

DeBrief: Choppy Breeze | Moding & Wind Trends

January 28, 2018 in Biscayne Bay

Conditions: South East wind, veering (trending right) throughout day. Wind speed between 13-16 knots. Low tide. Choppy, especially over shallow areas of bay. Big backwash near Grove Isle.

JIB SET UP

Managing the slot was critical for performance today. A few team started on middle/outer. That is, middle on the clew board and outer pin setting on the jib car. This creates a lot of vertical tension along the jib's entire leech, which means that there is very little twist up top.

The only way to keep the air flowing with the jib at this setting was to keep the main in tight, widening the gap. Hard to do in puffy conditions, especially when the risk of backwinding the main's upper luff slows the skiff's performance.

Middle/middle setting gave the jib enough twist in it's upper leech so that it reduced the risk of a thin slot. An open slot means less backwinding and keeps the boat planing at full speed upwind, as long as the crew does their job of keeping the boat flat.

A slightly fuller jib foot also gives the jib the depth it needs to punch the bow through the waves.

ANGLES UPWIND

The wind direction at and swell direction weren't perfectly lined up. The south easterly wind direction meant the breeze was slightly left of the chop. This meant that boats on port (upwind) sailed more head on into the waves than boats on starboard, as starboard boats had the swell more to their beam.

Moding upwind was really only an option on starboard. There was no seastate penalty for a high mode on starboard tack, and boats could use their high and low modes to create vertical distance and leverage on others around them when on starboard tack.

On port, boats had to hold a low lane to get through the chop, or otherwise lose a lot of water by forcing the bow up.

Strategically, with the breeze's right trend, if you held with the pack and moded on the first leg you could create space to then maintain on port back to the mark. Boats that split on the second upwind and sailed on port out of the gate, were able to make big gains while sailing the long tack back to the mark. Moding on starboard tack, especially on your final approach to the mark was critical for gaining water to set up for the downwind.

FINAL TAKE AWAYS

It's important to work through these steps and sort things out prior to racing, rather than learning as you go.

DeBrief: Choppy Breeze| Moding & Wind Trends

Once you dial in your jib and daggerboard settings for conditions, start to pay attention to the nuances of the day's conditions. The chop factor impacted boat's moding and performance on each side. There were strategic implications and identifiable pros and cons to each tack.

Figuring this out before the warning signal takes time, so on race day it's important to work through this problem solving. Adding this type of examination of the race course, asking: "Can we approach each tack the same, or do we need to sail one side differently?" should be a question you add to your routine list of boxes to check.