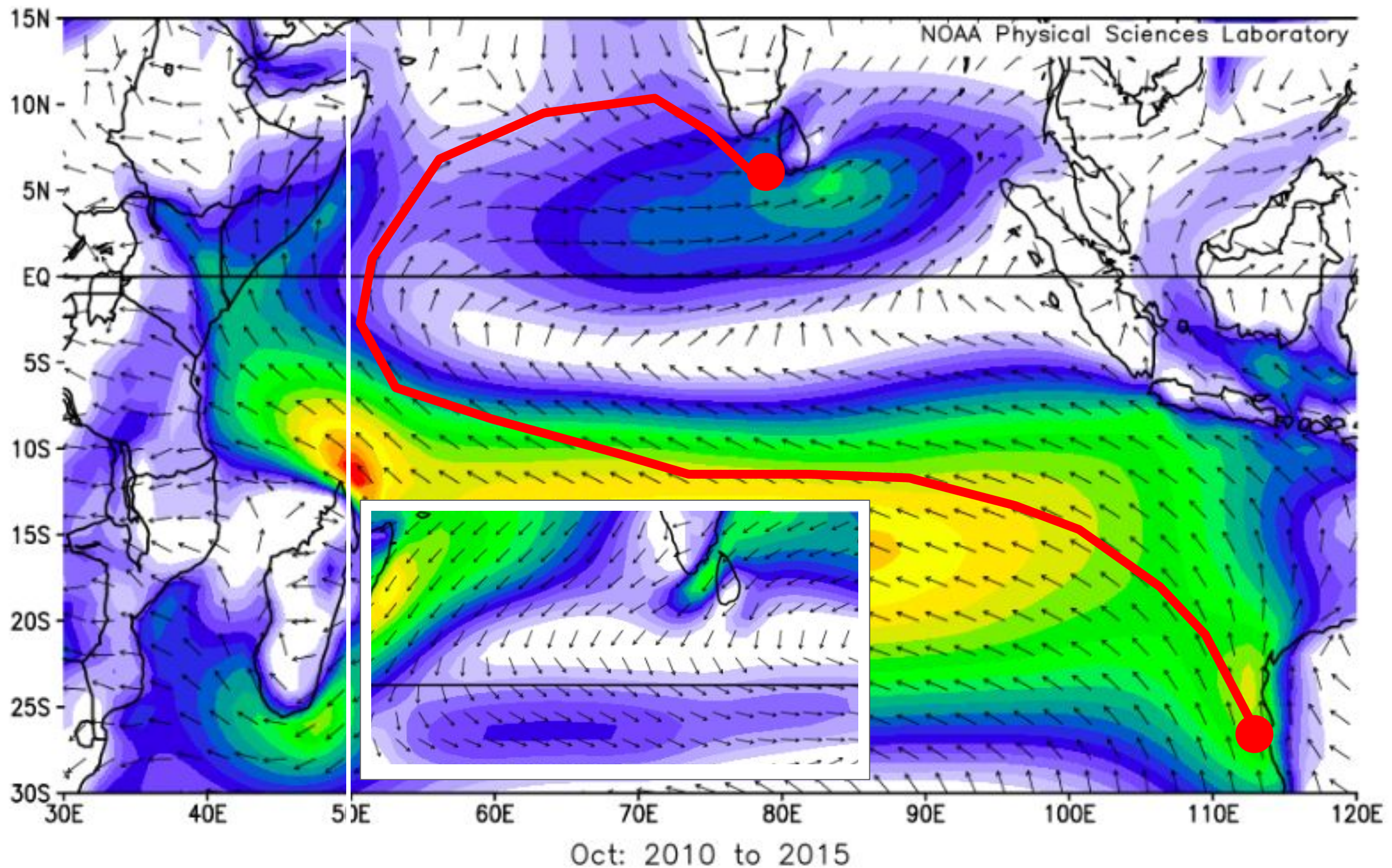


The plan

WS's strategy was simple enough. Note the less-than-a-month course in red overlaid on the historic wind chart.

