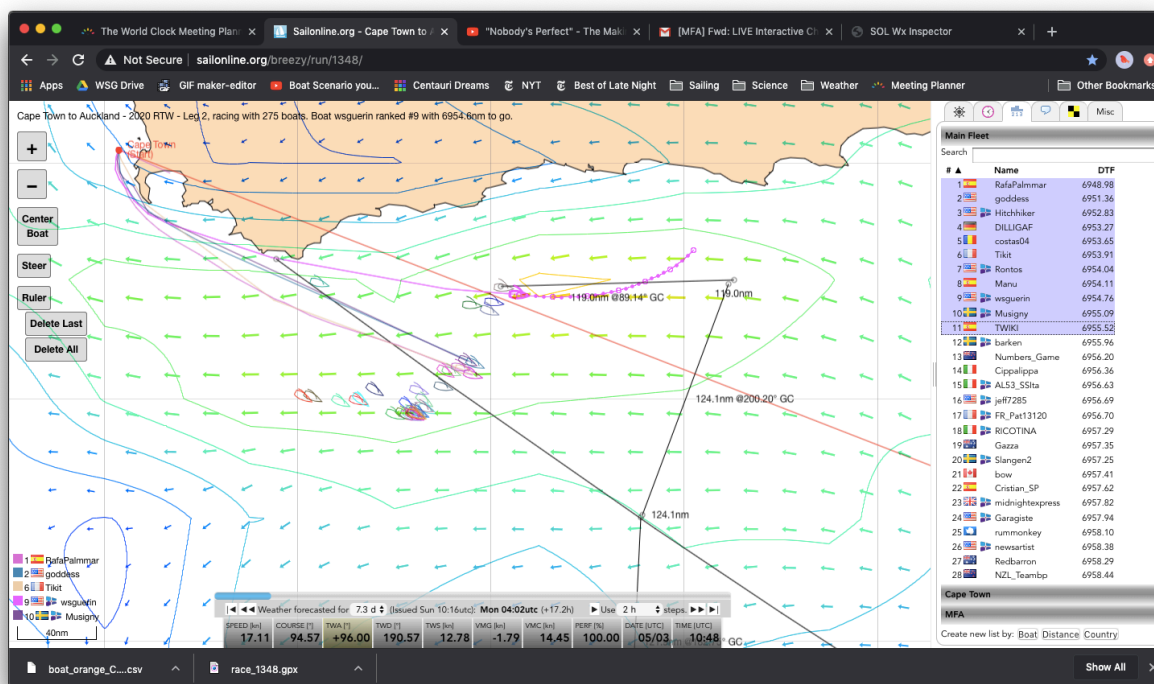


Cape Town to Auckland - a diary

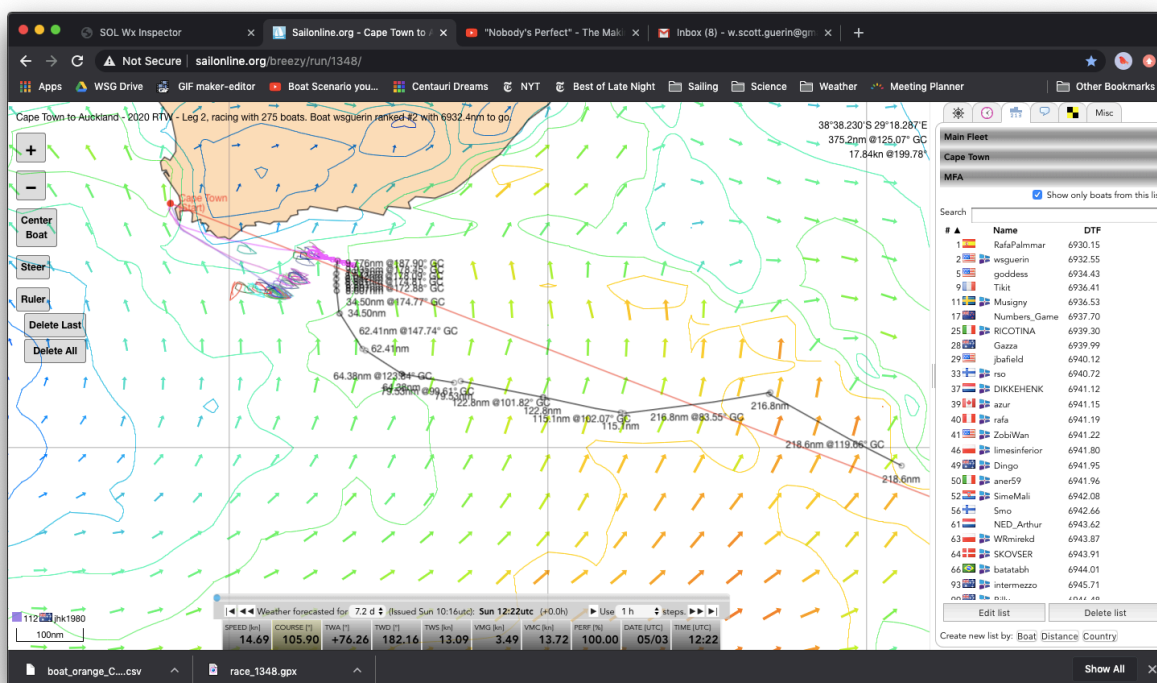
By Scott Guerin aka wsgerin

Day 1: Saturday May 2 - I spent the time pre-race getting to know the giant cat we were assigned. Wow, at speeds of 24kts, a gybe cost an 85% performance loss that took 30 minutes to recover from. Then dug through very informed forum posts on the issue and vowed to make incremental direction changes.

After an indecisive start, 19:00UTC, a left/right fake in the first five minutes, jbafield, I and other likely SOP-ers committed to a TWA course that bent around the Horn and stayed north while the pack headed south for that blob of pressure a couple days away.



Day 2: Sunday May 3 – Spent the day worrying about when to Gybe south. Undertook multiple manual predictor line diagrams and employed mental previsualization gymnastics to understand how to get around that counter-rotating high and into the pressure