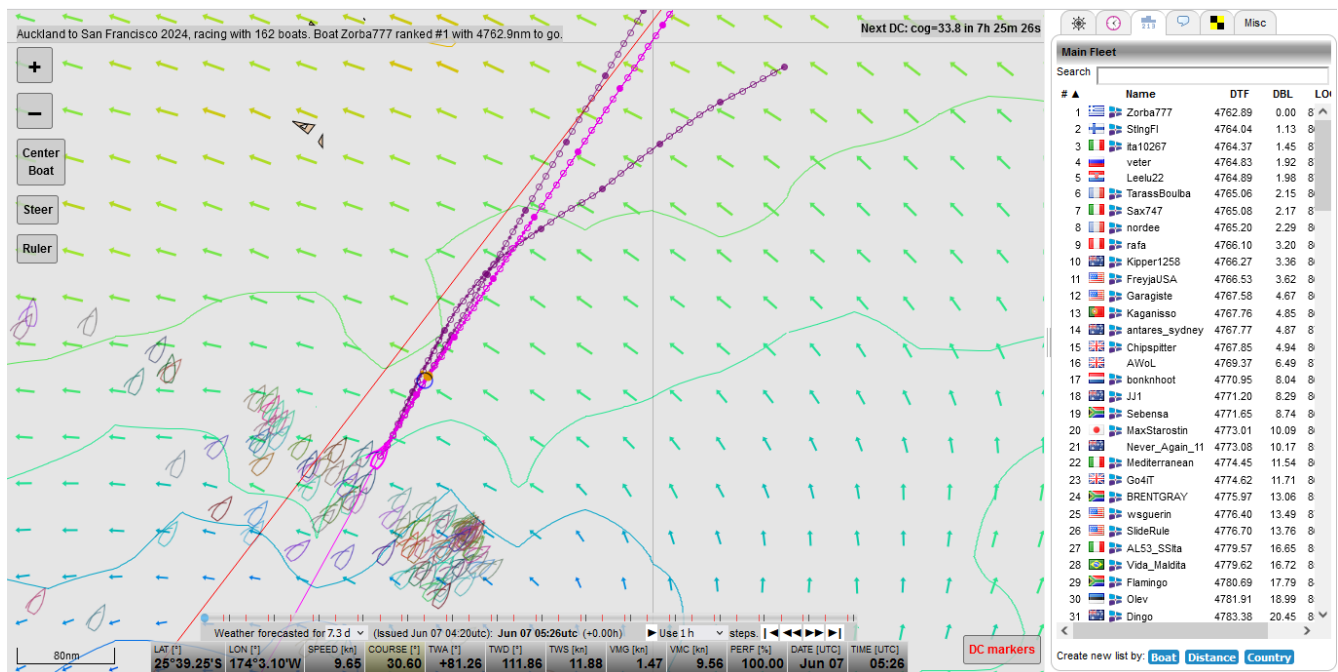


Auckland to San Francisco 2024 – Report by Zorba777

5600 NM in a relatively slow boat (for ocean races). This promised to be a long trip.

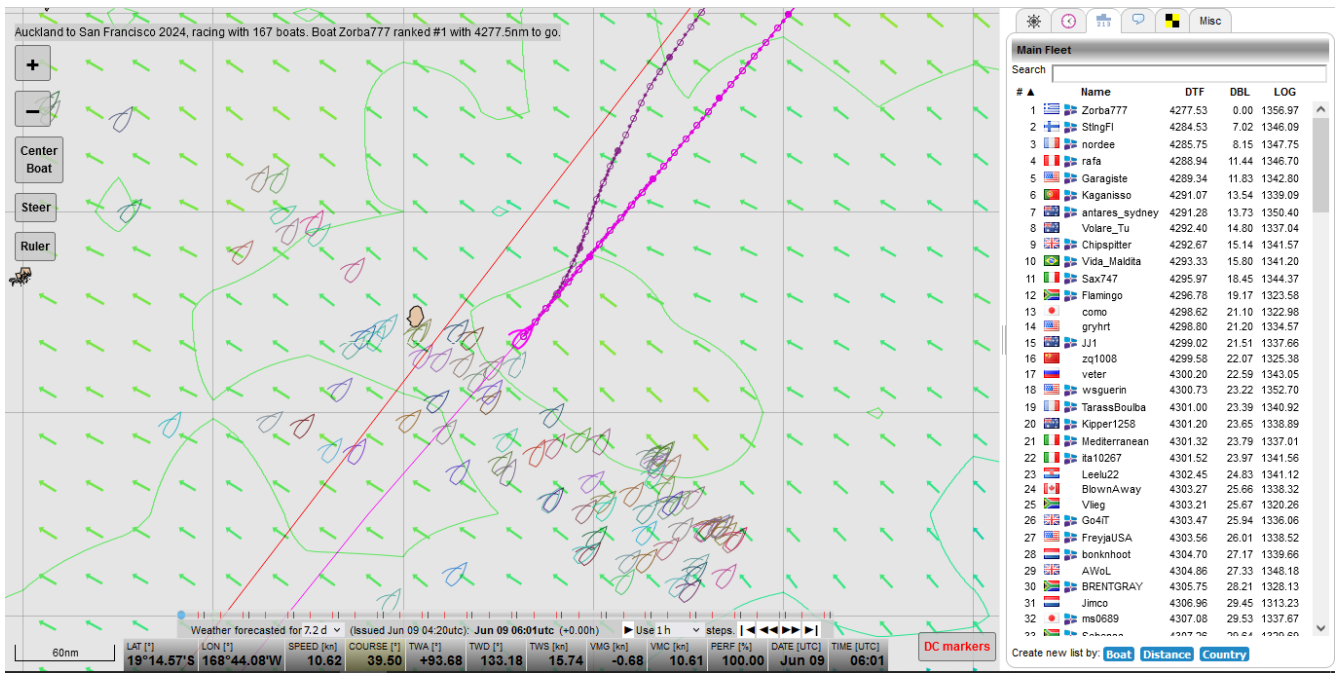
I have never done well in ocean races and I don't like to wake up at 1:30 am, so I decided to skip the 2230 WX updates as much as possible and see what goes. Fortunately the Swan 65 polar proved very forgiving. And the winds were very steady... until they were not.

I had a good start and here is my first screenshot after 4 days of racing.