But best laid plans were put in doubt when someone (Bonk?) posted a link about the monsoon this year:

What would have been semi-favorable October winds, were predicted to switch early into a December pattern and turn the winds against us. (See inset)

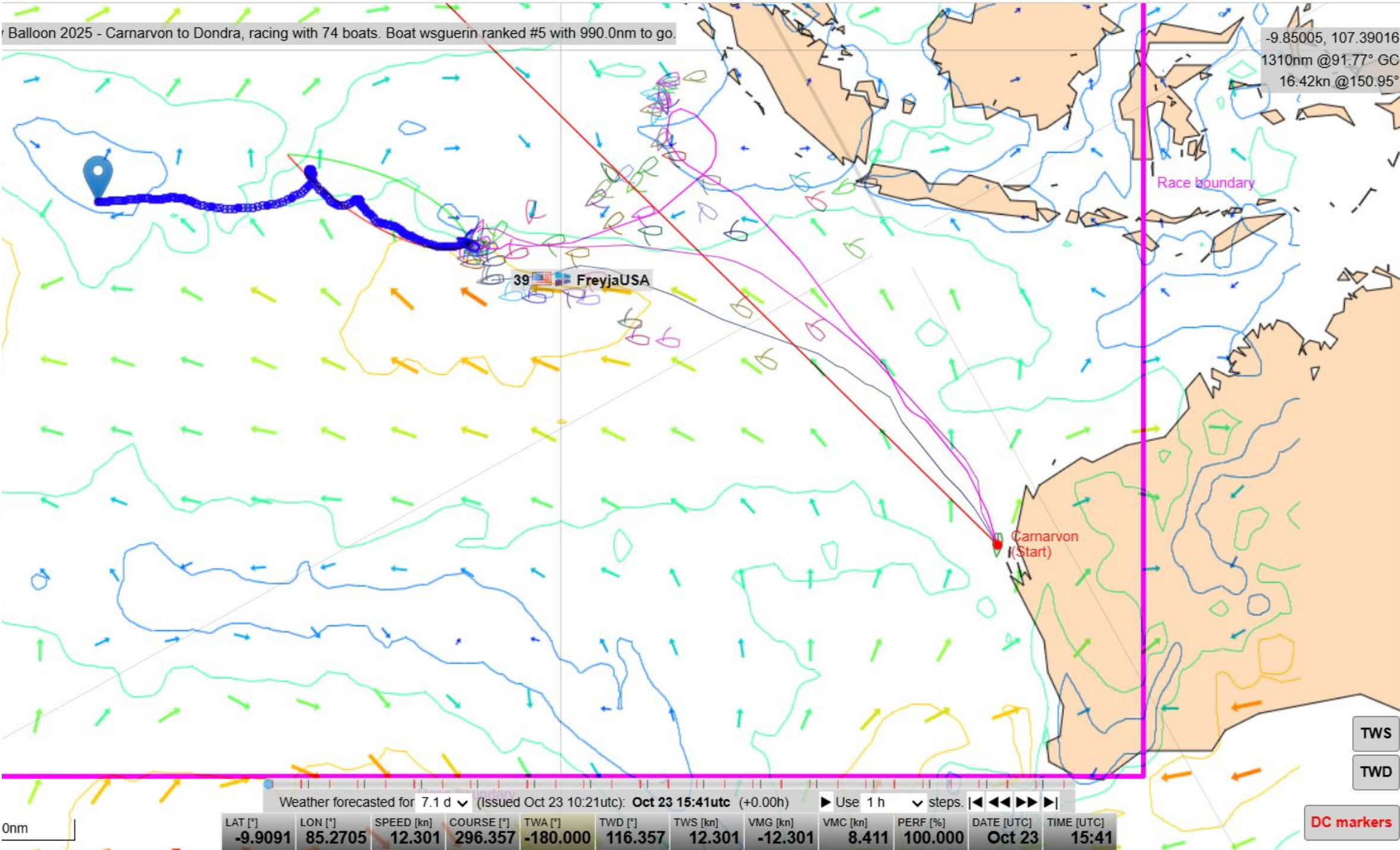


The struggle

WS headed north then west as planned, but it was tough going.

The ITCZ played havoc and QT was near useless for the balloon except it does allow one to see ahead with the 16-day GRIB.

