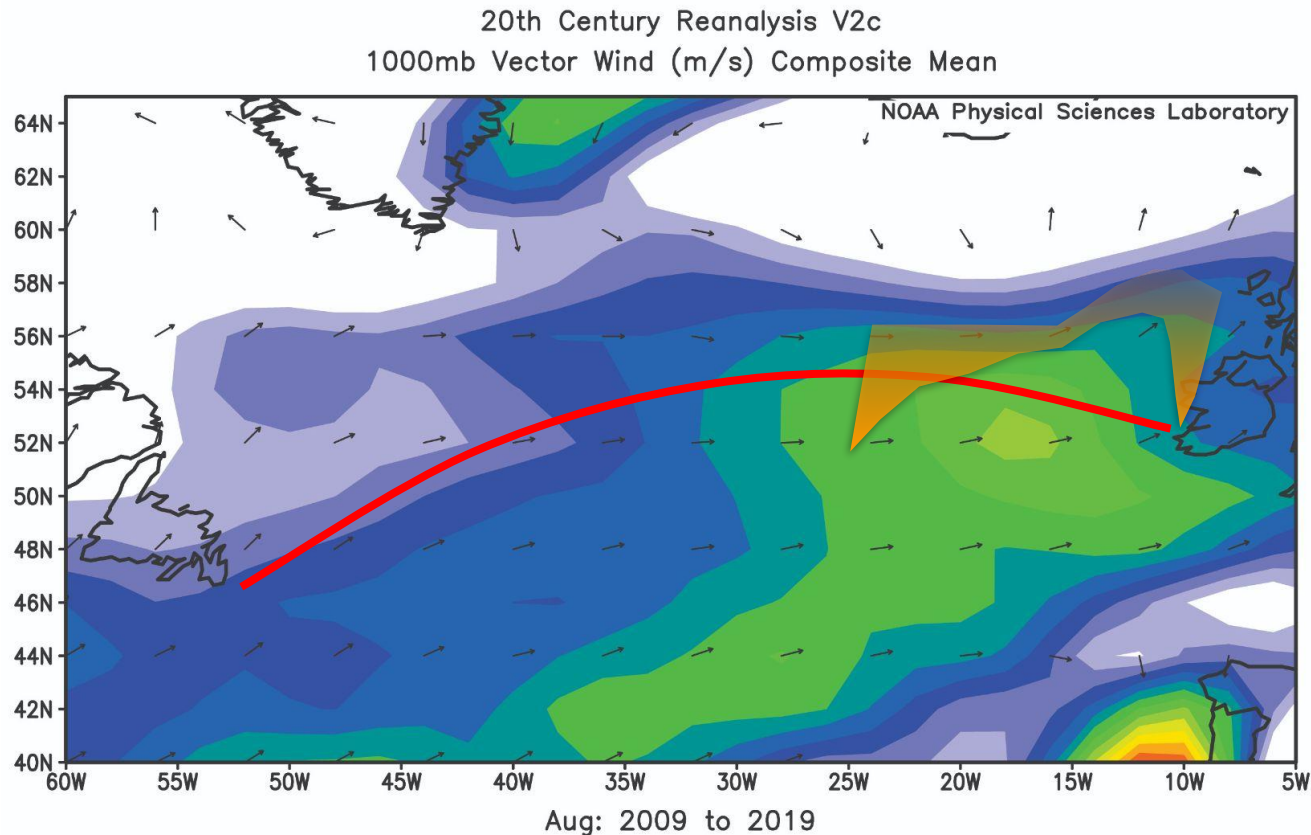


Balloat, Boatloon, Boatoon... sheesh, whatever!

Nothing in the historic average winds suggested the path to the podium (shaded in light orange.)

