

NEWPORT BERMUDA 2020

"Interesting race so far. Plenty of volatility caused by jet stream like winds (~300mb) originating around Georgia. As for Sun Fast division, all four clusters of GEFS perturbations from the beginning of the race are in play, however, probably no major changes until the finish. It seems that this new nonhydrostatic finite-volume cubed-sphere GFS is more volatile in low winds than the previous iteration. IRL, I'd go for icosahedral German ICON (also nonhydrostatic) that was holding almost perfect in similar conditions over the last two races vs GFS and it seems that also during this one,"

one of my more cerebral rivals shared with the fleet during chat, as we exited said low-wind volatility. Assuming (big assumption) I would have understood this as a warning not to put too much faith in the forecasts beyond their six-hour update windows, I might have planned to do what I in fact did, which was to head straight(ish) for Bermuda with the sheets eased.

Having routed the track several times before, I had observed significantly different outcomes from one WX to the next. One solution, which occurred more frequently, was to keep slightly to the west of the rhumb line, but every now and then that route got blocked by the shifting blue goo, and then a more radical arc over east was forecast to be significantly faster, and the last WX before the start had done exactly that.

Alas, at the first WX after the start, with bonkhoot well on her way to the southern tip of Martha's Vineyard, my router (fifi) abandoned the western arc. Having only recently become badly unstuck following a long wide arc via New Zealand from Antarctica to north Queensland in The Migaloo Migration, I too decided to abandon the western arc. However, I didn't correct fully onto fifi's latest proposal; not enough in fact it turned out.

Whatever course that was, I kept bonk on it across the next several WXs, which I think I remember once or twice brought west back into play acc. to fifi. I'm not sure. Anyway, at some stage, I decided all was not lost, and started to carefully carve routes to pick up more pressure where I could and smoothly transition through various major changes in wind direction (I had not done well on the 'whatever' course).

To my considerable delight, as the wind finally steadied up, bonk started to pick up places from the other IY14.98s, until I hit P3 in the Finisterre division (my IRL yacht lies forlorn in Combarro on the Ria Ponte Vedra in Galicia, so Finisterre had to be my choice). Sadly, a beam reach for a day or two in steady winds now looked like it was not going to provide enough opportunity to pass either GreatSkua (no chance) or Maximus (miniscule chance). I did close the gap, but as we rounded the Mills Breaker Buoy, Maximus was still three minutes ahead.

I set a few safe DCs and went to bed. And now I hope that a minor divisional podium has put me in line for some rum, and that Goslings will be able to find a way to deliver a bottle (or two) across the ocean and through customs & excise to Tipperary in Ireland.

bonkhoot / June 2020