

Auckland to Fiji in Steinlager II

It has taken me just over ten years to win a race in SOL. Initially I was a **Seat Of The Pants (SOTP)** virtual sailor and then with the great assistance of Finn (Bimmer), who left us all far too early, I became familiar with qtVIm and the pleasures of routing as was being utilised in real life sailing; so why not use it in virtual sailing.

I have improved my familiarity with qtVIm over the years and I plead guilty to using it extensively in my present racing on SOL which is principally medium to longer distance racing.

Because I have no great insight to convey to the fleet over my unexpected success in this race, I am going to use this short race report to pass on some of the techniques I employ, or mistakes I have made, with qtVIm for others to consider/adopt/reject as they judge fit.

My tips in using qtVIm are as follows. If you are not software literate then I suggest that you seek someone who can help.

- Ensure that you are using the latest edition of qtVIm and of AGL.
- Ensure that you are using the latest version of the polar for the correct yacht for that race, not the polar from the last race.
- Ensure that you have downloaded the marks for that race and deleted the marks from the last race.
- Input appropriate performance loss ('PL') figures for the yacht (qtVIm/Boat/Boat setting/Engine & tacks/gybes). These numbers can be checked by a practice sail in the prevailing wind pre-race to establish % PL for a tack/gybe and the recovery period back to 100%. A lighter wind will result in a lower PL and a shorter recovery period to 100%. These figures need to be reviewed as the winds change during the race.
- In light winds consider using shorter time periods between your course changes and consider using TWA as light wind can be very fickle.
- IRL when helming, I used to ask my owners "*How close can I go here?*" and the answer was often "*Not too close.*" Accordingly, when setting delayed commands (DCs) in SOL I often increase my clearance margin to land as any BBQ gives a performance loss and a painful time loss. So, a BBQ is best avoided for a smidgeon of extra clearance and a peaceful period of bunk time.
- When setting DCs, qtVIm gives you an alternative of **True Wind Angle (TWA)** or **Course Over the Ground (COG)** headings. When going close upwind or as deep downwind as possible, I tend to use TWA as it enhances the benefit of any wind shift at minimal performance loss. In the same way, if I spot a period of time with a consistent heading (TWA or COG) then I will use those numbers, as DCs to reduce any performance loss once again.
- At the start of a race, I will set my initial course to fire a minute or two before the start time so that I have no performance loss when the start gun fires – my boat is already heading that way.
- As for tacks and gybes, I tend to use TWAs for the two course changes up to and after the manoeuvre as I consider that it will minimise the performance loss.

- If a race is more than 7 days duration, I access SailDocs from the white download panel in qtVlm top panel and obtain 16 day forecasts to my email. If the race is more than 16 days then I insert intermediate marks (7 and 14 days) as routing points during the passage.
- I try to never have my last DC as a TWA because you never know where that will take you. At least a COG will point you in a known direction. This is very reassuring if you are near a finish line and/or a wind update (Wx) is due.

I duly applied these principles in this race and, benefitting at last from the law of averages, on this occasion it worked out very well. Plus, when I found myself ahead of the regulars, I kept between them and the finish employing a standard match racing type of cover. If you get in front then protect it. Likewise, if you are behind them you will not overtake them if you follow them!

I hope that this helps with your use of qtVlm and with your continuing enjoyment of SOL.

Richard/Go4iT
Chair-SRC

15th June 2023