

Strategy and Resilience: San Diego to Puerto Vallarta 2026

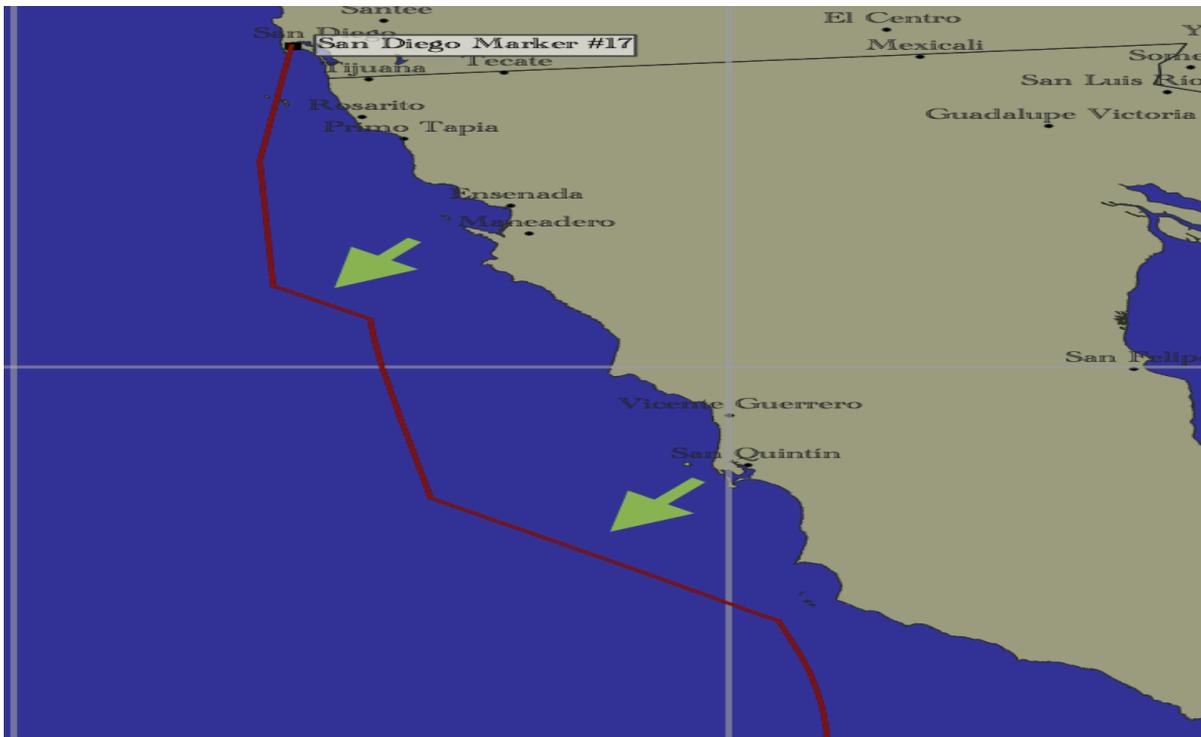
By: mb007 (Skipper, Santa Cruz 70)

My thanks go out to Sailonline and all the skippers in this elite fleet. This race was an intense game of oceanic chess from the very start, with two clearly defined paths: committing to the South or heading Southeast.

The Offshore Bet

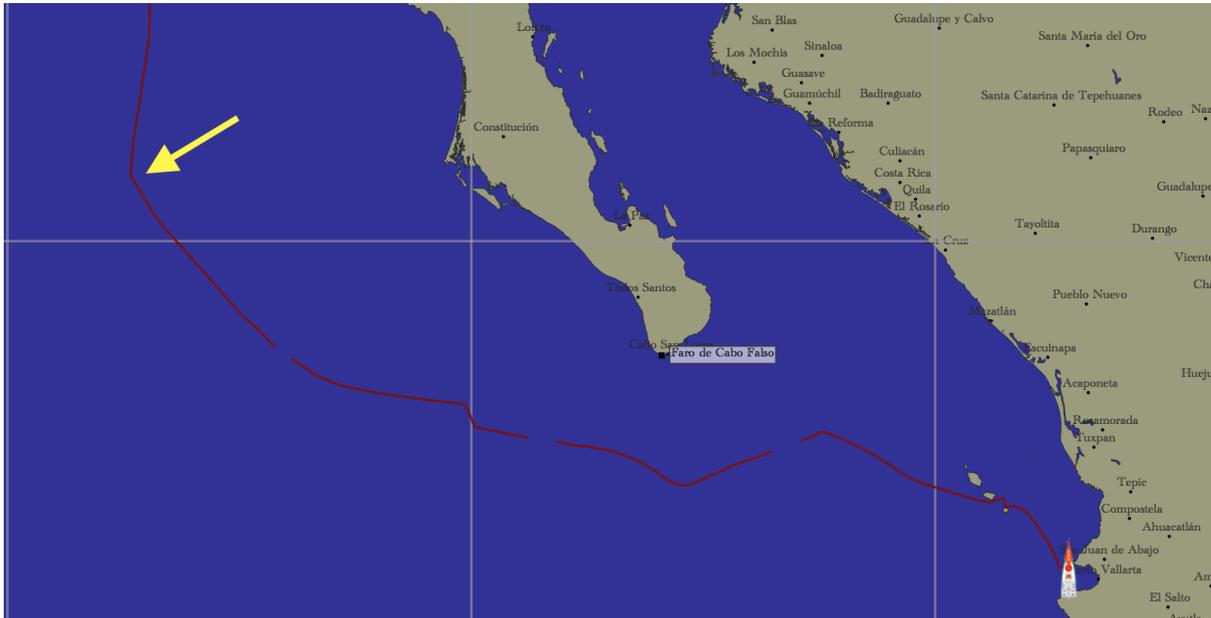
From the start, my conviction was to stay well offshore to avoid coastal orographic calms and find more stable wind pressure. I knew this decision would initially drop me down the leaderboard compared to those taking a more direct line toward the coast. However, this was a long-term play.

