

NEWPORT BERMUDA 2020

I was entered in this year's Bermuda Race under my boat name "Slide Rule". This would have been my 10th Bermuda Race including 6 NBR's on "Slide Rule", one as Navigator on Rocket Science last year, and two Marion Bermuda races when I was on my offshore learning curve.

Our "Slide Rule" team decided to do the Online Bermuda Race two weeks ago and I joined SOL on June 6th during the Starboard Portal presentation, and did a couple races to get all my newbie mistakes out of the way. The regular SOL folks are really helpful and very, very good at this! I got schooled in my early races.

I've been calling the shots during the NBR, but the team has been checking and sending me suggestions! Some of us met a few times on Zoom to chat. This year's team was pretty much the same team that won Division Seven SDL in 2018 plus a couple of my regular crew. My son and watch captain have also been a bit of IRL racing experience and do quite well.

I've been running Expedition for macro strategy and an understanding of strategic alternatives, but sailing SOP (seat of the pants) at the micro level. My Expedition routing told me to go way east, and some boats did that, but the isochrones said that the near rhumb line course was almost as good and far less complicated and risky. I elected to construct my own alternative routing from the isochrone solution and keep it simple. Tactically, I tried to optimize each step keeping the big strategy in mind. At each weather update, I reran my Expedition solution and used it as a guide. Threading the needle through the holes in the wind has been key, then optimizing when you have the opportunity, and finding wind lanes! Not too different from real racing.

Overall, you need to understand polars and how the game works. You need to turn on the features and data that are required to make good decisions (like VMC, predictor lines, and wind velocity/direction data). You should only give up VMC when it's an investment in the future. You need to pay attention, and wonder why other boats are doing things, particularly the boats that you know are clever and competent! Benchmarking against boats that are close to you is very useful. Oh yes, and watch what you're doing, and make sure you don't enter an unintentional command at just the wrong moment (done that too!)

On the line, my screen actually showed me finished and Modonnellaw still racing. But I think it actually came down to the order of calculations in the stack and the microseconds per calculation. (Ed: it is actually the difference between the updates you get from the server every minute and the updates the client your computer makes every 10 seconds). Previous refresh showed us tied at DTF, final refresh showed him ahead by 1 hundredth of a mile (smallest unit of measure shown by the interface).

It made for an exciting race. Modonnellaw had a nice lead at the last mark and it would have been disappointing for him to lose it. I tried though and scraped the paint off the last two marks!!

See you in the bar for a Dark & Stormy!

SlideRule/June 2020