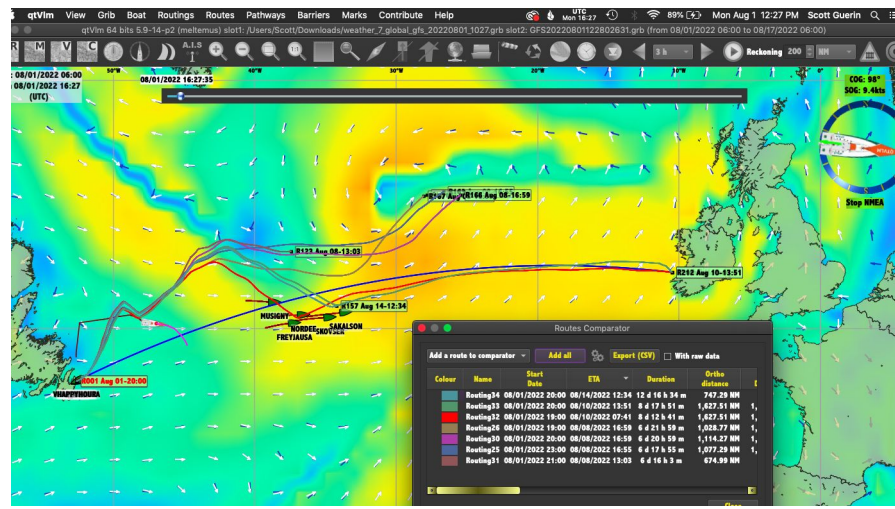
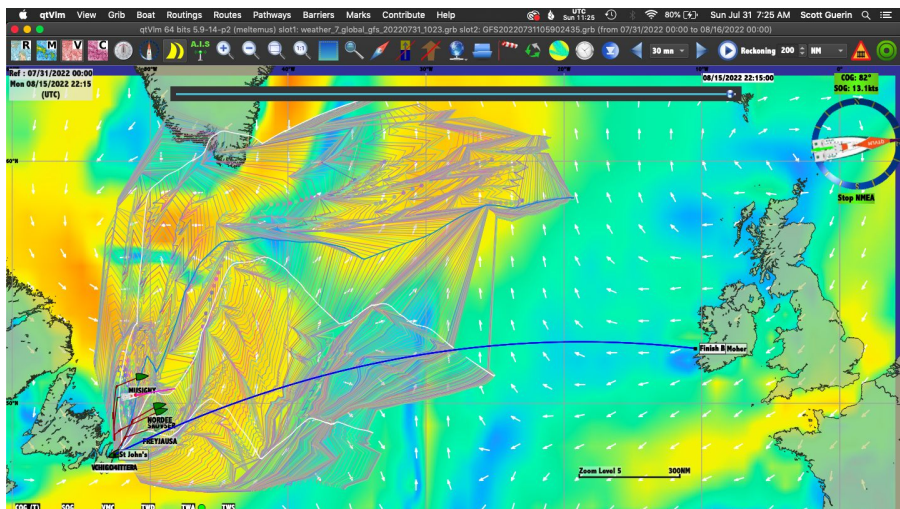
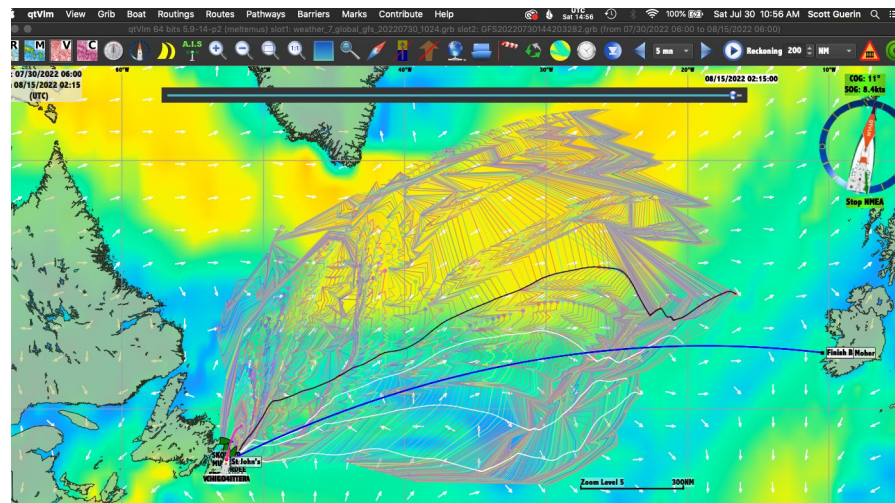
By the race midpoint the top 11 finishers were heading north then, near the Hebrides, having had a few cocktails while they waited, they rode a southerly blast to the line. By getting as far east as possible, even by 10nm, meant you rode a 20kt breeze south at TWA 175° or better versus those further west at TWA 165° or worse. A 3X boatoon speed difference.



Caution

In the lead up to the start, WS was torn between what seemed like a prudent southerly course to catch historical winds, or as some routings indicated, to head north.

WS started along the rhumb line and even hove to for a bit along with Kipper and Pitt.

