

Notes on winning IRC1 Round the Island Race

HW Portsmouth 9.45am

Commander's Weather Forecast

Event Isle of Wight Race 2009
Forecast for: Saturday, June 20, 2009
Prepared: 0600 Lt Saturday, June20, 2009

Summary...

- 1) Weather map shows large high pressure system centered to the SW of Ireland at noon today.
- 2) This large high will provide a WNW gradient wind for this race.
- 3) Model guidance is showing wind speeds mostly 7-10 kts at the surface.
- 4) Vertical profiles at 500 ft show winds 11 kts early building to 15 kts late pm toward evening.
 - a) This would indicate upper limit of the breeze today provided it can mix down.
- 5) Winds aloft will have trouble mixing down this morning as an upper level disturbance moves thru producing a few showers.
- 6) Radar does show a concentrated area of showers now moving SE thru southern half of England.
 - a) Expect this will dampen the breeze somewhat for the start of the race this morning.
- 7) But these should move out by late morning and there may be some breaks of sun this afternoon
 - a) No complete clearing is expected however.
- 8) Any brightening or sunny breaks will help to build the breeze this afternoon to its potential of 10-15 kts.
- 9) Gradient wind direction is around 300 this morning with a trend toward 280s this afternoon.
- 10) Winds aloft will be 280-290 this afternoon and that is where the stronger puffs will come from.
- 11) You are probably more familiar with the local affects around the Island but would think there would be a bit of a wind shadow on the SE side of the Island especially from St Lawrence to Bembridge.
 - a) The stronger winds likely further offshore
- 12) Also could see more of a left shift in the Solent this afternoon but you will be out of there by then.
- 13) May also see a slight right shift late pm in the Spithead as you head for the finish.

Saturday, June20

Time	Solent	Off SW Isle of Wight	Off SE Isle of Wight	Spithead	Comments
0800	290-310/ 6-10	290-310/ 8- 12			Clouds and showers thru mid am dampen the breeze
0900	290-310/ 6-10	290-310/ 8- 12			
1000	280-300/ 6-10	280-300/ 9- 13	290-310/ 7-11		
1100	270-290/ 7-11	280-300/ 9- 13	280-300/ 8-12	290-310/ 8- 12	
1200	270-290/ 8-12	280-300/10- 14	280-300/ 8-12	280-300/ 8- 12	Breeze begins to build In the pm
1300		270-290/10- 14	280-300/ 8-12	280-300/ 8- 12	
1400		270-290/11- 15	280-300/ 8-12	280-300/ 10- 14	Lightest winds near the shore eastern half of Isle- strongest offshore
1500			280-300/ 9-13	280-300/ 11- 15	
1600			280-300/ 9-13	280-300/ 11- 15	
1700			280-300/ 10-14	280-300/ 11- 15	Could be a small trend Right late pm in the Spithead
1800				285-305/ 11- 15	
1900				285-305/ 11- 15	

Weather... Cloudy with some showers this morning, Mostly cloudy this afternoon.

Wind Observations from on board Vortex

Time	True Wind Direction	True Wind Speed (kts)	Position
8.00	311°	6.6	Start line
8.30	291°	6.7	Off Newtown creek
9.00	270°	7.5	Off Yarmouth
9.30	284°	5.6	Approaching Hurst
10.00	261°	11.4	Hurst to the Needles
10.30	264°	13.1	Rounded the Needles
11.00	271°	12.1	From Needles to Cats
11.30	291°	13.8	From Needles to Cats
12.00	300°	12.8	Approaching St Cats

Built to 19kts and 260 direction from st cats around to Dunnose.

The breeze followed the topography really closely.

SE Sea breeze attempted to come in at Bembridge ledge before westerly tried to come back again.

A very quick burst of 4kts of NE before the westerly came over the island, a downdraft maybe?

Strategy and Tactics

Start to Needles

With the tide slightly against us at start time and a light NW breeze, but with the back eddy running along the island shore, we decided to start about 1/5th of the way up the line from the Squadron end. This was the point at which we could just lay Egypt Point, without taking, and whilst keeping clear air. Jim on Flair started right inshore to gain the most from the eddy, and suffered from bad air and a longer distance to sail.

With the forecast not predicting a left shift until later in the morning, we decided to sail straight into the slackening tide, on the rhumb line to Sconce. Again Jim decided to hug the shore and sail extra distance to get into the back eddy along the island shore.

As the breeze headed, to 260, footing off into the shore now paid and Jim crossed ahead as we passed Newtown creek and Hampstead Ledge. We got into the now westerly going tide and headed for the increasing pressure up from 6kts to 11kts as we got to Hurst, most of the increase coming from the tidal wind change, but some funnelling as well.

We got into the fast stream by Hurst and then headed to the Needles. Aiming close to the lighthouse, where we had surveyed the day before in a rib, we cut inside the wreck and gained on all boats around us. A1 hoisted and then we set off to St Cats.

