

Sinbad by Balloon 2025 - Dondra to Toamasina

Report by WRmirekd

It's been a while since I wrote a report and I don't really know how to do it. However, the uniqueness of this balloon race made me decide to write something.

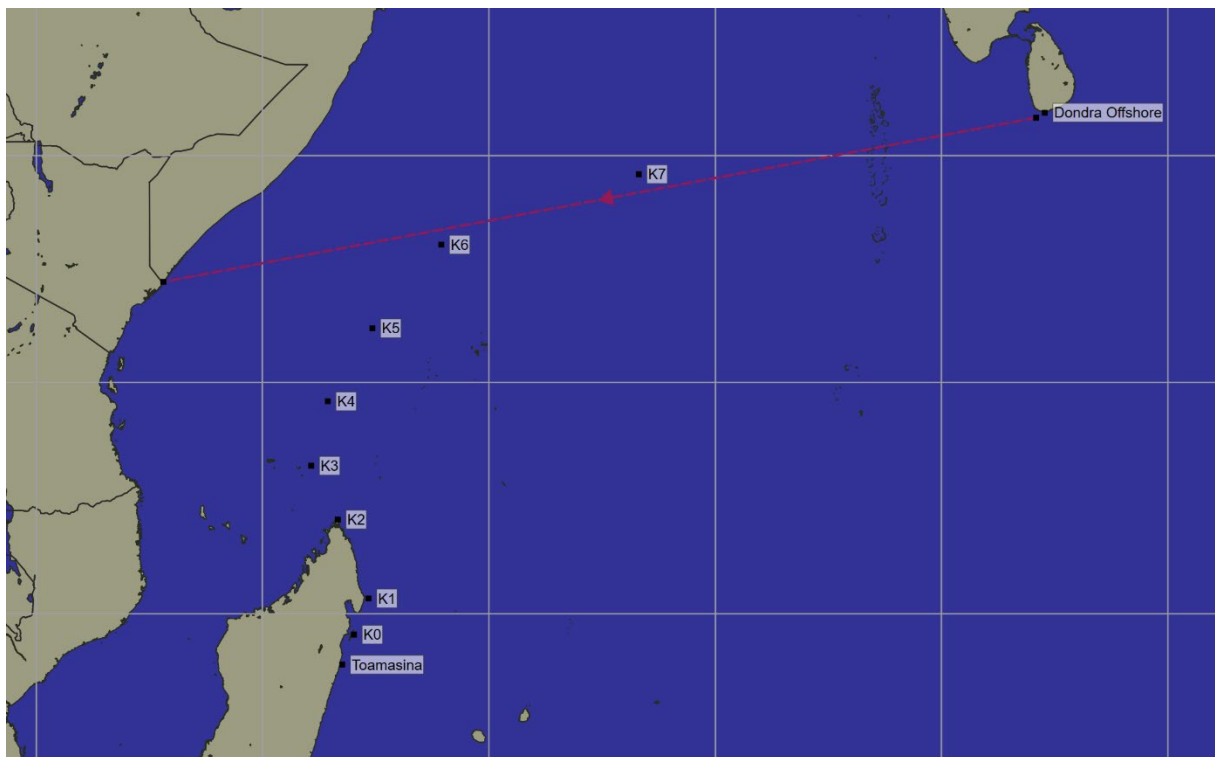
Nobody probably expected this race to take this long. Even the SOL schedule had it scheduled to end before February 16.