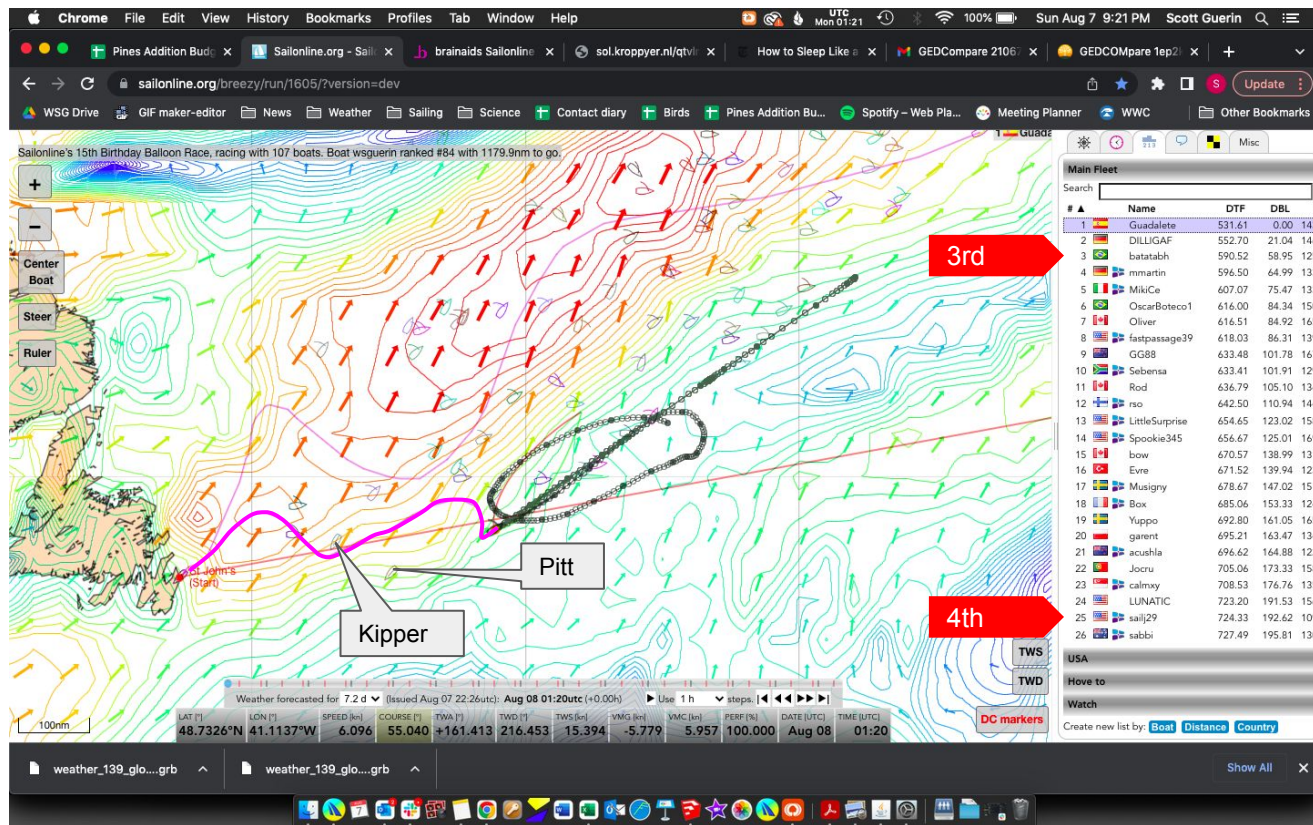


Luck

Some six days later, August 8 01:20 UTC, and having wandered the rhumb line up and down, this curious predictor line pattern appeared.

While Kipper and Pitt were hove to, WS committed to head north. (Not sure if labels are correct)

