

First Race then RACE!

Stage notes: Mouthansar, entering from stage left.

Opening line: "Holy main- and headsail – what is fourteen hundred UTC in Danish currency?"

Three o'clock it was on Sunday afternoon right after the finish in Imola, Italy, where, once again, Kevin Magnussen of Haas had tested his broken wings against the Brits and Fins and Aussies and Germans and whatnot of the F1 circus.

I had barely 12 minutes to prepare the race, signing in to Sailonline while the racecars were crossing the line with Hamilton in the lead.

This was not the first time I have sailed the Stockholm Archipelago to join Mistli and her birthday celebrations. On most previous completions, the proper course has been East after the start to circumsail the hundreds of tricky little islands along the coast.

Indeed, that route was what QtVIm suggested as demonstrated by Bimmer, who chose to follow QT's recommendation. Exhibit 1 shows his track in light blue.

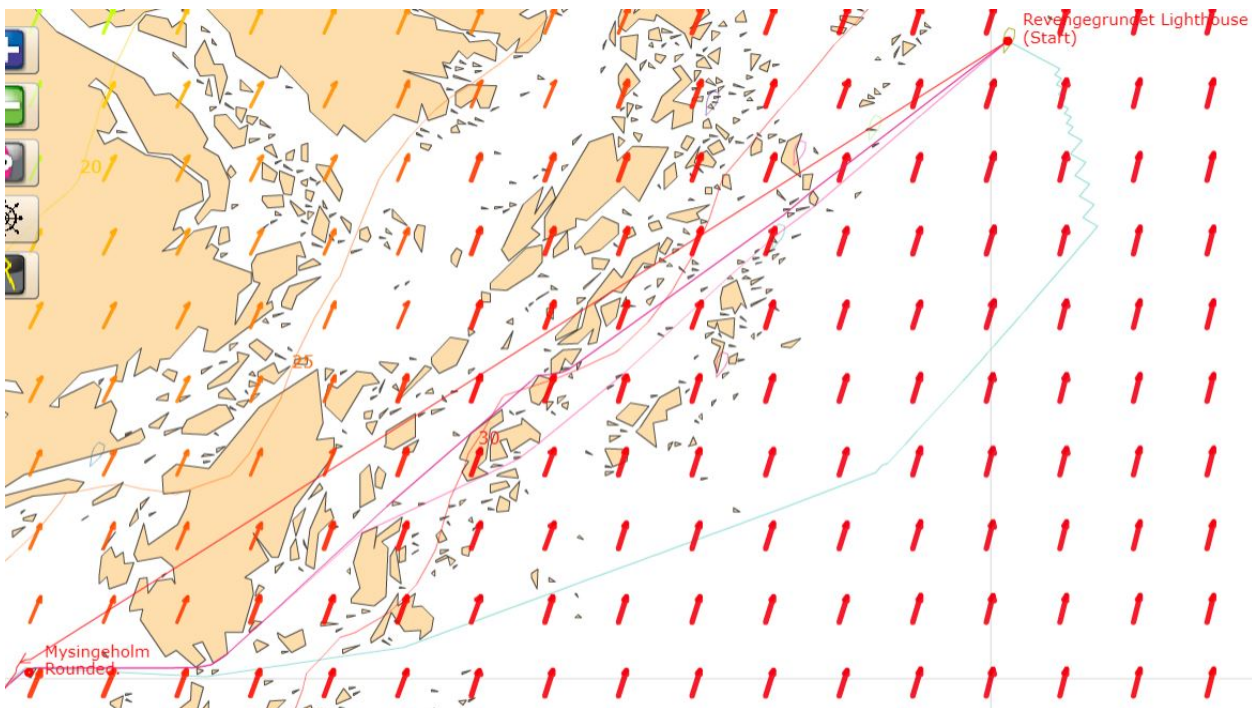


Exhibit 1, Bimmer's track.

You will notice how QT favors tacks. Many tacks. I doubt Bimmer's perfection ever rose above 93% for the first full hour.

So, using the router was a definite no-go. Then, in rapid succession, came the question: Why not go the most direct route to the Mysingeholm mark even though that meant threading a hundred needles.

I had only a few minutes left to make up my mind. The decision was made without any calculations whatsoever and with tongue in cheek and fingers crossed. This was not going to be a 'Push-off-and-see-you-in-six-hours'-race.

The first stretch afforded me a little more time to plan while I stuck to max. VMG on port tack. A long island in the shape of a drunken Italy complete with boot heel beckoned to be held to port, but the wind was lighter on the north side, so, I discarded that option. The trick, I rationalized was to spend as little time as possible off the wind to cross through the string of major islands in the way.

