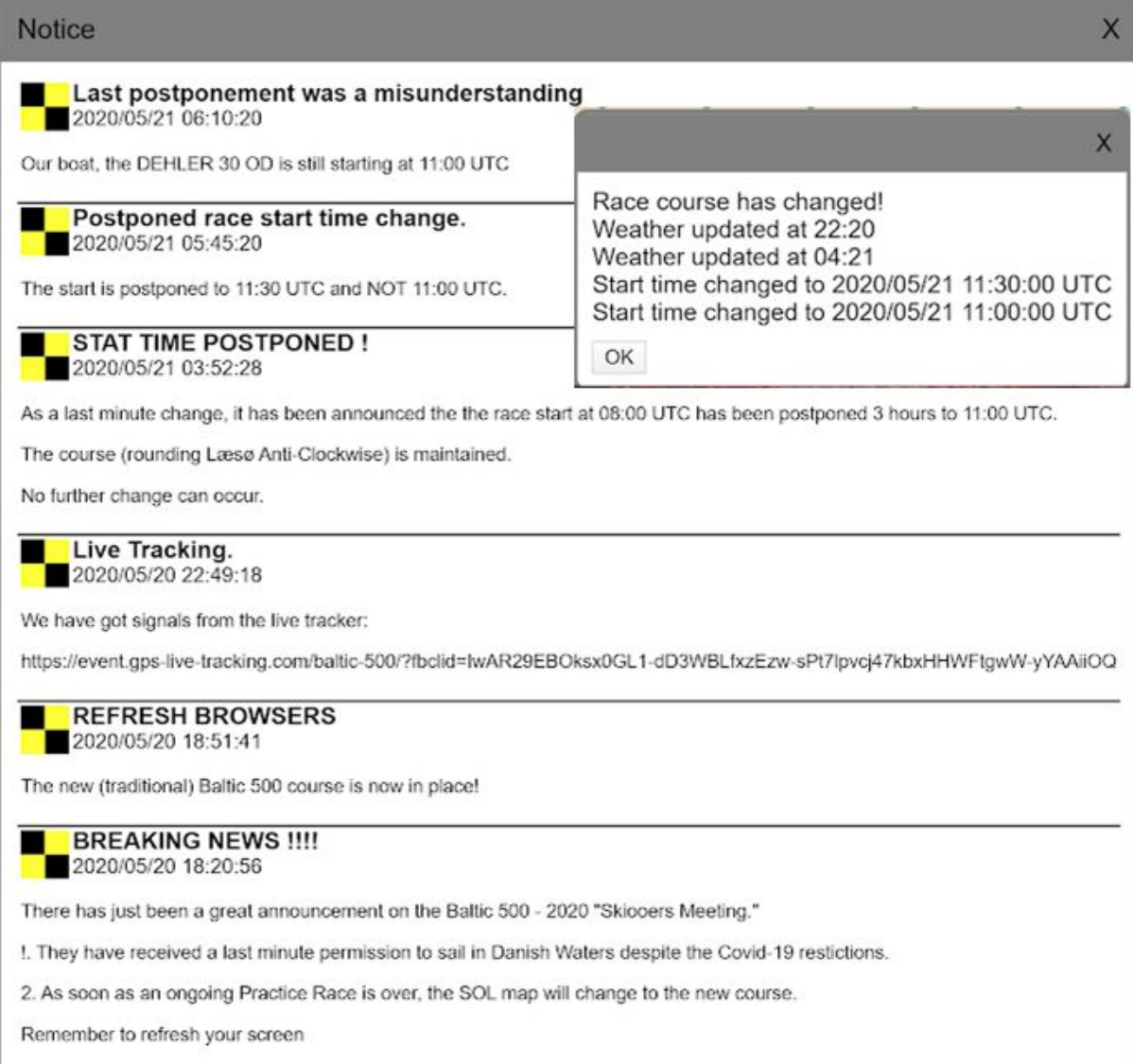


This is one of the few races where there are special starting conditions, the other that I know of is the Silverrudder race. While any race can theoretically be changed before start, it is in these special (buddied) races where they are more likely to happen relatively shortly before start, to keep in line with what the IRL fleet is racing. But SOLing competitively means that one should be checking regularly for wind changes to set accurate start commands. Hence, even if they missed the red text in the race description, they should notice the changes when opening the race, through the screen and race messages.

