

Aland Sea Timed Race 2021

Race 1444

Run 1

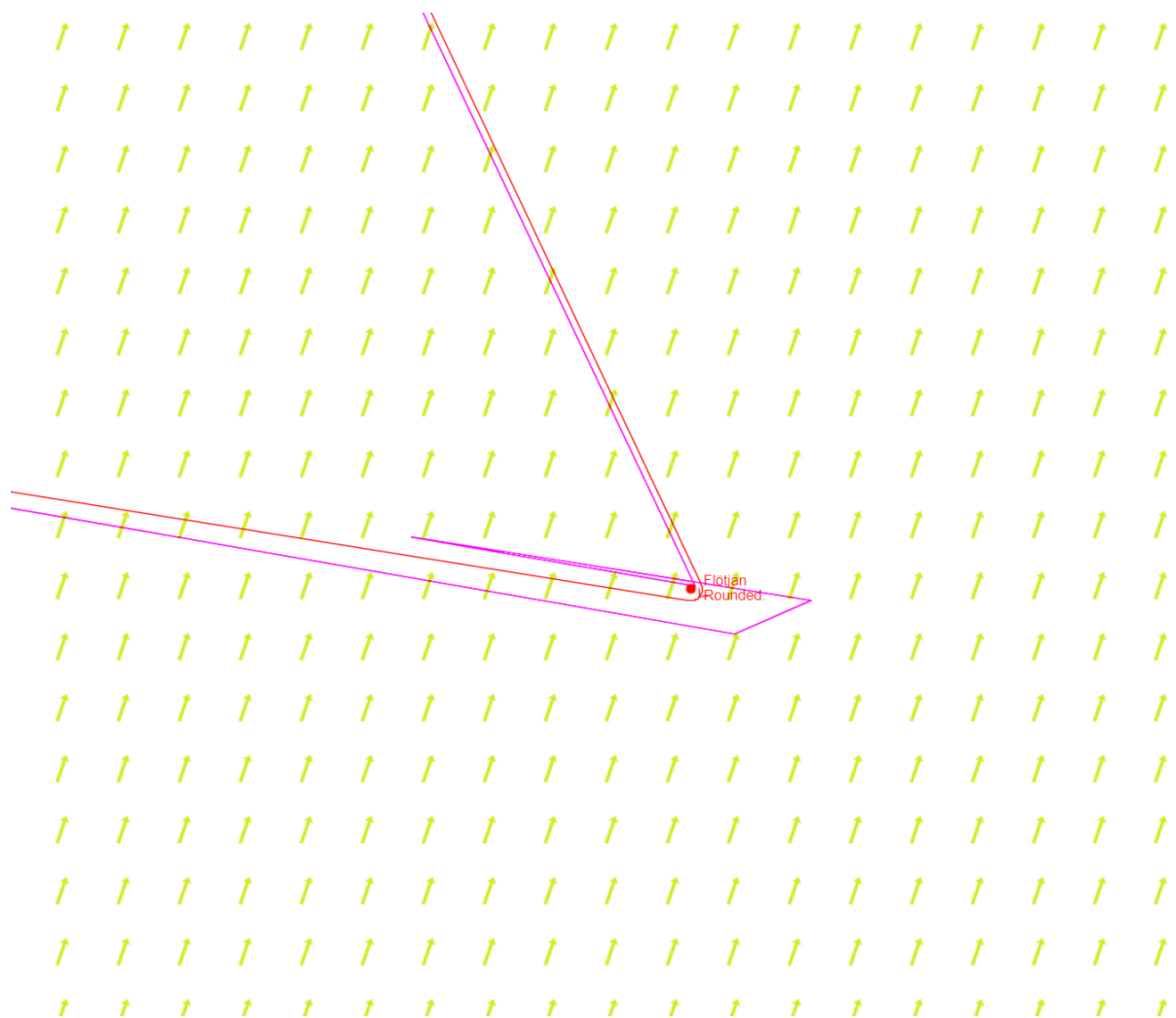
The first promising start window for the Åland Sea race was on February the 18th with average winds speed between 18 and 19 knots from around 200°. This allowed an almost straight course from the start to the Villösan mark, followed by a VMG run to the North.

