

## Cape Town to Rio 2026 — Brent Gray (written by Copilot)

### 27 December — Start and first impressions

I pushed off at the start feeling the familiar mix of nerves and focus. With 160 C2R74s on the line the fleet spread quickly. My plan was simple: respect the **great-circle** — the shortest route, which runs south of the rhumb line — but only commit to it when the wind and timing made it worthwhile.

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### The middle miles — choices and gambles

Early on I chose a conservative southerly track to stay in steady breeze and avoid the light, fickle patches that can kill progress. That decision kept me moving consistently while others tried a northward gamble. Watching those who went north taught me to be patient; the gamble paid for some, but it also introduced a lot of variability. I waited for the right moment to transition back toward the main lane and that timing proved crucial.

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### The decisive hours — pressure and precision

The last 48 hours were relentless. With WX updates at 0430, 1030, 1630 and 2230 UTC I had to squeeze every tenth of a knot out of the boat and make tiny course adjustments that added up. It was tight VMG sailing, constant attention to wind shifts, and a few well-timed aggressive moves. I kept the pressure on, trusted the routing, and stayed disciplined when others overreached.

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### Highlights and feelings at the finish

Crossing the line at **2026-01-08 03:50:52 UTC** felt like the payoff for a week of small, correct decisions. Rafa and Nordee were right there, pushing hard and never letting me relax. I'm proud of how the team sailed the final approach — steady, controlled, and decisive when it mattered. The chat after the race was full of warm congratulations and tactical banter, which made the win feel even better.