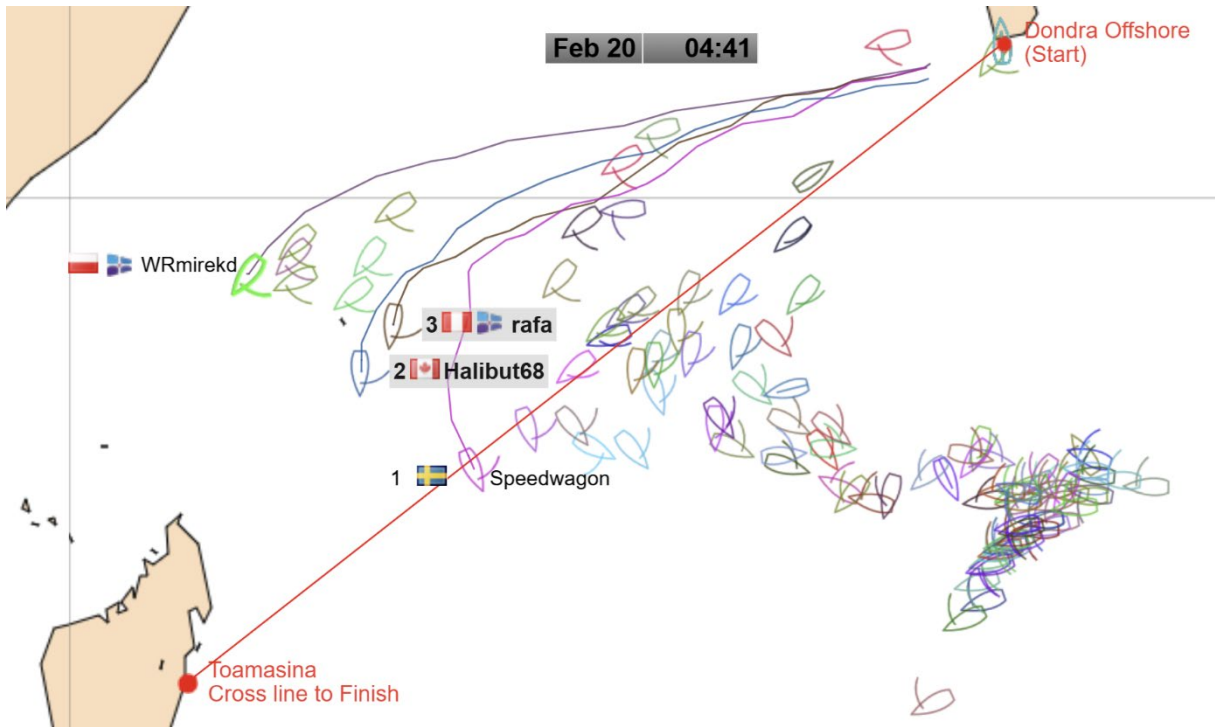
I started preparations right after registration on February 2, carefully reviewing all subsequent WX changes until the start. I also reviewed NOAA's 16-day gribbs. I have been following the chat posts and your ideas to fly with the wind at the maximum possible speed for the first few days.

This is what most of the fleet did.

Although this offer was quite tempting, it did not give an answer as to what would happen next. No concept provided an answer to this question. In addition, the paths determined by QT for the available SOL and NOAA grids gave very divergent results. This made QT completely useless software for me. My observations confirmed my belief that the most stable wind directions were to the north along the latitude passing through the Dondra offshore.

I decided to fly towards the Somali-Kenya border on the African coast. Then turn with the wind to reach Cap d'Ambre in Madagascar. The most uncertainty came with the last stage of my plan, which was to fly along the east coast to the finish line, being careful not to get carried too far from shore. I set my own waypoints K7 to K0 and decided to stick to them with possible minor corrections.