The Tröllingarna mark is located on one of two adjacent small islands. Rounding both islands effectively requires three course changes in quick succession, each with an accompanying performance penalty.

The wind direction was just right that I could approach the mark on the downwind target angle through the sound between the two islands. The track is shown in the figure below. This allowed me to round the mark with only two major course changes, giving me hope for a small advantage. And it is always cool to show off by doing something unusual.

The following leg was a close reach, followed by a tack around the Flötjan mark and a beam reach to the finish line. That should have been really easy. But it wasn't. See the next figure (without words).

Kipper was the fastest and I ended 1'30" behind on a preliminary place 6.



Run 2

The next promising start window was on Monday the 22nd between 17:00UT and 18:00UT. The average wind direction was from 130° and the average wind speed was between 14 near the coast and 22 knots offshore. This again allowed an easy exit from the start. From Villösan to Tönningarna it was a straight line beam reach, maybe with a Jib Top and Staysail.

Regrettably I spoiled the race again at a mark rounding, this time by turning too early and running into the western island at Tröllingarna. I was quick on my way again, but the performance had dropped to 80%.

Once I have sailed with an instructor who, when we were practising manoeuvres used to say »slow is smooth and smooth is fast«. According to the rules of logic he was saying that slow is fast, which is hard to believe. But there is a grain of truth in it. The performance recovery rate is a function of boat speed. If the boat is quite fast, the performance recovery is extremely slow, and vice versa, if the boat is really slow, the performance recovery is fast.

For this reason I stopped the boat by issuing a TWA=0 command and waited for 10 seconds when I had left the islands behind me. When the boat does not move, the recovery is almost instantly. That solved the performance problem, only the boat was going anywhere.

In a situation like this one has to remember that the price for a course change that is not a tack or gybe depends on the amount of the course change. The number to remember here is 101°. A change of course of 101° lowers the performance from 100% to 93%. So if the proper course is a run, it is advisable to first change to a TWA of say, 105°, and in a second step to the downwind target angle. The course from Töllingarna to Flötjan was a beat, so I could bear off in one step to the upwind tar-

get. When the boat was back on course the performance was at about 97%, much better than the 80% before this manoeuvring.

Smo scored the best run time during this time window, 78:08:26.

Run 3

On Wednesday the 24th between 13:00UT and 15:00 looked for a long time to be the best starting window. This time required considerably more planning, because the wind was blowing from 245° with 22 knots on average. That meant, that the direct course from the Start to the first mark at Villösan was more or less dead downwind.

