

Aggressive vs Conservative vs Stupid



The tactical decisions we make during a race sometimes are usually a combination of conservative and aggressive moves. Unfortunately these decisions sometimes result in being stupid. I feel there are many times during a race you need to make a tactical decision that should be both conservative and aggressive.

THE START

The start is the time to set up a conservative plan and then aggressively execute the plan without being stupid.

Conservative plan:

- Starting in the favored third of the line
- Approaching the line on port tack
- Not setting up before 1 min
- Having a space behind while sailing on port
- Having a good hole to leeward at the start
- Trimming up on port prior to tacking
- Completing the tack prior to luffing
- Aiming at port tack boats (get them to tack soon)
- Knowing the time needed to get up to target

Aggressive plan:

- Bailing out when a boat tacks close behind during final port tack approach
- If overlapped on final port tack approach, luffing up to break overlap
- Tacking close to windward group and keeping the space close
- Tacking and aiming at port tack boat, then quick luff to gauge
- Working hard to get the favored end of the line

Stupid

- fouling a boat while on port or while tacking (no rights)
- being over the line with 30 sec to go (committees write the number)
- tacking outside the lay lines for either end
- being over early

[more]



UPWIND Leg #1

The goal of the first leg is to be in the top five at the top mark.

Conservative

- Tacking as soon as possible with out ducking boats
- Staying in the middle of the cone
- Sailing target speed all the time
- Cross the fleet when possible
- Approaching the mark late on starboard

- Tacking well prior to lay lines and ducking when behind
- Sailing in clear air

Aggressive

- If ahead sailing on to better pressure or shift when crossing is possible
- Sailing to either edge for an advantage
- Approaching the top mark on port tack
- Sailing "Wally" high, slower while headed and fast, lower when lifted
- When crossing on port asking "do you want us to tack or cross?"
- Sailing in bad air to get to a shift

Stupid

- tacking early and fouling a boat while crossing
- sailing to a side that turns out to be the wrong side
- tacking inside the two boat circle at the top mark and fouling a boat



DOWNWIND Leg 2

This is the leg the boats usually separate, so consider the course, understand where the leeward mark is and push hard to gain one boat.

Conservative

- Bare away set

- Sailing target True Wind Angle all the time
- Sailing the headed gibe early
- Crossing the fleet once of upwind boats
- Keeping the air clear
- Staying inside at leeward mark
- Rounding the favored gate
- Spinnaker up and down on left side of the boat
- Staying inside the downwind cone

Aggressive

- Quick gibe at top mark
- Sailing "Wally" fast, high in a header and low, slow in a lift
- Setting up to be inside on the long gibe
- Deep turn down at top mark to be in a low position on starboard
- Executing a fake gibe
- Last ten lengths, pole less for more options when rounding gates
- Fighting for an overlap, circle perpendicular to transom
- Gibing on oscillations
- Sailing thin lanes (a small amount of clear air)
- Gibing when boat ahead gibes to block air

Stupid

- rounding top mark high, allowing boats behind to get inside
- gibing early and not crossing the starboard boats behind
- rounding the bottom mark outside other boats
- claiming room when the overlap was established too late
- sailing low and slow

UPWIND Leg 3

This is the leg to take control if ahead or chip away at the lead behind, do not look for the home run.

Conservative

- Tight leeward mark rounding and clearing air soon
- Tight leeward mark rounding and tacking when boat behind tacks
- Sailing inside the cone
- If leading protecting the favored side with close covering
- If behind, sailing the favored tack to the wind
- Cross the fleet when possible
- Leaning towards the side that worked on leg 1
- Approaching the top mark on starboard

Aggressive

- Very high exit out of leeward mark
- Sailing in bad air to get to favored side
- Sailing to the edge of potential favored side

- If leading sailing only shifts
- If behind sailing for more leverage
- Approaching the top mark on port

Stupid

- rounding leeward mark wide
- sailing the headed tack too long
- fouling a boat on a cross
- when leading loosing the lead
- when behind sailing to the unflavored side and hoping for a miracle
- tacking inside the two boat circle and fouling a boat

DOWNWIND leg 4 and finish

Last leg, time to gain one more boat back by making leaders sail in bad air, or if ahead keep your air clean in front of your competition.

Conservative

- Bare away set
- Sailing the favored gibe first
- Sailing in clear air
- Sailing target angles
- Covering competition with wind ahead of boats
- When behind staying inside downwind cone
- Finishing a closest end

Aggressive

- Set and gibe at top mark
- Setting up to use starboard as an advantage
- Gibing on boats ahead breeze
- Sailing headed gibe
- Covering boat behind with breeze aft
- Finishing at favored end deep

Stupid

- When behind sailing to the extreme wrong side
- When ahead not covering boats behind
- Allowing boats behind to gibe on your breeze
- Sailing to the wrong end of the line

I like to start all my decisions by being conservative and then hopefully execute the plan in an aggressive manner. I only hope the outcome is not stupid, yet if it is I will just say, "That was stupid" and get over it and make the next decision again conservative.

Sailing is not like gambling in that you do not have to win back your losses all at once. This game is all about minimizing mistakes and the boat the usually make the

least mistakes wins. Unless there was a big shift and the race is many reach legs, there are times to chip back up and down wind. Break the race up into many small races and view each decision independent from the last.

Decisions

- When to leave the dock
- Pre race practice
- The pre start
- The start
- The first tack
- The middle of the 1st leg
- The end of the 1st leg
- The beginning, middle and end of all the following legs
- The finish

Start each decision with a thought out conservative plan and then be as aggressive as possible with out going over the edge and being stupid. Have fun and sail hard.

...Wally Cross- North Sails

