

## ORCV West Coaster – Melbourne to Hobart

I've been a real world sailor for 35 years, and have done this race "for real" a couple of times. Couldn't do it this year so signed on for the virtual race instead after seeing the "article" on the ORCV website. Very glad that I did. This was my first adventure into the virtual world and an interesting one it was too.

Couple of sneaky practice sessions on Xmas day and boxing day during family trip away for Xmas, and away I was on the first "day" straight into an unexpected / unpredicted wind shift during the night that had us do a 90o turn to starboard (sailing on TWA) and go ashore on the NE Coast of King Island. First time I've ever put a yacht aground. Pushed off and headed back towards the heads.

Same thing happened and we went ashore at Cape Schanck.  
Lesson learnt: Be "on deck" when (or soon after) the weather update is posted.

Managed the start pretty well (I thought) given that it was done on a laptop while parked under a tree on a 37oC day during the first rest stop of our road trip back to Melbourne. That took some managing to get the timing right...  
Lesson learnt: Thank goodness for mobile phone hotspots.

Made a snap decision to go west of King Island when the forecast showed a big hole to the east and plenty of pressure to the west at good angles. Next forecast came in and the hole had vanished. All boats going that way sailed through, hardly slowing down at all. This would NOT have happened in real life (oh, IRL).  
Lesson learnt: No snap decisions. Stick to the "game plan". Weather forecasts stay constant for 6 hours and then change (remarkably sometimes).

Playing "catch up" after that. The extra distance going around KI killed me. Front bunch got into a nice strong "packet" of pressure and carried it all the way down and around the bottom and up the other side. Just like the real world. Leaders into different breeze and gone. Amazing how close the leaders cut the corners. Sea room = zero!!! But given the closeness of the racing you need to.  
Lesson learnt: Forget real world safety issues. More wind = more speed. No "clearance" off the land required. No land effect on wind speed or direction.

Got to the finish and thought I had done pretty well. Finishing in 46<sup>th</sup> place, just ahead of Ksail (who also went west of KI). But... Didn't finish and parked on the beach (that's 3 times now).????

Looked back and saw that I had mucked up the calculations at the start and had not rounded ORCV B. Didn't allow enough time for the downwind leg and turned south too soon.  
"Missed it by that much."

So, turned around and went back. Had some nice breezes (strength and direction) and had some good practice at programming course changes and switching between TWA and COG sailing. Loving that pink line and red and orange dots that show you exactly where you will be and what the wind will be at "X" time in the future. And the ruler. Allows you to program your course changes very precisely.

Rounded Mark B. (Parked on the beach inside the heads in the process (#4)).

Sailed the course (again). Some good breeze and some interesting strategic decisions. Routing said go inshore but it was very light. More breeze (way) offshore. Played the hunch and went with the more

breeze. It paid off. The longer route in more breeze was faster. Caught and passed a couple of boats that took the inshore route. Picked some nice shifts and angles and curved around Bruny and up the river all on one gybe.

Finished 110<sup>th</sup>.

Total distance sailed 1474.75 nm. (3 X the race distance).

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To conclude, here are my assorted observations on the differences (in no particular order) between the two worlds.

1. It's much more comfortable in the virtual world, and less onerous on the body.
2. No sense of speed or motion.
3. Amazing to have helmspersons / autohelm that can hold a course accurate to 0.001 degrees.
4. Quite remarkable that the weather stays exactly as forecast for 6 hours and then (sometimes) changes abruptly and possibly quite significantly.
5. Outstanding to have crew that sail exactly to the polars 100% of the time. Makes for very exact routing.
6. Very strange that "sufficient sea room" equals zero. Go as close as you can without hitting it. But given the closeness of the racing you pretty much have to.
7. No allowance for tide or current – you can go places you wouldn't "for real".
8. Little or no land affect on the wind. What you see is what you get. Again, allows you to go places where you wouldn't in the real world.
9. More wind = more speed. No need to "preserve" the boat or crew.
10. It's a much more "mathematical" approach, with not many variables. I'm thinking if you use routing software and just follow the routing you should do well. So it becomes who can follow the routing the best, with little room for any human input, apart from the usual deducing (guessing?) how the next version of the forecast will differ from the current one. Although that makes it more like the real world – those who concentrate, pay attention the most / best and put in the effort get the best results (usually).

Anyway, I really enjoyed this more cerebral version of the sport and feel that I learnt a fair bit about this new world of sailing and how to sail in it.

Currently doing Cape 2 Rio (and learning about GC routing) and the second leg (Hobart to Sydney) of the Tasman Double.

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