

Conditions: 8-15 knot E/SE, lumpy sea at an angle to wind, especially towards the top of the course. Ebb tide almost directly opposed to wind direction.

What's the definition of insanity? One I've heard is: doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Call me insane then:

- Was having consistent trouble starting at the boat, occasionally getting shot out the back, but more frequently losing to boats that were starting further down the line and banging the left corner. So what did I do? Started at the boat some more and tried to make the right work!

- On the runs I was getting too far to the right of the fleet, and therefore had tough final 1/4s trying to work my back to the leeward gates against the ebb tide. So what did I do? Kept sailing to the right of the fleet downwind!

We've all been in similar situations (and the fast pace of frostbiting doesn't exactly lend itself to calm reflection between races), but obviously I was having problems and need to adjust.

Going into the last two races any one of three sailors could have prevailed: Mike Matan was fast with two 1sts (and would have had another in the opener if he'd finished correctly), a 2nd and a 4th; Steve Girling and I both had a 1st, two 2nds and a 3rd. Each of us had a stinker race. Unfortunately, these two boys went in early (Matan couldn't deal with the cold after spending most of the winter down in Florida, and Girling had a date with two VERY cute blondes), so it was Blake Marriner who kept up the pressure, logging a 1st and 3rd in the two final races to end up second overall (and notably having no race worse than a 7th--he would have easily won the day without throw-out!).

Finally I got tired of being stupid and played the percentages. Specifically:

- In the easterly with an ebb, started to the left of the fleet to lead them to the ebb coming out of the nearby channel. It sure was nice watching the fleet to windward falling down onto my hip the further we sailed on starboard!

- Sailed all the way to the port tack layline, taking into account the ebb in calculating said layline.

- Rounded the top mark and dove HARD down at first to stay to the left of the fleet while sailing downwind. This allowed me to ride the really big swells to the right later in the leg and still average out close to rhumbline.

- Rounded the right leeward gate (looking downwind) to stay to the favored left side on the second beat.

- Took extra care to not overstand the port-tack layline to the finish (kept head up).

Result: a convincing win.

Guess the insanity was just temporary, but it sure made my day stressful. When you're having a rough time, try to isolate just ONE aspect that didn't work for you in the race just sailed and steel yourself to NOT MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN. Yacht racing is rarely about being brilliant, and more often about making fewer mistakes than one's competitors. By systematically identifying and eliminating errors, results can go nowhere but up.

Many thanks to Tim Millheiser and crew for running 8 good races in the bumpy conditions.

Marc Jacobi