The race started October 15th, and by October 23rd the fleet was casting their lots to the north (SMO et al), South (Freyja et al), and West (WS, Dikke, maybe Bonk)

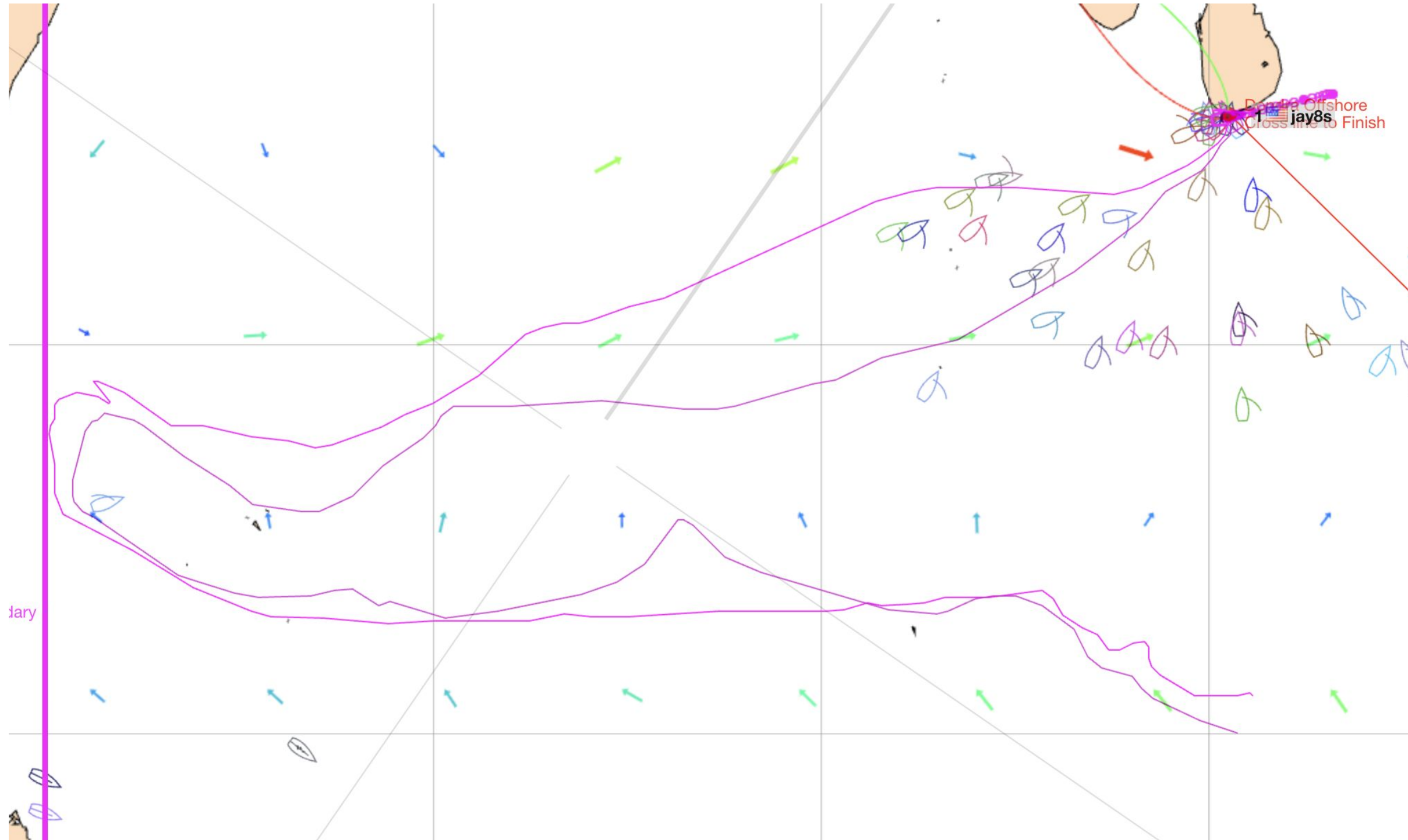


The boundary heave to

Along the edge, WS hove to or crawled north when he could as headwinds would not allow an approach to Dondra.

There were several others nearby and for days we flopped around out there.

The winner Jay8s was nearby until WS tried that zig-zag track to the northwest.

