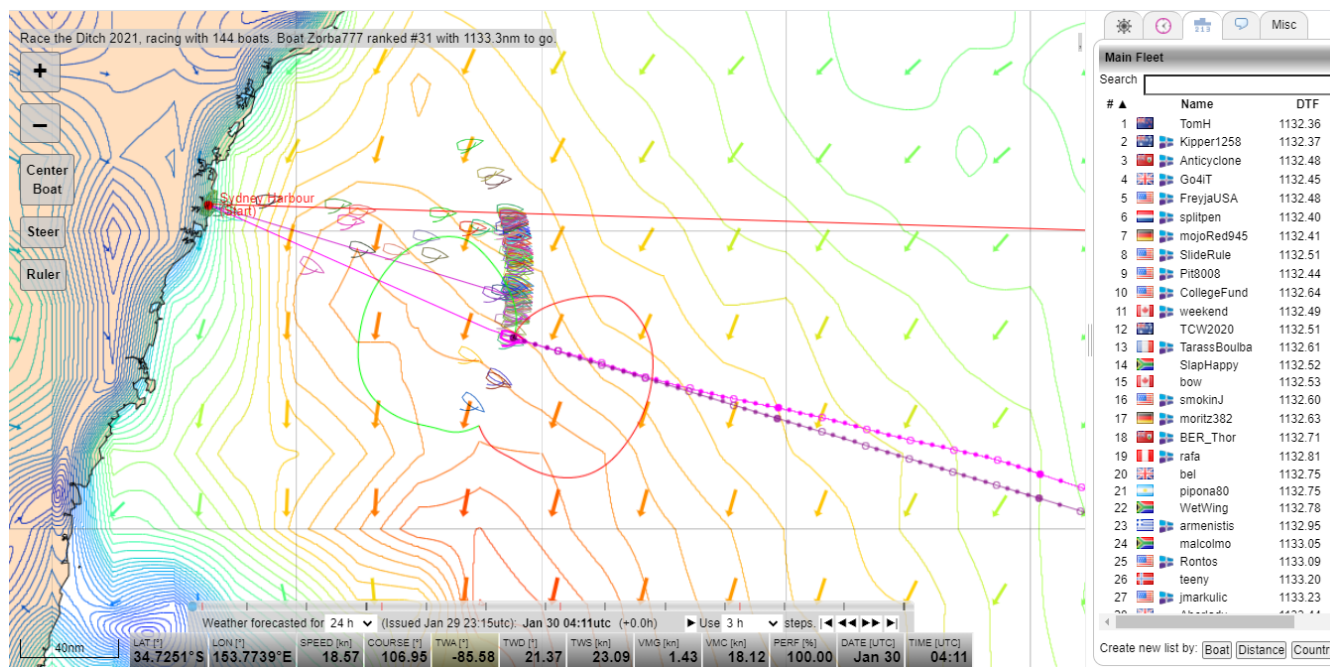


Race The Ditch 2021 – Report by Zorba777

A five to six day race (more or less my favourite duration) from Sydney to Auckland in the luxury yacht Falkun. The thought of sailing in warmer waters while we enjoy winter in Europe. What more one can ask for those days?

