

Palermo – Monte Carlo 2021 – Report by Zorba777

Medium duration races in unpredictable winds are the kind of SOL races that seem to suit me best. A Palermo to Monte Carlo race ticks off all the boxes, so was high on my agenda for Q3.

How the weather gods smiled on me to win this race can be seen in the screenshots further on, but first I want to show some funny numbers for the curiosity department.

When I took a boat name as I joined SOL a year ago, I thought that a bit of extra luck would never hurt, so I added three lucky 7s to get Zorba777.

It just so happened that this race was my 7th win in 77 finished races according to the stats page. Maybe it also helped that we were sailing through 7th July (07-07).

Results summary for Zorba777

Wins

first 1st in 2020-10-11
latest 1st in 2021-07-08

Podiums

first 2nd in 2020-07-14
latest 1st in 2021-07-08

Top tens

first 2nd in 2020-07-14
latest 1st in 2021-07-08

First race

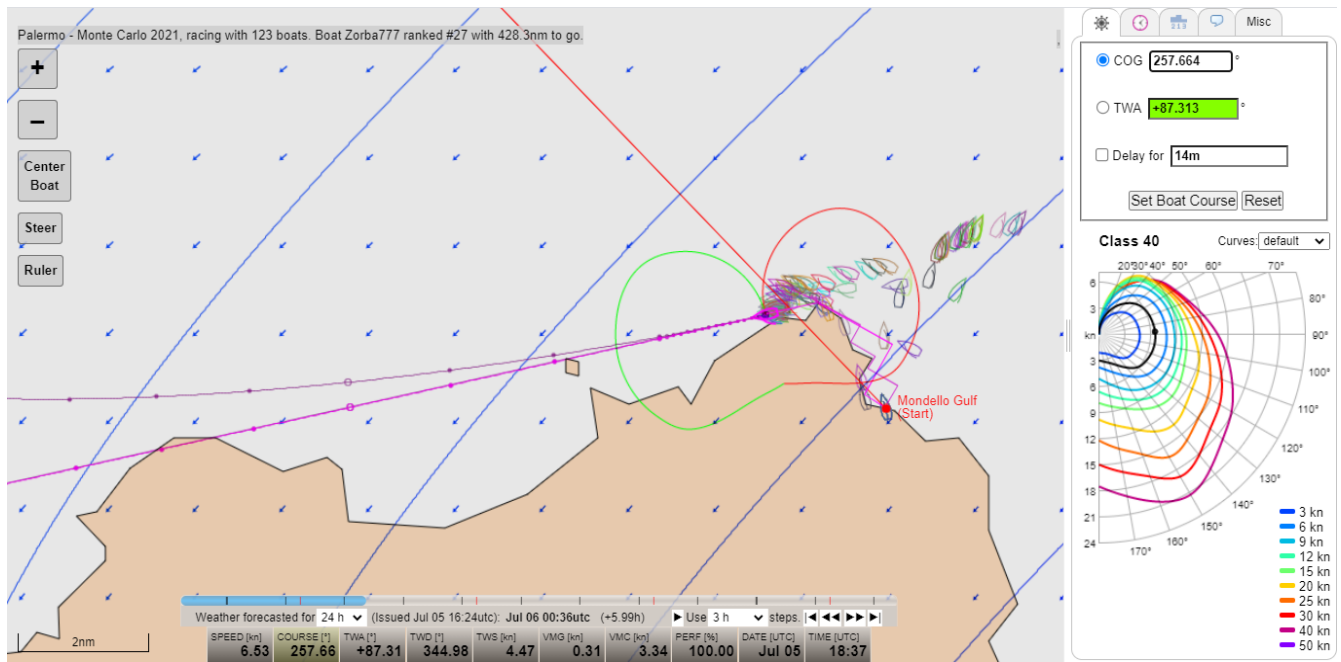
92nd in 2020-06-14

Total of 132347.8 miles raced in 83 races with 77 finishes.