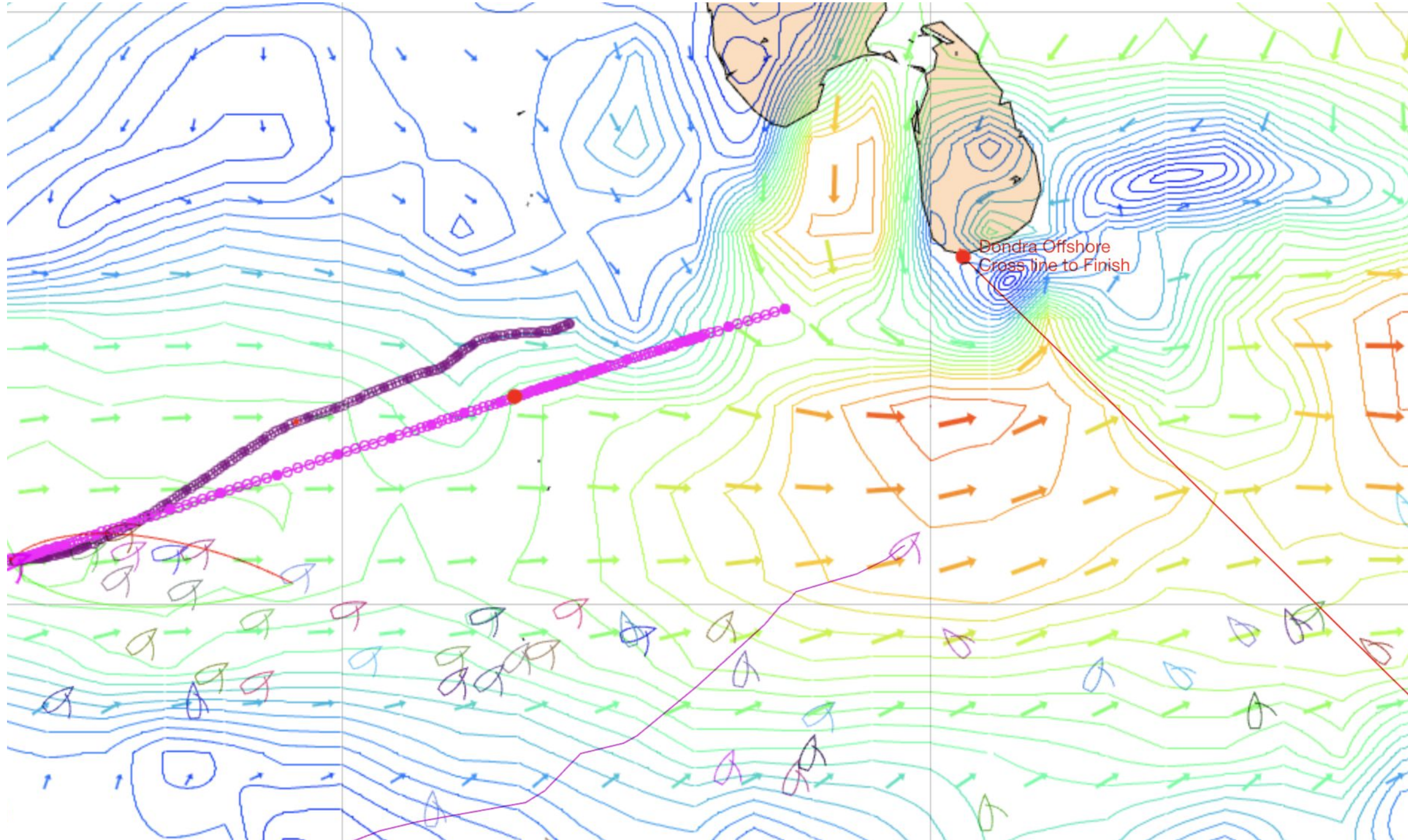


At last!

Around 11/20, The wind swung around as predicted and the Western group sped along with good VMC.

WS floated for a couple days at TWA +/-180 in 20+ kts and made up ground fast.