everyone anticipated given my northern position. But as WX's came in, the wind stabilized from the south instead of swinging east, so I hung on a +45° TWA course which took me just a bit north over 6 hours. Wife unhappy as guests were due at 5pm ET and the interior window trim finish carpentry lagged.



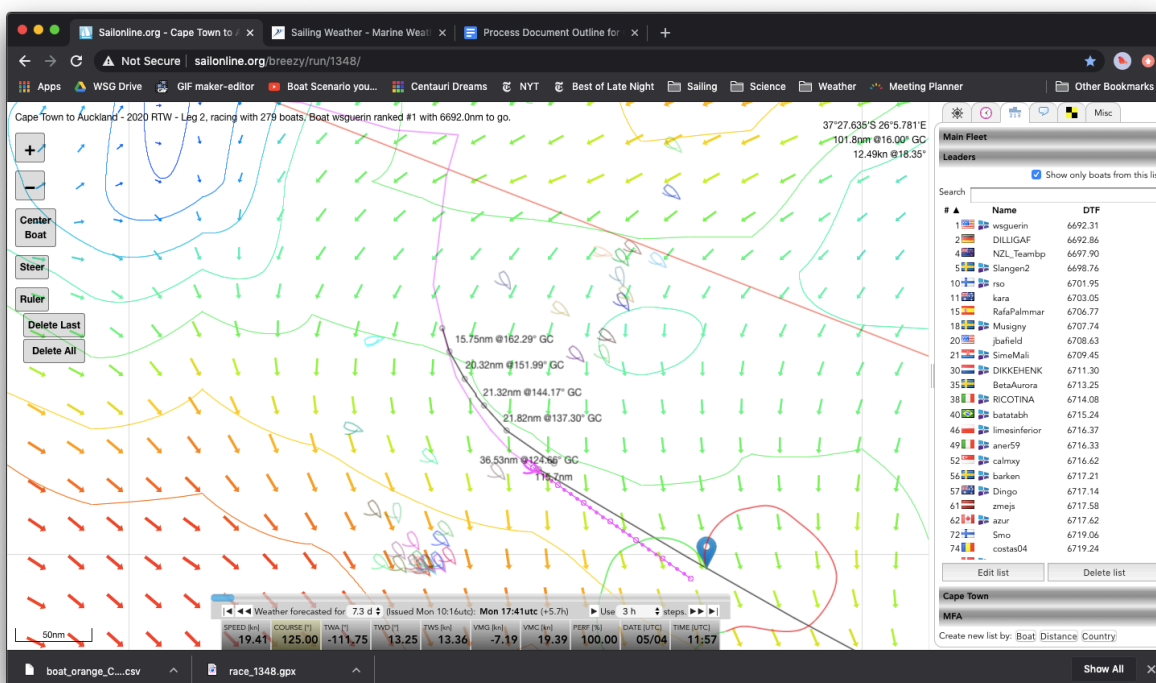
Chat extracts:

- WSG: hilarious to wake up in 6th but have the feeling you are screwed! Long long race...any suggestions?
- Bonknhoot: difficult one, ws. it's nicer weather up there though.

Day 3: Monday May 4 0945 UTC Woke up in #1 one spot. Meaningless but nice while it lasts. The Southers are starting to heat up in 20kts+ wind speed, I'm in 13kts WS at max TWA -113.05° for the time being and don't think bearing off will help so I'll wait as it builds over the next 6-9 hours. I think "hang tight, keep speed up, bear off a bit when possible." Then again, I could go south and reach stronger air in a couple hours...

