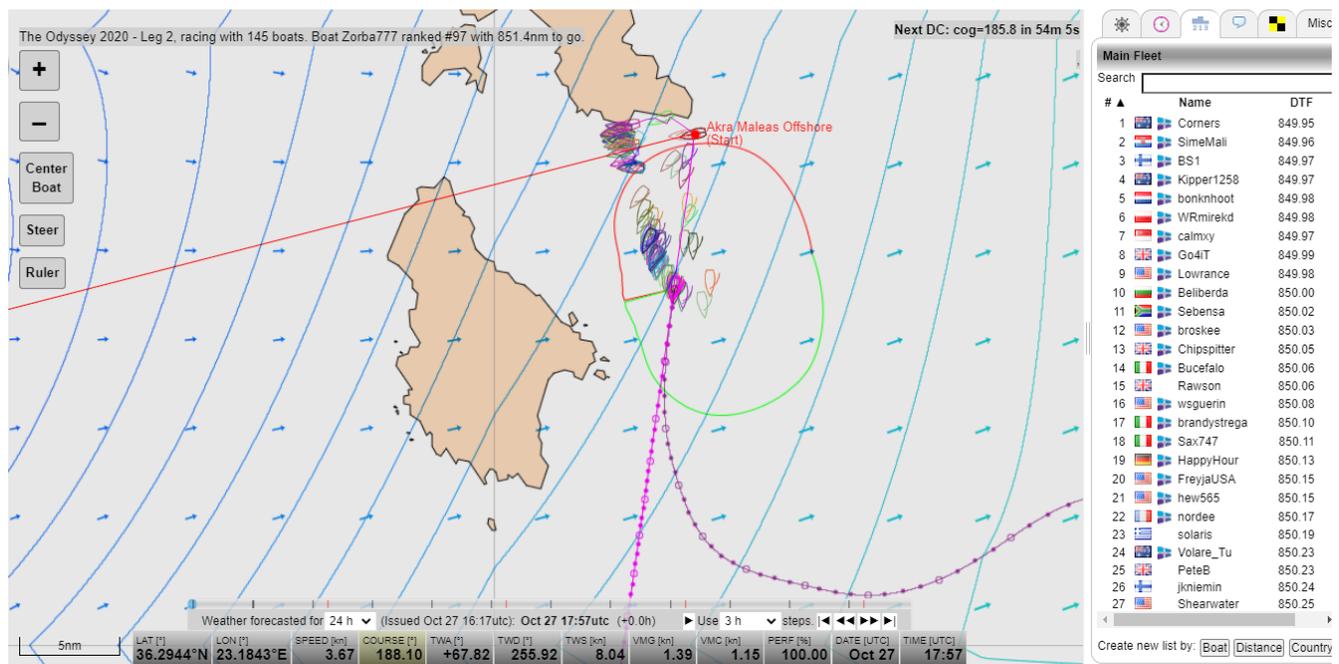


The Odyssey 2020 Leg 2 – Report by Zorba777

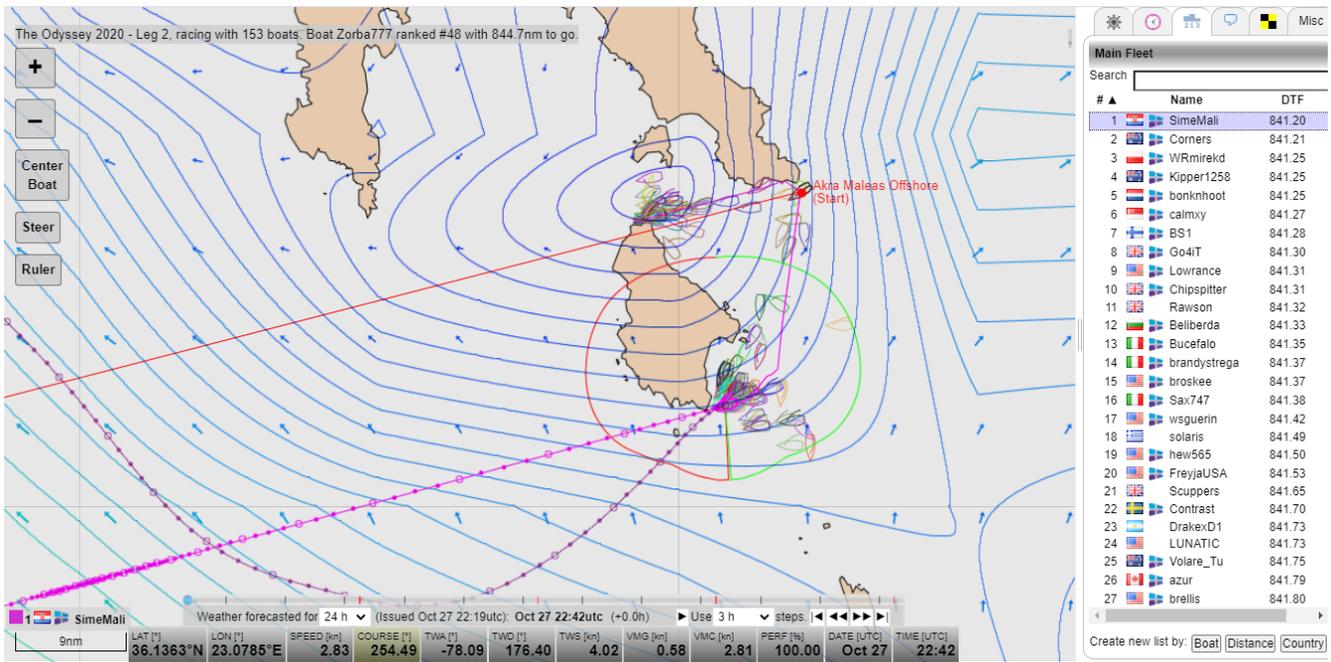
Leg 2 started where leg 1 had finished, at Cape Maleas. The stage looked deceptively simple with only one waypoint near Djerba, before turning North to the finish line on the Sicilian coast.