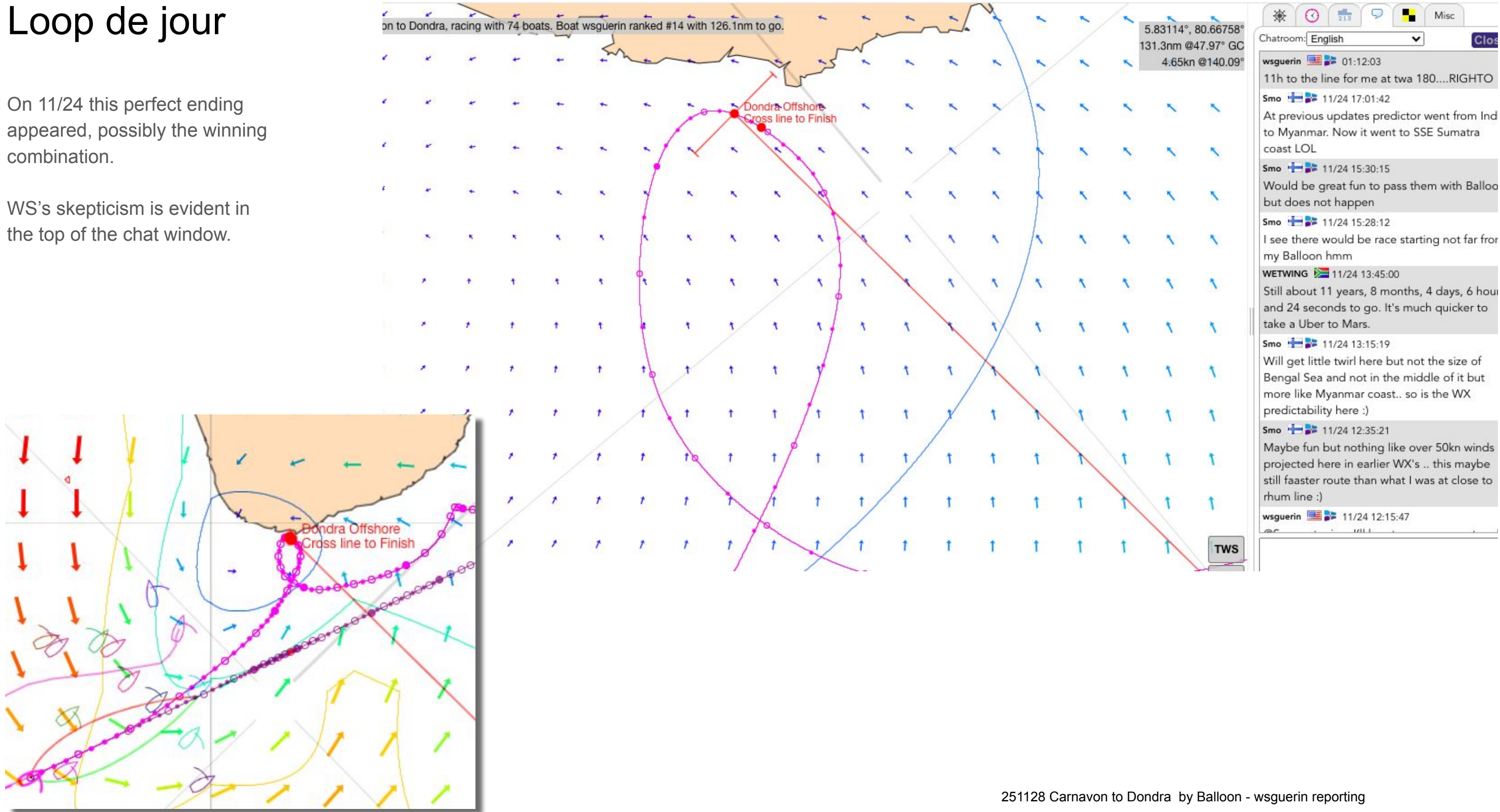
WS resolved to just point the boat at the finish on COG and let the directional variations average out.



Loop de jour

On 11/24 this perfect ending appeared, possibly the winning combination.

