

## SSANZ TRIPLE SERIES 2021

This race was a tactical course that wound its way around the islands in New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf, just east of Auckland. Lots of mark roundings, islands to avoid, and a strong steady breeze from the west made this a fun and interesting race, with little room for error.

The first leg from the start to the northwest corner of Waiheke Island was pretty much dead downwind, but these boats (Young 88) were able to sail pretty deep angles for optimum VMG, so I set off at about 165 TWD on starboard jibe. After two quick jibes to get around the point, I was stunned to see SOL placing me in 1st - a most unusual experience for me! I didn't figure it would last long, since Bonkhoot and Sassy63 were among those nipping at my heels - how long could it last? Austere company indeed!

The next leg took us further east along the north shore of Waiheke, pretty much a long starboard jibe run. I sailed the rhumbline, but a few boats tried sailing hotter or lower, to no real advantage as far as I could see. As I approached the NE corner of Waiheke, the wind clocked aft a bit, so I wound up sailing a deeper angle than I would have preferred for the last few minutes. It was a coin toss whether to do two more jibes for a better angle or just suck it up. I opted for the latter, since (a) I was only 2-3 degrees lower than I wanted, (b) the speed hit wasn't huge, and (c) I didn't have far to go. Seemed like most folks made the same call. It worked out ok - I was still showing in 1st as I rounded. Amazing.

The next leg SE to round Tarahike Island to port was a nice beam-y reach. I managed to stay in front somehow, rounded cleanly, and then was off on a nice broad reach east towards Cow and Calf. Sandwich time!

Taking Cow and Calf to port, we headed waaaaaay up north to Motupotaka. Another reaching leg. The relative placings on SOL bounced around a bit as we headed up the course, but I figured that was more due to some of the boats that sailed hotter and poked out to the west a bit being judged "closer" by SOL's placement algorithm. As we approached Motupotaka, everyone fell pretty much back into the same line, and miracle of miracles I was still showing in 1st!

And then I screwed up.

I had been setting conservative DCs for each turn point "just in case", but then steering each turn manually to optimize my roundings. This had worked well so far. Alas, approaching Motupotaka I got distracted by some other shiny object - I don't recall what, could have been dinner, refreshing my adult beverage, checking an email, responding to a kind request from Mrs sailj29, phone call, who knows - and I totally zoned out on doing a seamanlike rounding of Motupotaka. As a result, I went about 30 seconds further past Motupotaka than I needed to. This really hurt, since we were all close and the next leg was upwind. I lost 4-5 boats in that rounding, including Bonk and Sassy. Ouch. No more Mr Nice Guy! Time to hunker down and race.

As noted, the next leg to Gannet Rock was upwind, our only windward work of the day. And it was an interesting scenario: The wind was a bit stronger to the north, which favored going right, but there was a slight (2-3 degrees) left shift as we went south, which favored going left. So what to do - go for the pressure or play the shift? After looking at the polar I realized these boats wouldn't go any faster upwind in the stronger breeze, so going left seemed to be the thing to do...but I was still in the top 10, and banging the corners hard is often a recipe for disaster. So I opted to protect my position by sailing pretty much down the middle of the course, biased to the left side. That seemed to work out pretty well - I had climbed back into 3rd behind Bonk and Sassy as we rounded Gannet.

No surprises on the final two legs - another reach northwest up to Shearers Rock, clean rounding, then a close reach south around the west side of Rangitoto and thence south to the finish. bonk took 1st, Sassy 2nd, and I managed to hold onto 3rd. Whew!

Who knows what might have happened had I done a better rounding at Motupotaka? But to be honest, I am truly honored to be sharing a podium with bonk and Sassy, who are consistent top finishers (I most assuredly am not). In any event, this was another supremely enjoyable race courtesy of the SOL admins and race committee, and all the competitors who put their virtual boats on the line. My deepest appreciation to all the SOLers for making it possible!

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