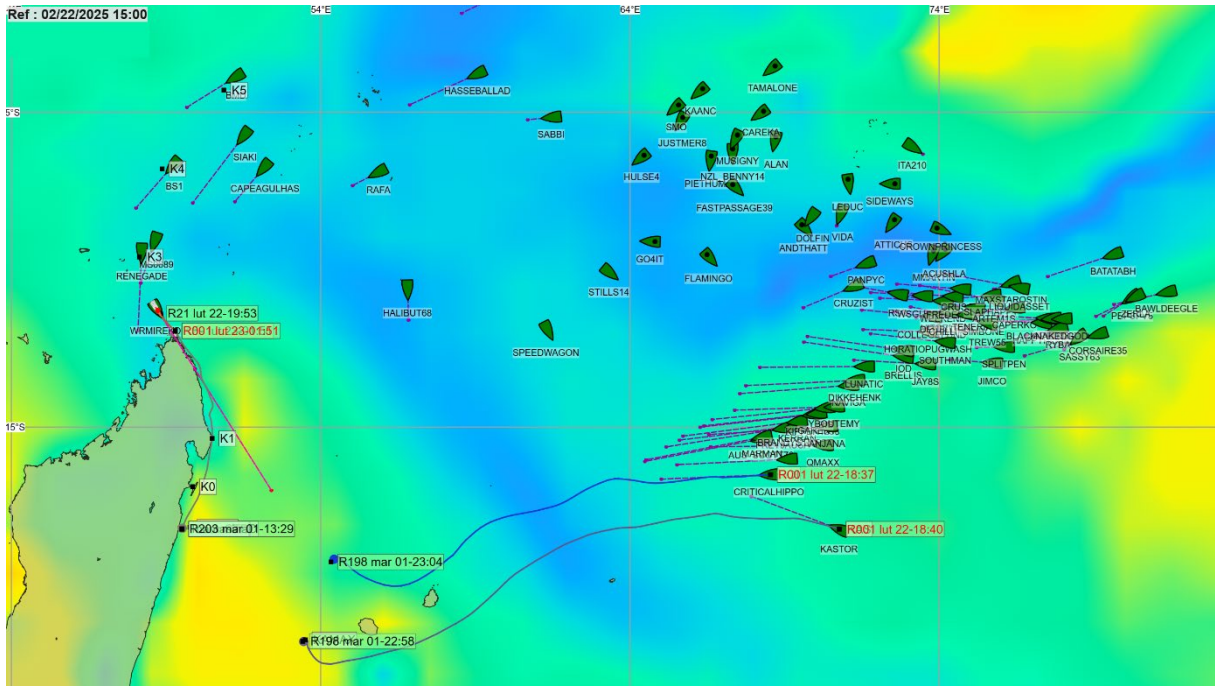


On the way to my K7 point I watched with envy as the fleet moved quickly west, turned south to form a beautiful S and find itself on a fast course to the finish line.

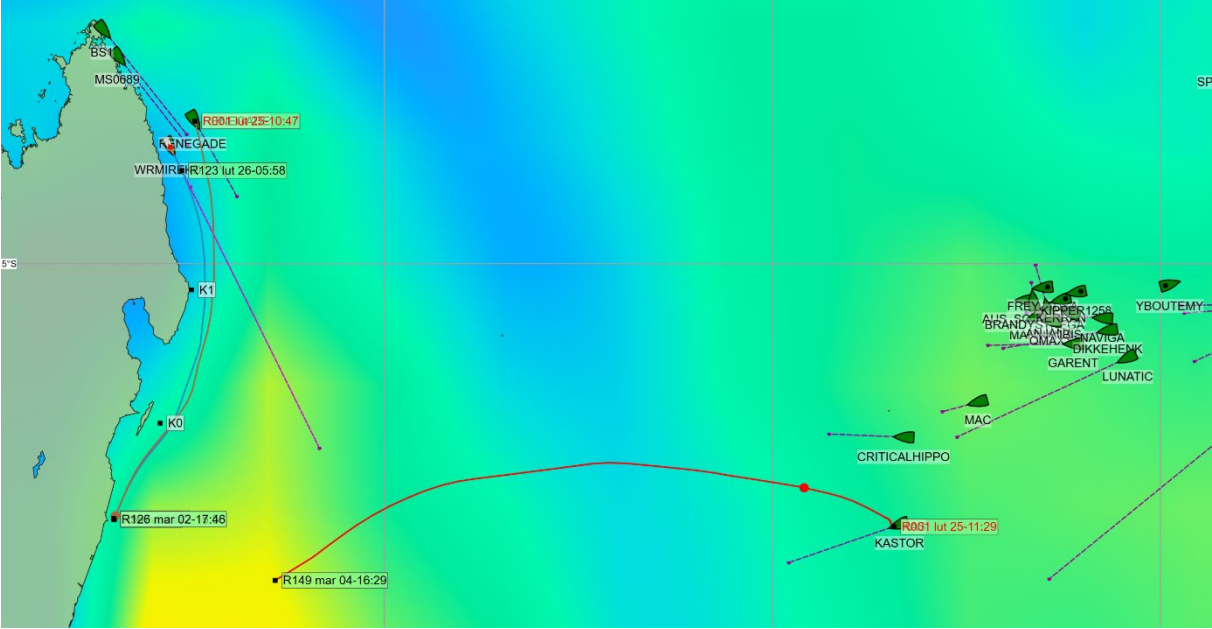
For me, however, it was too late to change my mind and I continued with my plan. It soon became clear that they would stop before the wall of northern winds or fly like KaStoR further south.

By point K6 my situation was already clear as all the yachts Renegade, BS1, ms0689, bmd and others were a bit more south of my planned route.