In Exhibit 2 you may detect three purple lines.

The straight line directly from Start to Mark 1 is not feasible because Sweden is half a peninsula and 4 million islands, which tend to be located where you want to sail. So...

The fattest of the two other purple lines is my course, which can be compared to the thinner line of the winner, Zorba777. We were both meandering the course but had different takes on the optimal route. Zorba was smarter and therefore faster by 13 seconds at the finish.

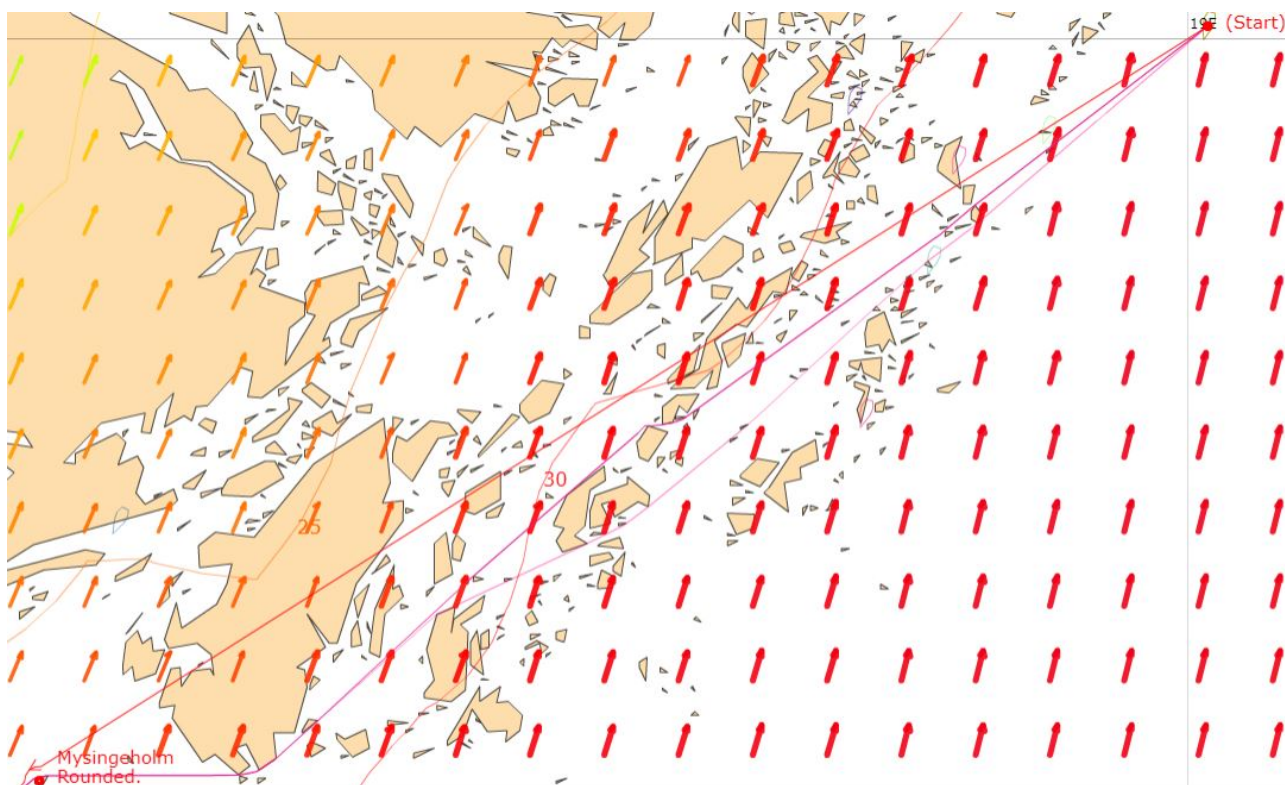


Exhibit 2, Start to Mysingeholm. Can you find 'Drunken Italy with boot heel'? It's about halfway to Mark 1.

Mysingeholm was a test of everything I'd almost forgotten about tight cornering. I haven't raced much for over six months, and I was wary of mistakes. I even tried Bonknhoot's Perfection Loss

Minimization Bag o' tricks. My perfection never dropped below 96.3%, so I suppose they worked although I cannot say I have ever really mastered them.

The leaders through the first stretch had chosen a much more northerly route over all the islands and would sail into weaker headwind. Their bottom dropped out in the final tacks towards Mysingeholm.

At this point I had had time to study the SeaCart 30 polar, which afforded some interesting insights. Particularly because we were heading into stronger winds.

