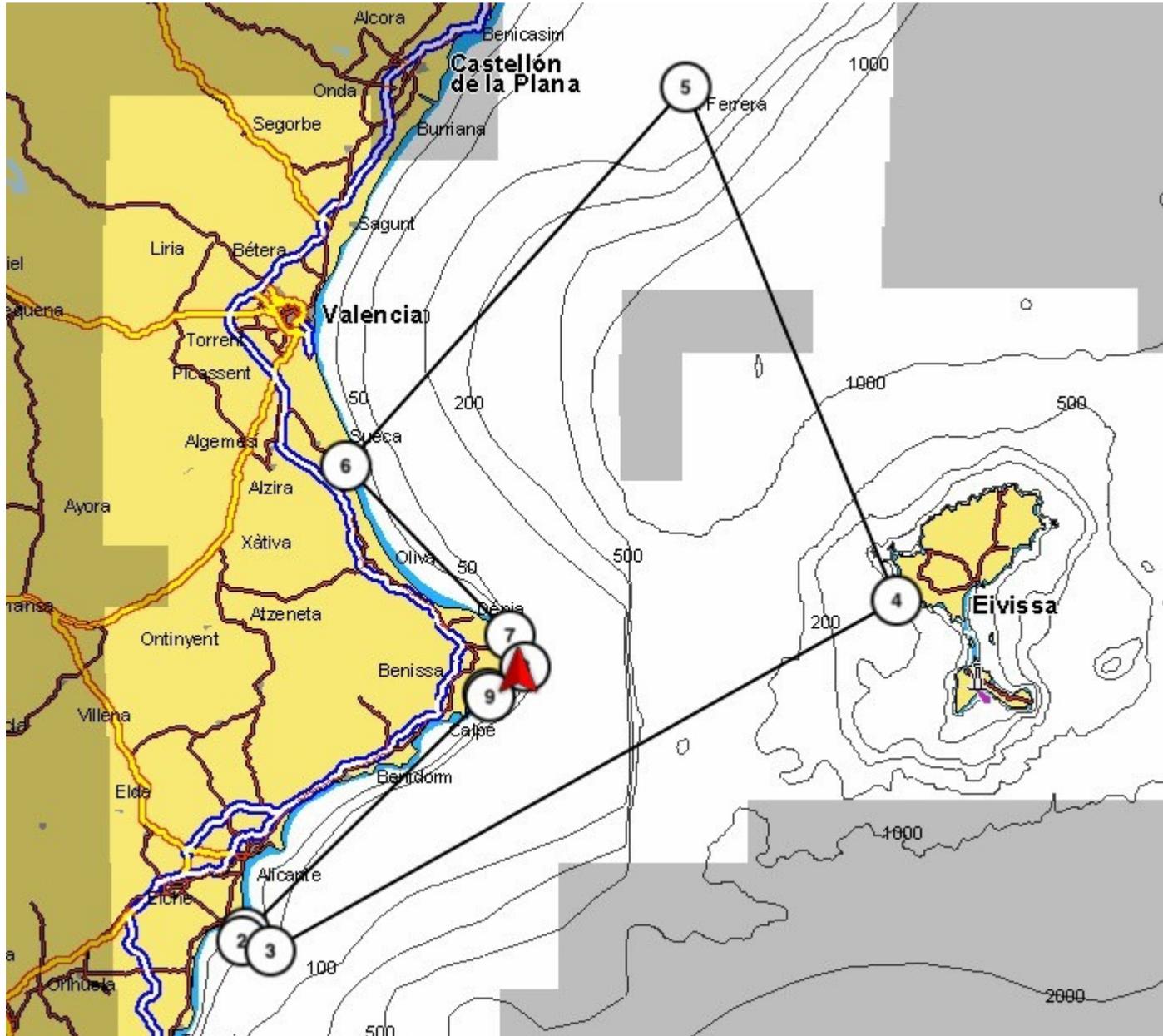


300 Milles A3

29 December 2016



A pretty satisfactory end to our 2016 season with five third places from the last five races. And all carrying a relatively high ORC rating. Now we are all set - complete with new rating - for 2017.

We are now beginning our preparation for the first race of the year, the 300 Milles A 3, scheduled to start 1200 on Wednesday 18th January - and thought you might be interested in what we are doing.

It's a 3 crew / 300 mile event. The course is typically from Moraira down to an island off Alicante, out to west coast Ibiza, up to an island off Castellon, back down the coast inside some rocks off Gandia, then further south to round Cabo de la Nau and finish back off Moraira. I've got good pals Kevin Moss (Javea) and Chris Gibson (Lymington) doing it with me.