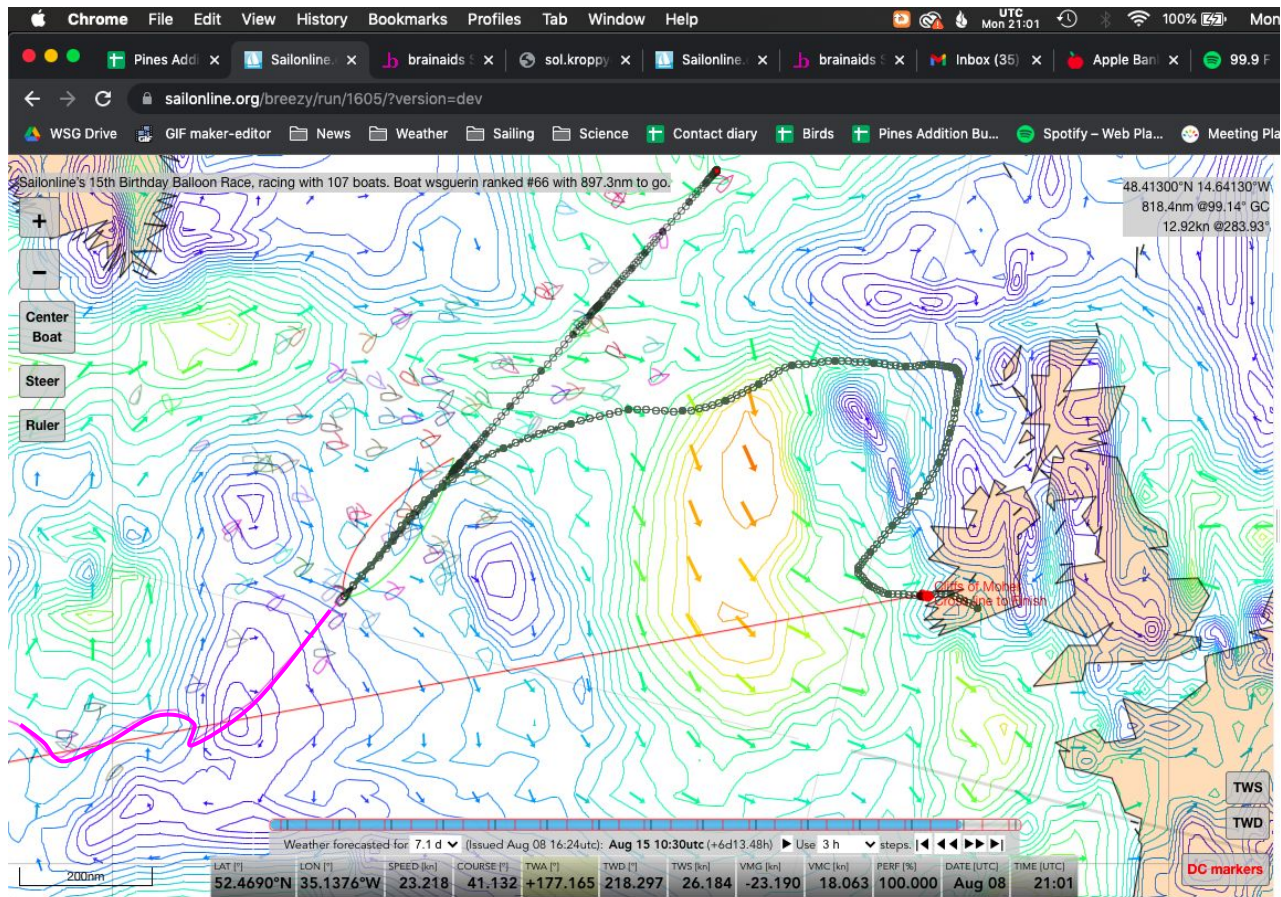
Note that **batatbh** is in third place where he actually ended up finishing (amazing really) and **Sailj29** came from 25th to take 4th place.