In fact, we were heading from green over yellow to red wind, and as you will see in the polar, the speed loss when pinching to the wind is much less dramatic in the red wind.

Therefore, I decided to ease off the sheets a couple of degrees to reach higher winds faster and to pinch a little more once I was there.

This meant that I would have to take the inevitable tack earlier than the optimal point both in terms of geography and in terms of a slight change in the direction of the wind that I saw coming. However, I stuck to my plan figuring that the next leg would be only four miles and the disadvantage by tacking too early would be offset by sailing into stronger wind.

I allowed myself plenty of room for the early tack to avoid being strung out by a curvy TWA-line and getting stuck behind an island.

This was fortunate, as Wolff would discover when he tacked only to find that his WIFI had died. A few frantic moments later he was back online but had to fall 10 degrees off max VMG to clear an island.

Wolff avoiding a BBQ on the beach and even finishing in the Top Ten was a heroic feat.

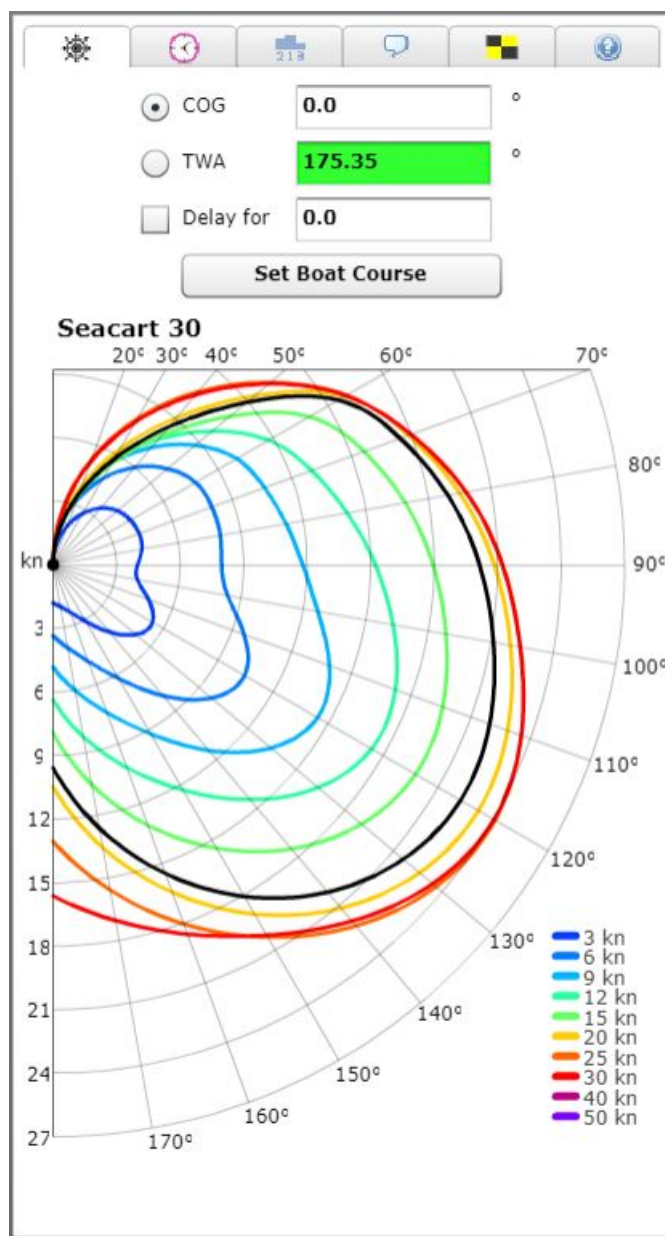


Exhibit 3, SeaCart 30 polar with built in polar hopping opportunities between various windspeeds.

We were sailing in Jepsom's own back yard. Jepsom nearly always chooses creative and often genius tracks. Thus, I was enthused to see that we chose nearly the same way through the first half of the race. We were head to head most of the way until Zorba777 came zooming out of nowhere to take the win and I inched past Jepsom.

What a race that was, but I am getting ahead of myself. We still need a look at the second half of the race.