It is imperative that you read AND understand these special Starting Conditions for the Baltic 500 2020 Starting Conditions!!

Yep, before the race, there were six notices, basically to inform that the course was changed to the “traditional” course and the start time was shifted back 3 hours to 11am UTC.



Notice [X]

Last postponement was a misunderstanding
2020/05/21 06:10:20
Our boat, the DEHLER 30 OD is still starting at 11:00 UTC

Postponed race start time change.
2020/05/21 05:45:20
The start is postponed to 11:30 UTC and NOT 11:00 UTC.

STAT TIME POSTPONED !
2020/05/21 03:52:28
As a last minute change, it has been announced the the race start at 08:00 UTC has been postponed 3 hours to 11:00 UTC.
The course (rounding Læsø Anti-Clockwise) is maintained.
No further change can occur.

Live Tracking.
2020/05/20 22:49:18
We have got signals from the live tracker:
<https://event.gps-live-tracking.com/baltic-500/?fbclid=IwAR29EBOksx0GL1-dD3WBLfxzEzw-sPt7lpvcj47kxHHWFtgwW-yYAAiiOQ>

REFRESH BROWSERS
2020/05/20 18:51:41
The new (traditional) Baltic 500 course is now in place!

BREAKING NEWS !!!!
2020/05/20 18:20:56
There has just been a great announcement on the Baltic 500 - 2020 "Skiooers Meeting."
1. They have received a last minute permission to sail in Danish Waters despite the Covid-19 restrictions.
2. As soon as an ongoing Practice Race is over, the SOL map will change to the new course.
Remember to refresh your screen