Smart

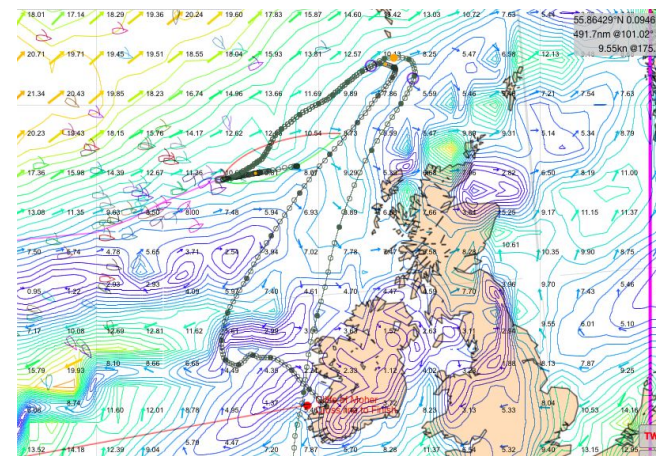
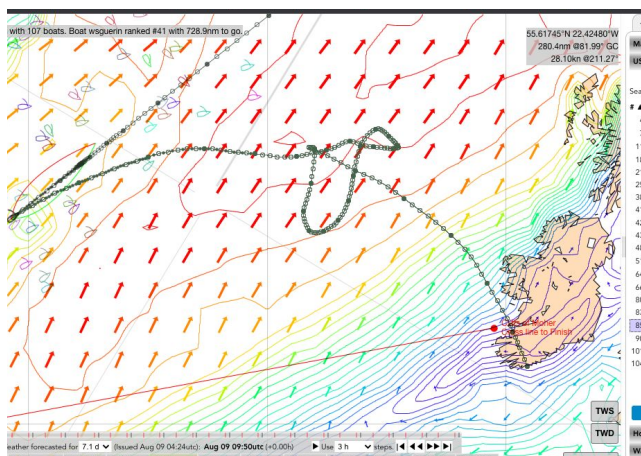
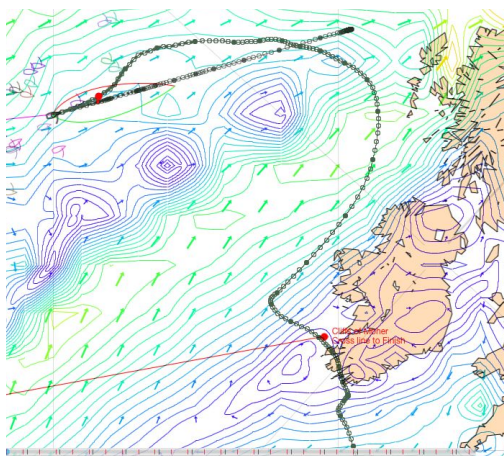
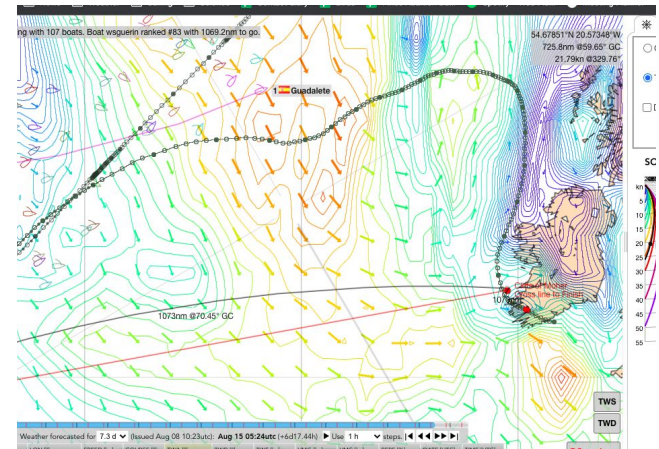
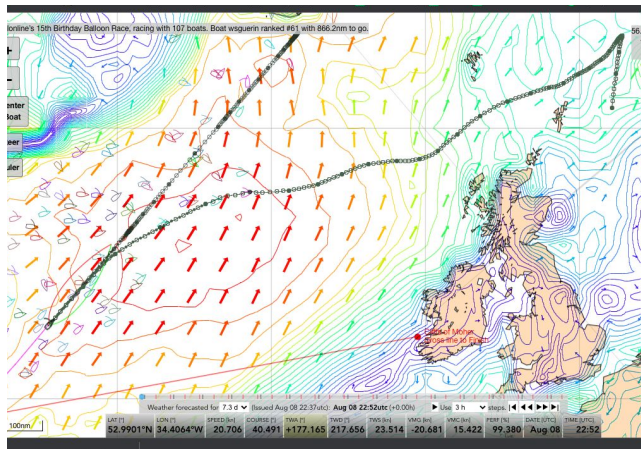
QT was mostly useless this race, and it took WS a while to figure out that the extended predictor could be used to zero-in on the finish – if the wind generally held.

From here on, WS (in 66th place), tweaked his TWA course, often by just .001° to keep as close to crossing as possible, even if backwards.



Patient

Days went by heading Northeast as the predictor sometimes tied itself in knots. But the trend was clear, head North and get East.