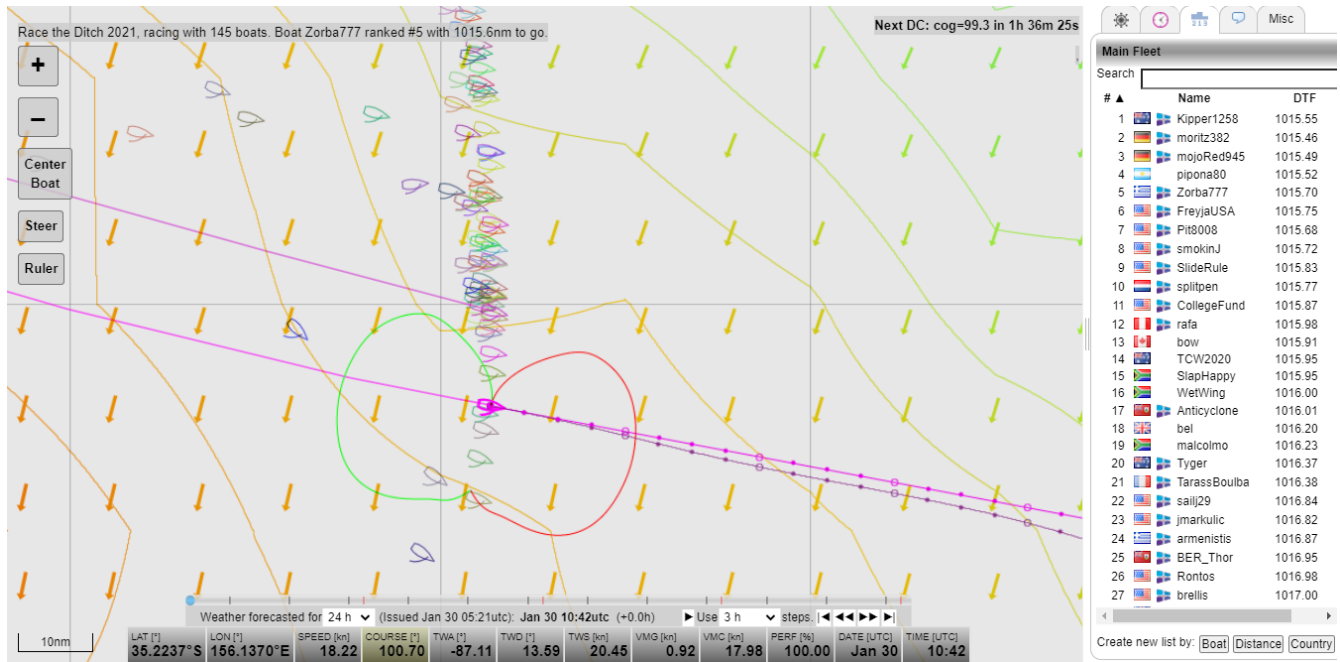
I made some screens, as I usually do to review where I went wrong (or right). So here goes.

1 – An easy start, heading straight for strong 23 kts winds. I just set a fixed course and went to sleep. Woke up with this view:

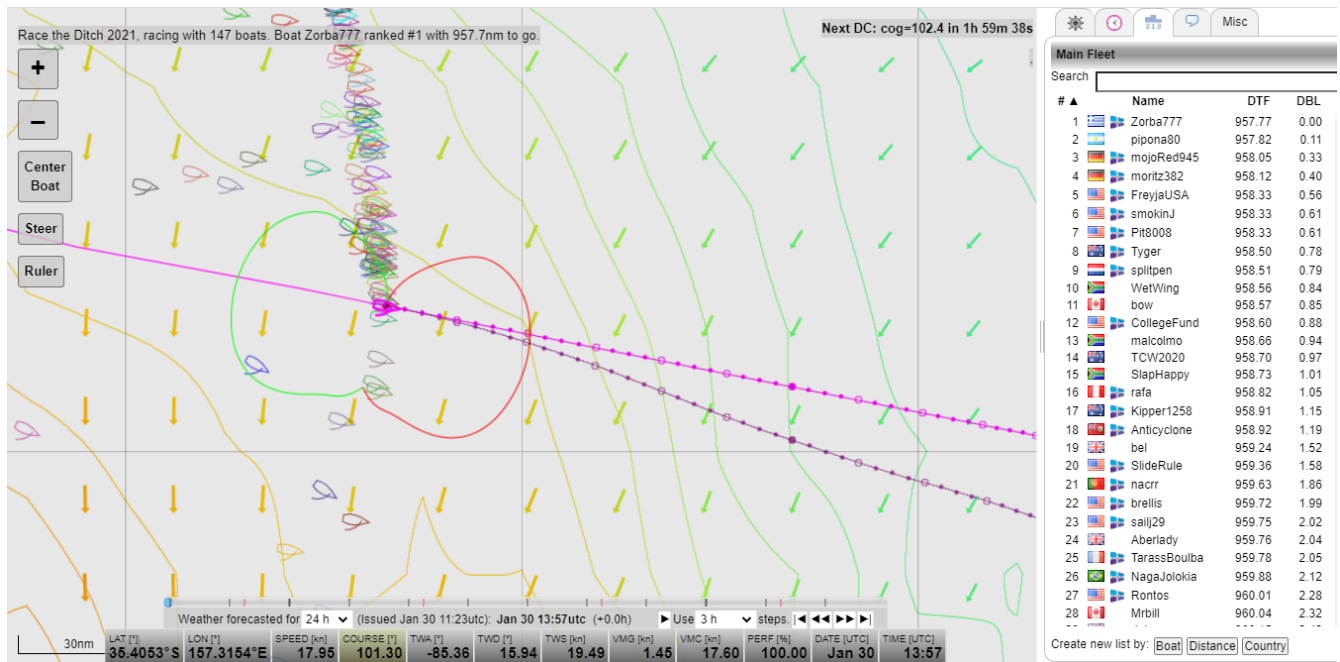


Looked like I had gone more South than most. I even checked if I hadn't routed with the wrong polar (has happened before), but all was well. So, just used that pressure while I had it.

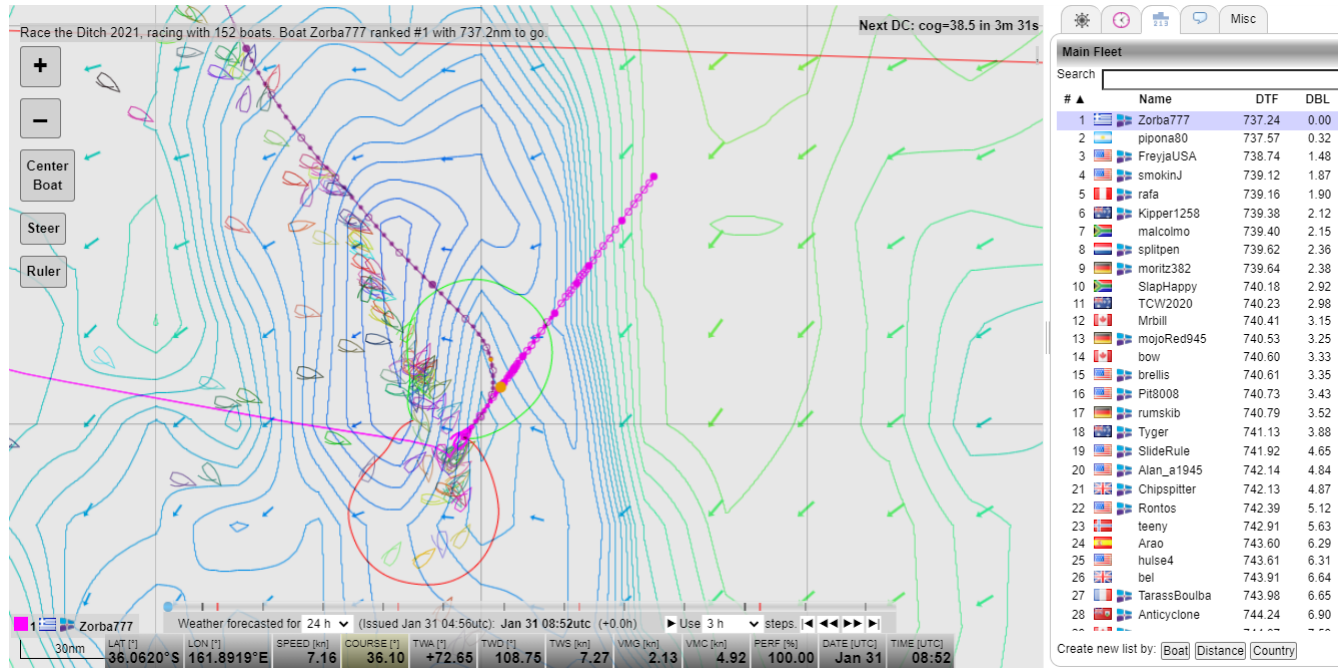
2 – Six hours later all boats lined up in a nice vertical row, and I was up into 5th place.