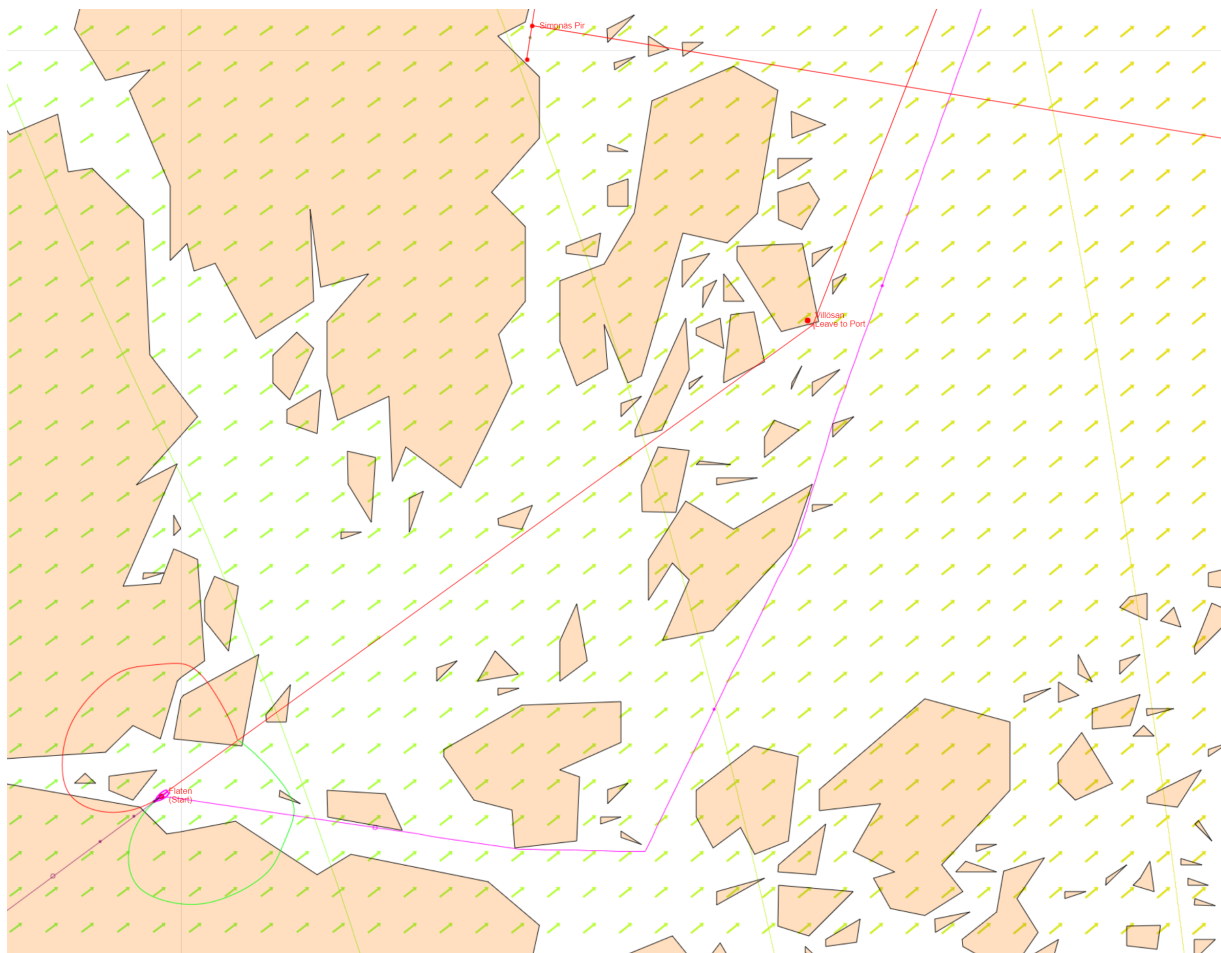
It was possible to find one or another route out of the maze of small islands without deviating far from the downwind target angle. But that requires gybing in close proximity to the shore. Given my experience from the first two runs, I did not dare to follow such a route.

Instead I came up with the route shown in the figure at the bottom of this page. It starts almost due east on an angle a little hotter than run VMG. Once clear of an Island by the name of Lidö, it bears away. Next comes a gybe with enough space for errors and a long stretch to the eastern shore of Idö with plenty of opportunity to find a clear path through the outer skerries.

When I had prepared the DCs for a 14:00UT start, I watched the other competitors. It was reassuring that rafa was following a quite similar path. Kipper, on the other hand, sailed a possibly faster route with three gybes close to shore. It was not exactly the one I had considered, but too difficult for me.

By the way, the pink line in the figure is not the track of my boat. The boat is still at the start position at Flaten. It is the awesome DC aware predictor that can be enabled in the settings tab of the new client. Very cool.

I did more conservative mark roundings and finished with an elapsed time of 6:42:51 on place 4, behind Chippalippa, Kipper1258 and Pit8008.