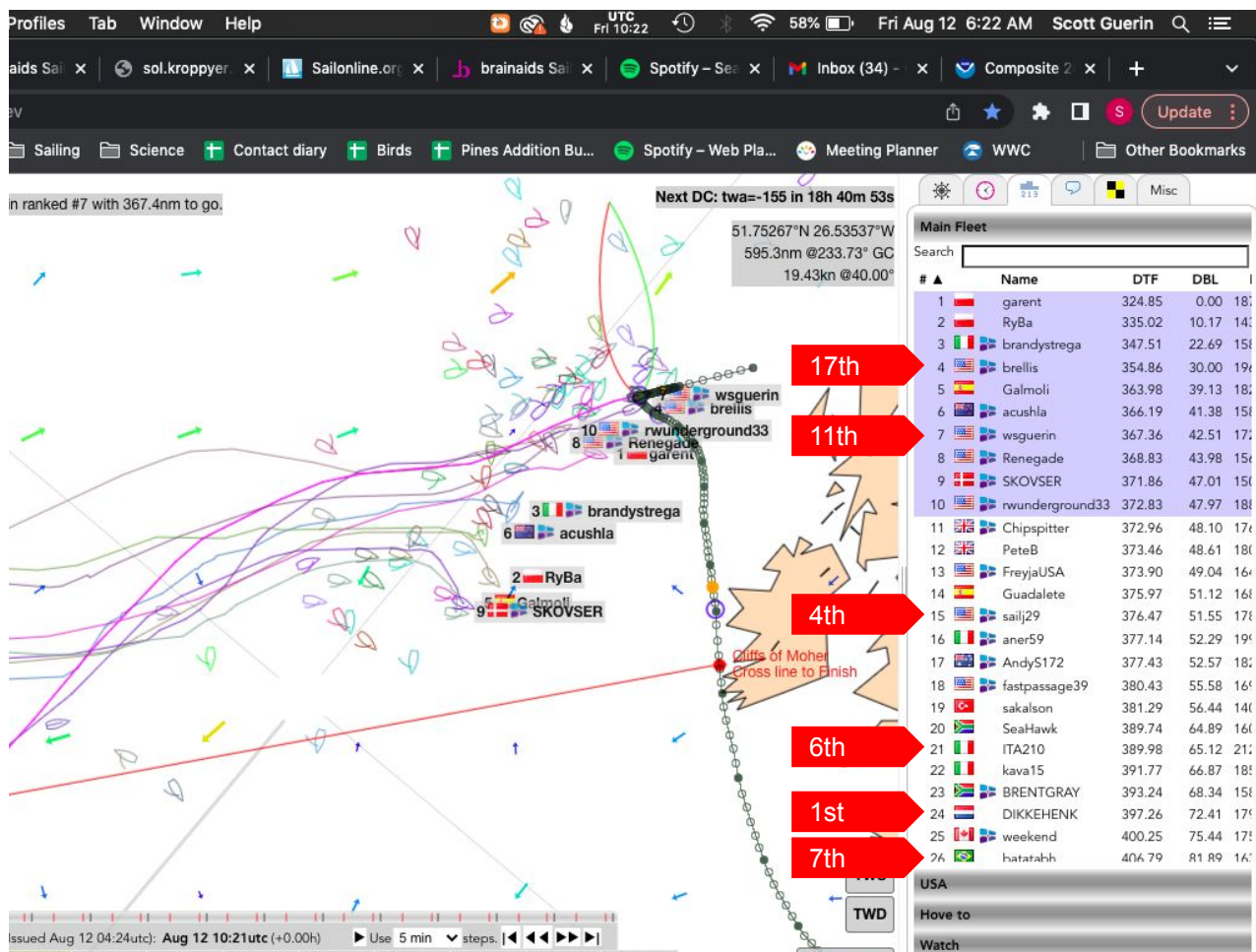


Patient

WS clawed his way east here at .061kts BS at TWA 75°. Brellis was nearby and we soon took a too early turn south.

WS recalls chatting that his COG looked like a reverse logarithmic scale as progress slowed to a crawl

Dikke and the top ten were further north but the endgame was in sight.