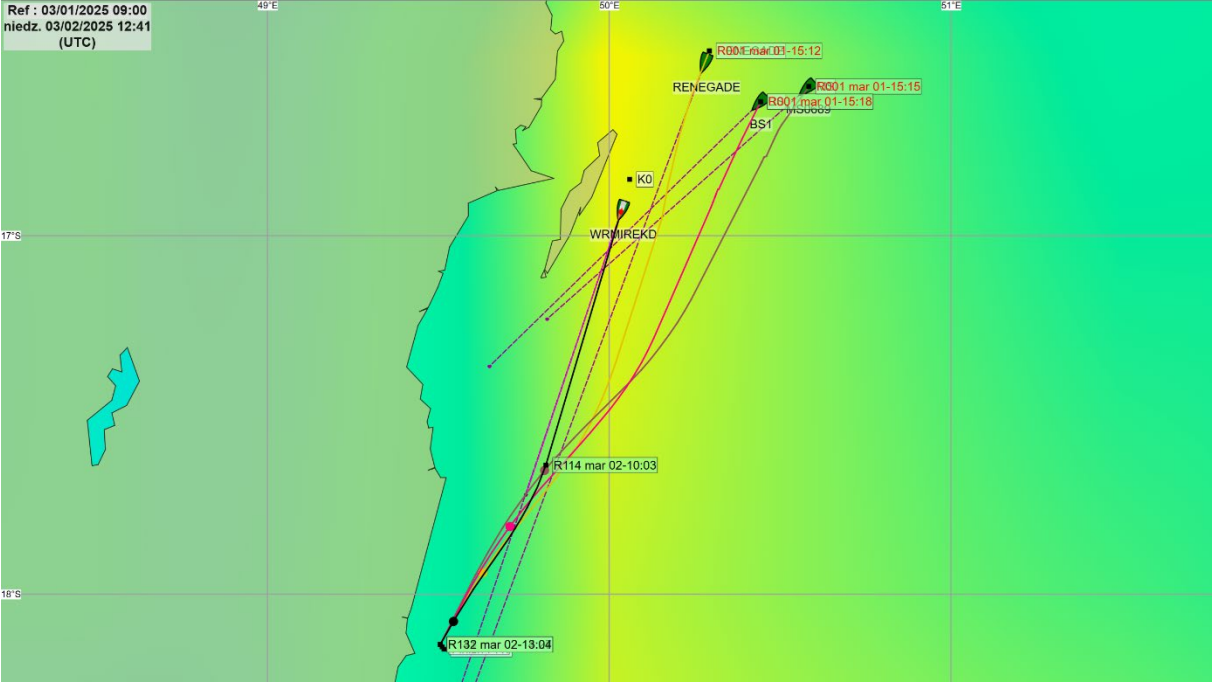
This polar diadram is very treacherous and it is easy to be tempted to change the TWA a little to gain a big speed increase. However, it works the same the other way round, which we somehow do not want to remember. At this point I was already sure that if the conditions did not change drastically, I would at least be leading the northern group. And so it happened.



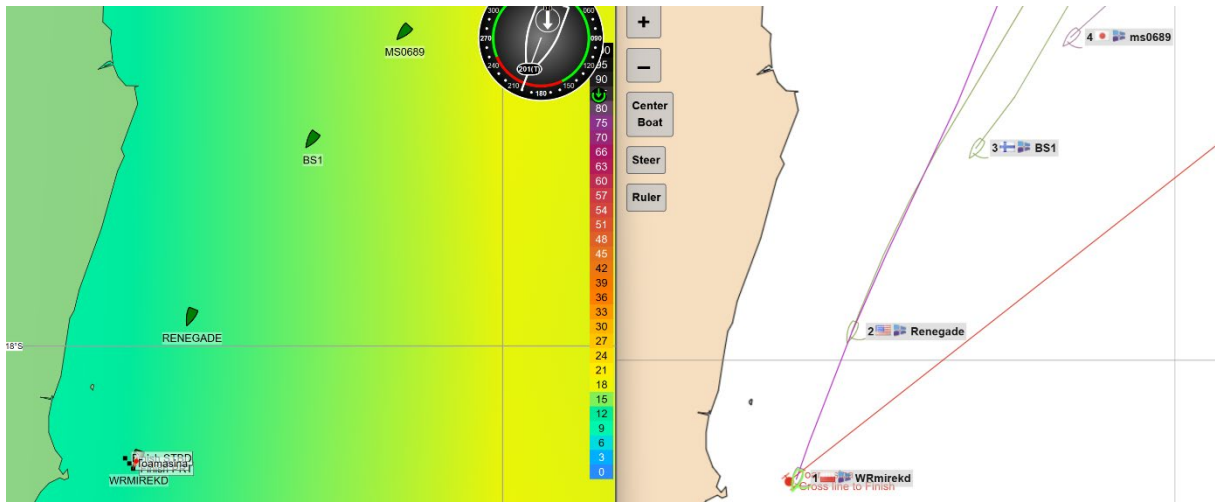
Finally, after 17 days, I reached Cap d'Ambre (my K2 point). From this point on, QT was put to work. For the first time, QT showed an ETA of 01-03-2025. There was a lot going on in this final stage. Immediately after passing Cap d'Ambre, Renegade got carried away. I have no idea why he went so far from the shores of Madagascar. He quickly came to his senses, however. He soon realized that this could cost him his good position.



Luckily for him, BS1 and MS0689 succumbed to the same temptation a little later. MS even jumped to first position in the race ranking. However, this glory was short-lived because in the end he lost even to BS1, ultimately taking 4th place.



Finally after 30 days 2 hours 24 minutes and 4 seconds I crossed the finish line. It was a hard and difficult race.



Currently, there are only four competitors at the finish line. What's next? I don't know, I'll just watch calmly.

Greetings to all.

Mirek / WRmirekd

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