

Summary of the 2019 D2M Race

Racing started at 15:00 on Thursday February 28th in a 7kts SW breeze but within 30 minutes the wind had swung to NE and increased to 20+ kts and the boats continue to beat up the coast of the UAE passing from the Emirates of Dubai to Sharjah, Ajman and Ras Al Khaimah.

In the shallow waters and squally conditions during the first afternoon and evening, with rain and gusts over 30 kts many of the cruising fleet found the conditions arduous and retired with broken forestay and ripped sails. El Seraya broke inshore and hugged the coast overnight, taking advantage of the offshore breeze that turned quickly backed into more of a beat for those yachts further out. By dawn El Seraya have built up a healthy 10 mile lead when the lighter morning airs held back the fleet off Ras Al Khaimah.

Severe weather conditions were forecast for Friday night, with 30+35+ kts gusting 50 knots predicted in the Straits of Hormuz. Following a race committee meeting prior to the start and a meeting of the race skippers, Amendment 2 to the Sailing Instructions was issued and a safety line included that the boats had to pass by 18:00 on Friday 1st. And provision for seeking refuge in the nearby Port of Khasab or into one of the many Khors.

All boats cleared the 'safety line' and continued racing. The lead boat 'El Seraya' sailed through the 'gap' into the gulf of Oman and encountered 5m seas, beating into 30k winds. After a few tacks El Seraya decided the conditions were too severe and turned back to the nearest town of Khasab. News of the conditions were passed on to the fleet and all boats decided to seek refuge except for Exodus, an X-boat EC45 skippered by Phil Ellerby (the most experienced D2M sailor in the fleet with over 15 previous races). Exodus is continuing to Muscat. The rest of the fleet set up to wait out the severe weather until Saturday and to then chase to catch Exodus before Muscat will begin.

At 10:30 am on Saturday 2nd March the severe weather had blown over and the fleet were cleared by Race Control to resume racing, sailing out of Khasab bay into the strong 30 kt westerly breeze. However Exodus was by this time over 100miles ahead having sailed wide around the top corner of the Mussandam and on turning towards Muscat, taking the strong westerly breeze on her starboard quarter and averaging 10 kts with 3 reefs in the main and a No 3 Genoa.

The fleet re-started and sailed around the top of the Mussandam into light airs in the shadow on the mountains. And spent a frustrating night and early hours of Sunday before reaching the more consistent westerly breezes. The lighter race boat 'Playmate' was first to break through and built up a 10 mile lead on Twister who should be the faster boat in the reaching conditions, making for a great battle to reach Muscat. With the First 36.7 'Pink Diamond' also in pursuit.

Perfect sailing conditions of 20-30 kts broad reach carried the fleet quickly across the Gulf of Oman and into Muscat. With Exodus crossing the line on early on Sunday morning and the remainder of the fleet on Monday morning. Twister made good use of the planning conditions and headed slightly east of the Rhumb line to stay in the stronger breeze for longer, achieving a maximum speed over 17 kts. Overtaking Playmate to claim second place overall. With Pink Diamond finishing strongly to secure third place overall.

30,000 virtual sailors are racing from Dubai to Muscat on [Virtual Regatta](#)