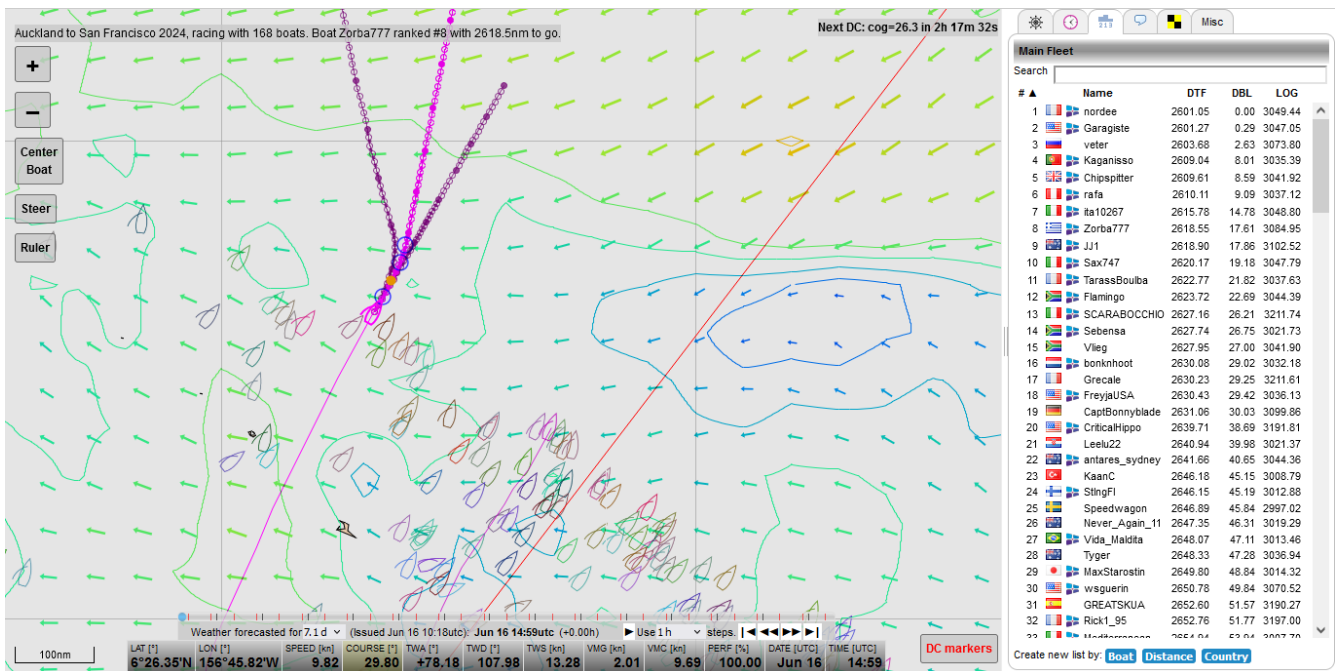


I was the leading boat at this point, but as you can see the main fleet was already quite a bit towards the East from my boat. Zorba was on the side with a bit more pressure, and just kept going in long straight lines, negating the 6 hourly router jojo as much as possible. I have to thank Scarabocchio for that tip he gave me years ago.

