

## Log Cairns to Darwin – Leg 7 of AGage Around Australia 2020

I had three reasons, as I started to prep for this particularly interesting leg of this year's A3 series, to try to do my very best:

1. it had been nearly two months since bonknhoot had last made the podium
2. that podium had been in Leg 6 of the series, which, importantly, I was leading
3. unusually, there was only this one (virtual) race to worry about

Alas, the best laid plans of mice and men... we were barely half an hour out of Cairns when I decided to intervene in my carefully curving DC series to the first mark of the course, Norman Reef. My thought was to switch to TWAs and to start curving in slightly tighter to the rhumb line, but I entered the TWA figure in the CC box and as I hit 'Change Course' I saw what would transpire. Too late: at the next server jump bonk had the sheets in and was heading south of east. I corrected, but the damage was done and I knew no trick to undo it. Performance was down to 94%, boatspeed was c 20 knots and it was going to take a quarter of an hour to get back to 100%. Sometimes (and always if through some calamity your performance has fallen into the 80%), it can pay to just go head to wind, thus resetting to 100%, to then, on bearing off, magically see performance back in the mid 90%. Not on this occasion, and by the time bonk was back up to 100%, I'd lost a minute and a half on the peloton.

Rounding the first mark, I think bonk was lying in the early 100s, but by the time we got to the next onr, Osprey Reef, she and I had recovered to the more respectable mid 30s, through no particular fault of mine that I can recall. For the past several days, the router had been showing a gybe west away from the gaining gybe was now the thing to do, perhaps not immediately, and perhaps with a double gybe after a while to take advantage of a shift and get north a bit into more pressure. So I gybed; nothing like combining a gybe with a bear-off online for less performance impact. When and where to eventually gybe onto the layline though was unsure.

IRL, you'd be very disinclined to radically gybe away from the gaining line, and online too, on this occasion, very many did not. However, my friends in contention with me for the A3 Series, Miroslav sailing WRmirek, Jean-Michel sailing knockando, and Adriano sailing batatabh, thankfully did all make the move as well, as did John sailing Dingo, who had led at both reefs. John in the past has won most things on SOL at some stage, and after a sabbatical, he is clearly on the comeback trail, so that was a useful affirmation.