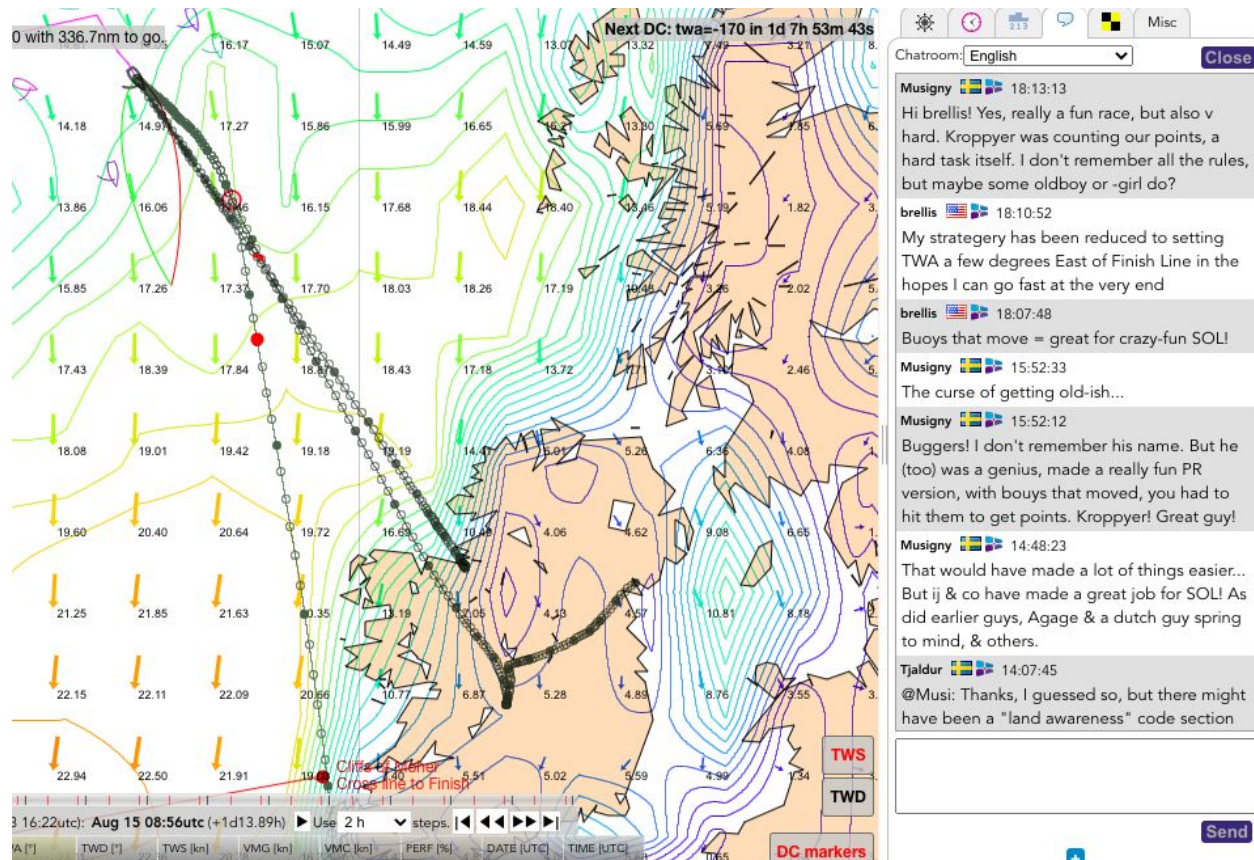


Stupid

With some northerners turned south and closing, WS (in 10th place) lost his nerve and decided to head to the line on August 12th.

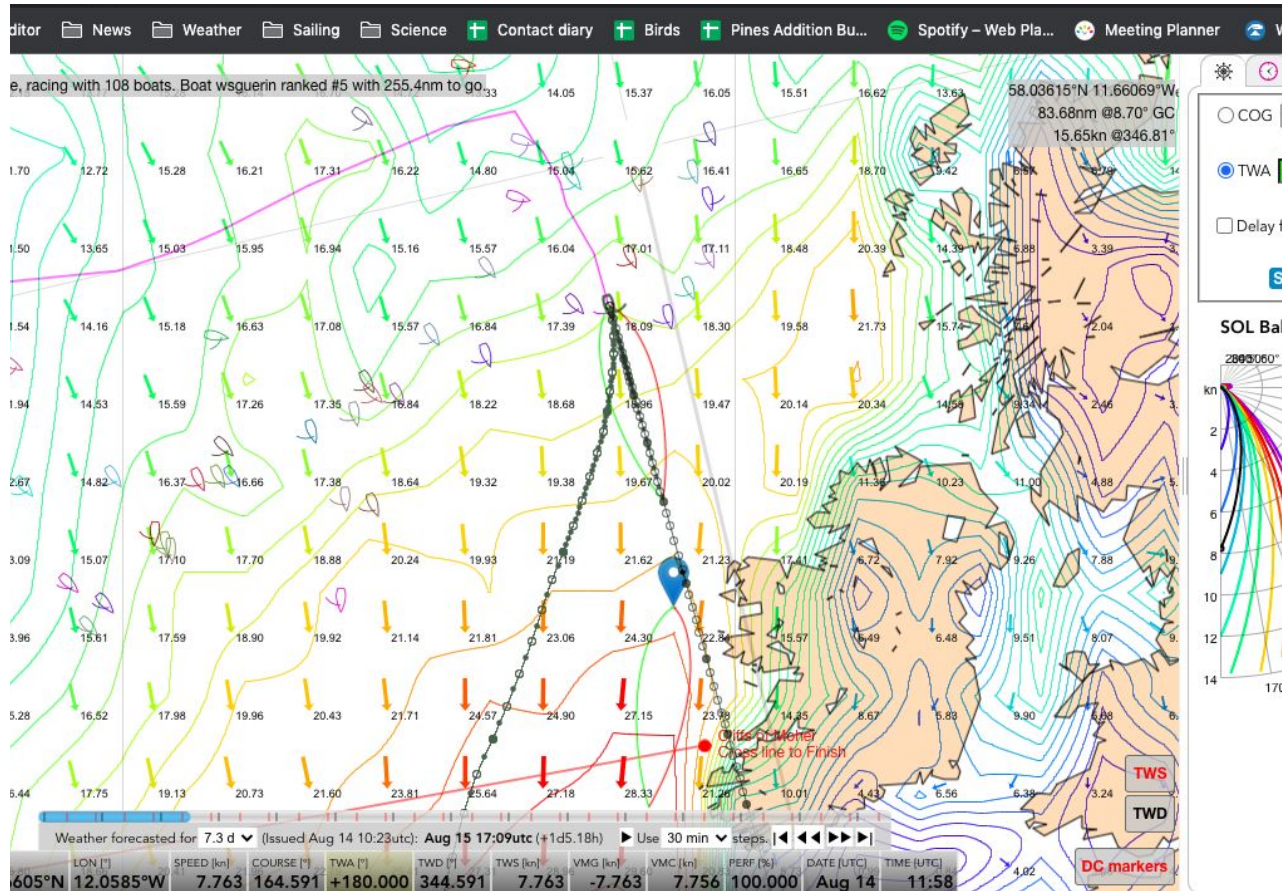
But would another day struggling east at .07kts BS east have helped?
Who knows.

