

New Hebrides Slalom 2021 Report

Looking at the Q1 race calendar back in late December, I decided that I would race the SYC Championship races. These are medium sized races, complex courses with good attendance and competition.

Unfortunately, my start of the year was not very inspiring (no wins, no podiums and just a few top tens) making this race a must in a search for a good performance. With this mindset I prepared this one - make all the 04:30 wx's and keep awake when close to shore to avoid the dreaded, feared BBQ's!

And a BBQ race this was!

The first leg to We Island was a difficult one. All upwind, searching for strong wind at the channel between New Caledonia and We Island and avoiding the wind shadow approaching the mark. I didn't make any serious mistake and managed to round We mark first very closely followed by WRmirekd, rumskib and rafa, with the rest of the fleet also very close.

The second leg was long and straightforward, a long close reach to Tanna Island. Uneventful till the mark, I kept my lead but here we lost an important challenger! rumskib went aground for an extended BBQ losing all possibilities of competing for the win.

On the third leg to Efate Island, I made my first mistake - I went too wide passing Erromango Island while WRmirekd took a much direct approach to Efate. There I lost my lead rounding in second at Efate mark.

Next was the leg to Ambrym Island, around Epi and Emae Islands. Some SOLers tried to go west of Epi but this proved to be a bad option. On arrival to Ambrym another surprise - rafa beached on the south of the island and got the BBQ grill out!

WRmirekd however sailed flawlessly, leaving no chance for me to recover the small gap I had when - hold and behold - he BBQs (very very briefly) on the north of the Island, just before starting the leg to Port Olry. This allowed me to regain a short lead before the most difficult and technical leg of this race.

Looking for strong winds and good angles, this one required precise pathing. And on this one I managed to sail well enough preventing all efforts of recovering from the boats behind and reaching Port Olry mark with a comfortable lead and an easy way to the finish line. Nice move from bonknhoot going inside of Sakao Island and getting the 3rd place.

Last I need to mention the effort of Portuguese solers! We got on the nations team competition with a 1st, 19th and 63rd! Come on Team Portugal!!

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