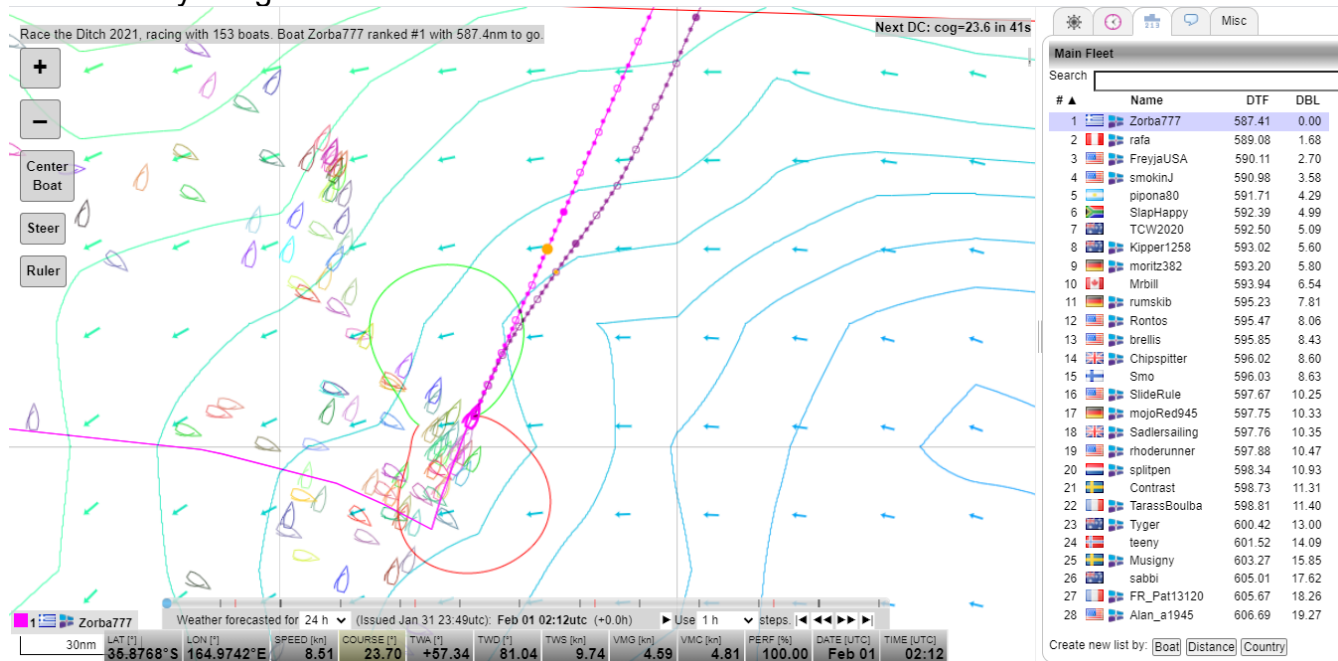
And a bit later the Southern path took the lead, as expected. About 1000NM to go at that point. An early lead is jokingly said to bring bad luck. I prefer to think it's a luxury problem to have...



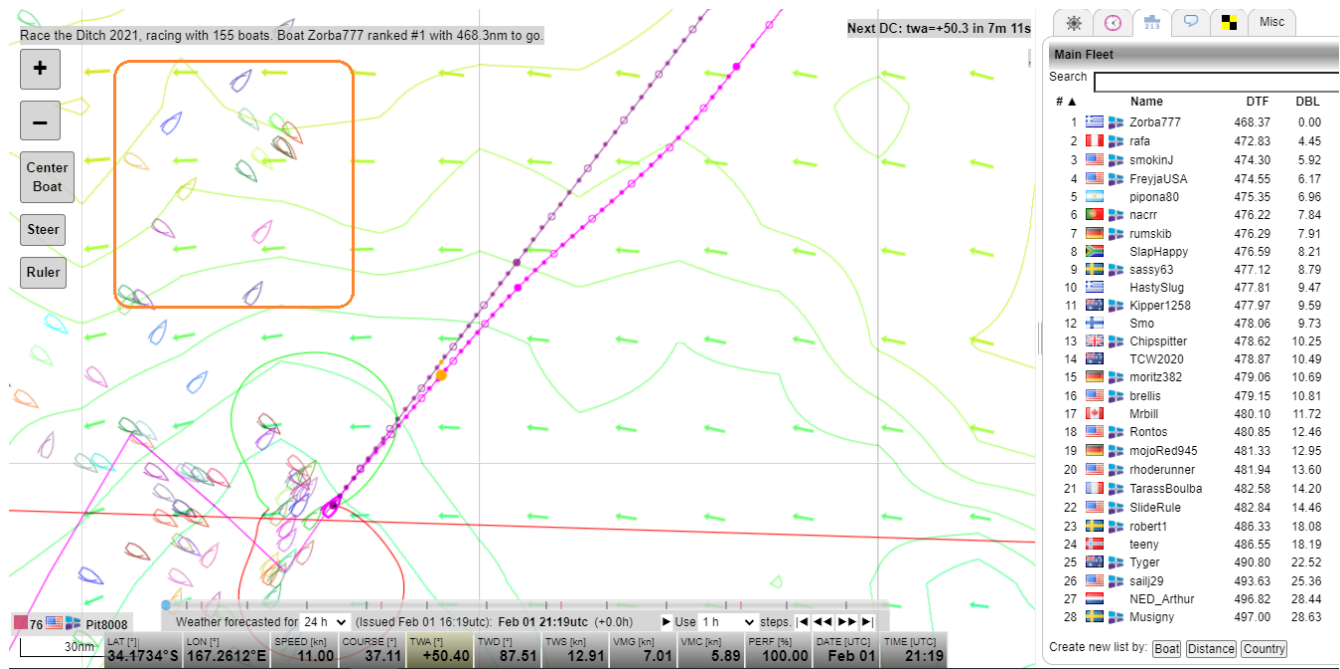
3 – On the next day we were headed for the first major speed bump and my first tack in this race. I found exactly the little pocket of wind I had hoped for, with the more Northern boats losing time in much slower winds. This proved crucial as it allowed me to pull away by getting back into stronger winds first. Pipona stayed close (he did an amazing race, being the first time he used qt router). FreyjaUSA was in 3rd position at that point