Chat extracts:

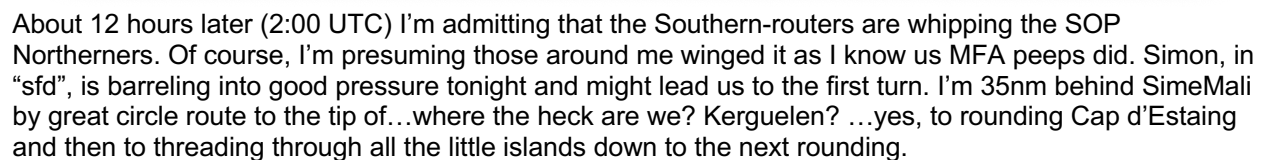
- DIKKEHENK: brave ww, taking the route no one dares to take
- WetWing: Durban first then Southern Ocean gate
- DIKKEHENK: a cunning plan
- Dingo: Could steal a march on us WW
- wsguerin: go WW, total commitment! Overnight DCs worked out but the question is do the 40- Southers speed under and past the Northern-Gybers?
- DIKKEHENK: with this wx? to be short : yes :)
- wsguerin: ouch



UTC Tuesday 2:00

My impression is that the 22:30 WX came in favor of the Northerners. Clipping along at 28kts now but there's trouble ahead with a ridge of low pressure coming in the morning.

Here's the strategy as of Tuesday 12:15 UTC with a rounding expected Thursday 18:00 UTC. It looks like I can just stay ahead of that ridge and ride it to the turn. Jbafeld splits south at 12:35 UTC from the #3 position. Turns out that was a DC error he ended up having to live with. A lucky mistake it turns out.



- Weekend: Performance should be back to 100 per cent about the time we reach Kerguelen :)
- Wsguerin:
It's common whenever I race
My life goes to heck très post haste
The wife she does roar
“Go back to your chores”
So I just hide my screen and play chaste