It was more like an open ocean race, totaling 850 Nm, at relatively slow trireme speeds. But in the Med things are rarely simple as we were soon to find out.

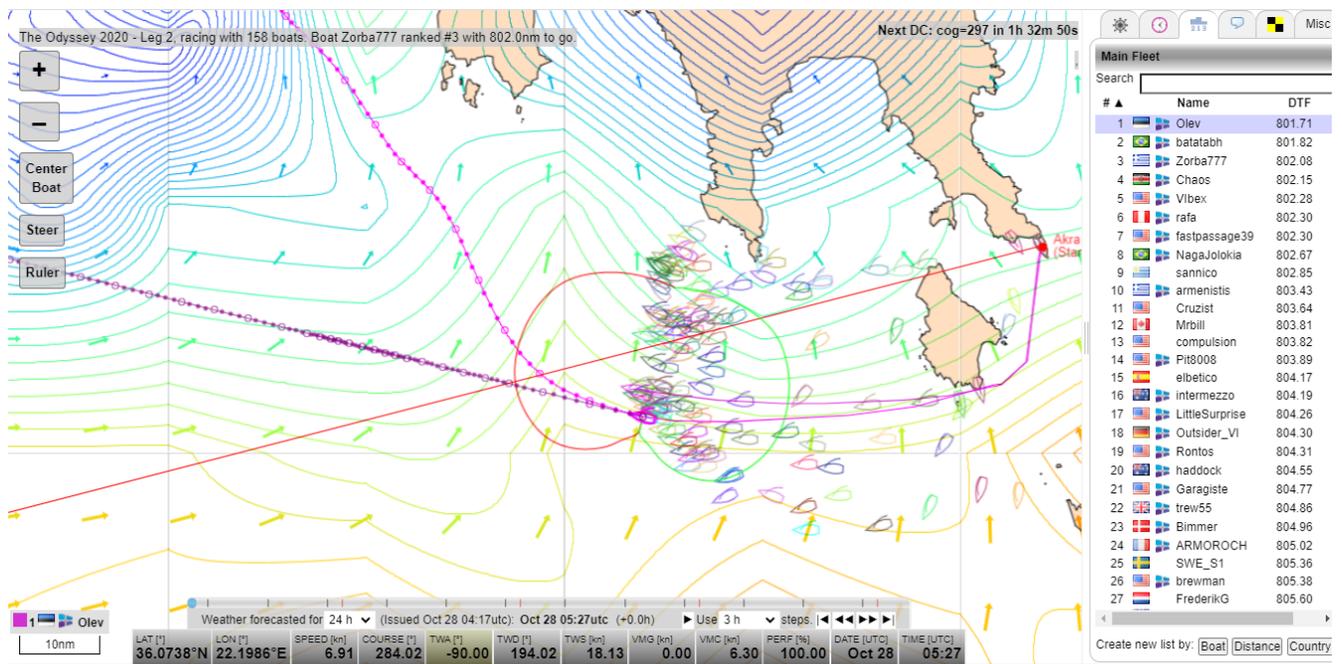
There was an instant tactical choice to be made right after the start: go North or South around the island Kithira. The fleet was divided almost 50/50. I chose the Southern passage, as seen in this screen:



That proved to be the slightly better choice as the Northern group lost more time than they hoped when they got stuck in very slow winds for a while:

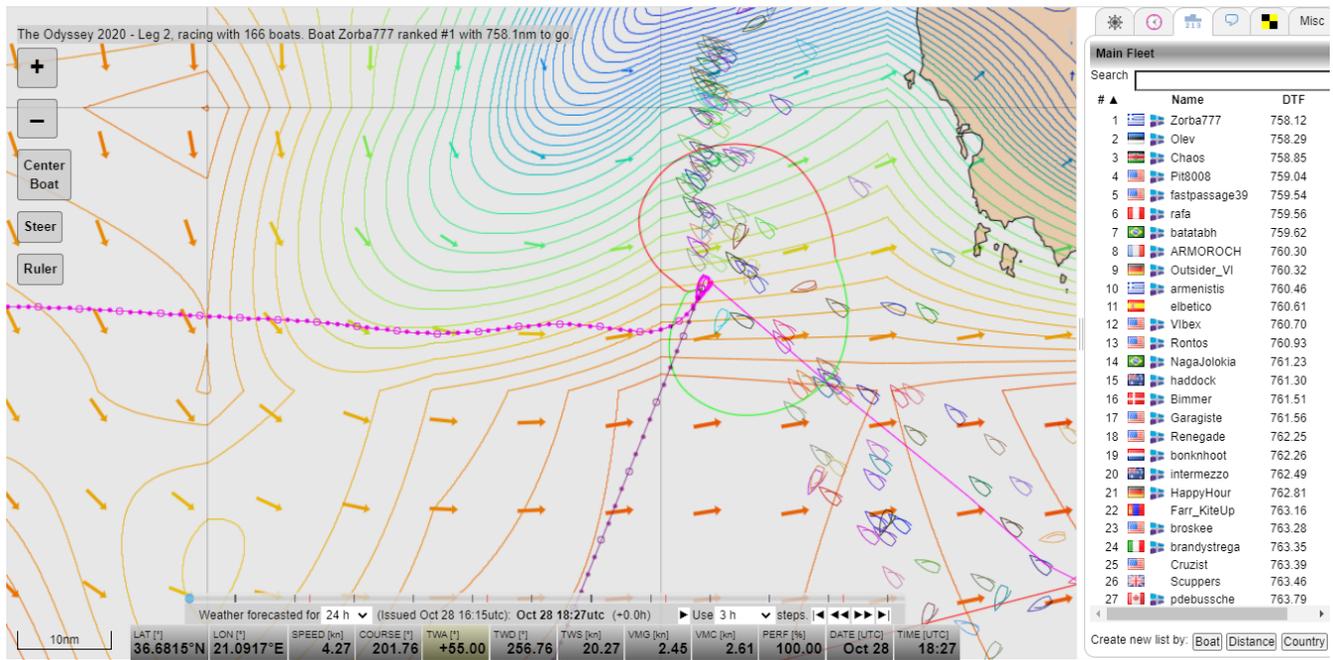


The Southern group got into faster winds, but at a less favorable angle, so the groups more or less came back together the next morning. @Olev had taken the best start, but I was quite happy to be in 3rd and at this point I was opting for a slightly more Southern course already:

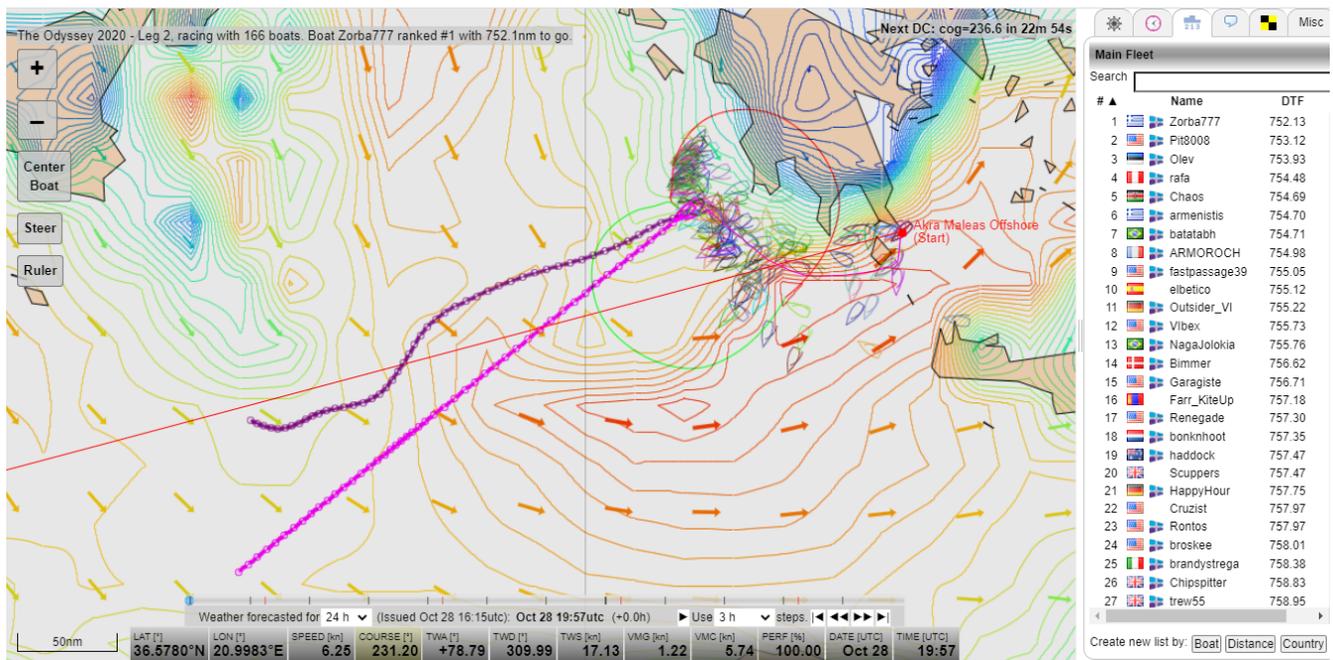


At this stage we were all positioning for a coming steady Northwestern wind that would take us straight to the Djerba waypoint. But I didn't trust my router, which pointed me to go far North. I figured that the slightest change in next WXs could easily mean I had gone too far to the North. Staying a bit lower looked like a small risk worth taking. A bit a gut feeling..

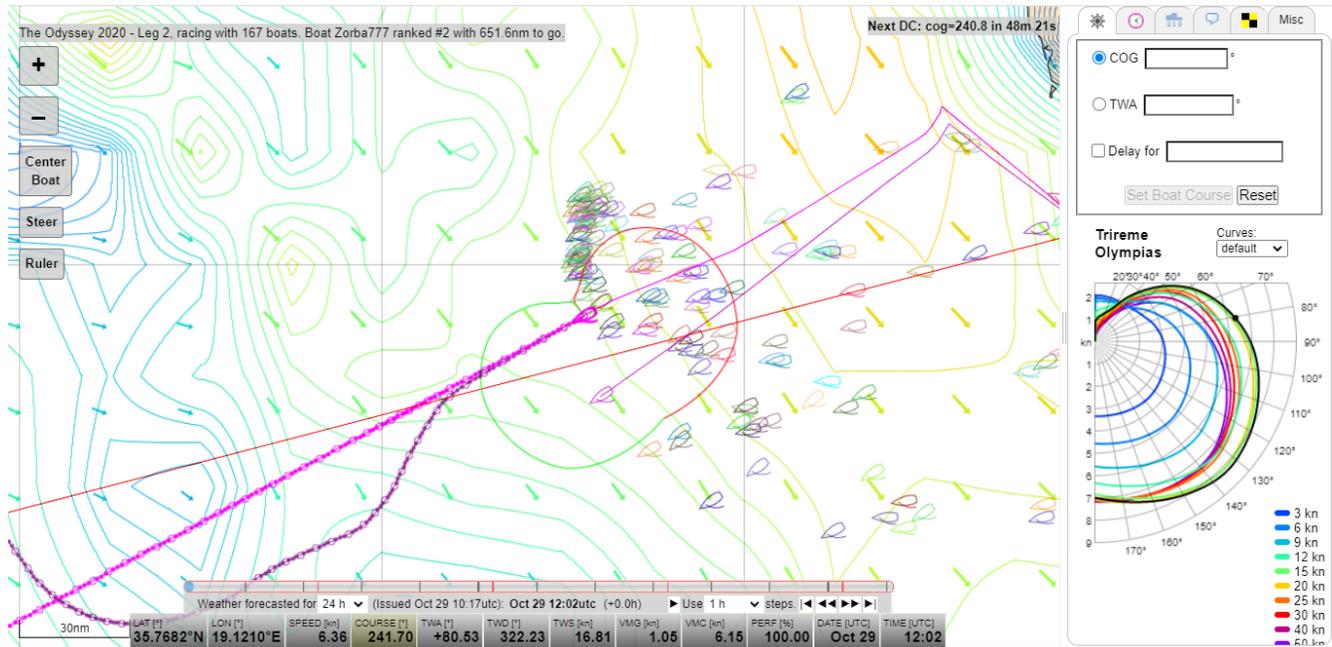
In this screenshot you can see how far to the North some boats had ventured, especially the boats that had passed Kithira on the Northern side. Staying in the stronger winds I had climbed into #1 position already when I tacked early:



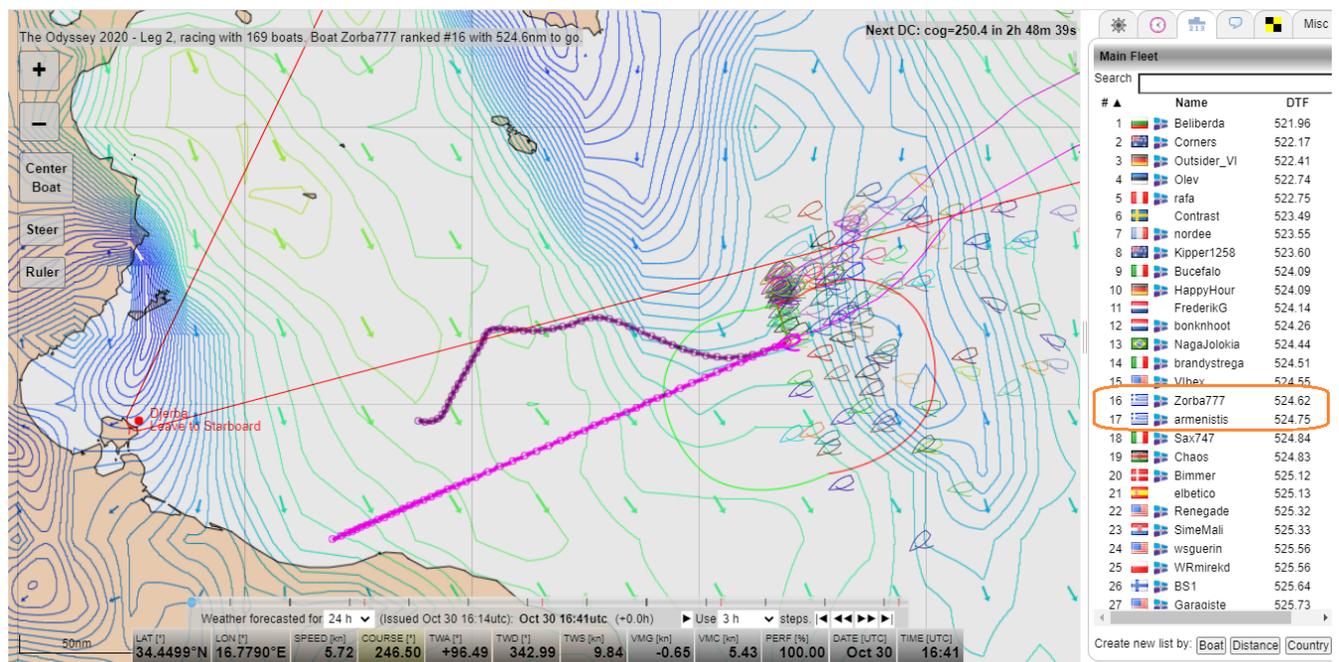
After nearly all boats had tacked we had this overview situation. Does that look like a jellyfish or what? I like some of the “art” that gets generated by the new long predictor lines:



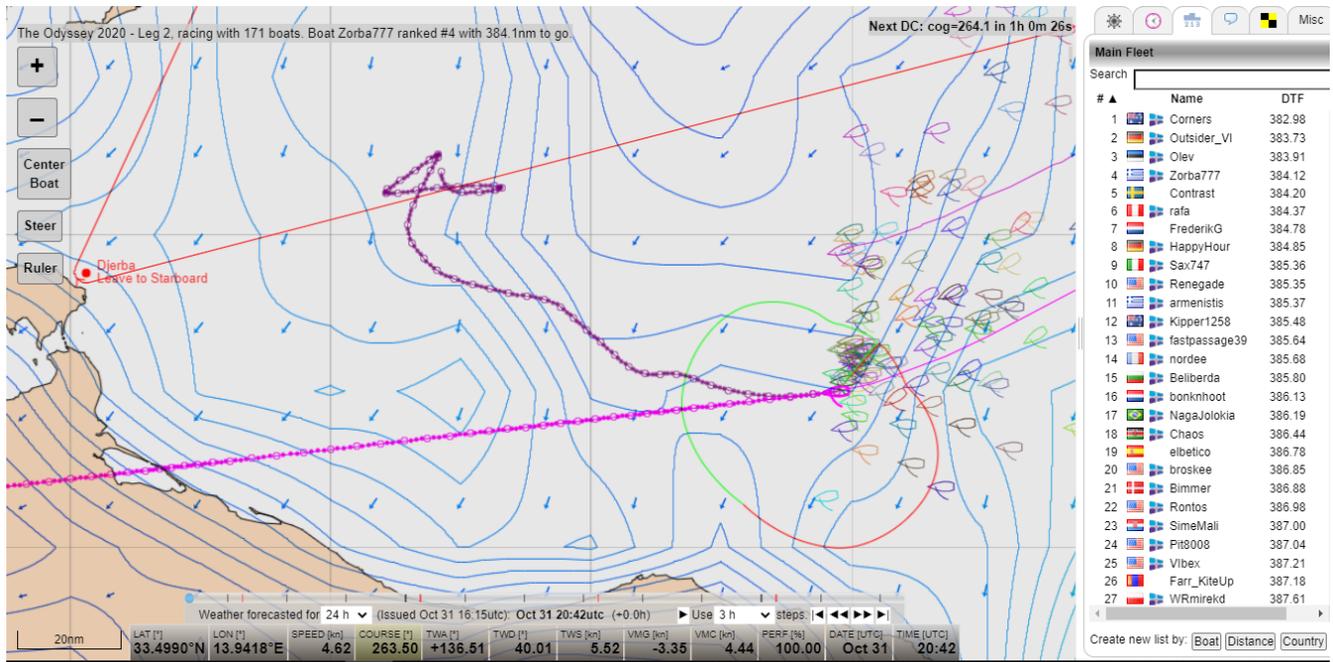
We got several days of “champagne sailing” as somebody called it, with great winds and good speed. At this point I tried to take away some of the angle the boats to the North had on me, while staying in 17 kts winds (at which this boat has its optimum speeds):