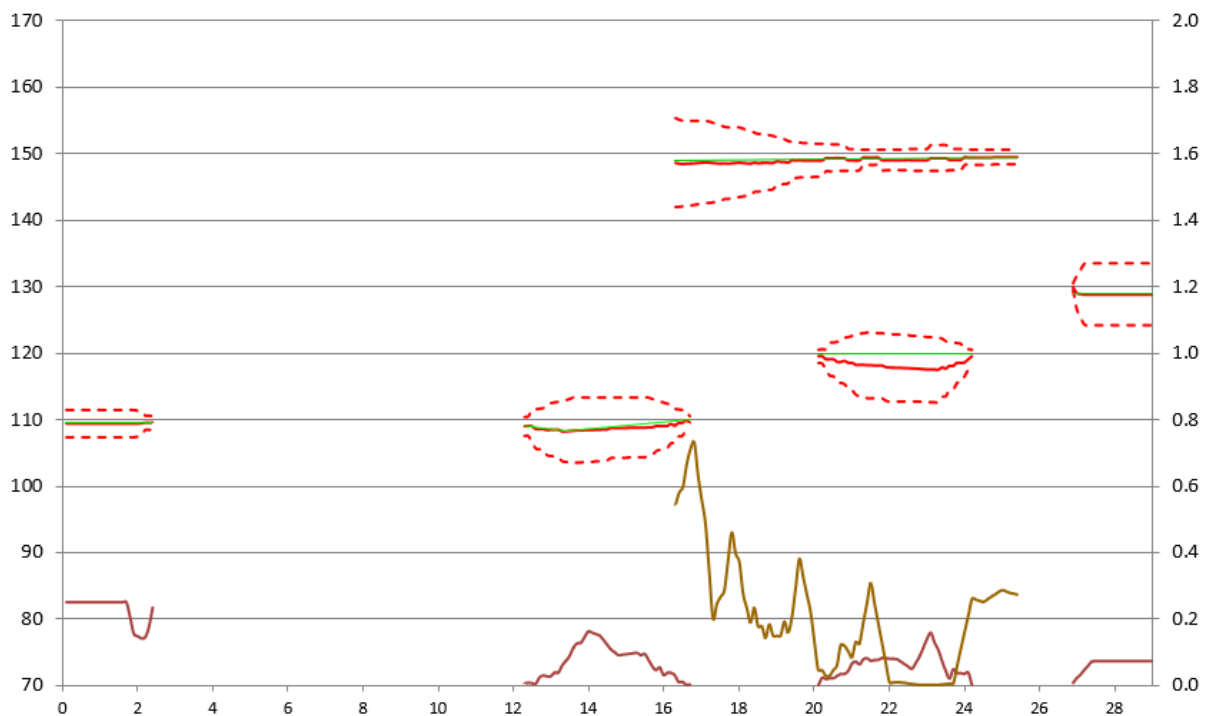
A3 Standings after 6 races

	bonk	WR	knock	bata
AA1	2	4	1	31
AA2	1	2	5	10
AA3	13	22	6	10
AA4	2	1	28	7
AA5	1	2	3	8
AA6	1	13	6	12
	20	44	49	78
disc1	-13	-22	-28	-31
disc2		-13	-6	-12
	7	9	15	35

Miroslav was already slightly adrift of the rest of us, so something bigger than my unintended luff must have happened to him. Perhaps he missed the mark. The other three were that fateful minute or so ahead of me, but as Miroslav was my biggest threat for the series, when he gybed north for Bramble Cay, I covered. It was perhaps a half hour earlier than the router had indicated, but nobody else went much further. The wind was now steadily backing, and hour-by-hour we all hotted-up, to arrive at yet another (virtual for sure) buoy in the sea at high speed, but dead-heated with the best of the big bunch that ignored the router (or used a different one or other further-than-6-hours forecast), including Sax747 and NagaJolokia. At least that is my recollection – that these two were not part of our little western squadron.

Gybing at the buoy, I think Sax747 just had the lead from Dingo, but bonk was now in the Top 10, with WR that bit behind and knock and bata that bit ahead. A long leg of several days high-speed sailing beckoned. The router said keep north, but its route was very much the long way round, curving along the outside of a bending breeze, to hold onto more pressure. How far north to keep was going to be difficult though, and a bumpy polar with various hopping opportunities complicated the problem.

Hopping Opportunities (% advantage on right-hand axis)