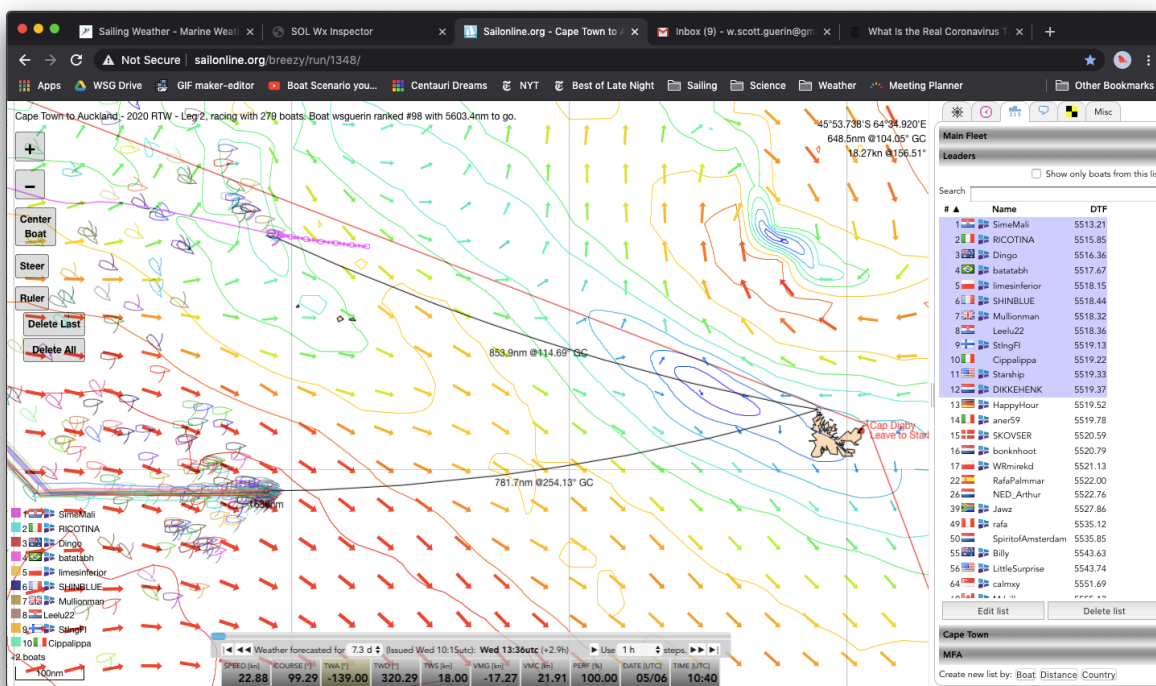
Day Five: Wednesday, May 6 1015 UTC

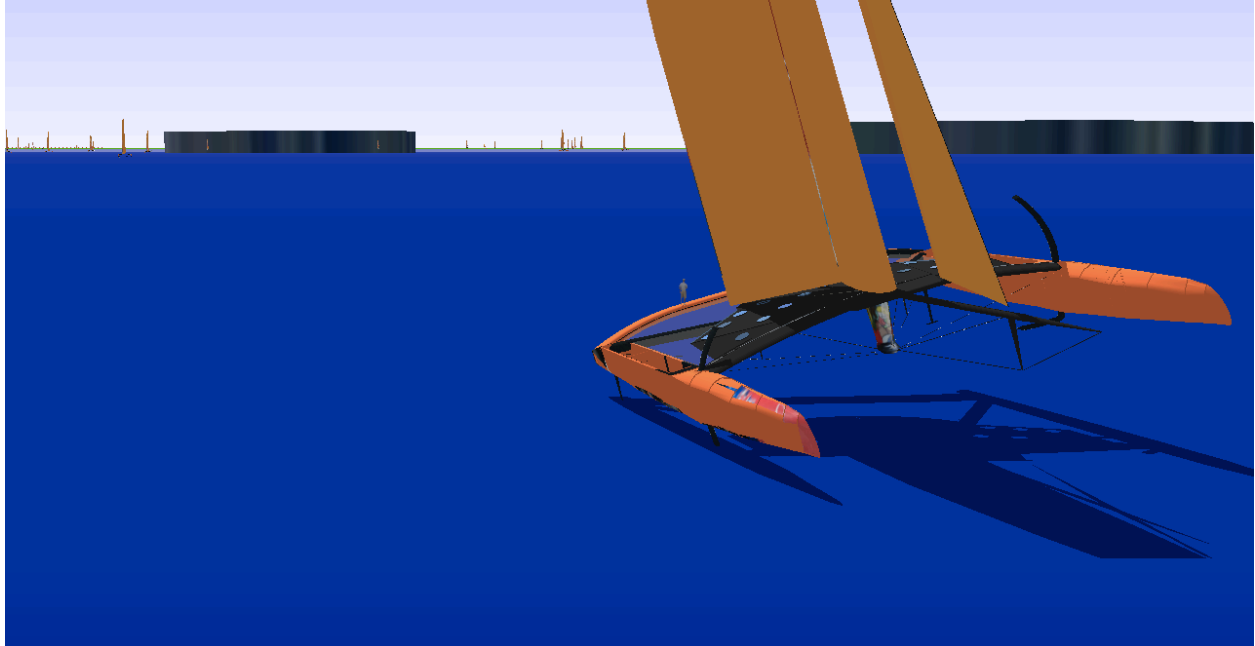
An angry looking, but agreeable, swarm of boats do the gybe down south and delivers the death blow to SOP Northerners. Bonk, who won the race is in 16th. I wish I'd tracked the mid-fleet boats but you know who you were.

Chat extracts:

wsguerin 05/06 16:43:19

- Predicting first Southerns round in 22hrs on Thurs 1430UTC, first Northerners in 29.5 hours or Thurs ~2100UTC





SimeMali on his yacht looking back at the fleet as he rounds Cap d'Estaing.

Day Six: Thursday May 7

I did a stupid test gybe toward the Island at 0715 UTC (320AM ET) but went right back, took the performance hit to 88%, probably cost me 10nm and I'm only back to 100% at 0755...a tired bleary move. (later learned it cost me about 2-3nm)

I set myself a goal to be in top 100, so I have to gain 28 boats with only a few nearby.

Day Seven: Friday May 8 1100 UTC

About to round Heard Island. Feeling glum, complex weather ahead will require babysitting!

Chat Extract:

wsguerin 05/08 18:55:15

@DK I'm not complaining...would love this (I think) IRL

DIKKEHENK 05/08 18:57:18

well, the blue thing you see below you..that is the trouble you woill encouter here. We up front are busy to avoid that :)

wsguerin 05/08 18:58:11

That's why I'm up north!

DIKKEHENK 05/08 18:59:22

yup, but north is VMC wise not the best. Wink wink, nudge nudge.

