

# ASTO SSR1 2020



*Challenge Wales and Adventure Wales during an RNLI fundraising event*

Challenge Wales is a sail-training organisation based in Cardiff and working for the benefit of young people, from various background, in helping them develop life skills such as teamwork, respect, responsibility, self-confidence self-esteem etc by taking them on sailing voyages of up to 3 weeks duration. We operate with a team of volunteers from various backgrounds and various skills but with a common aim to help the young people of today develop. 2020 has been a disastrous year for charities such as ourselves due to the Covid19 problems leaving our boats tied up achieving nothing and being a continual drain on our resources both materially, financially, and by way of keeping our volunteers engaged with our project.

2020 would have seen our larger vessel "Challenge Wales" participating in the Tall Ships Race to the Iberian peninsula and it was the collaboration between Sail Training International (STI) and Sail On Line (SOL) that first brought (SOL) to our attention and the online version of the real cancelled event. We entered two of our yachts in the online event, "Challenge Wales" and "Adventure Wales", and encouraged our volunteers to take part with their own "boats" resulting in a fleet of 8 entries affiliated to our charity taking part.



*Challenge Wales during the Round the Island Race (Isle of Wight)*

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Sailing in the first event, STI TSR, gave me the opportunity to understand the way SOL works and what its idiosyncrasies are, it also make you realise how addictive it is and how much I needed an alarm clock for the night passages. One huge advantage I found with it was that as it does not allow for the basic sailing skills of helming and sail trimming it did focus the mind more on to the tactics and the reading of the GRIB files to take full advantage of the “lifts” and “headers”. It also helped demonstrate to trainees the use of VMG, a concept that some people find difficult to comprehend sometimes.

Moving on to the ASTO event in the Solent brought in different skills, some specific to the SOL program and others which benefit anyone racing “around the cans” namely rounding the marks to give best advantage and realise how much a race can be won or lost because of this. The one area I still have to improve on is activating a course change at a mark between fixes, being too quick results in cutting the mark and the resultant penalty or over-standing resulting in more distance sailed. Over-standing a mark can have huge impact on your result, especially when the course change at the mark is in the region of 300 degrees, as was the case at the second mark, where for every metre over-stood equates to nearly 2 metres of extra distance to sail and with there being only 0.02 miles or 37 metres between Challenge Wales and the race winner on the ASTO race shows how important this can be. This was the big learning curve for me during the practice race, not so much the need to be tight on the marks but learning more features of the program such as the zoom, and the availability of running with both prediction lines, features I was not aware of during the TSR’s but, as being longer races, the features were of less importance and I was busy learning the more basic skills.

ChallengeWales / Andy  
Capt. Andy Hall  
Trustee and Skipper  
Challenge Wales