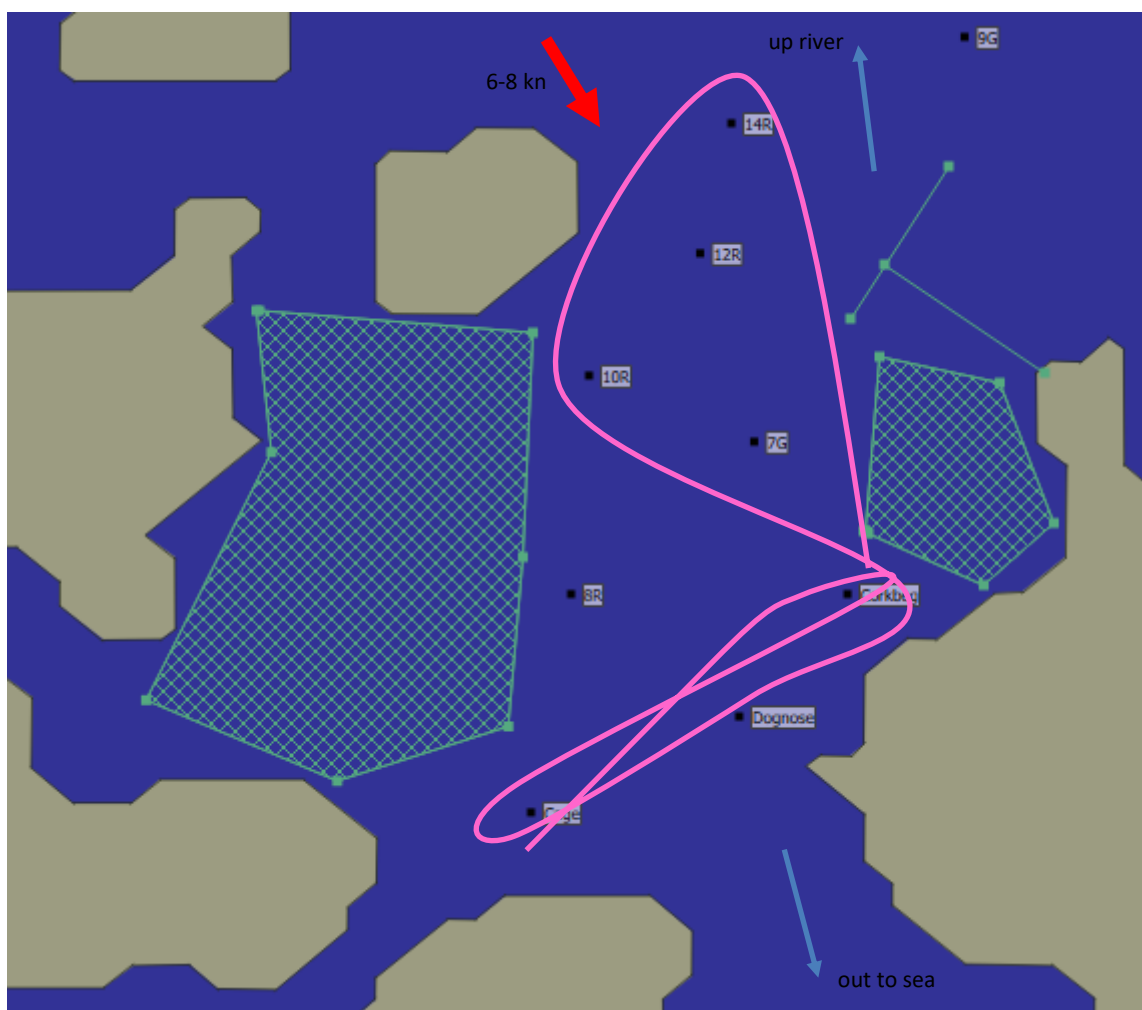
There is no doubt that QtVIm does not recognize optimum hopping angles well, but whether my re-interpretations of its routes based on the above polar analysis were what dragged bonk into effectively P2 still that minute behind Dingo, as we began our approach to the cape (Cape Condor) on the north west corner of Bathurst Island, I cannot say.

What I can say is that I tested how best to curve in on the lifting wind, and whether or not to plan in a double gybe, there where the lift was forecast to reverse into a header, and I concluded that the double gybe was definitely a 'smidgin' faster. Dingo, who by now was furthest west, said he was going to bed, and was clearly going to avoid gybing altogether.

Dingo was going to bed, and I was going racing, IRL. It's a solid hour's drive from where we live in Tipperary to the Royal Cork Yacht Club and Ria, my owner driver, wanted the crew on board by 18:00 BST (they may be 'brexiting', but they can't take daylight saving summer time away from us, even if it's named as if they own it). So, I left home at 15:30 or so, with the laptop linked to my hot-spotting Moto G (5) 2668, stopped once to check bonk had gybed back on course for the northern tip of the sandy shoal north of Cape Condor, and when I got to the club, set myself up in the very COVID-emptied dining room, hoping the 16:30z WX would be timely.

It was and after some quick work with the DC-checker, breaking up a couple of abrupt c. 8 degree turns into 3-minute steps that couldn't be TWA'd because they involved luffing up into a heading breeze, post grazing the edge of the sands now only 15 minutes away, I packed up and headed out onto the marina to join the rest of the crew aboard Ellida, an X-332.