Needles to St Cats

The need to get into the shore and out of the tide was clear, what wasn't clear was how the breeze was increasing from behind, bringing the boats behind up to us, but also that it was shifting from 260 to 300. Which made the tactical decision to go inshore more difficult as those offshore came in with the 40 degree shift as the breeze decided to follow the land, rather than the forecast, or the previous day's 260. The topography making a huge difference to the breeze direction.

As we approached St Cats, close to the beach, we were on the inside for the rounding and in the top five in IRC1c, with all the other boats insight.

St Cats to Bembridge

We hugged the shore to keep out of the tide, but got forced offshore whilst in gybing matches by a trimaran. As we headed further along we could see where the breeze front was, it was again following the topography really closely as the breeze moved from 300 back to 260 along this shore.

We aimed for where the breeze was in front of us, there was nothing to the right, out in the tide where Jim had gone and nothing under the cliffs approaching Sandown bay. We went down the middle towards Bembridge ledge. Halfway across Sandown bay, in generally clear breeze and having overtaken boats to the left and right, we noticed the SE sea breeze towards Bembridge, where boats were on opposite gybes. We headed a little more inshore knowing that the tide was slacker if the breeze did shut down.

Then it did! We positioned ourselves inshore out of the tide, a gentle SE came in and we went from A1 to Code 1, we then beat up to Bembridge ledge along the 2m depth line. We just rounded the cardinal when the breeze again dropped. We snuck around before any boats around us, but some did catch up. We tried to head back into the westerly but ended up with some NE, and then we footed off into the returning Westerly coming out of Bembridge itself.

Bembridge to Finish

With the new breeze we were off to ryde sands, following two J122's and a J133, leaving hundreds of boats behind! We played it safe along ryde sands knowing we didn't have to push it as we crossed tacks with the Farr45's. Then we just headed for the finish crossed about 9th over the line in group IRC1(out of 150) and first in IRC1c. Briefly we were 1st overall! But then Zarafa finished and then all the small boats too!

We won IRC 1c and group IRC1, winning the Owen Parker Memorial trophy for the first time it had been presented. Prize giving was the following day where we received prizes from Christine Parker and Ben Ainsle.

The brilliant crew for the day were:

Bow: Charlie

Mast: Tim

Pit: Freya

Pit: Jen

Trim1: Pete

Trim2: Ed

Main: Robo

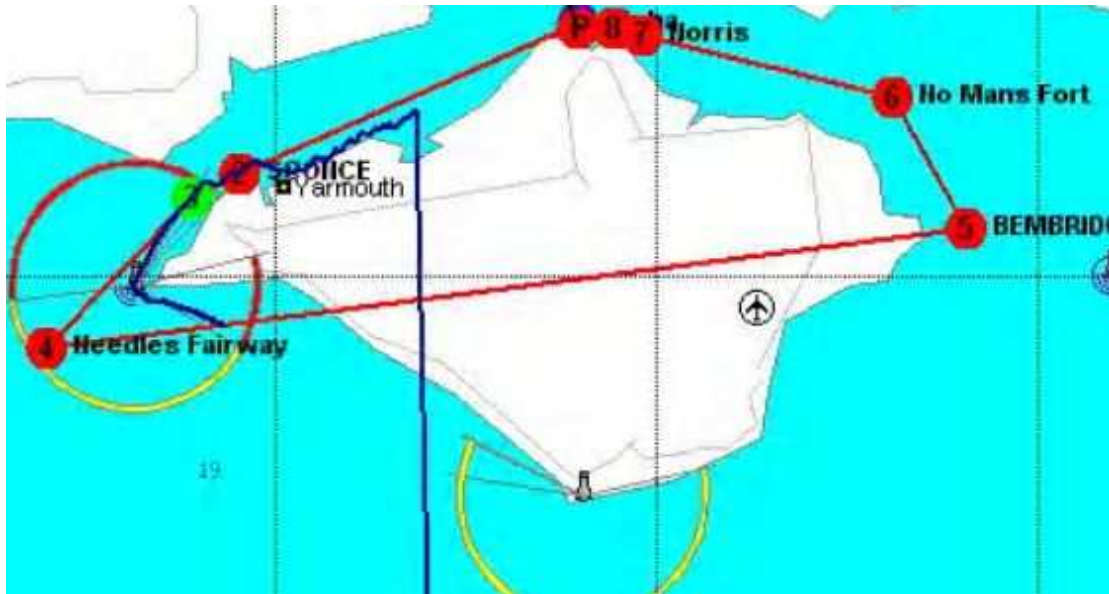
Navigation: Simon

Helm: Tim H



ANNEX

Track from Seatrack, heading around the needles.



Hugging the shore to St Catherines.