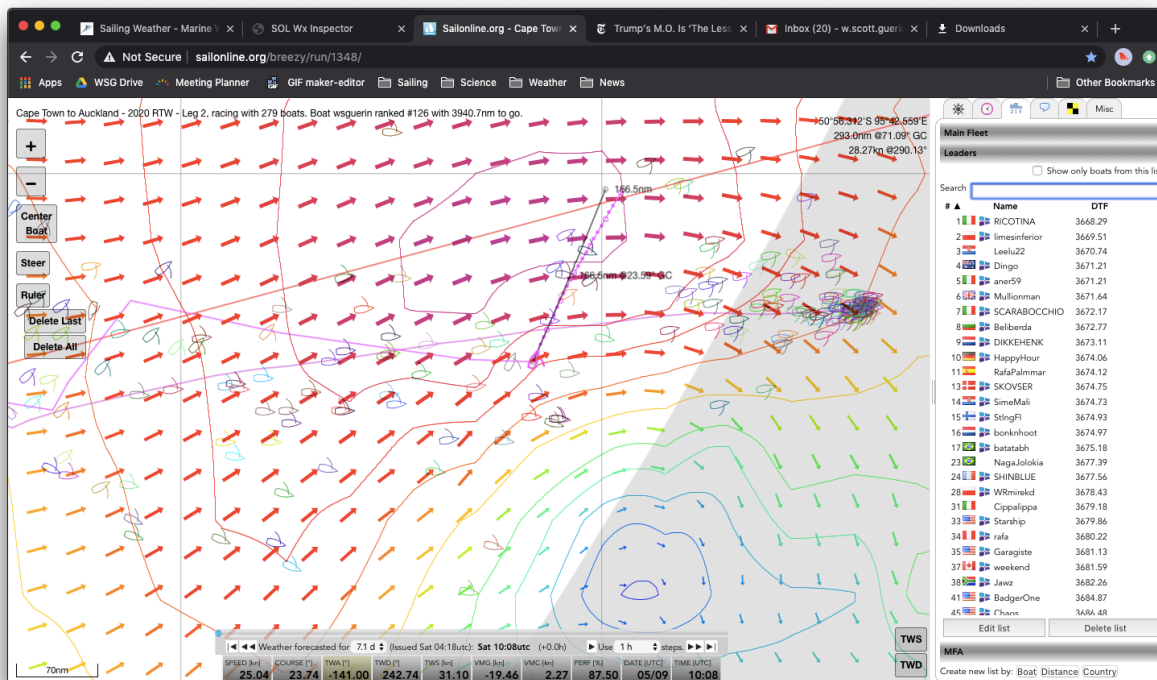
DIKKEHENK 05/08 19:03:55

so, gybe :)

I followed a 40kt filly north and lost a few boats for sure. Gybed back down still in good pressure. No real position changes expected, but there's a blue whale chasing us mid-fleeters.

Day Eight: Saturday May 9 0948 UTC

Up early to check as I was TWA overnight. Pretty much on track but I'm planning a gybe or two to get north then back onto better VMC.



Chat recap:

buncha 20:10:07

Dikke, Re your naked cavort. Why do I have this image of Homer Simpson pirouetting with a daisy between his teeth?

WSG:

We're about halfway 'cross the Ocean

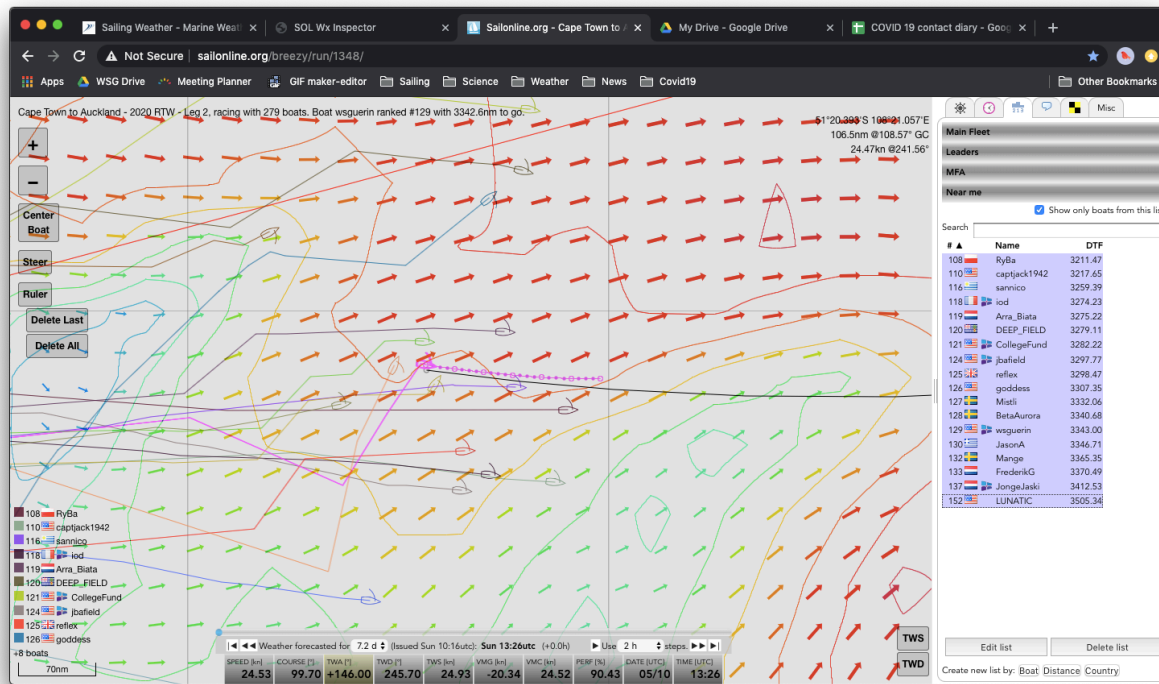
The Indian's great wind in motion

The leaders are routers

Which leaves any doubters

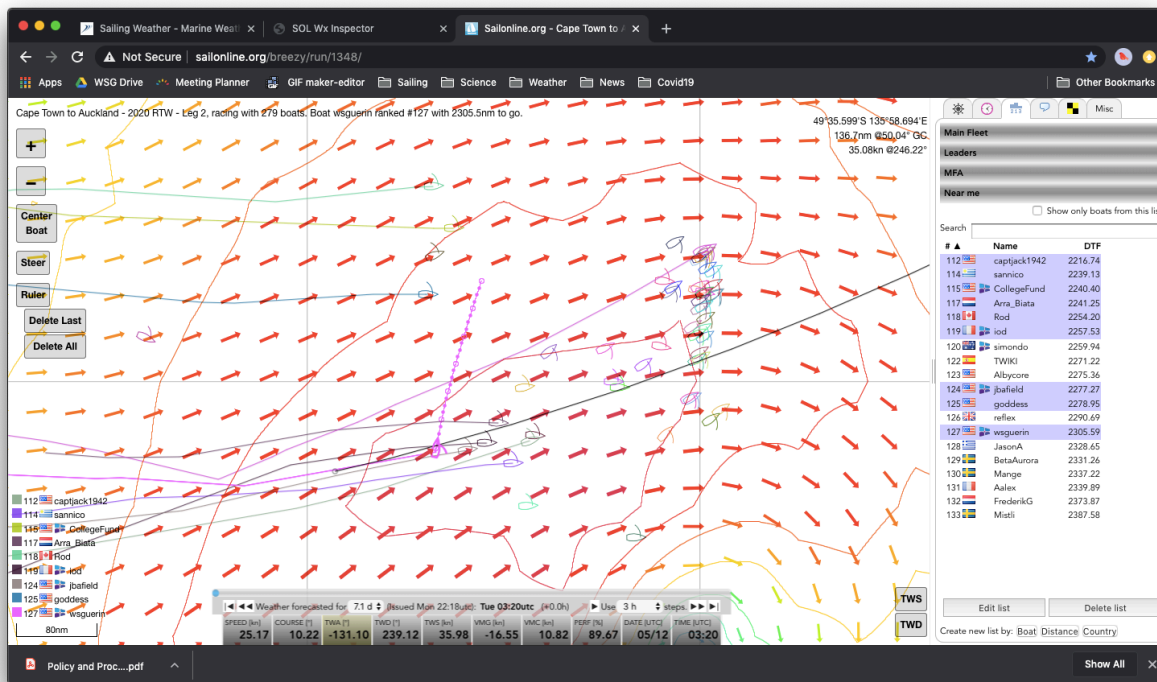
That SOP racers need potions

Straight shot drag race at 22-28kts all day trying to get back ahead of John Field.



Day Ten: Monday May 11, 2020

Long run on ~ 90° course varying between COG and TWA. but then in 38kts wind had the idea to gybe for lighter air so I could sail faster, 2-3kts more and headed north toward Lunatic and Deepfiled, love those names.



Chat recap:

wsguerin 05/11 18:23:28

Johnny B Goode, how many hours did you gain back on me? like 5-6?

jbafield 05/11 20:45:57

Its a long way to go scott... ill be sure to give it all back. Tasmanian devils are up ahead

wsguerin 05/11 22:38:43

We've been sailing in this pressure for days: here's an old song that our non-American friends will slap us for. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVFgEBq0EKM>

limesinferior 05/11 23:23:23

Not bad. Check out this one: Anton Ishutin - Into The Night (Original Mix)

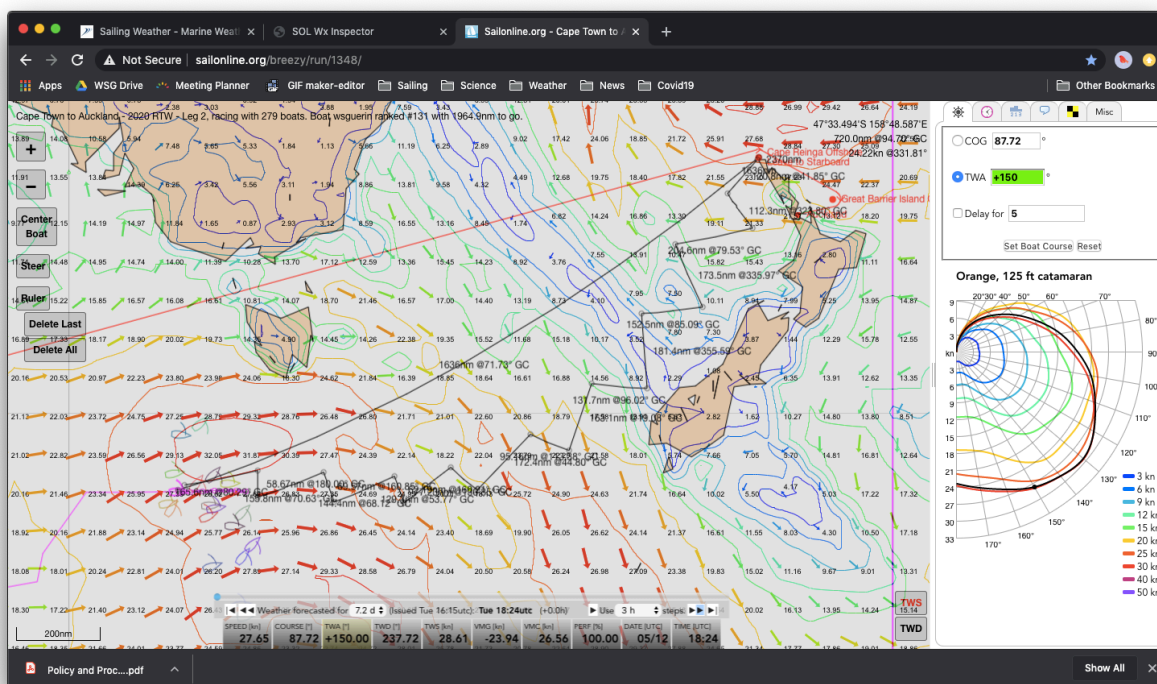
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23kpP9Q24Kw> - highly recommended. Good night. ;-)