#### Lower Cork Harbour – Shipping Buoyage used for Racing



*It was a balmy evening with no wind on the river as we left the dock, but out on the open water a cold but gentle seabreeze had us putting on our jumpers after all. You could see the banks of seafog out beyond Roches Point. The OD was anchored at the Corkbeg buoy just downriver below the bank off the refinery jetty – in no wind, as the prevailing airflow seemed to be off the land from NNW. Every now and then the seabreeze blew across the starting line, but luckily never long enough for the OD to get organized, in which case he had announced he was planning to have us beat into what had*

*to be a dying breeze and against the flooding tide, out to where there was (still) more wind. Perhaps, as there is a tidal back-eddy at Corkbeg, which he may not have been aware of, he thought the tide had turned.*

*Anyway: didn't happen. We chatted awhile about virtual sailing and IRL through the Torres Strait and along the coast of the Northwest Territories; Ria, having sailed round the world for four years with a Swedish man, literally having been everywhere – crocodiles and aboriginals, pristine white beaches, mangrove swamps and no-go areas.*

*By 19:00, a light north westerly was blowing across the entire racing area and a course was quickly chalked on the board and called out over the VHF – 14R, 10R, Corkbeg to port, 14R, Corkbeg to starboard, Cage to starboard, Corkbeg to port, finish at Cage. The bias favored the committee boat, but it was a shorter sail from Corkbeg at the southern extremity out into the shipping channel to catch the flooding tide. High water was 20:30. We timed a fetch close-hauled to hit Corkbeg at speed on the gun, and it came off perfectly. When we looked over our shoulder, we were very surprised to see quite a few boats had gone about onto port almost straightaway. Perhaps, like perhaps the OD, they too had confused the back-eddy for a turned tide. The river will of course turn the flow sometime before high water, but not an hour and a half.*

*Just one boat beat us to the turn at 14R, a 40-footer. The wind had backed a bit more west, so cautiously we kept the kite in the bag and sailed for height (hopping in Sol-land). When we did pop it, we found we had overdone it, and at the gybe mark (10R) we sailed too wide and a cheeky, nippy little 1/2 tonner gybed inside us. Naturally, I roared 'no water', but there was no way we could close the door.*

*We were now 5th on the water, and probably 2nd on corrected time to Miss Whiplash (the 1/2 tonner, I kid you not). At Corkbeg we managed a clean spinnaker gybe and then back at Cage, a spanking new J-112 did a comical turn attempting to tack around the mark with her gennaker flying. She hit and we went back into 4th for a while, and then at the last turn at Corkbeg further amusement was gifted us by Whiplash, who managed to hit a windhole all her own, so that it was now our turn to round inside, with them shouting 'no water' as we sailed away.*

Back on the dock by 21:15, sails bagged, lines secured, covers on, I didn't stay for fish-and-chips and a beer and headed away as quick as I could, having had a quick look at our race to Darwin, to note I had gone into P2 but somehow not loaded all the DCs I had prepared; just some and there was a sharp turn that ought to be smoothed scheduled within 25 minutes. I drove for a bit and then pulled off, got the laptop out, sailed the turn by hand, and then drove on again. I repeated this procedure twice more and on the last occasion I found a DC had not registered, so that I was heading for a BBQ on Bathurst Island, which of course we had to hug, not bonk! I corrected.

Home slightly after 22:30z (23:30 BST) there was a penultimate WX to be dealt with. Just slightly addled, I rerouted but with a grib from three days ago. The DC checker showed something was very amiss, but by the time I had figured it, I had careened on rather too free-and-fast and into the lead. By 00:30z I was in bed, for a four hour off-watch bunk-down. Things had gone as well as I could have hoped – I was still 2nd and the sail-in to the favoured eastern end of the line was going to be relatively straightforward; a couple of feint coastal corners and a curvy final approach, but a straight line wouldn't have been much slower.

Coming in 21 seconds behind Dingo, and on receiving a text from Ria that Ellida had finished 1st both on Club handicap and IRC, my 24 hours were doubly made. And with Miroslav having had a bit of a 'mare' of a race for a P9, my focus for the last two races needs now only be on knockando. I'll tempt fate and state: one more Top 10 will do it.

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AA1	2	4	1	31
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AA3	13	22	6	10
AA4	2	1	28	7
AA5	1	2	3	8
AA6	1	13	6	12
AA7	2	9	4	7
AA8		1	1	
AA9		1	1	
	22	55	55	85
disc1	-13	-22	-28	-31
disc2		-13	-6	-12
	9	20	21	42



bonkhoot / July 2020