A few days later my lead had become a bit bigger and the boats were becoming more spread out already. Still over 4000 NM to go. No weather changes.



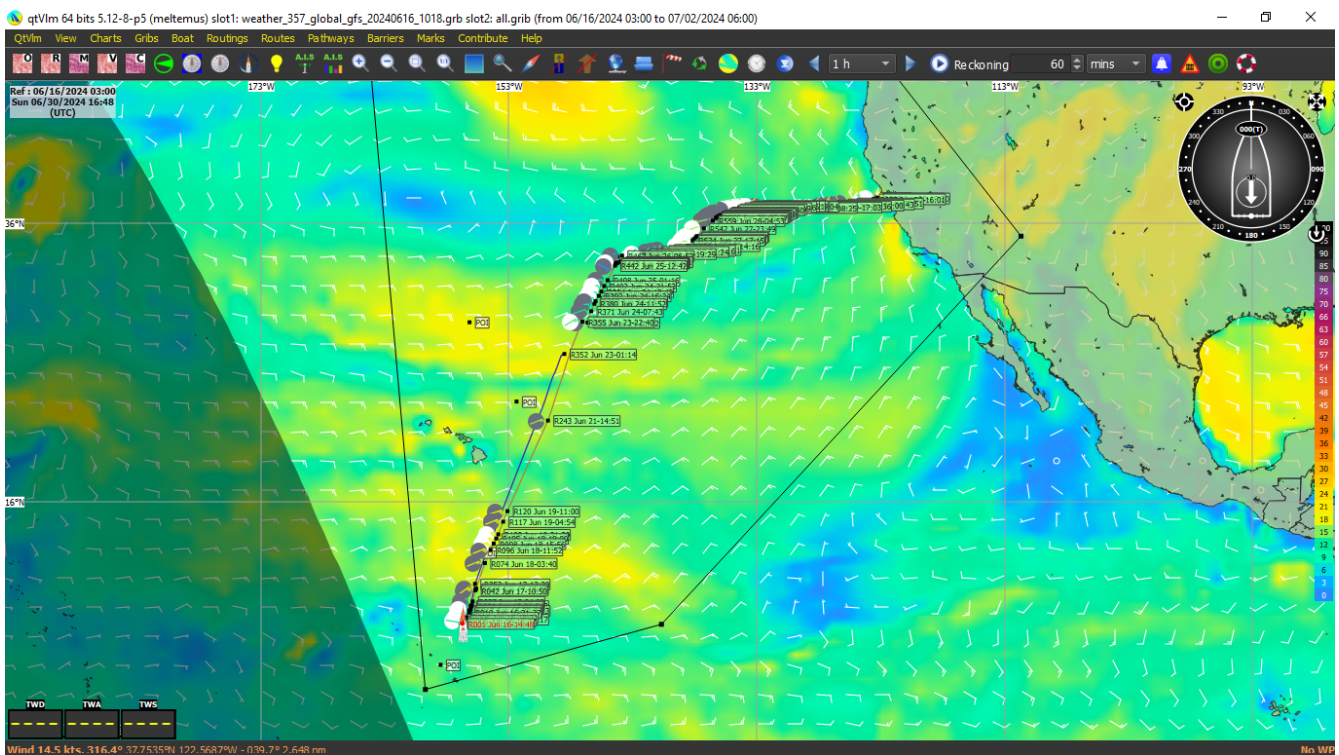
Nothing much happened for a week, until around the 15th when the first zone with slow winds was to be crossed. I didn't want to find my boat stuck in blue goo, so I took what looked like the easiest crossing to me:



It was long clear at this point that my only way to win was over the North. I saw Hawaii on the map and remembered that famous song:

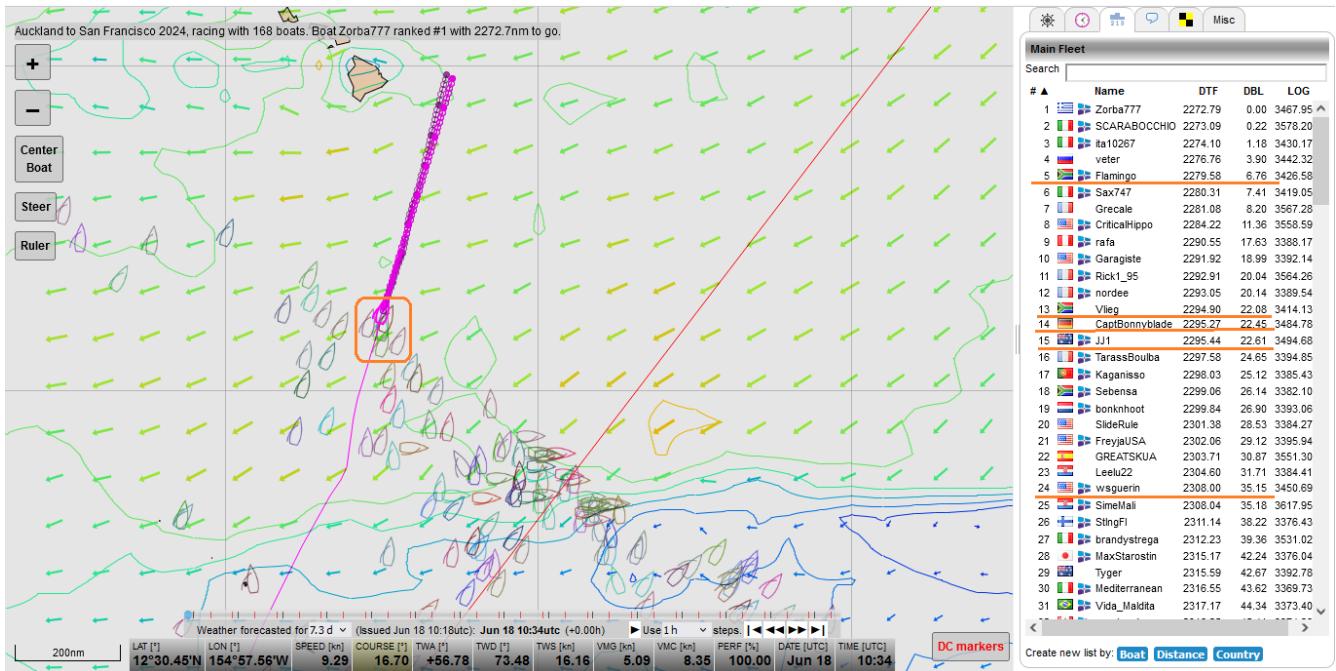
*"If you change your mind, I'm the first in line.
Honey I'm still free.
Take a chance on me.
If you need me, let me know, gonna be around.
If you've got no place to go, if you're feeling down.
If you're all alone when the pretty birds have flown.
Honey I'm still free.
Take a chance on me."*

Well, I felt first in line to sail to Hawaii at this point and all the pretty birds had already flown in the middle and right of the middle groups. So it was an easy decision to take that chance. Made a first complete routing to the finish and that showed an ETA on 30th June. Could that be enough??

