

## Bay to Bay #2 Report

The occasional sprint race is a nice change from the more typical transoceanic Sailonline events, and this race, a short 23.4nm slalom through Australia's Great Sandy Strait in Queensland, was one of those. It started amidst the Moonboom Islands and headed northward to the finish near Urangan. This was the second in a series, with the first race (of similar distance but on its own course) having been sailed just the day prior. We sailed these races in zippy Seascope 18s, boats that offer a very generous polar that doesn't penalize sailing very deep downwind angles in any moderate breeze.

And that's exactly what we had – a nice steady southeasterly that didn't vary much in direction or pressure across the course and made most legs a reach. So this race became pretty much a drag race, which put an absolute premium on crisp mark roundings.

By way of pre-race preparation, I (as a seat-of-the-pants kind of guy) used the ruler tool to tick off courses and leg distances to have them available, and I checked the wind across the course in 30-minute intervals to look for any major shifts or gradients, and to predict what my TWA was likely to be on each leg. I had sailed the course for practice the day before when there had been substantially less pressure to the west, but for the main event I saw no such difference. The one big tactical question was how to get around Big Woody Island before the final turn to the finish; take it to starboard or to port? The course looked to be pretty deep downwind either way, but again the polar suggested that sailing deep would be ok. It looked to me that Big Woody to port was a little shorter & more direct, so that would be the way to go. Time would tell.

As we neared the start time, I set a start DC to get me to the first mark, Red Buoy S24. That leg was pretty much as expected – everyone pointed their bows at the mark, heading there on a broad reach, all going the same speed. Would have been fun to watch IRL! My plan was to "hand steer" the mark roundings as we went, but on each leg to set a conservative "just in case" DC for the next leg, with full intent to manually time the turns as best I could. Good plan, right? So halfway up the first leg, with the leaderboard showing me bouncing between 6th and (gasp) 1st, I set a 10-second-late DC for the next leg to Booker Island PB S23 - then promptly got distracted by some email or phone call or other Bright Shiny Object. When next I looked up we had all rounded the mark, me quite generously, and I had dropped about 5 places with the sloppy rounding. Rats!

The next couple legs were nice reaches and again we were all going the same speed, so passing lanes were hard to come by. There were a couple peninsulas sticking out from Fraser Island that we had to sneak past, and I cut them as close as I dared, which helped a bit. Then around Duck Island, and decision time: which way around Big Woody? I was sitting 5th as we passed Duck, and having decided to stick with my plan to take it to port, I was greatly relieved when the vast majority of the other boats did the same. Whew!

Gybing around the last mark of the course, Big Woody PB5, I did a very aggressive turn, clicking for the gybe halfway between server jumps and holding my breath. I

was convinced I'd cut it too short and would have to re-round, but then I saw that wondrous word: "Rounded"! Hooray! So off I went, heading for the south end of the line to maximize boatspeed. At this point, WRmirekd had a lock on 1st (no surprise there), but Rontos, rumskib, CollegeFund, bonknhoot, and I were neck & neck all the way to the finish. Rontos sailed well and secured 2nd, and I was fortunate enough to squeeze out a 3rd, my first ever podium finish.

To be honest, though, I feel like I was more the beneficiary of good luck than great skill and talent. This course was not terribly challenging tactically: no upwind legs to play the lifts and headers, no gybing downwind to maximize VMG, no huge wind shifts or gradients to negotiate. Just point the boat toward the next mark and go. Where places were gained and lost was in the mark roundings, the crisper the better. I was fortunate to get friendly server hops that put me in a great position to make a tight turn, in particular at PB5 as noted earlier, and that made all the difference.

Congratulations to Mirek for sailing yet another superb race, to Rontos for a strong second place finish, to rumskib, CollegeFund, and bonk for keeping it exciting all the way to the finish line, and to all the great SOL competitors. See you in the next race!

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