This strategy required surgical precision, as the course geometry constantly forced us back toward land. On two occasions, I had to close the angle toward the coast (**Capture 1 - Green Arrows**). I felt uneasy there; wind instability near land features is treacherous. As soon as the meteorological window opened, I headed back South, watching my ranking tumble once again, but trusting that the final approach angle would pay off.

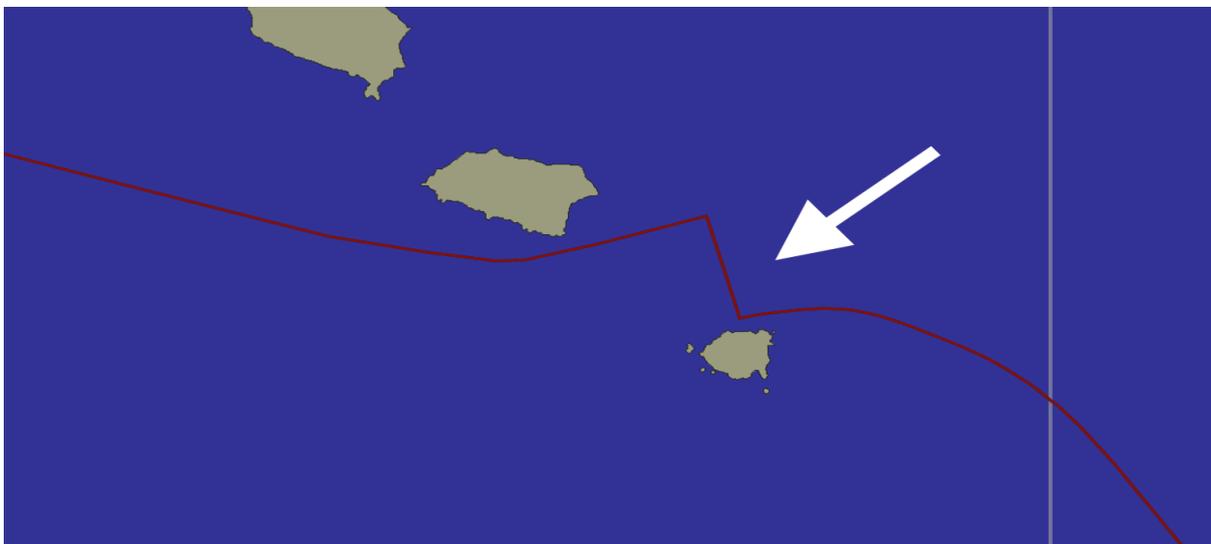


The Turning Point

Positioned 220 NM offshore, level with Constitución (160 NM NW of Cabo Falso), we began the definitive approach on a Southeasterly heading (**Capture 2 - Yellow Arrow**). At this point, a whole new race began.



The final stretch presented unique tactical challenges (**Capture 2 - White Arrow**). I observed elite skippers who tend to initiate maneuvers early with great success, but my focus was locked on **bonknoot**, who was shadowing my position closely. A wind shift (header/lift) was entering from the bow.



Turning East and then Northeast prematurely seemed inefficient. I waited for the exact gap to jibe South, calculating the space needed to enter the rotation without compromising our position against the island to leeward. After one last jibe before hitting the island's coast, **mb007** finally caught the wind rotation that propelled us swiftly toward the Southeast.

The Final Sprint: The Geometry Trap

The critical maneuver arrived when several boats were to the West and further South of my position (**Capture 3 - Red Arrow**). My final sprint plan was "etched in stone" in my router: a curved trajectory targeting the southern pin of the finish line.



We were heading South-Southeast, but the wind continued to clock. My obsession was to tack before this shift allowed the Western boats to cross my bow. My strategy was clear: close the door from below, forcing them to attempt an overtake from above (the outer arc). In light air, sailing that outer arc would force them to fall into my wake due to the geometry of the rotation.

Suddenly, the tension became unbearable. I saw one of my rivals maneuver earlier than my strategy dictated, and a "lemming effect" followed as the rest of the fleet joined in. I was still 4 minutes away from my ideal tacking point. It was the ultimate moment of doubt: do I cover them now or trust the routing?

I kept my hands "tied" to the original plan. Those were the longest 4 minutes of the race. Finally, the clock hit the mark, I tacked East, and **mb007** began tracing that great final curve toward the southern end of the line. Physics and meteorology did the rest: our superior VMG and the optimized use of the shift allowed us to secure the win.

Thanks again for the competition. See you at the next start!

MB 007