

It's been quite a while since I last submitted a race report concerning a sprint – April 2019 in fact, when I wrote about a race around Seoul's Incheon Airport, in fact even through or across the main runway if you so wished. It's been a deliberate policy and my reasoning, as those of you who read my ocean race reports may have gleaned, is my double agenda: mirth (I try) and self-improvement (I try).

There are quite a few things that can go wrong in a sprint certainly, but far more that can go wrong in an ocean race and that you can therefore learn from. Even if you win an ocean race, there are plenty of errors to reflect on, whereas to win a sprint, you have to sail almost faultlessly. And of course, it is 'wins' and 'podiums' that inspire the OPS officer-of-the-day to mail you a congratulatory word or two complete with report request, which I have so far in 2020 managed to swerve, as far as sprints go.

But RainbowChaser, who has as ever done such an astounding job coordinating our cooperation with the Short-Handed Sailing Association of New Zealand's for their annual triple race series on Auckland's Hauraki Gulf, asks so nicely, one has no choice but to climb behind the keyboard. So...

I skipped the first two episodes of the SSANZ series – one can only race so much online and those Antipodean starting times were quite the challenge. However, this third race of the series being a counter towards the annual Sprint Series, and given my ambition this COVID-crazy year to finally try to win the series overall by inter alia, but importantly, racing all the races, I had to give it a go.

I do quite a bit of prep work for a sprint, probably more than most, and do use the router to help me to interpret what the wind is promising us. Routing sprints with QtVIm is a very different matter to routing ocean races (or tall ship races!), the goal being an exact solution rather than an approximate forecast-uncertain fleet-strategic solution. I route sprints as follows...

I set the crank duration at the minimum 1 minute (Configuration/Boat and Instruments/Crank duration = 1 min) and I set isochrones (both <24hr and >24hr) at the minimum 5 minutes (Routings/Create a routing/Options/Isochrones= 5 min). What this does is generate a routing in 5 minute intervals, which after simplification, then optimizes in 1 minute intervals.

I also switch avoid coasts off, and avoid barriers on and put in some barriers to create a 'simplified' coastline. What this does is minimize the number of POIs that QtVIm makes 'unsimplifiable' because they are too close (< 5 mins) to a coast (switched off) or a barrier (only a few).

If the course has some very sharp corners in it, I either make separate routings from very sharp corner to very sharp corner or I create a gpx file, define this as pathway and use that pathway when routing.

Once the routing has been created, converted, simplified and optimized, I make POIs visible and play around by adding extra ones, optimizing again, and treble-checking and adjusting so that I am not crossing any coasts.

Finally, I export a csv of the route in 2 minute intervals (Routes/Edit route/RoutingXYZ/Route logbook/Interval = 2 min), which I then convert into a DC series using a homemade spreadsheet, which I then check and adjust further using AGL.

It sounds like a lot of work, but in practice it is all quite quickly done, most of the settings are pre-existing in the router, most of the rest of it is routine, and the only cleverness involved is seeding the odd additional POI and adjusting the DCs slightly when viewing them in AGL. Anyway...

For this sprint around Waiheke and Tarahiki and home, it was clear that, apart from close cornering (which I am not a genius at), there were going to be three opportunities to gain a few seconds on my competitors:

1. Holding slightly north of Browns Island for more pressure to curve down relatively late to the south eastern corner of Waiheke, using TWA DCs to partially follow a heading breeze.
2. A short beat from Tarahiki to the north eastern corner of Waiheke, where it was going to be important to adjudge the tack point just right, so that you might romp in with sheets eased to the turn west, but not too eased and not too soon.
3. A race for the line on a broad to beam reach, where the wrong or right end of the line was going to be critical, with the north western end being favored, but perhaps not the very pin (which was good news, since I was definitely going to be fast asleep by the time bonknhoot would get there).

1. worked well, and at some stage I wiped out most of my DCS and sailed the rest of the leg 'by hand' As always, I turned the various corners by DC, checking and double-checking them with AGL. This is safe, but not as 'fast' as sitting behind your monitor, timing your keyboard 'Enter' entries trying to hop across a cape or two, rather than round them properly, for that extra half-second advantage.

A new WX before the short beat north (2.) required a regeneration of DCs, but didn't change the overall solution, and having uploaded and made the tack for the corner, I went to bed. With three discards, and only one (relative, P16) disaster, I can afford to take some risk. But...

I got round and didn't miss the line, and P2 was more than I could have hoped for, but calmxy (Kama-kamzee) came in right behind me, and remains a threat for the overall, and undoubtedly is taking notes.

I've let slip I have a fondness for spreadsheets before. There's history – back in 1983, I used to tutor 2nd year Business students at University College Cork when I was a mature MBA student there myself; very floppy disks, 1 drive, load O/S, remove O/S disk, insert SuperCalc disk and load and go. So, it's always nice to discover yet another 'front end' formula that makes life easier. It's probably been around for years, but recently I came across LARGE (Array, K), where Array is any selection of cells with numeric values, and K refers to the Kth largest you wish to find. Dead handy...

	Race	Date	bonk	calmxy	sassy	rafa
1	<a href="#">Formentera Sprint 2020</a>	11/01/2020	1	9	12	76
2	<a href="#">Martinique Sprint 2020</a>	25/01/2020	5	1	3	14
3	<a href="#">Mayotte Sprint 2020</a>	08/02/2020	1	6	3	2
4	<a href="#">Toulon RTI Sprint 2020</a>	21/03/2020	16	2	7	9
5	<a href="#">Oahu East Coast RTI Sprint</a>	04/04/2020	2	6	23	29
6	<a href="#">Bay2Bay 2020 - Leg 2</a>	03/05/2020	3	2	5	18
7	<a href="#">Quiberon Islands Sprint 2020</a>	16/05/2020	3	7	9	18
8	<a href="#">Estonian Islands Sprint 2020</a>	06/06/2020	2	8	6	7
9	<a href="#">Block Island Sound 2020</a>	25/07/2020	2	16	8	24
10	<a href="#">SSANZ Lewmar 50 PIC</a>	28/08/2020	2	3	11	6
dsc			<b>37</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>203</b>
1			16	16	23	76
2			5	9	12	29
3			3	8	11	24
			<b>13</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>74</b>