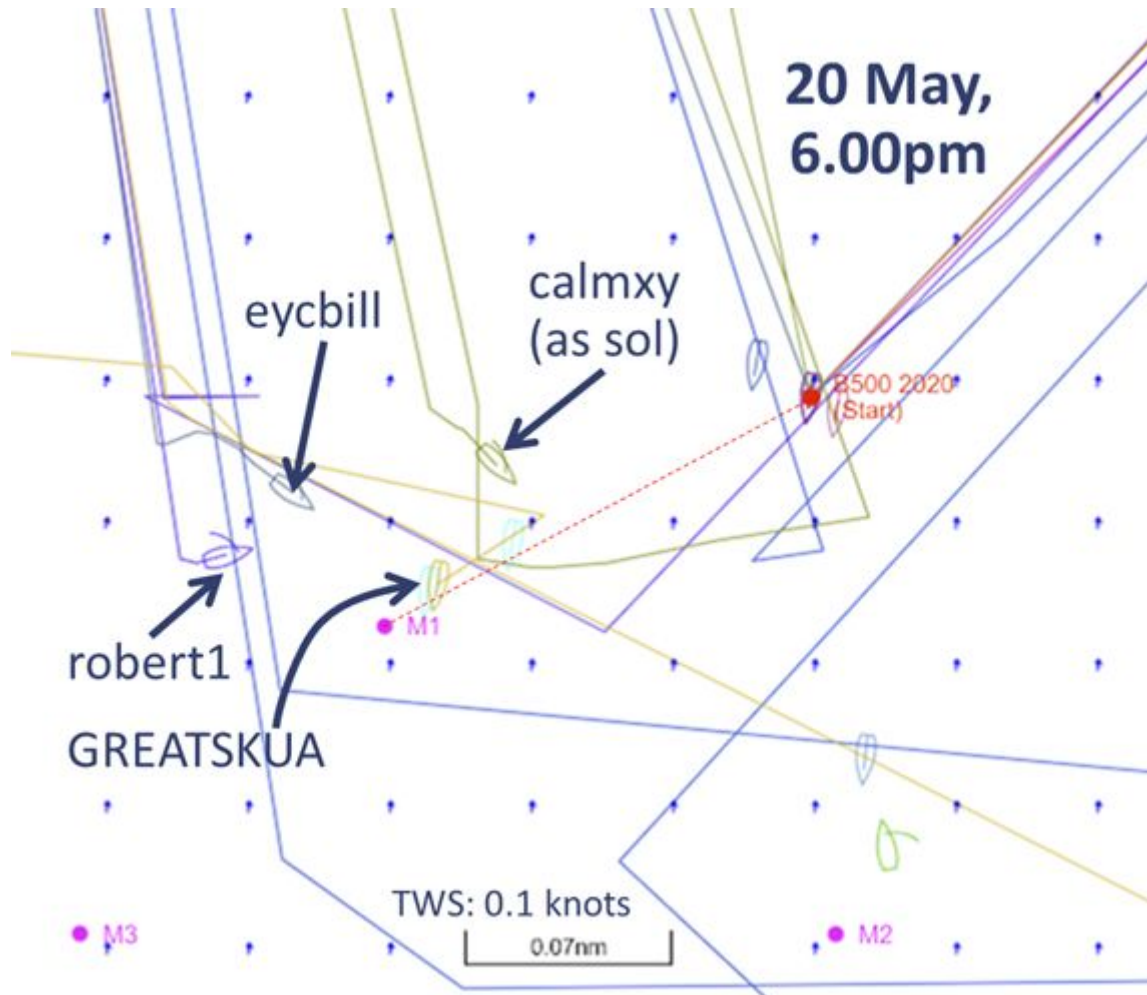
Overlaid Dialog Box:
Race course has changed!
Weather updated at 22:20
Weather updated at 04:21
Start time changed to 2020/05/21 11:30:00 UTC
Start time changed to 2020/05/21 11:00:00 UTC
[OK]

This could be the race with the most notices, considering that there are still the “race reports” and the “race close” notices which typically get posted closer to (or after) the race finish.

Speaking of race reports, I have had some of those added recently to older races:

- [Hook Island Timed](#)
- [Santa Monica Regatta](#)
- [Jakob's BBQ](#)
- [Gibraltar Timed](#)
- [Quiberon Sprint](#)