I hoped for a top ten.



Resigned

In this shot on August 14th, the top 10, who went some 50-100nm further North and 10-50nm further East, are roaring by at 18kts+ while WS is 7kts.

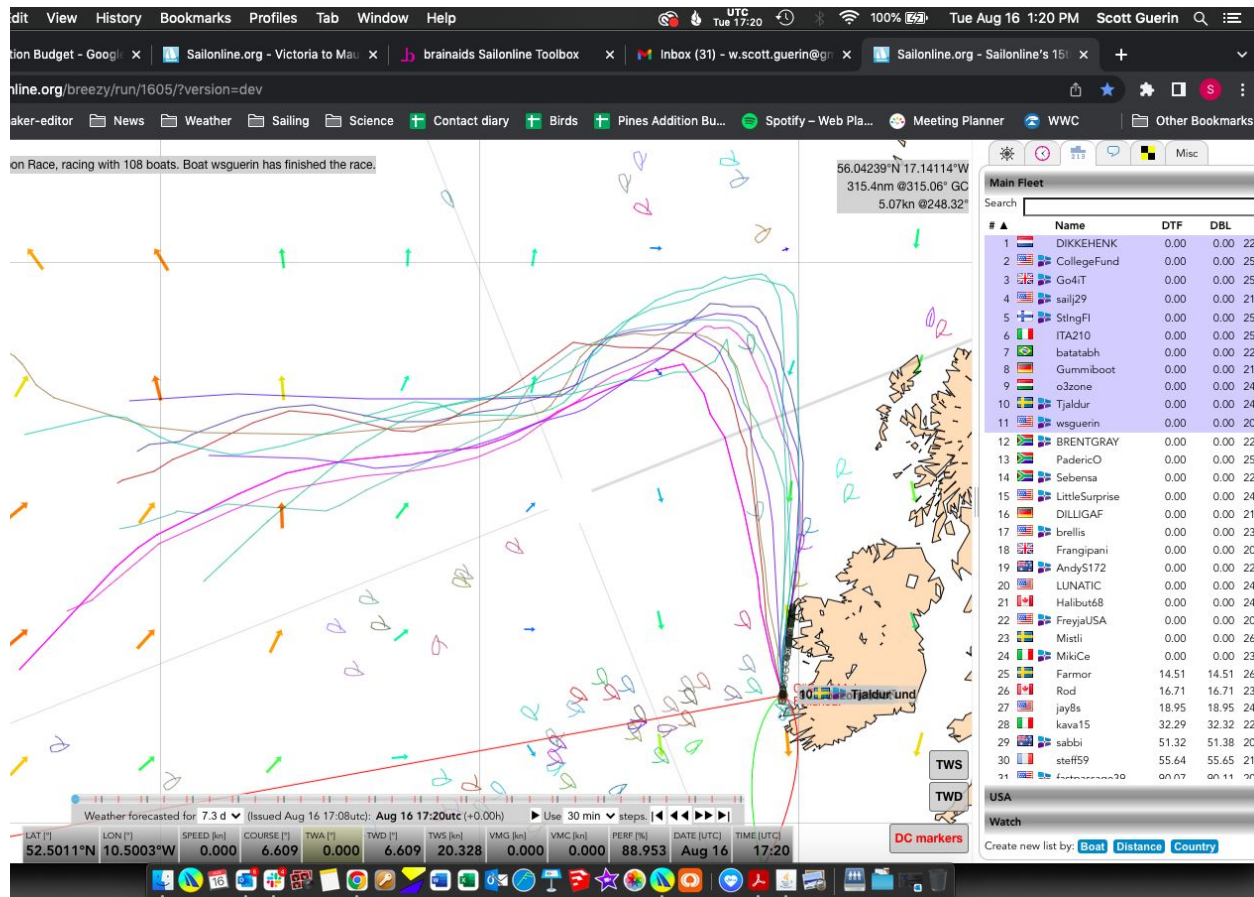


Finale

The tracks of the top 11 with WS furthest West.

Congratulations to all who had the luck, patience, intelligence, and fortitude to finish and to 76 Trombones who invented the race and polar.

A biennial balloon race should be a given in the SOL schedule!



Coda

A SOL-er named Ollie sailed forth,
But he drifted too far to the North.
Round Iceland he floated,
His course duly noted,
Was far from the Mercator Orth.

