

Making a sail racing course



Here are some of my views on how to make a sail racing course for Virtual Skipper.

I guess all skippers have slightly different opinions on what is a good, (or bad) course (map).

I have made hundreds of maps, but it is still a challenge to make what I would call a “good” map.

I don't tell you to make maps like mine, but I will share some of my thoughts when I make a new map.

I firstly consider some general decisions:

- Boat type
- Purpose with the course
- Expected skills and type of skippers
- Complexity
- Number of skippers
- Duration
- Pre-start time

Boat type

I make most of my maps for the ACC boat. I still believe ACC is the boat that best resembles, behaves and feels like a real traditional racing yacht.

Purpose with the course

Nowadays most of my maps are created for use in top regattas. They can of course be used by anyone on open servers.

Expected skills and type of skippers

Since the maps are mainly directed to top events, the expectancy of the skills, rules knowledge and general behaviour of the skippers, are set quite high.

Complexity

I try to make maps that gives the skippers different options to approach the marks, especially the 1st mark. If the top skippers have taken different paths to reach the 1st mark and arrive there more or less at the same time, I would say that is a good 1st leg. I want the skippers to use their brains, not only their fingers 😊 I seldom make real strong wind maps. Light wind maps are the toughest!

Number of skippers

My maps are usually set with 30 starting spots, but I recommend not having more than 20 skippers in the starting fleet.

Duration

My maps are usually set to last between 25 to 30 minutes for the top boats. If you make the course shorter, I think the start will be too important and the first leg tends to be too short to possibly spread the fleet.

Pre-start time

Pre-start time is always set to 5 minutes. It gives the skippers good enough time to prepare tactics/strategy to plan for a good start. It also gives new skippers longer time to join the race. I place the starting points so that no collisions occur if each boat maintains its course.

After creating some ideas based on the above thoughts, it is time to set the parameters and start making the map.

- Site
- Wind strength/Direction
- Oscillating/Shifty
- Expected TWA
- Current
- Obstacles
- Starting line
- First (upwind) leg
- Roundings
- General

Site

I look for a venue racing site and an area where I can create a map based on the criterias set, and ideas I have. NOTE! The conditions for the racing sites and even different areas in a site, may vary.

Wind strength/Direction

Chose the cardinal direction and Beaufort wind strength.

Oscillating/Shifty

Set the Shifts parameter. I mostly use Oscillating.

Expected TWA

Should the angle be fixed? Bending? Or varying? Different in different areas?

Current

None? Same direction throughout the whole race? Or changing over time? Strength? Different in different areas?

Obstacles

Do you want some obstacles (usually islands) on the course to make the skippers have to make strategic/tactical decisions?

Starting line

I usually make starting at the pin end a little more favoured. Reason: "Give the lefties a chance". On a perpendicular starting line, the boats starting on starboard at the committee boat are favoured by controlling the boats to leeward and having the possibility to tack to port before the leeward boats. The tilt of the line may depend on the set of the other parameters and map conditions.