wsguerin 03:17:31

@limes, now I feel I know you!

Day 11 Tuesday May 12

A couple of gybes but I'm lined up for an approach through the blue wall to the South. The Zig Zag Lines show the sweep of probable areas of sailable paths if I went along the shore.



Day 12: Wednesday May 13

I chickened out late last night, the new WX doesn't show a southerly path so I'm stuck in the middle on a wide slow 145 TWA and am resigned to mid fleet finish

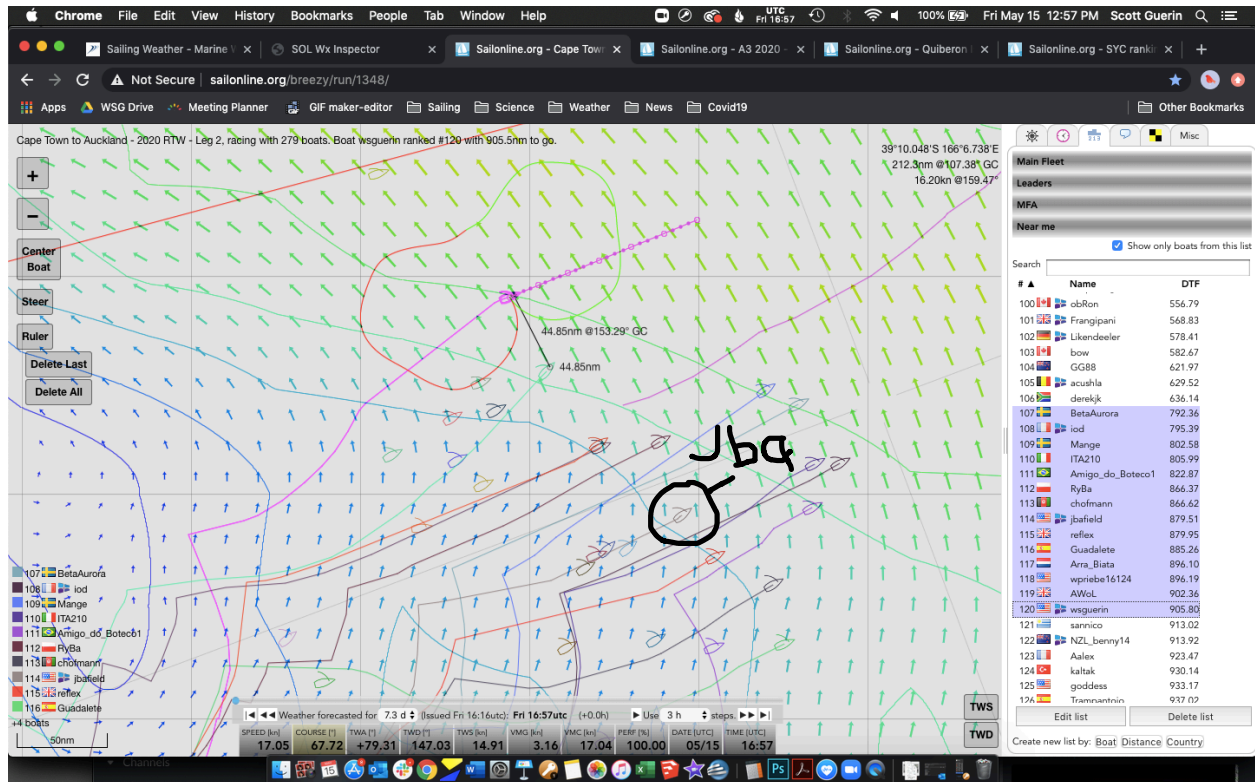
Picked my way east then north and held a Zoom chat which Calmxy joined from Singapore along with jbafield from the East Village in NYC. Calm was "working" as he chatted with us, he's in #52 as of Thurs 03:00 UTC and was clearly psyched to improve.