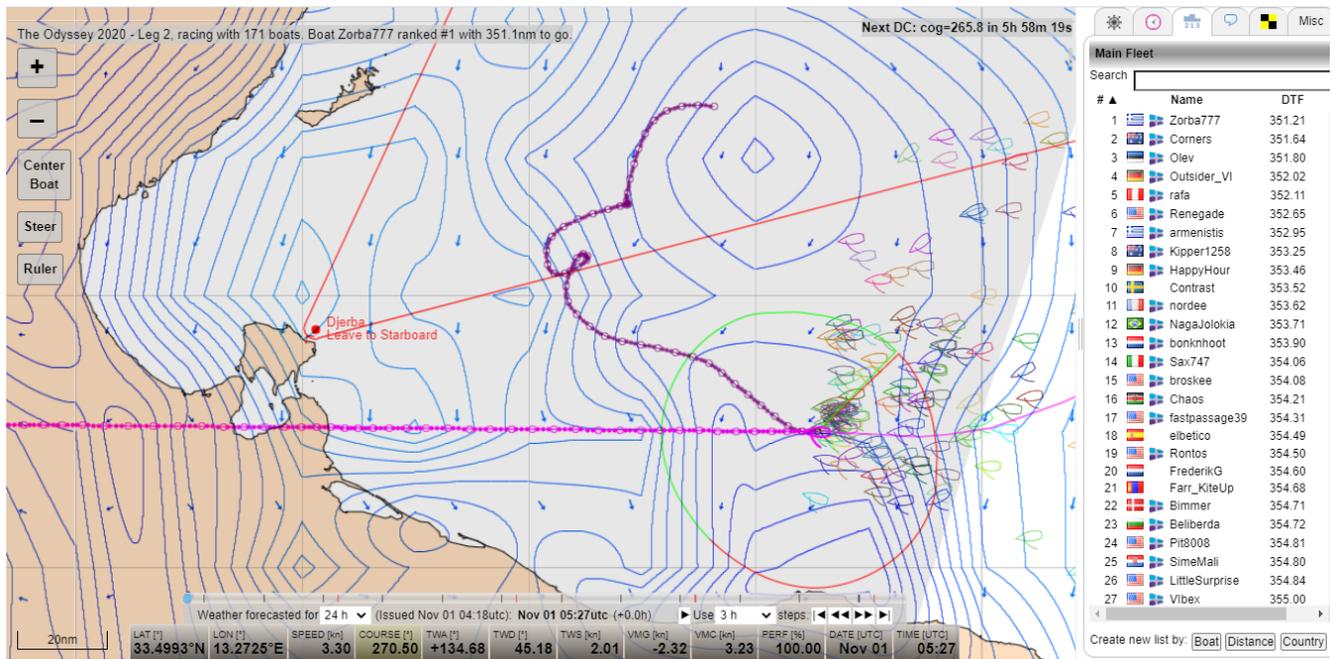
Just before mid-race no boat had been able to pull away and there were frequent changes at the top of the rankings. One SOLer was joking that two Greeks boats were fighting for 16th position. What if we were just getting into *optimal* position :-)? The boats on Southern paths started getting into stronger winds here:



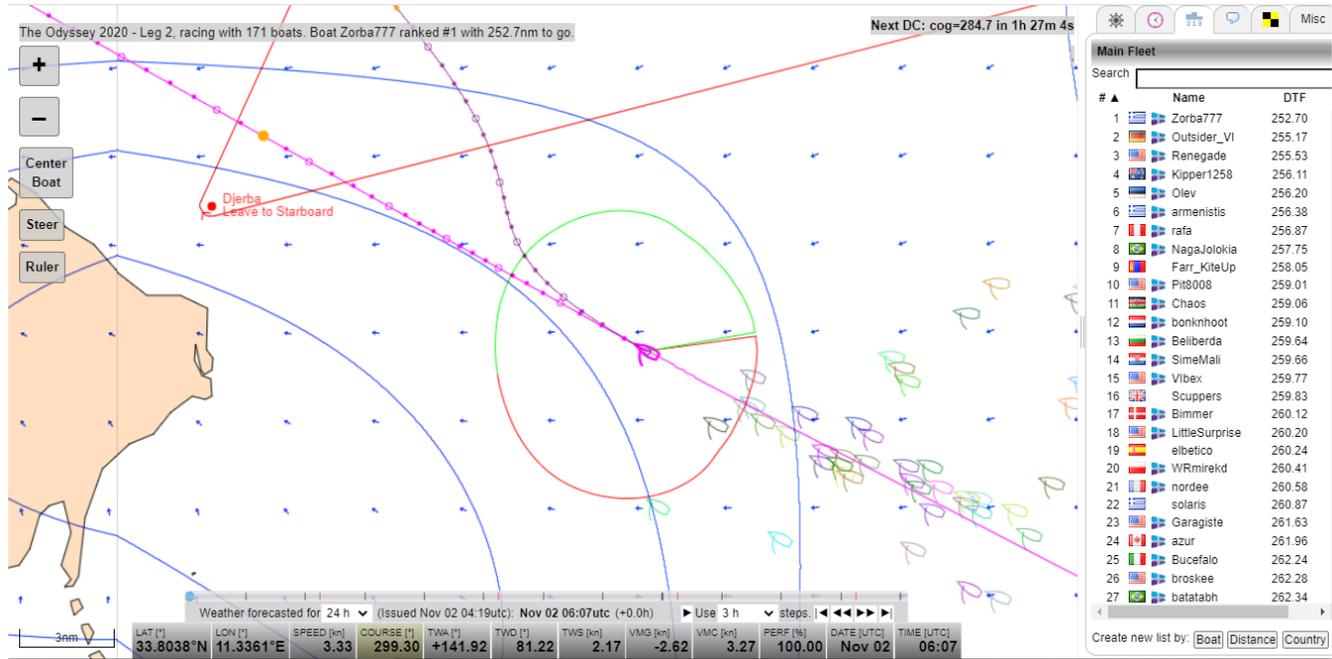
I had noticed in some test routings done in the days before the race that occasionally stronger winds happen along the 34N or 33.5N meridian in front of the Libyan coast. That was one of the factors that had made me opt for the Southern side of the fleet. Those stronger winds flipped on just in time. Here you can see that highway to Djerba starting to shape up:



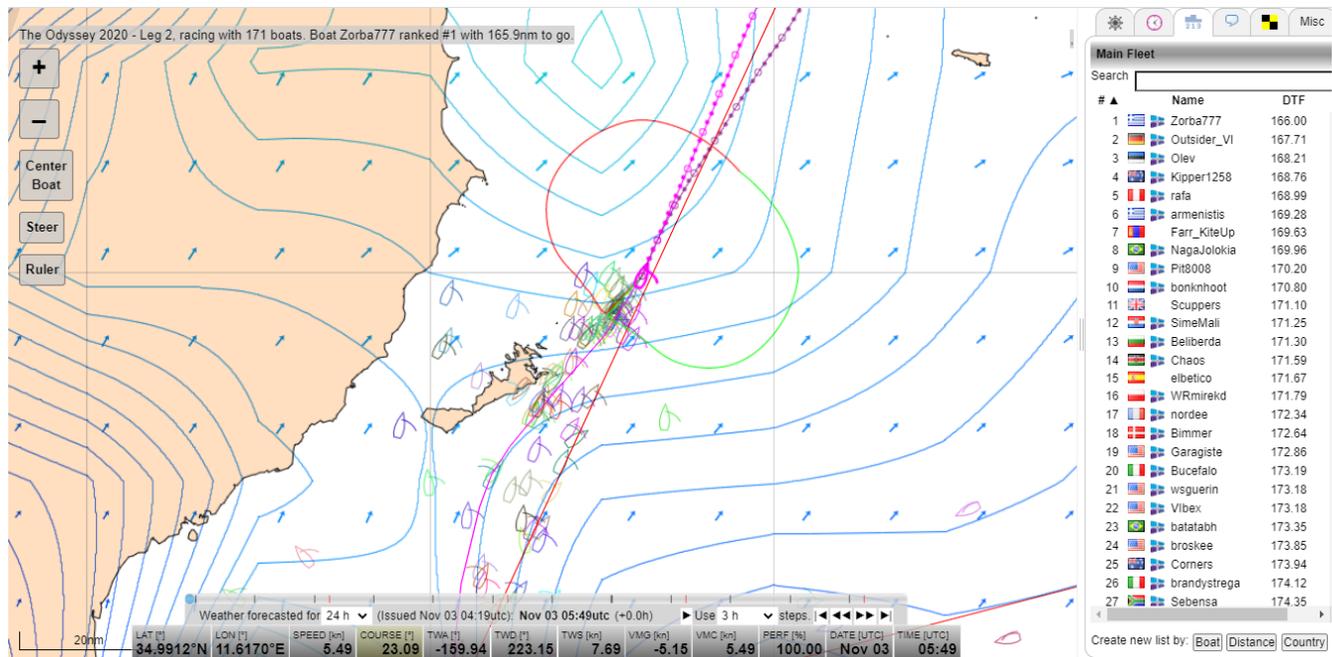
Just sailing along that meridian and always getting into faster winds a bit earlier than others would allow me to pull away nicely:



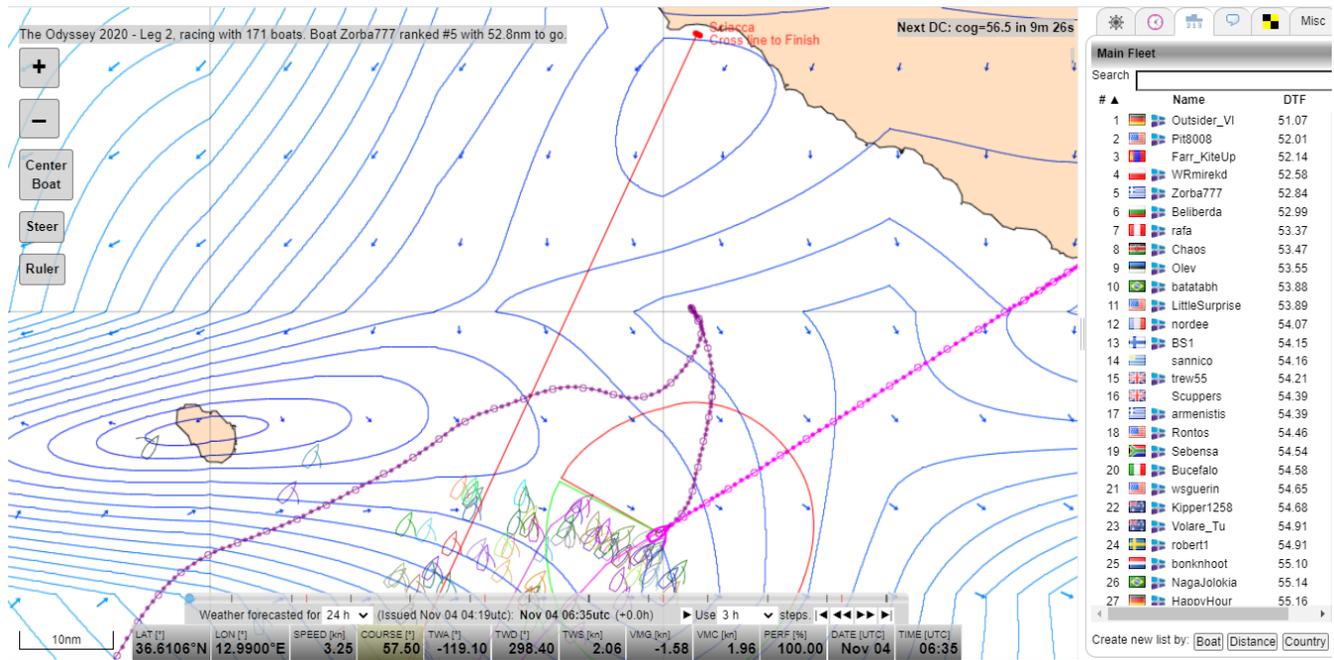
It worked even better than hoped. An almost one hour advantage before the Djerba waypoint. That looked like a “safe” advantage with 250Nm to go, but what’s safe in this part of the world?