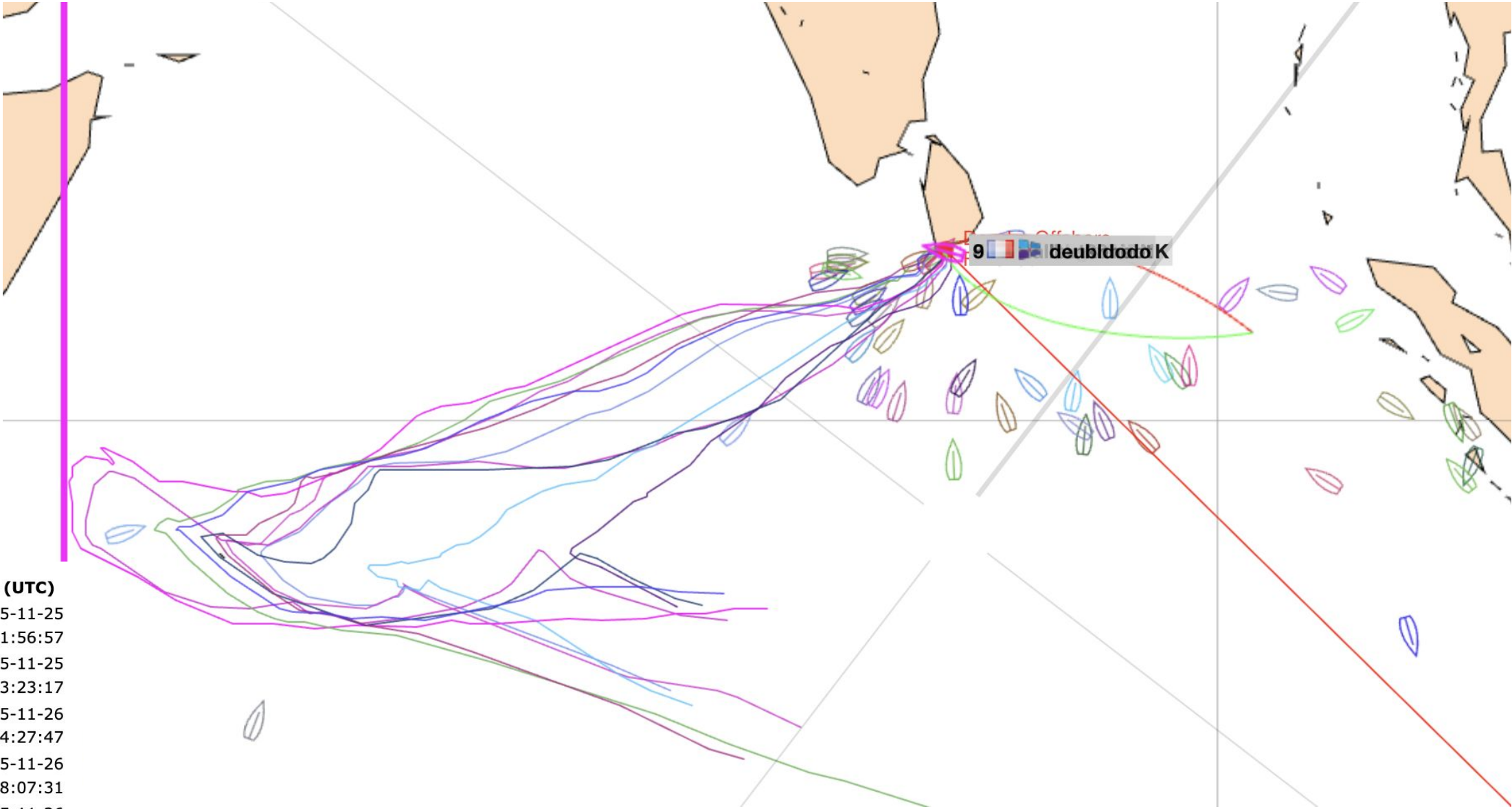
WS's skepticism is evident in the top of the chat window.









Butterfly effect

Tracks of the top ten finishers show that the basic plan to head West, scramble North, and be carried East to the line held up.

As of this writing (1100 EST on 11/28) only 10 boats have finished. WS logged 7222 miles in 41 days 22 hours.



Rank	Boat Name	Boat Type	DTG	DBL	Finish Time (UTC)
1	jay8s	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-25 11:56:57
2	 BS1	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-25 13:23:17
3	 DIKKEHENK	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-26 04:27:47
4	 Ibis	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-26 08:07:31
5	 wsguerin	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-26 09:28:49
6	 Olev	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-27 02:02:45
7	Halibut68	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-27 03:33:32
8	 bonknhoot	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-27 15:52:10
9	 deublodo	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-27 20:33:11
10	Kerran	SOL Balloon	0	0	2025-11-27 21:10:12

Congratulations to the podium, It's Dikke's second time (Transat 2022 Gold) and thanks to the SOL admins and to the great fleet of SOLers for these fun, mostly SOMP races!