



Getting off to the right start

A must-buy this year is *Solent Racing*. The following excerpts deal with two of the biggest Cowes Week starting conundrums: Squadron line to the west against the tide and the dreaded downwind, downtide starts

RYS STARTS HEADING WEST

Scenario 1 – Beating south-west against the tide

Starting on Line 1, between RYS and West Bramble, head out for the start early so you have plenty of time to work out which marks will definitely involve a beat along the north shore and those that will favour the island shore. This will give you a dividing line between the two routes. There may be some questionable marks along this line for which it's unclear which route will be favoured. In most conditions with a south-westerly wind, this dividing line runs roughly from East Lepe to Hampstead Ledge.

Eight times out of ten, the West Bramble end is favoured in these conditions – even though the inshore end of the line is generally biased as far as wind is concerned. The aim should be to launch yourself towards Lepe Spit, with an early tack onto port and the aim of making use of the

large area of relief west of the spit.

This is especially true when heading to windward marks on the mainland side of a line from East Lepe to Hampstead Ledge – anything to the north of this line, you will want to beat along the mainland shore; anything to the south will require beating along the Island shore.

If the first mark is East Lepe or Hampstead Ledge, it's often very difficult to decide whether to go north or south. The conditions on the day will determine whether you take the Island or mainland shore.

When assessing this, don't attempt to take average wind direction readings close inshore off the RYS – you need to get into clean air further offshore to get accurate data.

In addition, East Lepe buoy was moved 0.22nm (403m) on a bearing 212M from its previous position in 2006. The new location favours starting close to the Island shore more frequently than previously

as the buoy is now further from the mainland shore, and is also 0.12nm closer to Alpha than to West Bramble.

Scenario 2 – Running east with tide and wind

Work out which buoys will definitely call for starting at the South Bramble end of the line and which will require a start closer to the shore. The two vital variables here are distance and wind angle. Which marks are physically closer to each end of the line? Which marks can be reached on a single gybe and which will require sailing VMG?

The east-going tide runs faster north of Ryde Middle Bank than south of it for all but the first hour of flow. On a long leg, such as when leaving the Solent, it pays to start near South Bramble and aim to leave NE Ryde Middle buoy close to starboard. Aim to pass north of the bank (but not over it) to gain tidal advantage and a slightly hotter angle through the east Solent.

However, in the pre-start jostling for position, make sure you don't get trapped with a slower boat sitting on your air.

A more northerly start also tends to avoid the shifty wind that extends out from Norris and Osborne Bay.

SOLENT RACING



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