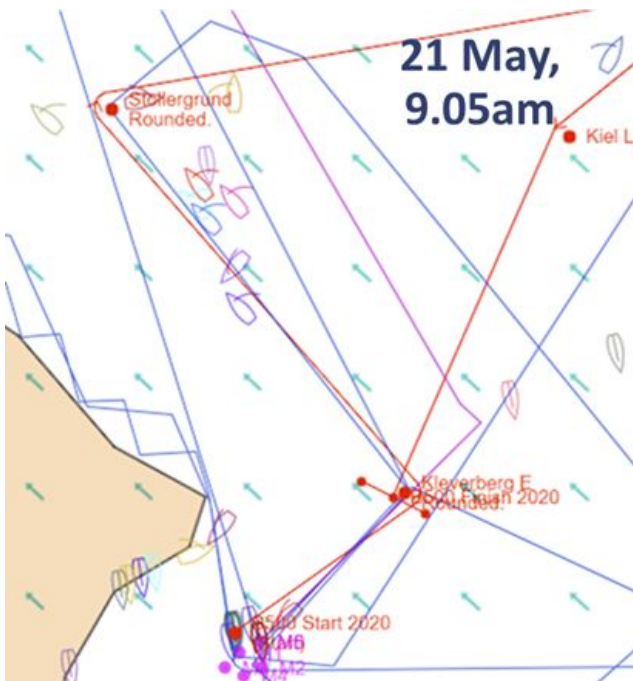
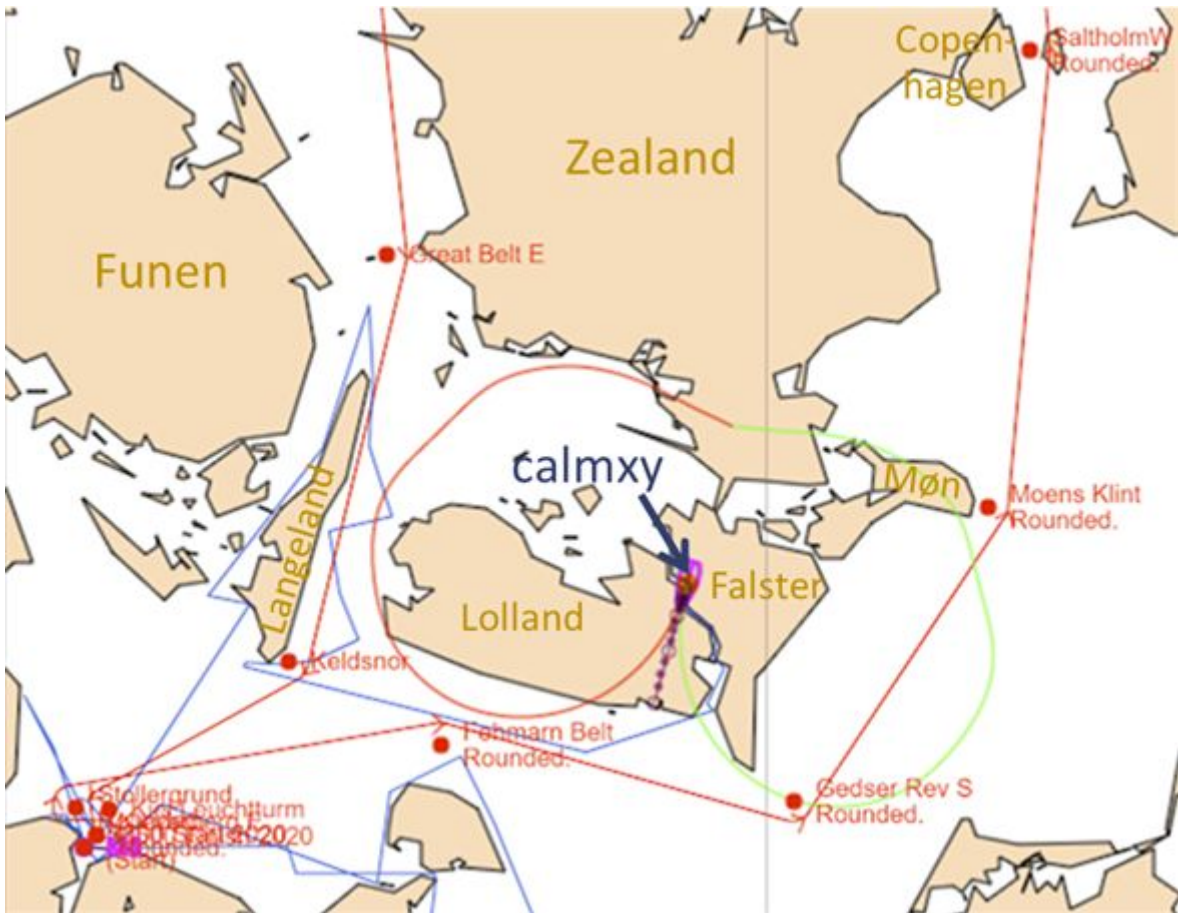
But before I go into the actual race, I would like to share that Practice Race in a windhole:



Yes, the winds were incredibly weak, to the point where I set boat sol towards the start line at 5.45pm UTC, thinking that the 0.1nm would be traversed well before then. The danger I thought I faced was crossing the line too soon and failing to notice it (results in a 360° penalty). The actual danger was that of a late start due to low boat speed. It would take a half hour for me (as boat sol) just to cover that 0.1nm to the start, thus crossing the line 15 mins late. Luckily, I was not alone here: eycbill (+23 mins) and robert1 (would have been at least +20 mins) also joined the struggle to reach the start line.