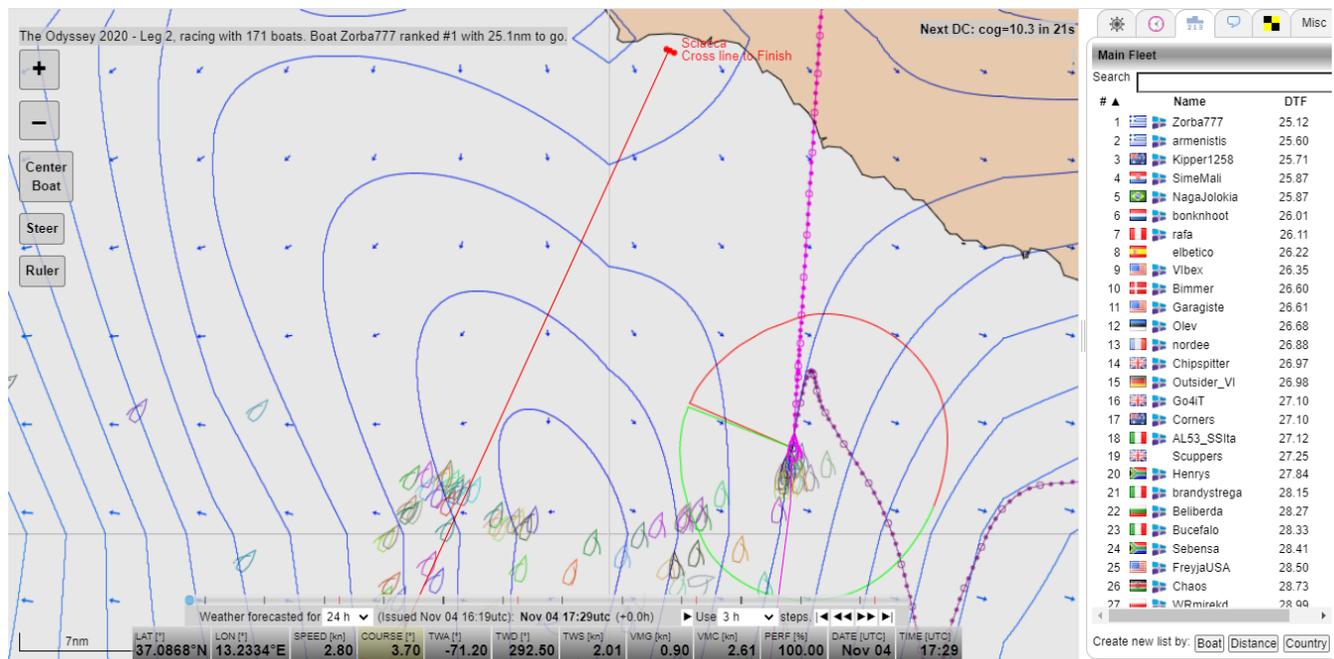
My routings from Djerba to the finish at Sciacca were jumping around like a crazy monkey with every new WX update. The winds were to slow down all the way and many boats would inevitably catch up and spread out in other directions to go their chance. I would have done the same in their position. But if you are in the lead you have to defend. 165Nm to go and my advantage was halved already:



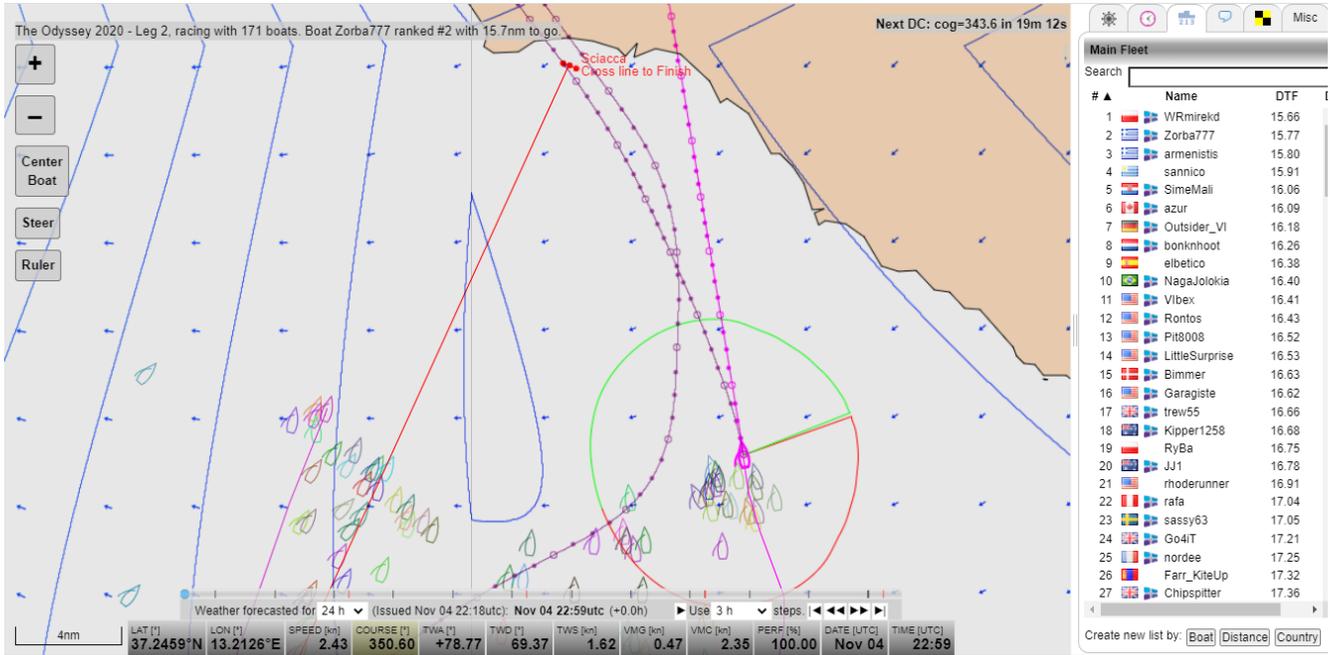
50 Nm to go. Leading group was forced to sail around a very slow wind zone. Some boats took their chance by going a bit more directly for the finish. Down to 5th place and out of the top 20 a little later. But all you can do is go on and make the best of it.



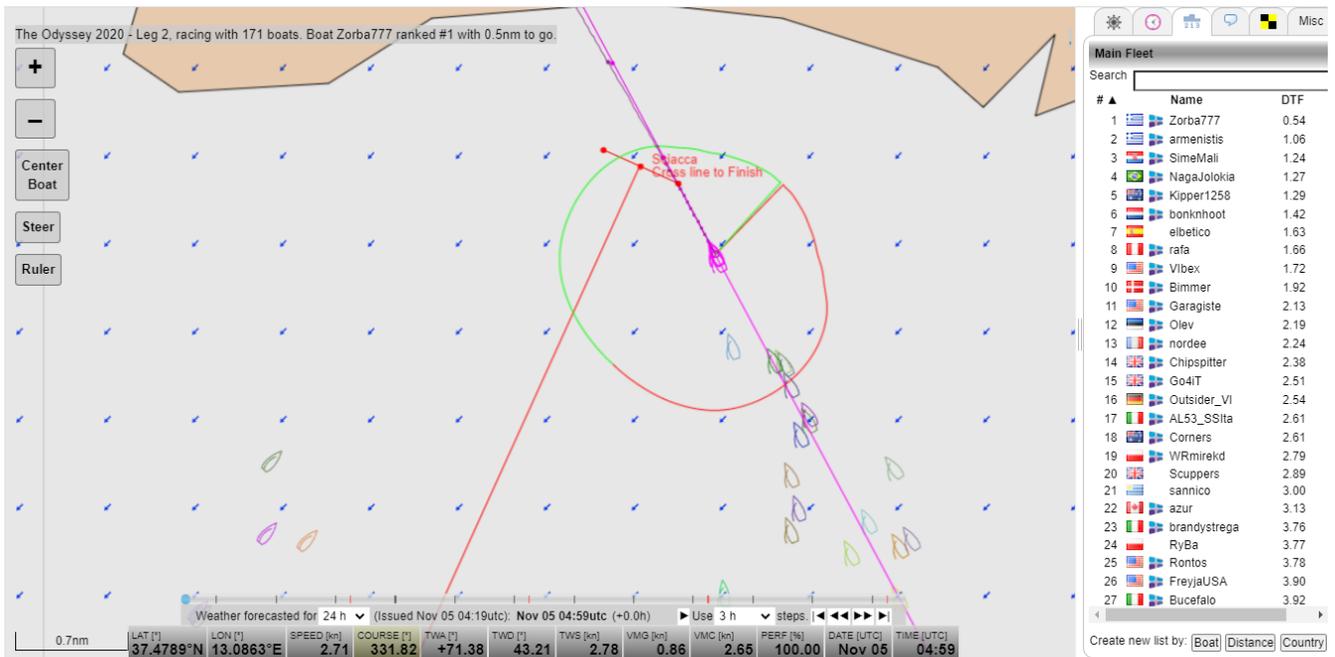
25 Nm to go. Back in the lead as a 0kts wind zone moved through the fleet and slowed down the other boats first. At those low speeds it was another 10 hours to go and two more WX changes. Armenistis had sailed a very good race and quietly moved in 2nd place. But boats were coming into the finish from all directions and wind directions were also all over the place.



15 Nm to go and here Wrmirekd grabs the lead. That small group going straight to Sciacca had been in 3 kts winds, while the Eastern group was in the dead wind hole. Luckily the last WX didn't bring major changes and the Eastern group would benefit from a better wind angle towards the finish line. Here I had moved closer to the shore to get the best angle and a bit stronger wind on that side:



That proved sufficient to win this dramatic race after countless position changes:



Armenistis held on for 2nd place, his first podium and well deserved. This makes for a unique 1-2 of Greek boats. SimeMali did a great second half of the race and finished 3rd coming from behind. Congrats to both and thanks for the challenge. Congrats top 10.

See you all back for more adventure in Leg 3, when we will visit some exciting parts of Italy.

Zorba777

PS: Note about the Greek mati that will be sent to the winner of this Odyssey series. If I happen to win the series myself then the mati will go to the winner of Leg 4, the final stage. Should I win Leg 4 also, then the mati goes to the winner of Leg 3... You get the idea :)