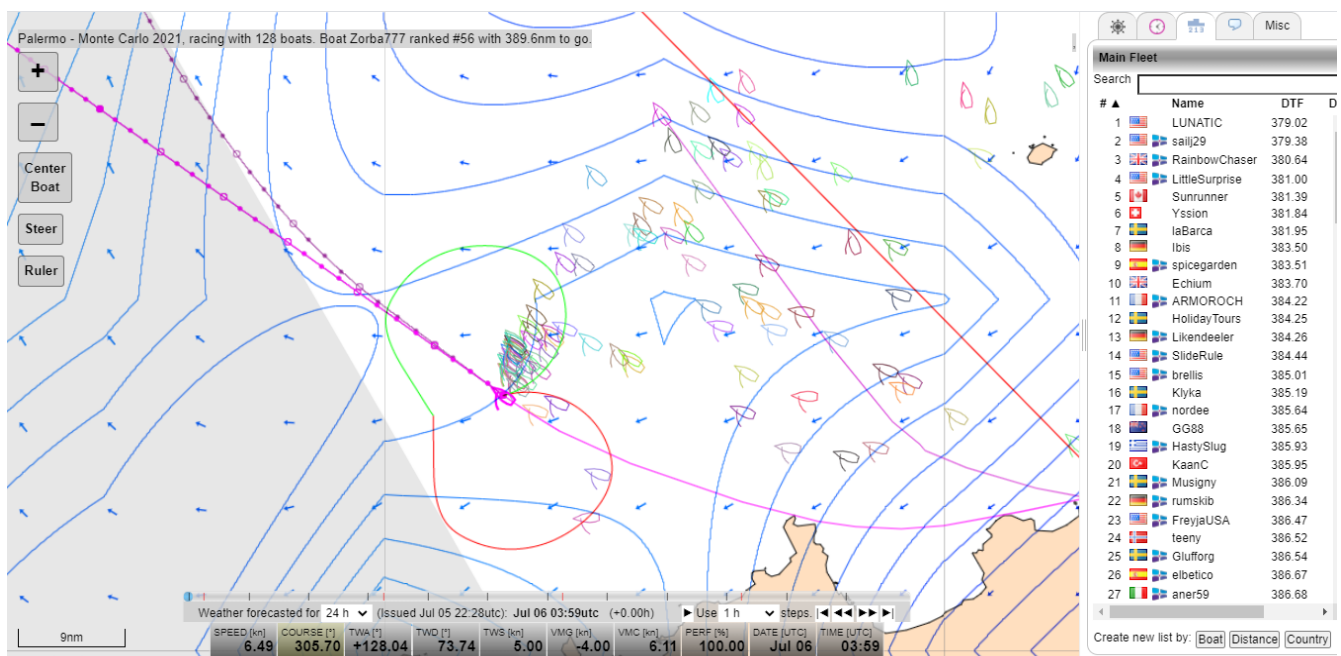
And if you want more sevens, my first podium seems to have been on a 07-14 (or: 7+7th of 7th month July). Moral of the story: always choose your numbers wisely LOL. And before you ask: no, I can't give any advice for lotteries ;-)

The race as it happened:

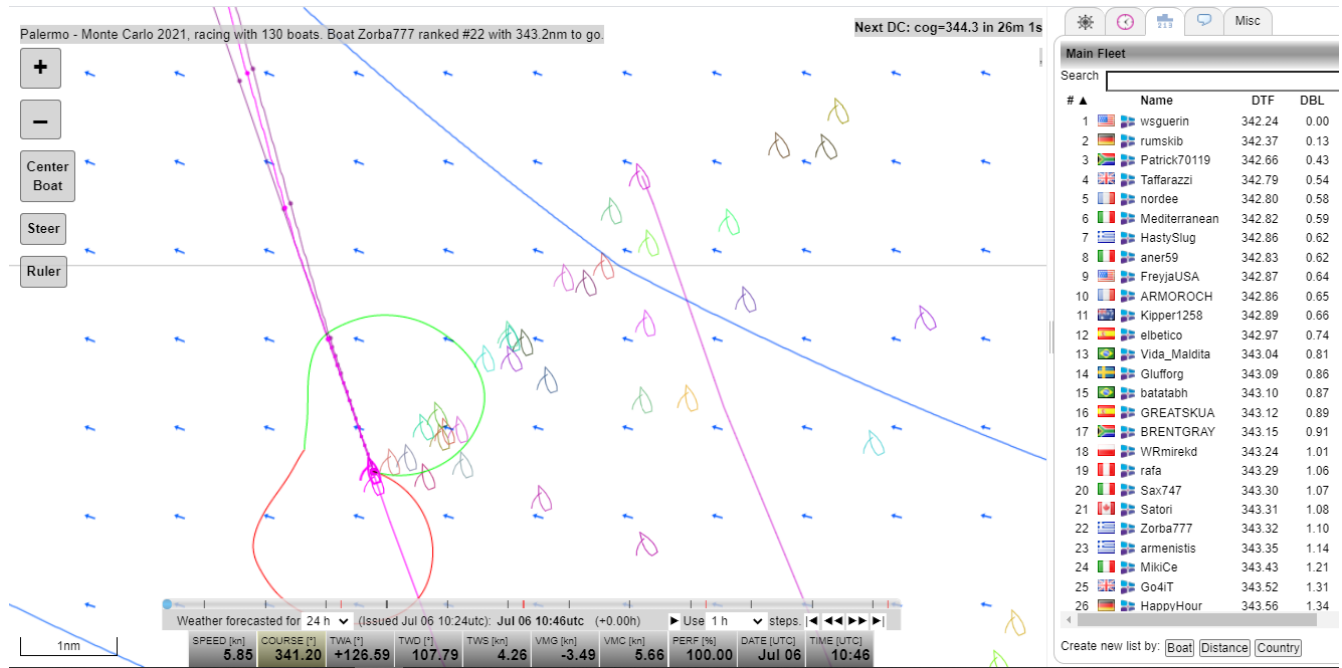
1 – The start was in very light winds and the first job at hand was to stay away from blue goo. So I sailed as close as possible to the shore of Sicily, while heading West, where the winds were a bit stronger:



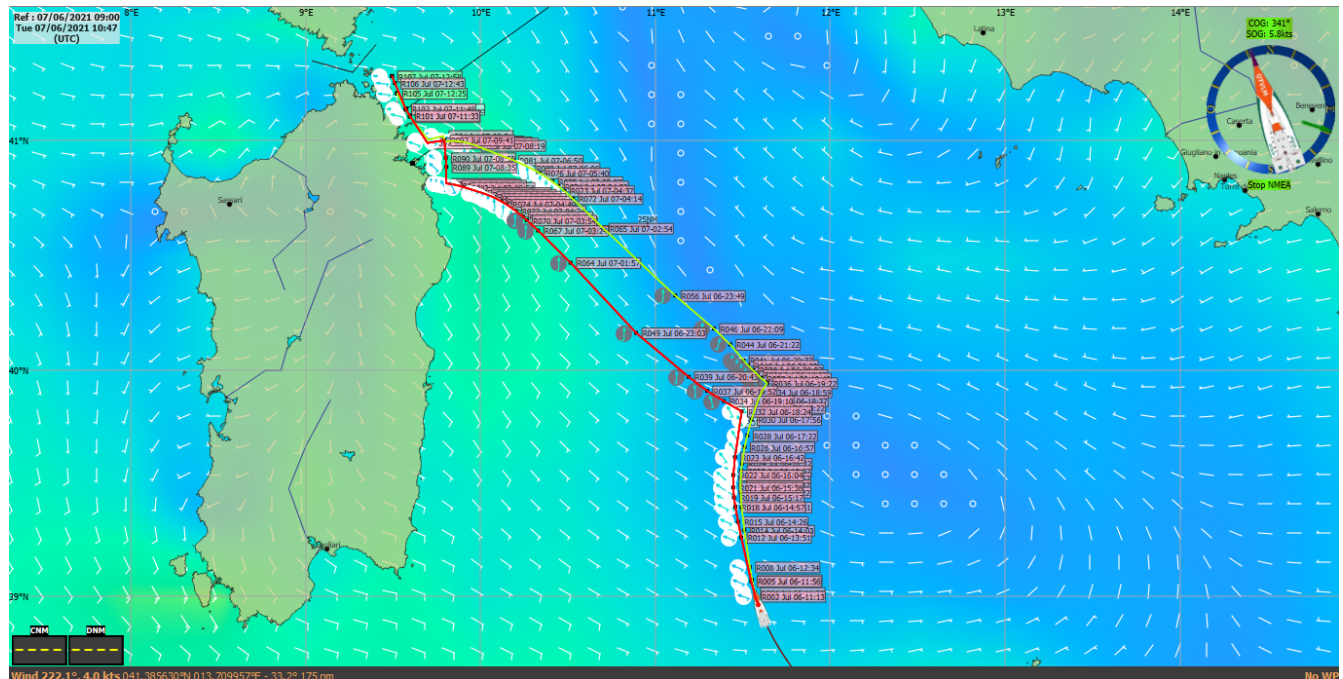
2 – As we left Sicily behind I went a little bit further West than the router indicated. Just taking a small chance that could pay off if the high pressure zone moved a bit slower than predicted:



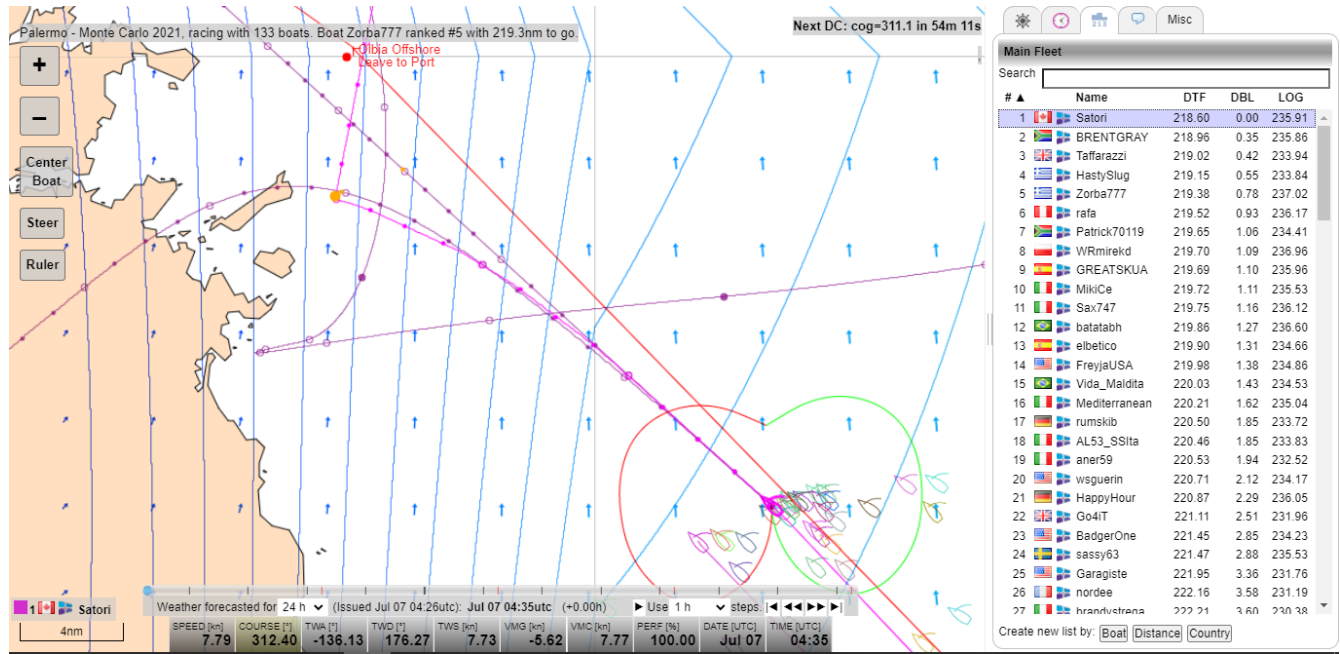
3 – That plan panned out nicely and soon allowed me to sail in a bit more pressure as the boats turned North towards the first waypoints:



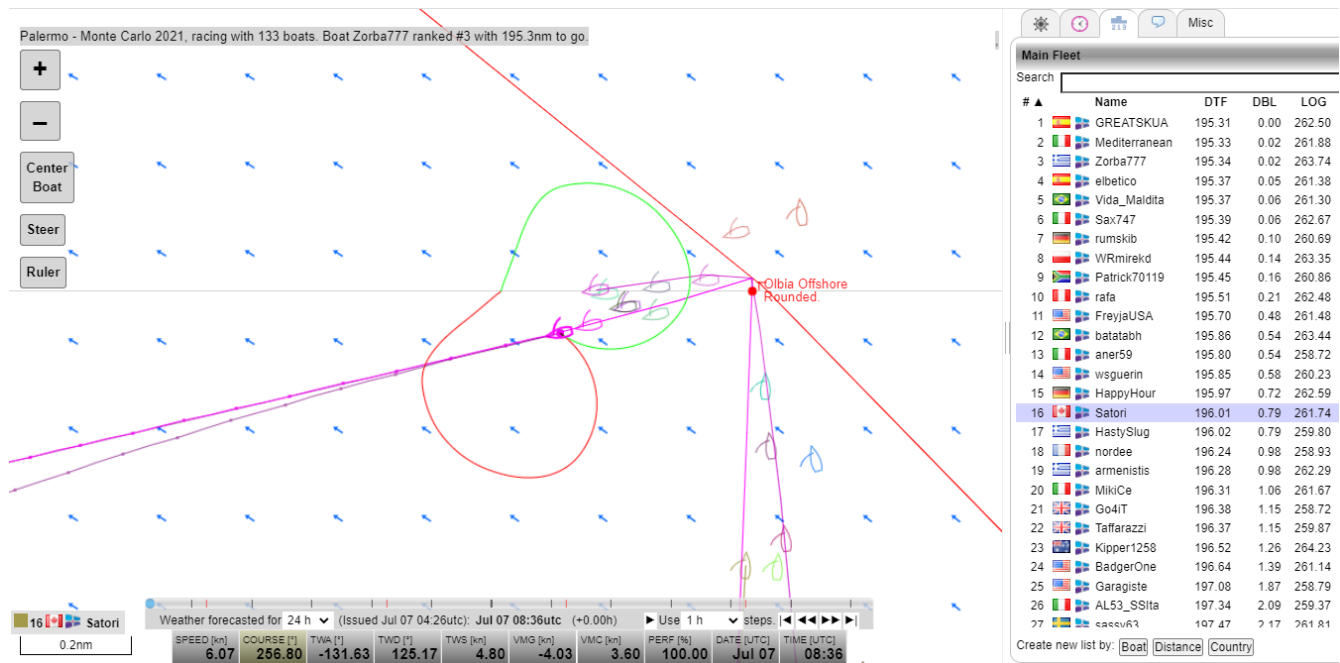
4 – On the next WX update I negated the fastest routing (green) and opted to stay on the Western side with a bit more pressure (red):



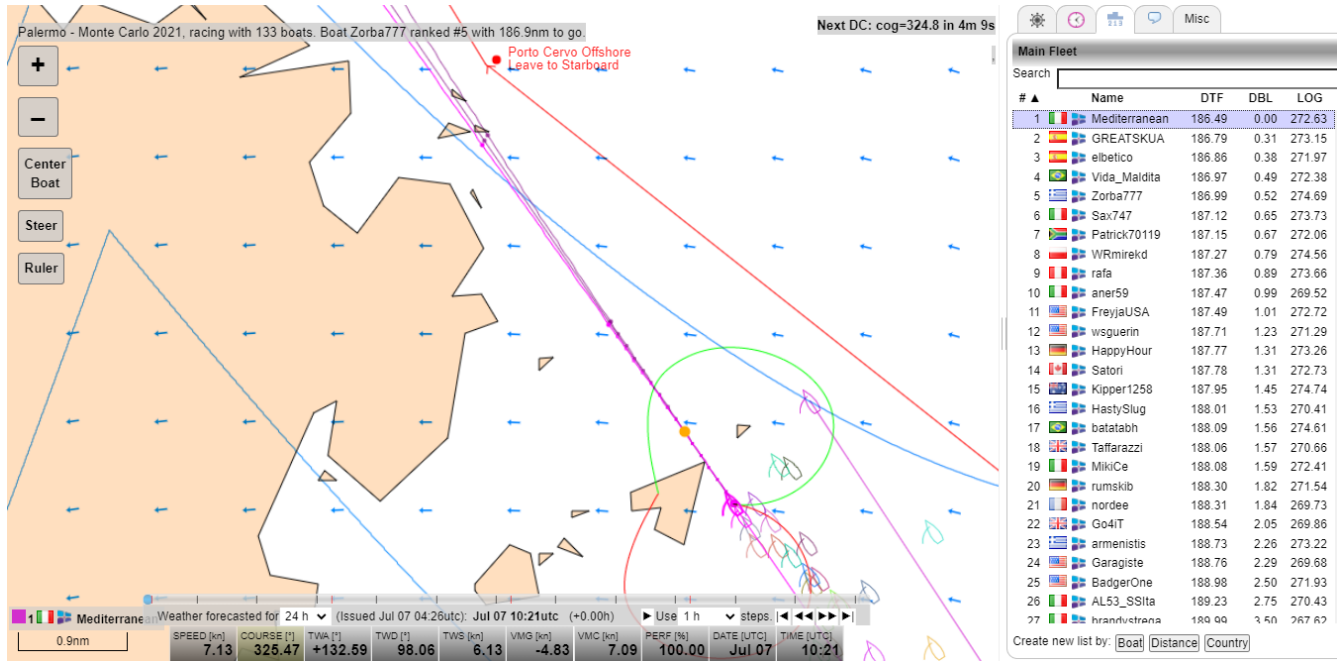
5 – Kept a good position going towards the first waypoint at Olbia. But who would get to that turn first?