Due to the windhole, the practice race became simply “Free round M2, cross M1-SOL Start line”. sannico did this best, with a punctual start and a tight rounding of M2 netting them the win. Greatskua missed the notification of the shortened Practice Race and initially headed for M3, which together with gradually improving winds, let me get ahead right before returning to M1. Somewhere along the way to the start line, robert1 decided to pull out of the Practice Race, which I suppose is just as well since a late Practice Race start “+++” prevents the winning of G-scow anyway.

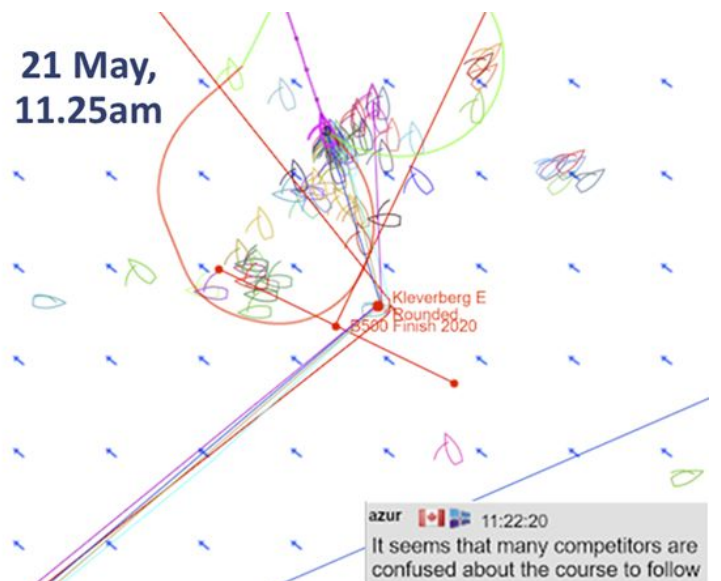
After that, I watched the course get updated. While the Flash client needs a manual browser refresh, the HTML5 client will do it automatically. I expected all the marks to become unrounded, but it was amusing in its own way that some of the new marks remained “rounded” and my next mark to round was Kronborg, despite that area being outside the old race boundary. Having almost completed the race course during “Practice Sailing”, sakalson ended up even extending their huge “lead” over everyone else. All this, however, is aesthetic as Towback resets everything, so oddities like these will not affect the race results.