Day 13: Thursday May 14, 2020

The Blue Wall swirled but I fought through and caught a few boats.

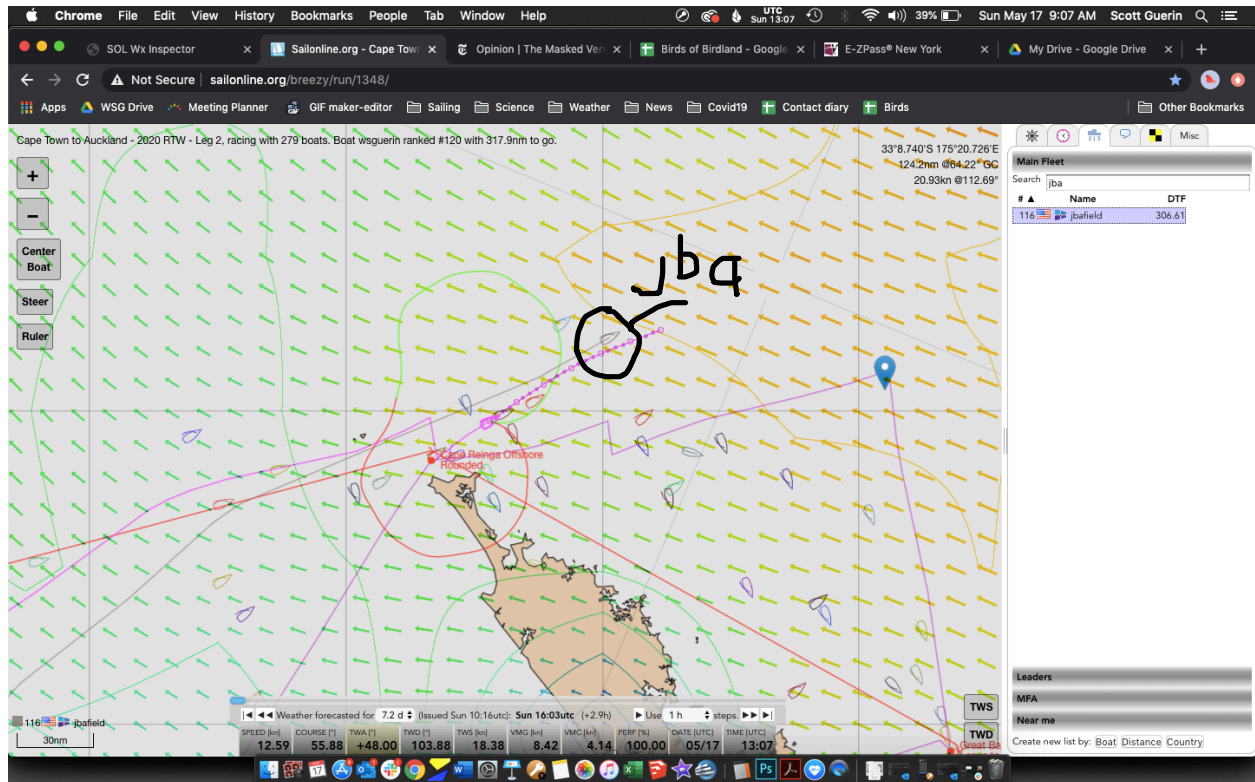
Day 14: Friday May 15, 2020

Arced north through the night a bit too far and my course to the turn is a fat beat.



Day 15 Saturday, May 16

Well, the TWA course swept me too far north and the wind is swing around to head me, Jbafield had a better line coming up from the south. At the final mark, at 03:30 UTC kipper1258 and Bonknhoot are neck and neck with kipper.3nm ahead after 6000nm....insane. But Bonk has a slightly better angle and the inside at the last turn so my bet is on Bonk.



Day 16, Sunday, May 17

I was right, Bonk took it by a nose hair. I rounded and my DC took me south as planned, now headed back out for wind about 4.5 hours behind jbafield, my MFA compatriot, who is in better air for the next 5 hours, gonna take a miracle to beat him.

Day 17, Monday May 18

Cut jbafield's (John Field) lead down to 12nm from over 40 overnight as I stayed in pressure north of him and sailed a slightly broader course, but he'll need to make a mistake going in...he didn't, so I finished 8nm behind jbafield at about 2350 Monday in position 113 beating Katalak and Urania.

John sailed 8,083nm compared to my 8,221nm and Bonk's 7,750nm.

SUMMARY

With a couple weeks of perspective and a couple more races under my belt I'm looking forward to another long distance haul. Need to have a steadier hand at the tiller and not be so reactive I think, and average out shifts over the long haul. We'll see.

Congrats to Bonk, Kipper1258, and FR_Vostro for a hard fought, surely exhausting effort.