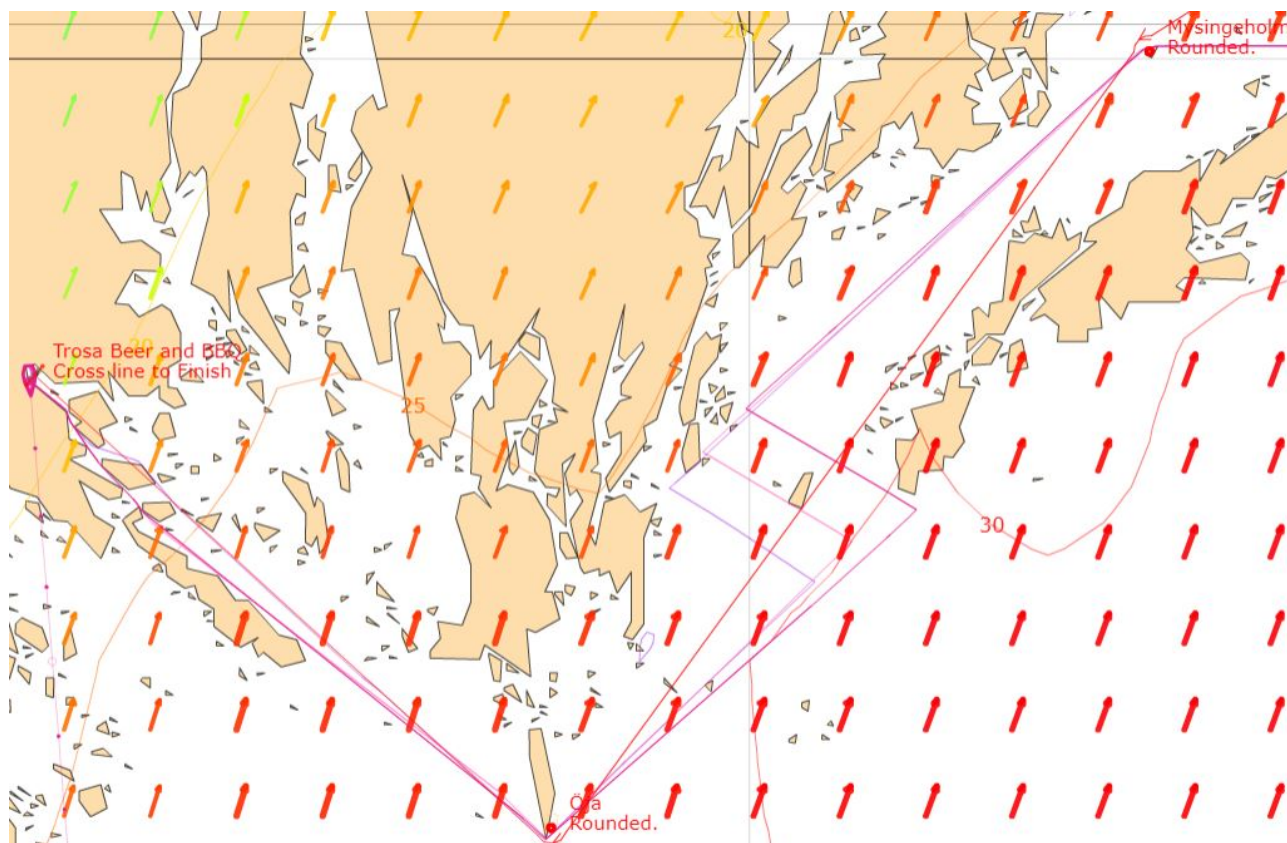


Exhibit 4, from Mysingeholm round Öja (the Eye) to Mistli's deck and Barbecue.

Exhibit 4 shows the three tracks generated by the podium. I was well clear of the islands in my tack while Jepsom went furthest south but tacked back a tad early for my taste. An extra minute on the short tack gave me a good long ride at faster than max VMG speed towards the Öja mark.

After the Eye, Trosa Beer and BBQ was a fast downhill run. The main excitement was avoiding the unforgiving Swedish rocks at speeds well over 20 knots. This is a situation when you catch yourself hoping that someone else, preferably ahead of you, hits them, only to realize that such thinking is not what Mum and Dad taught you.

I am very proud to share the podium with such accomplished sailors as Zorba777 and Jepsom. Under my breath I'll add that I am equally proud to have beaten such proven aces as Rumskib, WRmirekd and, indeed, Wolff.

Bimmer came in 50th about half an hour after we lit the coals on Mistli's barbecue. Wolff urged me to wax poetically about Bimmer's race and to release my poetry in chat. For once, words failed me, and all I could come up with was three words that rhymed: Race, Pace and Disgrace. Bimmer is much too good a man for that. Also, I realized that you cannot backstab a man when he is behind you so, I refrained.

Kevin Magnussen DNF'ed his race in Imola on account of a headache and a lousy car.

Tip of the skipper's cap to all finishers both in SOL and F1.

Thank you for reading, thank you for racing SOL and ...

Happy Birthday, Mistli.

Mouthansar/Lars