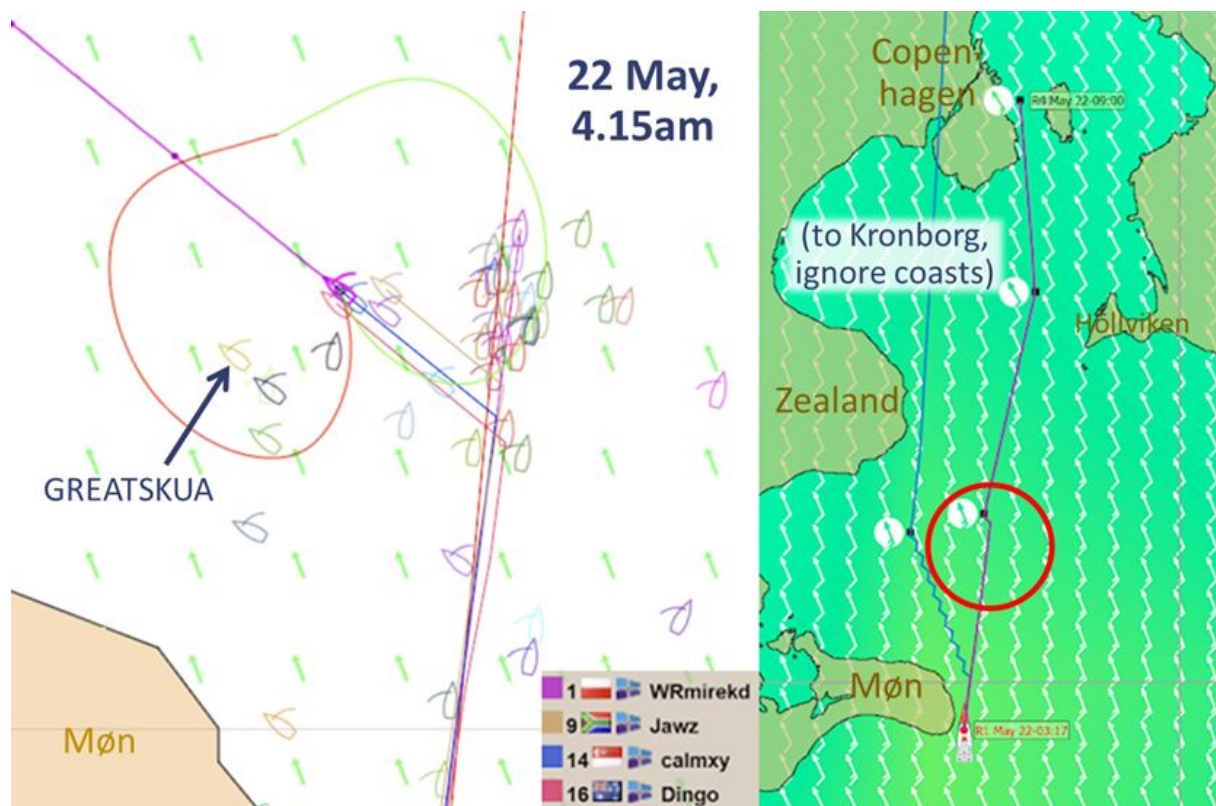
Did I mention that to do well in SOL races, or to perform any task accurately for that matter, the first thing to know is what is being asked of you? In this case, it's supplemented by the in-race notices. It seemed like a few boats may not have done this properly.

Between 7am and 8am UTC, a handful of boats left on what was supposedly DCs for the old start time, including Starship. This had no impact on the final results, though, unless the SOLer didn't return at some point before 11am UTC to correct the commands for the new start time.

The actual race start was quite hectic. Thankfully, the windhole from the last Practice Race had disappeared by then. There seemed to be a rather high incidence of boats that failed to round Kleverberg E correctly. Perhaps they were referring to the Flash client without having refreshed?



Each leg was like its own mini-race. The next few marks saw some strategic maneuvering taking place... and more boats missing marks. By the time we reached Gedser Rev S, a number of notable SOLers had dropped out of competition: rafa, aner59, Kipper1258 and Beliberda all had missed marks. bonknhoot and Dikkehenk were in perfect sync... neither had moved from the race start. I was in the lead, albeit by only a nose, with WRmirekd and Dingo hot on my heels.