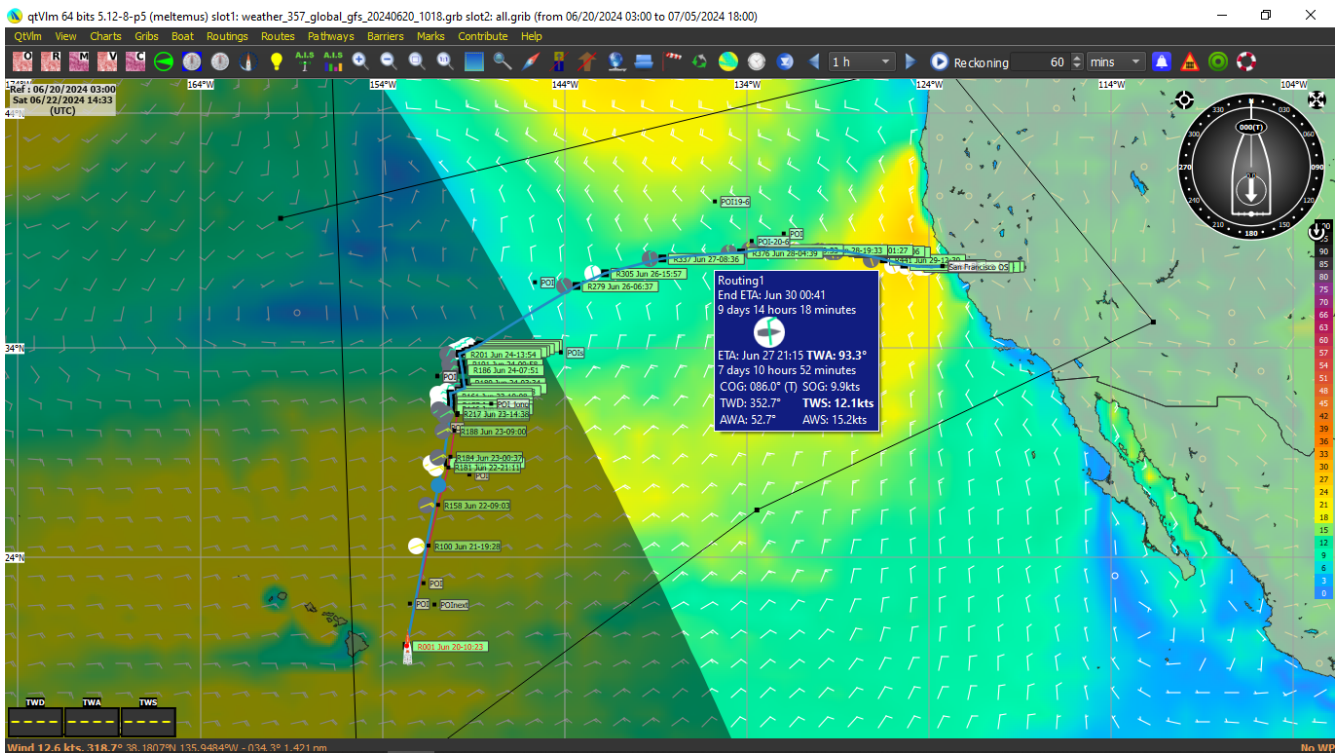


In the worst case it would get me several more days of easy straight course sailing and comfortable sleeping. Deal!

