

## Melbourne Osaka 2020

As my ocean race reports are motivated by a desire to learn from my mistakes and not repeat them, this one possibly deserves more effort than I am about to give it. A disaster, proving that I am more router-addicted than is healthy, but without this crutch where would I be!

Right... so coming away from Melbourne, it was clear that cutting the corner was not going to be a good idea, and so standing well off, once heading north, I found myself in the usual good company if slightly adrift, with plenty of rockstars further out to sea again and behind (in terms of DTF).

Then a strange thing happened. A strong following breeze developed further inshore, probably up a longitudinal line of grib data and this helped the boats further inshore keep in touch. But after a few updates the squall extended significantly further north, and there was nothing for it, but to sail across to it, as did the others all around me. Cost 30-odd places, but fair enough. But note: this is the second time this Antipodean winter that there has been favourable southerly breeze close in along the Australian coast north of Sydney.

Not wishing to concede too many places, I did not venture all the way over to the centre line of the squall. It looked OK for a while, but in the end it didn't pay, as the passage east of New Ireland which normally, as far as I can recall is the way to go, and that had looked favoured for much of the race, became not so. I gambled and went for it anyway. In hindsight, you'd have to say it was less than 50:50 that the forecast would pick up east of the island and die away west. Anyway, it didn't.

I close-tacked (gybed, probably) neatly along the eastern coast of the island, and was one of the first of the eastern group away in better (but not great) breeze. After a while the router suggested a serious gybe west for little enough VMC back to Osaka, and back towards the leading westerner group. I did it, and that was very stupid.

Ranked somewhere in the high hundreds, I confess I gave up. Didn't route too much more. Didn't think too much more either and just ambled steadily to Japan, missing all the drama that the everchanging leaders were apparently experiencing. Never give up!

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