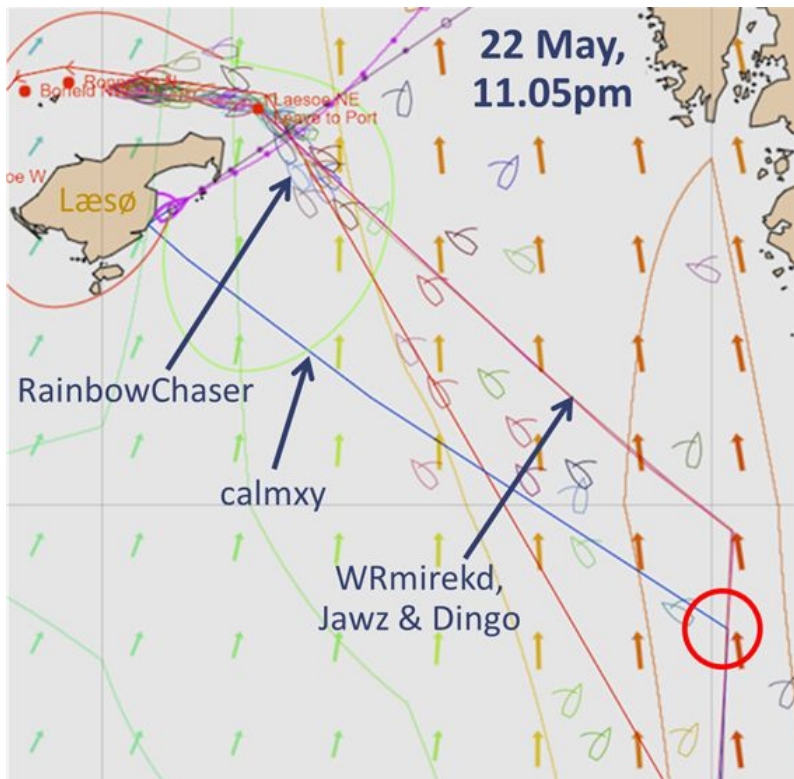


The high attrition rate meant that finishing on the podium seemed more likely, since there were fewer competitors to contend with. The strategies used in most legs were similar, but there was one where they differed considerably: Moens Klint to SaltholmW. In that one, QtVIm suggested making two gybes with a tiny interval between them. Of course, that was not the optimal route, due to the performance loss wasting more time than what could be saved. The question here was whether it was better to stick closer to max downwind VMG angles (no gybes) or to make 2 gybes with an appropriate interval in between. Additionally, the branching point was a few min before a Wx update, so this could have gone either way.

Of the leading 7 then, Jawz and Dingo accompanied me in making the gybes. Greatskua did the same, though considerably earlier and further west. batatabh also gybed, but only went slightly west of WRmirekd with his pair of gybes. WRmirekd and Starship didn't gybe; the resulting Wx meant that they gained a few seconds over the rest of us.

Everything went to plan until Kronborg, where the first gybe was well executed. About halfway through the race, I was slightly behind WRmirekd and about the same DTF as Dingo, Jawz and Starship. What could possibly go wrong?

Unfortunately, things did actually go wrong. After using Kipper's AGL to update the commands to round Laesoe NE and the marks that followed, I sent the commands. Or so I thought, because the image below is what I saw when I woke up the next morning:



Note that the red circle is where the last command of the previous DC set fired. The scream that followed led my parents to believe that I just had a nightmare. Which isn't exactly true in this case — this is far worse in many ways. I noticed that Kipper1258 and Beliberda had pretty much abandoned their boats once they realized their missed marks. But I would have to live with this mistake and continue the remaining 30 hours of this course, knowing full well that there was no way to catch up the 2+ hours to WRmirekd or most of those still ahead of me. This is because I am trying for

SuperSOL, so every position I could claw back (mostly from other SOLers' mistakes) would still help in lowering the total points.

Over the next 27 hours, things played out almost exactly as I predicted: no significant gain distance-wise on the leaders, although I did gain 15 places overall, from rank 52 to 37. Luckily, I checked at this point — for some reason, I thought that Keldsnor was the last mark to round before the finish, but the next checkpoint displayed "Leave to Port" instead of "Cross line to Finish", so I changed the commands accordingly (the fastest direct route from Keldsnor to Finish will miss Kiel Leuchtturm). Otherwise all that hard work to claw back some places would have been in vain.



In the end, I ended up with around 30 more points in the SuperSOL series than I should have gotten if not for that mistake. Well done WRmirekd, Jawz and Dingo for keeping those podium places!