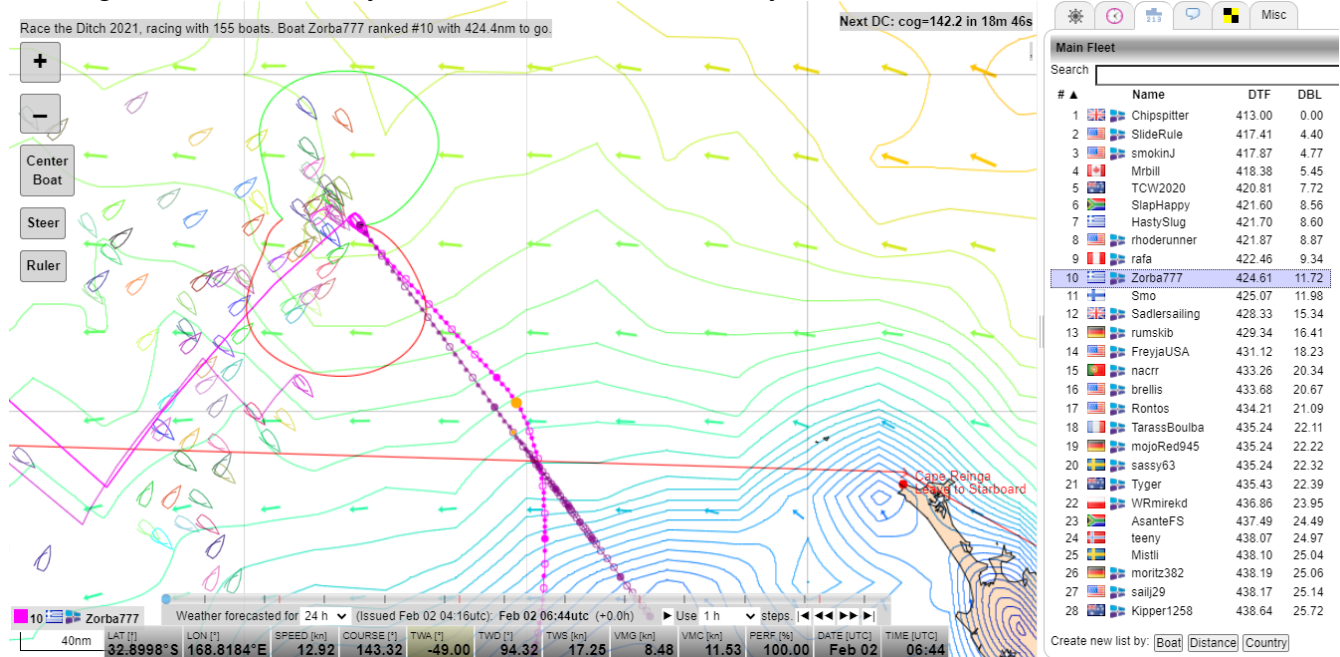
4 – A day and two tacks later we had two groups. I was still leading in the Southern group, with Rafa giving me work to do. But many of the usual suspects were in the more Northern group that tried to take their chance by going to the stronger winds in the North first. That path had appeared on one of my previous routings, but I had negated it. So I knew they could become very dangerous:



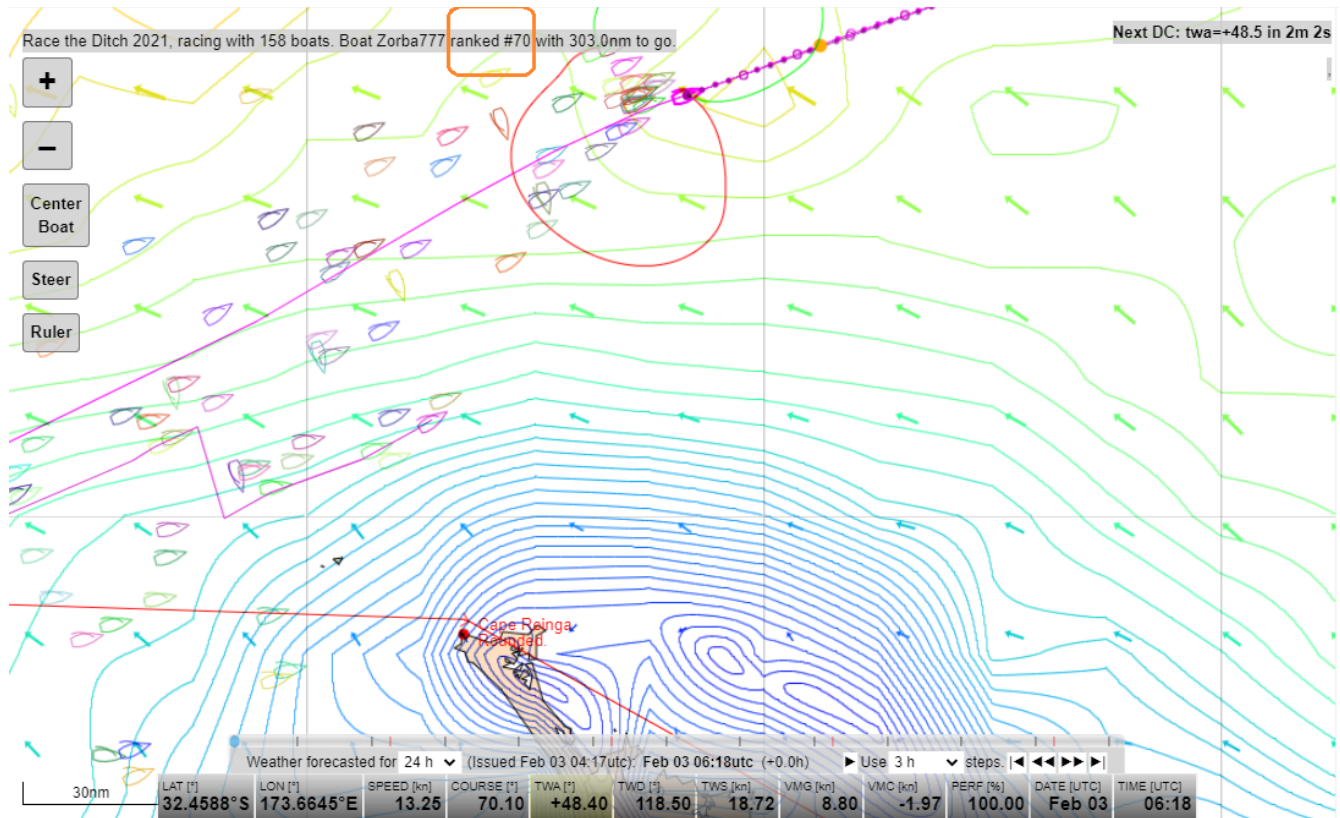
5 – I couldn't complain about the WX updates and my lead on the other boats in the group increased to about 5 NM. Nacrr was the first boat from the Northern group to rejoin the main group, and here the other Northerners started coming down as well, but probably not at the angle they had envisioned:



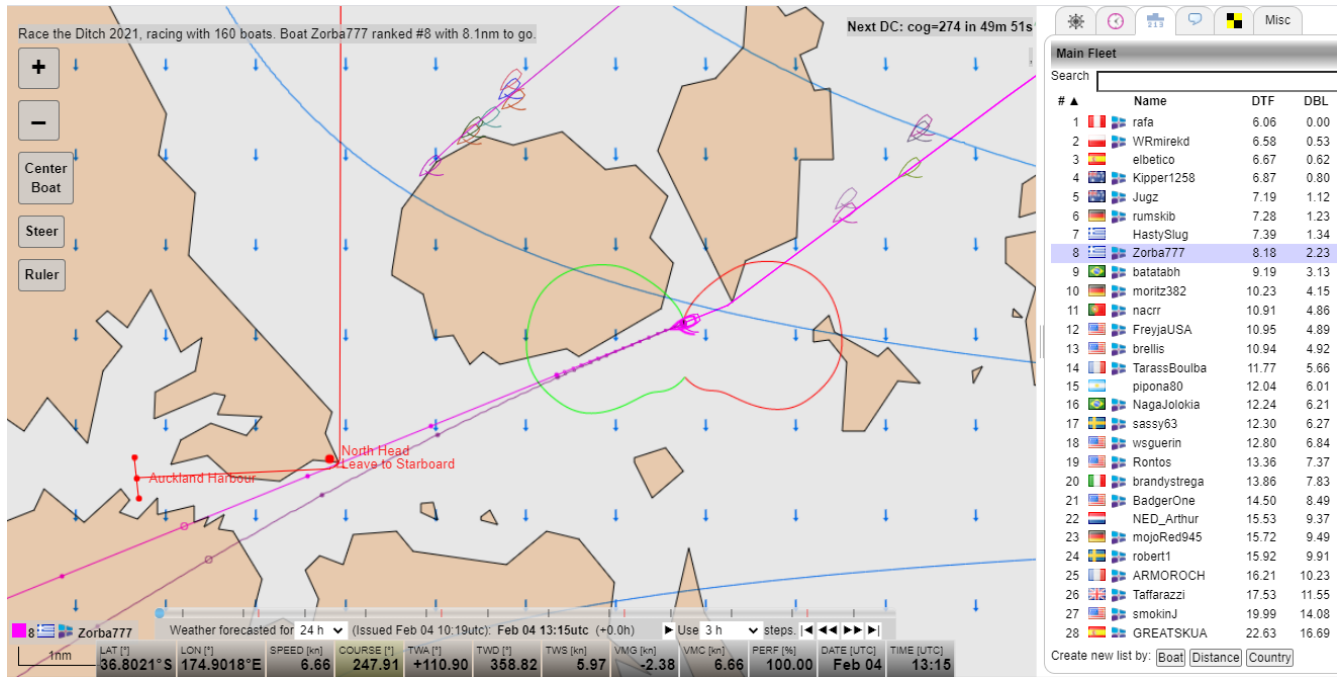
6 – Here is the regrouping on the next day and I had kept the lead. If the winds stayed like this it would be difficult for the others to catch up. All I had to do was make the tacks in the right places, which is of course what we use router software for. The winds forced us to go around Cape Reinga in a wide bow, using the strong winds to the North. That made for funny ranking as we sailed away from the finish line for many hours:



7 – That’s how I rounded Cape Reinga in #70 position :) This is just before the tack towards Auckland. Half an hour advantage on the direct opponents gave me comfort:



8 – The slowing winds compressed the field going to the final stretch. An interesting battle for the top 10 places developed with boats taking different routes around the islands. Here you see the sprint towards North Head, the final waypoint:



Rafa held on to position #2, with Mirek pushing Nacrr off the podium in the final half hour. Elbetico rounded out the top 5 with an inspired comeback on the last day.

Thanks for an interesting race. Especially the way around the North of New Zealand was very tricky. Go too close to the slow winds comes with the risk of slowing down too much. Going more to the North gives stronger winds, but also more miles to sail. Redoing this race a hundred times, maybe the Northern route would win more often than the Southern (shorter) route. I don't know.

Congrats to all and see you.

Zorba777