hand, the east route required going through a relatively narrow channel at a TWA of $\sim 160^\circ$ (quite a significant downwind pinch) or otherwise gybe twice in quick succession.

I ended up taking the west route, which turned out to be the more popular of the two. Lunch and a few others took the east route, which I thought was slower (couldn't DC check this) but it appeared that the east route was a few seconds faster. Fortunately, I was sufficiently far enough ahead that I still remained in the lead.



The rest of the race was pretty straightforward, although the huge group of boats behind me kept me on my toes all the way to the finish. I'm impressed that USA took their share of 6 of the top 10 places, given the sheer number of them who signed up. Well done!

Now to wait for Tristan Timed to finish so I can officially claim my 10th podium...