Run 4

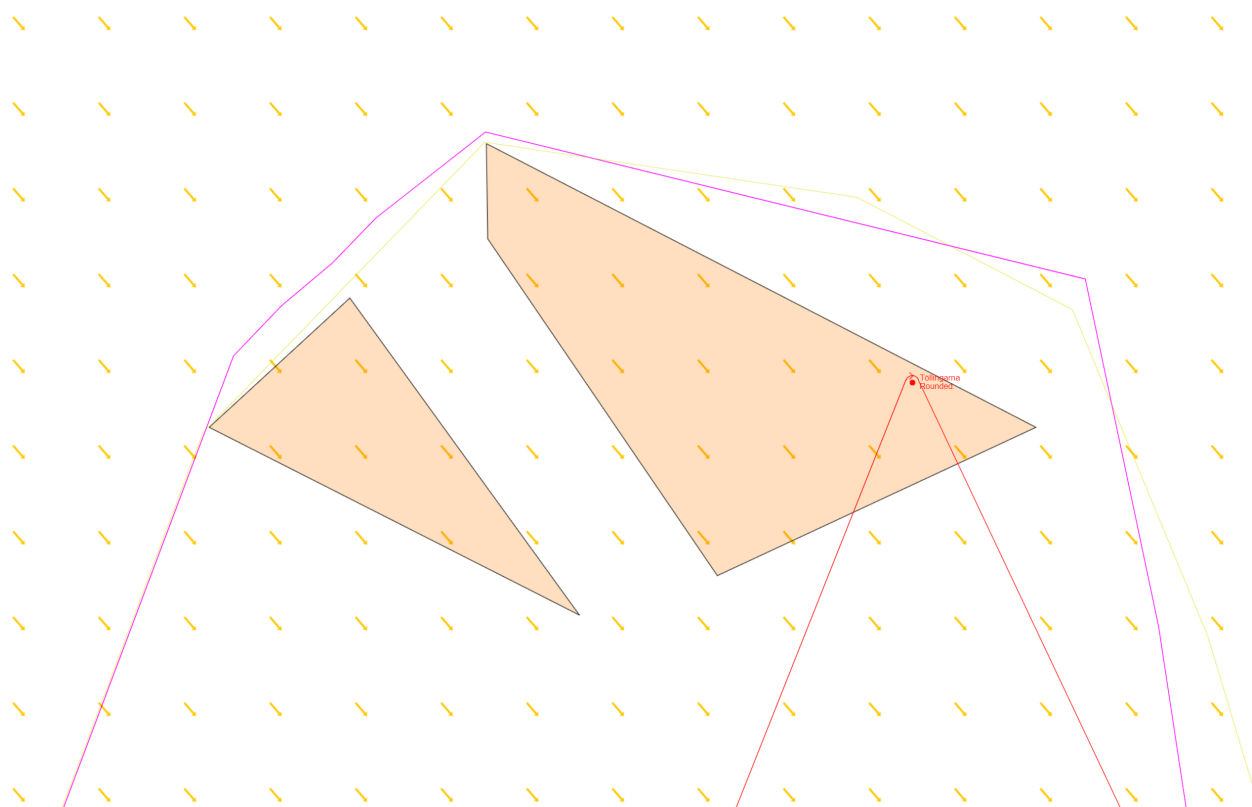
The following days it appeared as if the race had been decided, until the 16:30 forecast on Saturday promised another opportunity in the following night between 02:00UT and 03:00UT. That persisted with the 22:30 forecast, so I decided to try again.

This time the wind was from the North-West blowing with 21 knots on average. This allowed for longer periods of straight line sailing, that gave me the opportunity to short naps.

I am again not happy with my mark rounding at Tönninganar, that is shown in the last figure. After the DC at the first corner fired, I manually altered the course to the second corner. But then a second DC fired, that I had forgotten to delete and put the boat on the previous course. Therefore I had to correct the course again. That left me too little time to correct the timing for the gybe at the third corner. It was intended as a gybe in two steps, but when I submitted the DCs, it was already too late for the one for the first step. So in the end I started the southbound leg with 87% performance instead of the intended 93%.

The faint yellow line is Kipper's track. It looks much better and I marvel at the precision of his roundings.

The 04:30 forecast resulted in more favourable conditions. Because I had started later than some of the major competitors, I think that gave me a slight advantage and allowed me to finish second, 9 seconds behind Sax747 and 10 seconds ahead of Pit8008. That earned me the right to write this report.



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rumskib