We've already agreed on a 6 hours on / 3 hours off watch system, meaning there's at least two on deck full time over the 300 mile course. It's what we used on our delivery trip from IK to Spain and it worked well.

Typically on a medium distance race like this most crew are wired and full on at the starts and towards the finish. I personally think this creates opportunities in the middle part of the race - so when the others might relax - we aim to maybe break out from our watch system to pile on the pressure.

Well that's the plan, anyway. 😊 My plans usually go to pot once the race starts.....

So what's the work to be done on Jumbuck before we set off?

I've already had the wheel off the boat to reseat the leather grip and strengthened up a loose spoke. It's alloy, and only held together by compression. If that came apart half way round it would provide a bit of a challenge.....

(I've actually checked out new carbon wheels for the 109. In fact Father Christmas told me to get it. Sadly, his sledge won't arrive until after month end).

As this race is Category 4 with EPIRB and life rafts, we've also got the task of selecting minimal items to get her back up from her coastal racing lightweight mode. At the least it means refitting the lee cloths, buying new flares, fitting deck lines, Dan buoy, Life Raft and all the associated kits required offshore.

I've also got to check out our autopilot as I suspect it's going to take some load if there's only 3 of us trying to push the boat hard. It took quite a bashing on our 3 handed delivery trip down here, even managing to handle the helm ok in 40 knot winds from behind, so it is well due a good once over. Same same with steering gear as I've heard a few unusual noises on the last races, and now found bolts working loose on the idler sheaves carrying the steering wires aft! So they all need looking at pronto tonto. Lucky I checked - eh!

But all that shouldn't take us too long - and with the corrected ORC GPH rating now at 617.8 - a huge 6 seconds per mile better than before - it's well worth taking time to ensure we stay as light as possible to be in with a good chance.

The race officials have asked for all participants to be at the host club, CN Moraira, by Saturday 15th so they can do safety checks and also seal the gearbox. With these more valuable prize races, competitors are towed out to the start and then the seal is checked again once you've crossed the finish to ensure no motoring underway. But guess with €3000, €2000 and €1000 up for grabs, they're not taking any chances of anyone cheating if the fleet hits lighter winds.....

We've also drawn up a provisions list for the three of us, anticipating we will be back inside 72 hours. Main meals are Curry night one, chilli night two, Frey Bentos steak pies night three.....If the winds get super light then it will probably help us if we have no choice but to crash diet on day four! Worst thing is the decision to carry only one case of beer.....

With bottled water for drinking we only need carry enough to rinse things with in the tank, and I'm happy with the half tank of fuel we've got right now. Long term forecasts continually indicate it's going to be a light wind event, so weights quite critical.

Then we also need to strategise where we are going to go. I've had a look at the last two races on the tracking website, fresh winds in 2015, very light in 2016. In 2015 they did it in reverse direction. Assume it's weather direction dependent on start day.

It is possible to get long range detailed forecasts via Accuweather, but despite the name they are not exactly accurate this far out from race date. But it hasn't stopped me checking projected wind direction / strengths every few days and trying to plan race strategies for each of the forecasts. Trouble is those forecasts have differed from 5 knot drifters up to 30 knot blasts on the same days.....and gone from SW to WSW to NW and even N.....but at least having strategised every one of them, we've at least got a fag packet plan on what to do.

One major advantage we've got over lots of others is our Seatrack Race Routing software. If the forecasted Grib files (wind maps) are correct, it allows us to download those files, overlay those with the course, and with Jumbucks performance polars, and get suggestions on which way to go and what sails are optimum.....

So provided there's differing wind across the course (and it's not all straight line reaching), Seatrack it could be hugely influential on our results.

The officials install other tracking devices on every boat, so I've added a link on the right hand side bar of this page. Right up until race start you can view 2016s race.

The reason I'm praying it doesn't become a moderate wind / straight line reaching race is that if it is, then it will be tough for our little 10 metre boat to keep pace with the bigger boys.

But should that happen, and it likely at some stage of the lozenge shaped course, then we would prefer to reach in light winds where we can use our Code 0 to advantage. Or if the ends in any way aft, we would alternately love heavy breeze. One advantage we smaller boats have over the large ones is the relative ease we can handle our sails.

Dale Andar - the Dufour 36 Performance - who last year came 5th on corrected time in the light conditions, will again be our 'boat to beat'. If we can do as well on this longer race as we did against her in the Trofe Navidad, I'd be well pleased. In fact our new offshore rating means 'Dale Andar' will owe us 7.5 minutes on this 300 miler. Just got to keep them behind us.....□

So it's on on.

Excited.

Fingers crossed for the right conditions.

Can't wait.