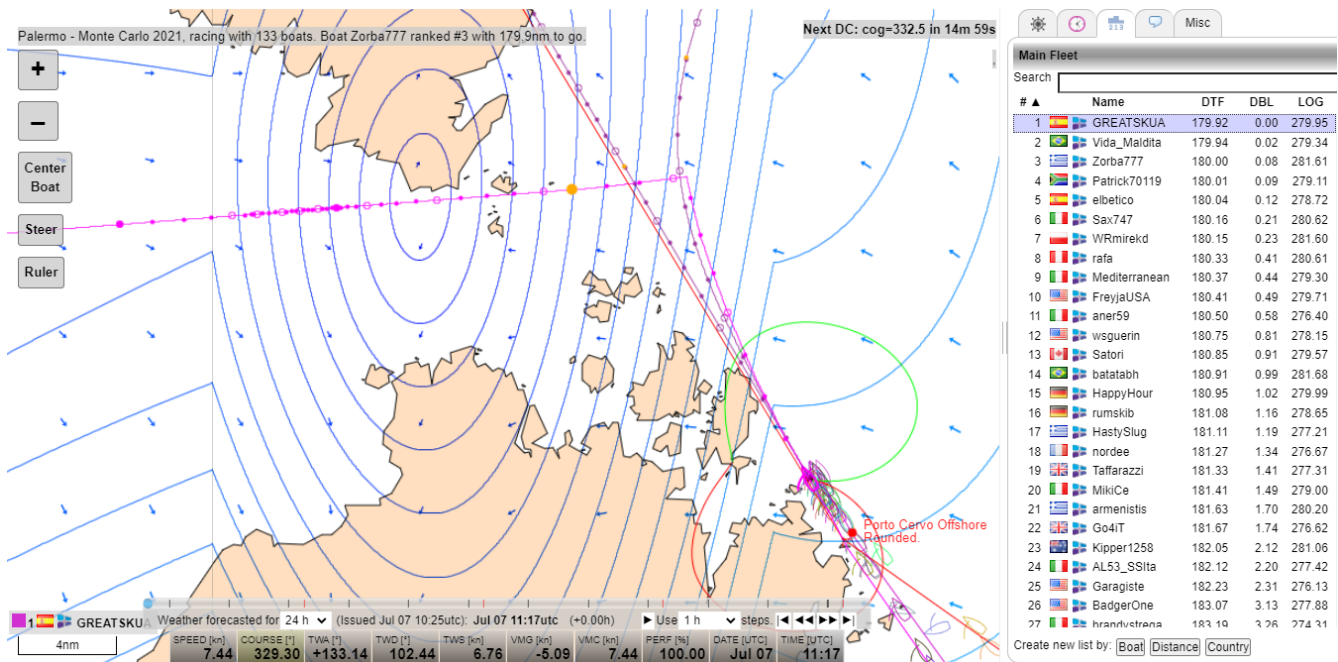
6 – GREATSKUA was first at the buoy, closely followed by Mediterranean and Zorba777. Only 0.2NM separated the first ten boats, with nearly 200NM to go:



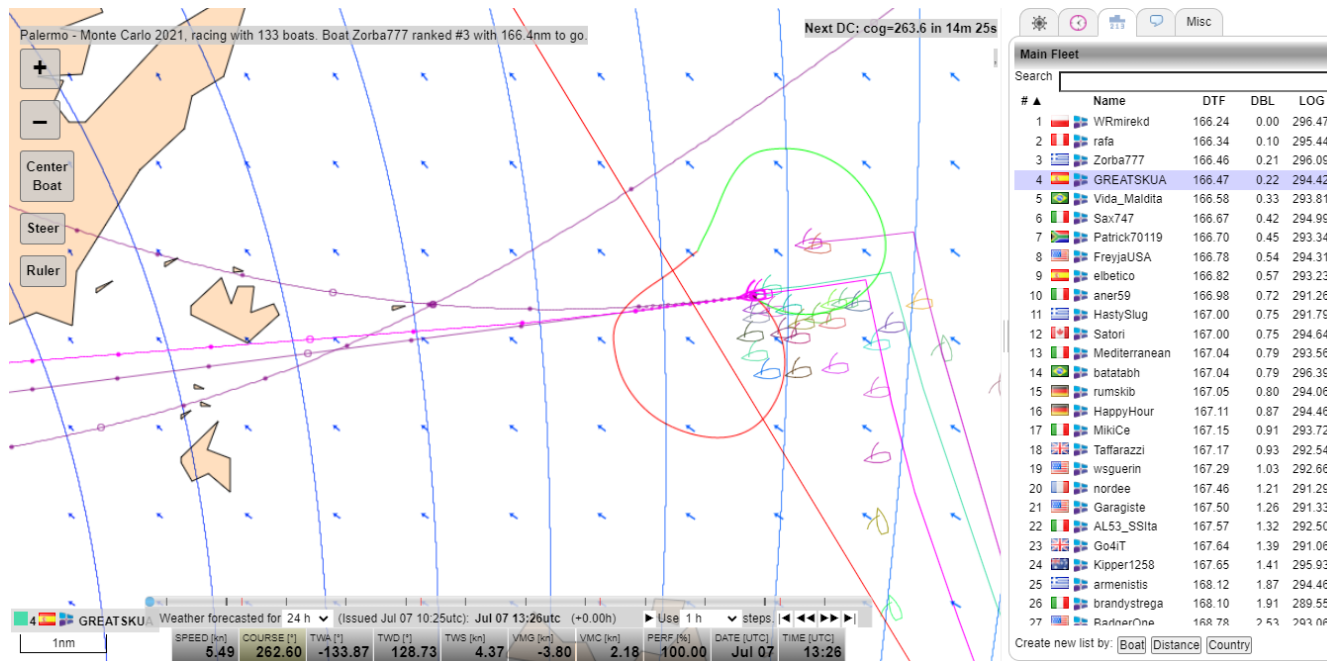
7 – The second waypoint (Porto Servo) was to follow shortly after the first. The two boats before me seemed to route towards that waypoint, which gave me the chance to sail towards stronger winds first and worry about that waypoint later. This screen was just before a WX update, but I had committed already to pass upcoming Corsica on the West side. Committing early can sometimes give a small advantage, and that turned out to be the case here:



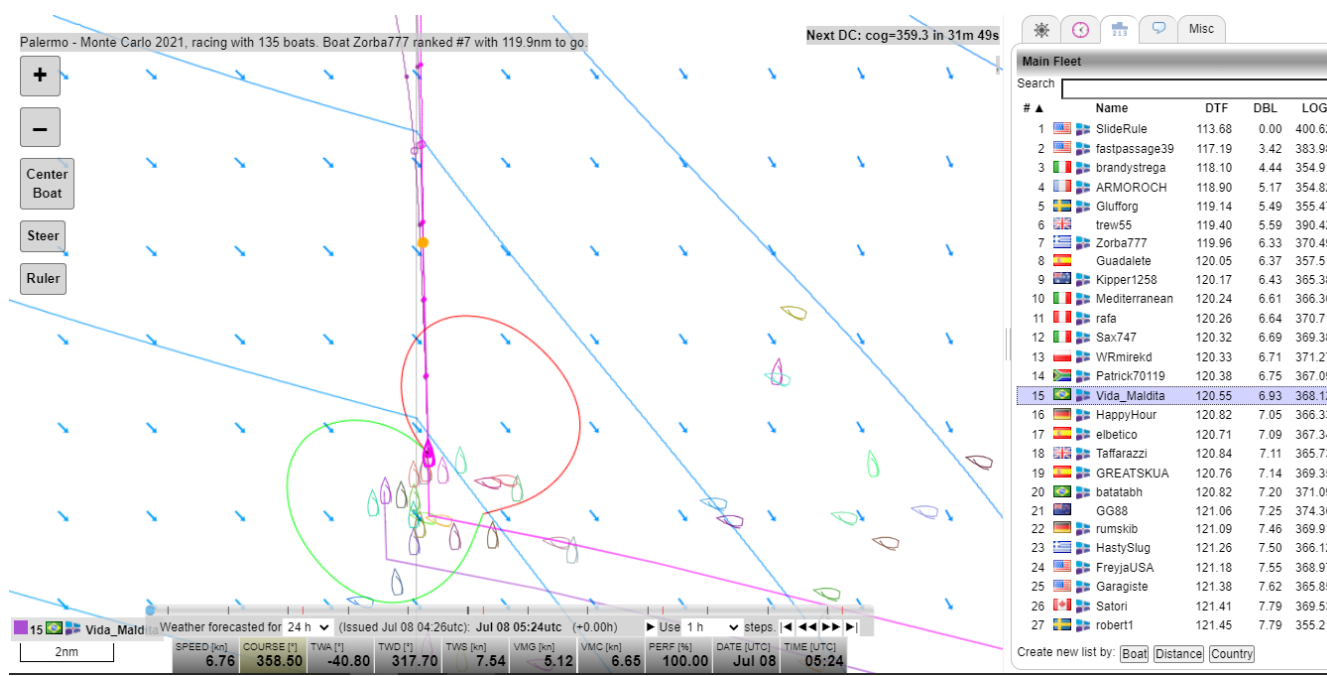
8 – Waypoint rounded and completely on the West side of the fleet. Aiming for the “eye” of the upcoming no-wind zone, while taking every chance to scrape the hull on Sardinian rock:



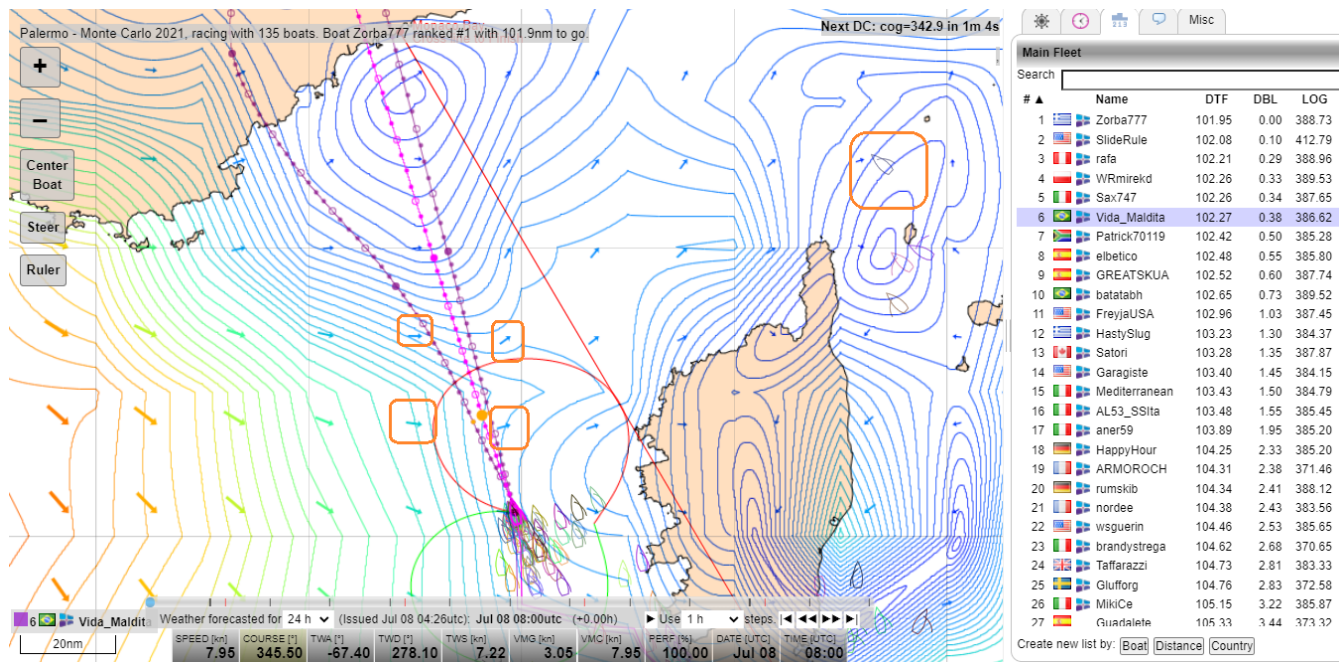
9 – Gybe for Bonifacio Strait. The distances between boats stayed very small and were set to become smaller as we sailed towards <1 kts winds:



10 – Zorba777 came through Bonifacio with a minimal advantage. GREATSKUA and Vida_Maldita held strong positions too. The WX showed the race would end in >20kts winds coming in from the West. The first idea was naturally to get into those fast winds first and win the race. But I figured everyone would do that. I decided to invest a bit more in turning North first, those faster winds would come anyway. Last tack:



11 – It put me on the side with less pressure, but also the side with better angle. So a 0.3 NM advantage was enough and I just sailed optimal route towards the finish line. The brave boats that had taken the East side of Corsica didn't get the weather change they needed and saw their chances evaporate.



Vida_Maldita held on for second place, just before WRmirekd, GREATSKUA and Rafa. Congrats to all finishers. Thanks for a fun race and see you next time.

Zorba777