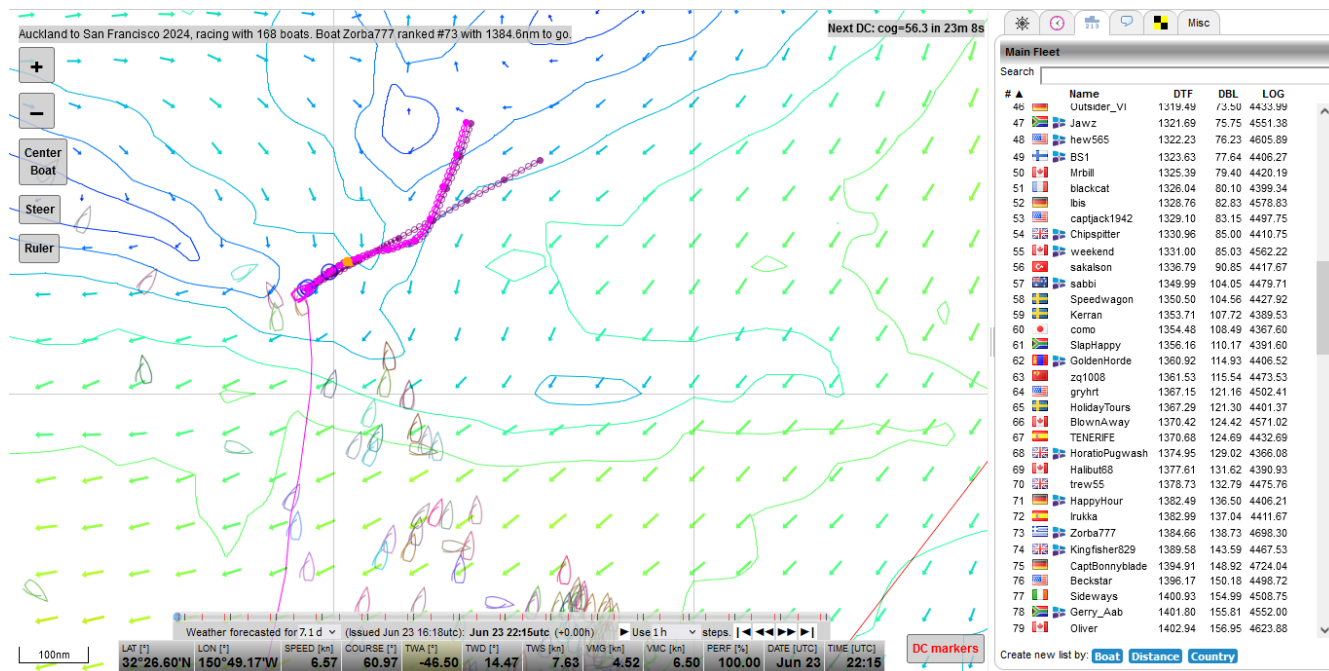
A few days later the first signs of distress became visible in the middle group, where many boats started tacking to keep some VMC towards the finish alive. We had become a small group, with CaptBonnyblade, JJ1, wsguerin, Vlieg and Flamingo as the nearest colleague sailors. Scarabocchio in the far East had become our nearest competitor as the middle group struggled.



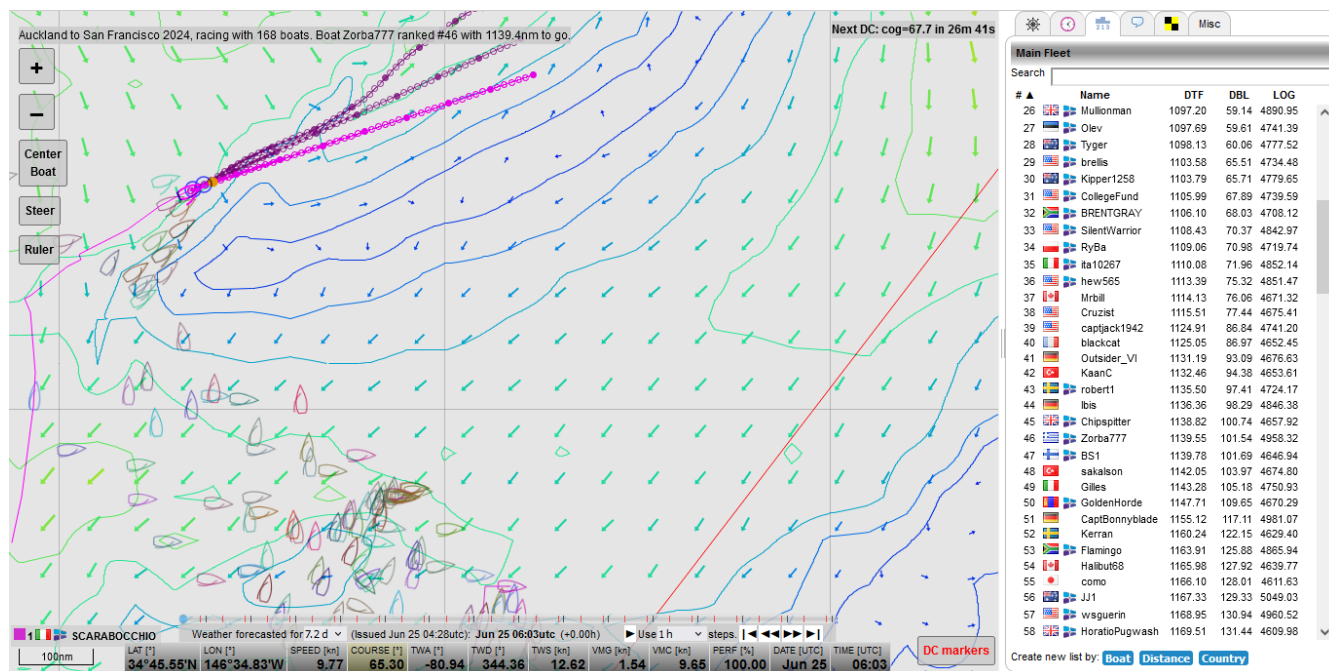
The winds changed very little and we appeared to have a good route around the Pacific High. ETA stayed at early June 30th as we passed Hawaii:



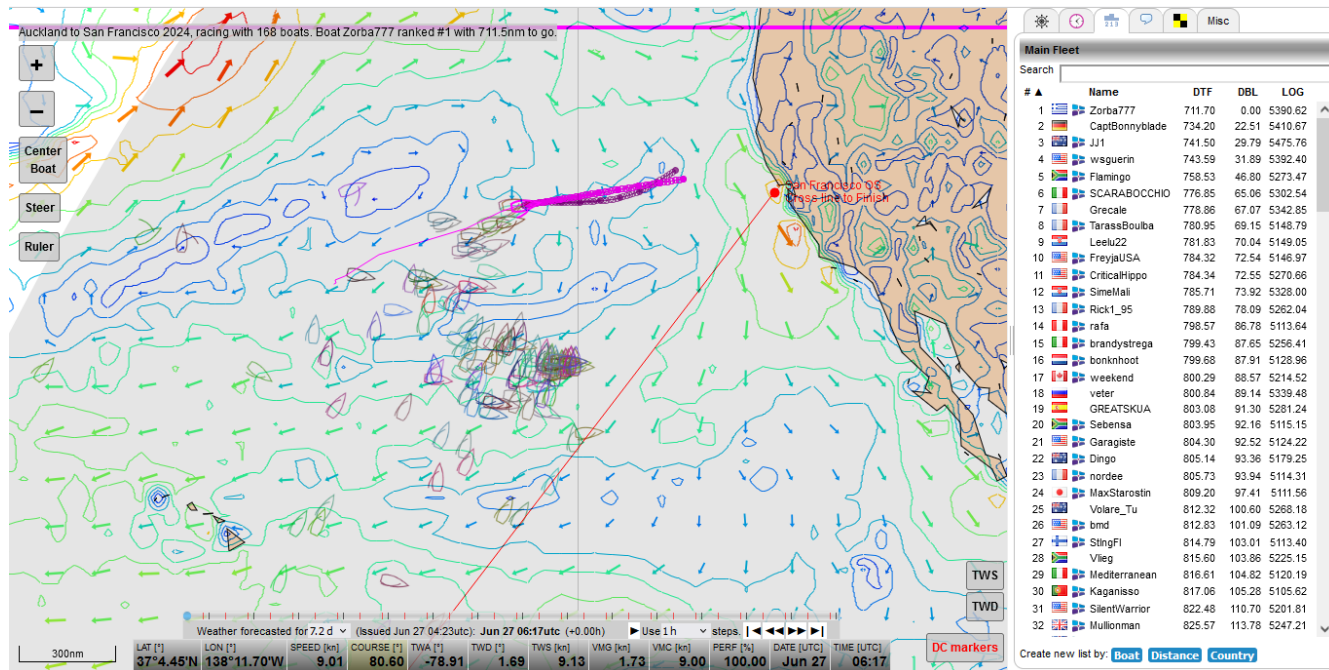
On 23rd of June there was only meaningful tack of the race with a week of sailing to go. I had a comfortable margin on the other boats near me, so just kept fingers crossed for the next weather updates:



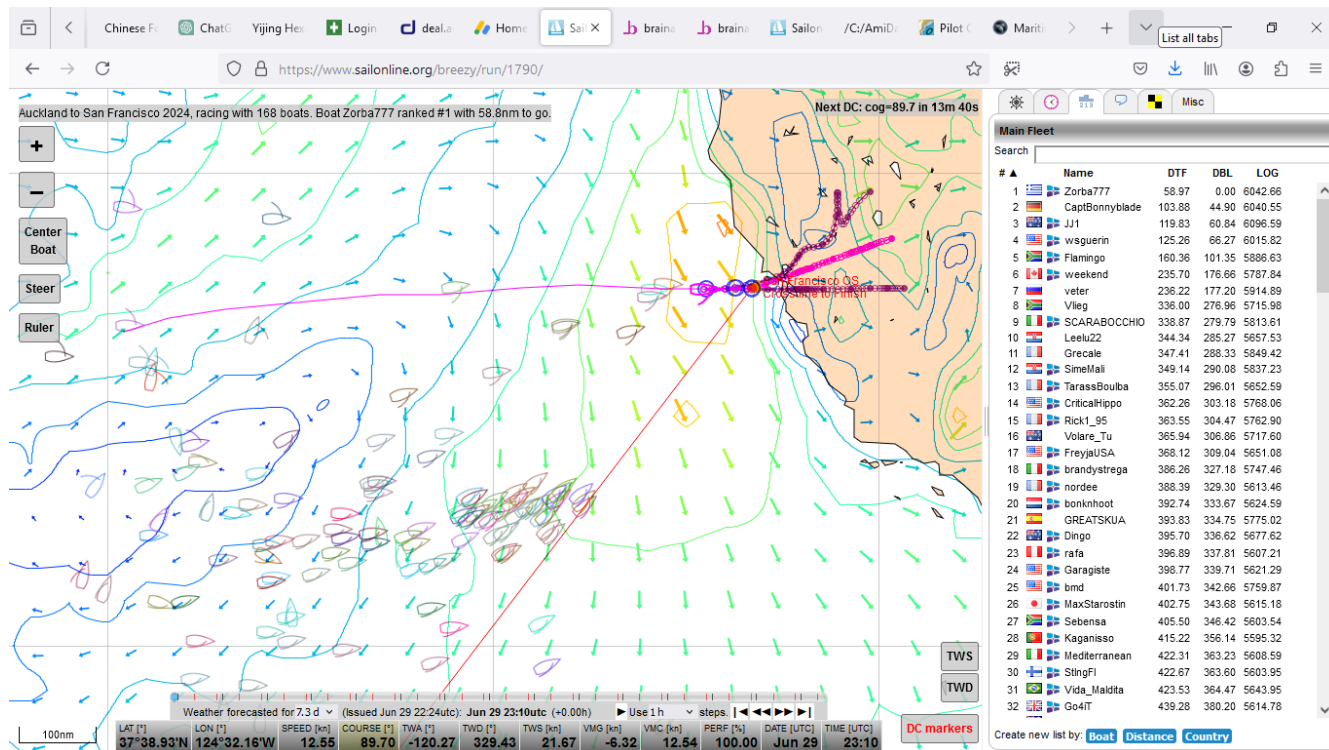
A few days later our little group was safely above the Pacific high with steady Northern winds blowing to San Francisco. Exactly what the doctor ordered. Meanwhile the middle and East groups were still not getting the winds they needed.



Going straight to the finish:



A strong breeze in the final days made the gaps bigger and bigger. With a finish in the early hours of the 30th June as my routing on the 16th had indicated.



Only six boats reached the finish line on the 30th of June. That's what can happen if the weather completely goes your way in an ocean race. Scarabocchio came in first of the boats that had taken the "normal" route.

The differences in this race show that you can even win from several hours behind or going SOTP. It will take some WX luck of course.

But take a chance if you see one. Be first in line. Some day it will work out.

Thanks all for racing, and see you in the next one.

Zorba777