



Racing in Federation Week -

the crucial first beat

Roger Palmer, shown here sailing in his Flying Fifteen 'Saffina', has raced on Chichester Harbour for 40 years. Here he gives advice on the challenges of sailing in Federation Week.

The challenge of sailing in Federation Week on spring tides is a complex calculation of wind and tide. Starting about one hour before high water the tide is still flooding forcefully and great care needs to be taken in choosing the correct path to the first mark.

After the first leg is over the race tends to be between those boats that have successfully countered the challenges of the first leg. If your start is not the first, you have the luxury of observing the efforts of earlier fleets both on the line and on the leg. If not, and you are first away, you will have to think it all through. The advice which follows may assist.

Before the start, indeed onshore, a lot of work has to be done. Check your rig tune for expected wind strengths. Know the weather forecast and likely changes and compare this with your own assessment. On going afloat look out for the inflatable mark on the Winner. See if it is to the left or right of centre. Equally important, check for wind angles as you cross from Hayling Island Sailing Club to the start.

South Easterly wind (140°-170°)

If the start is from N.W. Pilsey area check if the port tack can lee-bow the tide. If so, a starboard tack to the East followed by a long port may bring best results. Check

that the starboard tack is headed as you go in over Pilsey. As port tack is a long one it may be difficult to judge the exact lay line to the Wittering inflatable buoy some distance away. Avoid the Emsworth Channel tide and use the shelter of Pilsey sands.

Southerly Wind (170°- 190°)


As the start is over the Pilsey sands the weather mark is often placed on the middle of the Winner Bank where there is considerable tidal flow. So there are choices to be made. Will it pay to take a route around the East Head spit and break out on to the Winner? Will a more central course up the Pilsey sands to Mid-Winner using the tidal shelter of the high part of the bank pay? Whatever course is taken the result at the mark will be definite; you are either in the race, hopefully in front, or trailing badly while the leaders rush off down wind and tide to the next mark. The tide sweeps right to left on the first part of the leg, dead against over the Winner and follows the channel to Itchenor in between. Mental simulation comes in here. You have to imagine each route either to east or west and judge where you will be at a certain time. If you are at the green buoys before the boats are at East Head you are probably right to choose that side.


Check if any good lee-bow tacks are available perhaps by the red channel buoys, Stocker and Sandhead. Once over the Winner keep the power on and overstand the mark to avoid hitting it because of the current. Don't pinch. Full and bye is order of the day to get over the tide.

In extremely light airs (less than 3 knots) the Hayling shore can be used. A route that crosses to the west side of the Hayling moorings and passes close to Hayling Island Sailing Club, using the tidal eddy which carries you south, can bring you as far as the lifeboat station at the entrance to the Harbour with little difficulty. Here the decision when to strike across the main channel tide to the Winner is crucial. Best to wait for a puff of wind otherwise all the good work can be undone.

South Westerly Wind (200°-240°)

The likely start is in Ellanore/Rookwood area. The Race Officer is likely to set his line to tempt competitors to use the Pilsey Sands rather than East Head. However, East Head provides such good relief from adverse current that it is hard to resist. Once off the line seek the Ellanore shore where depth is good at springs and where a header on starboard tack can be expected. Tack close up to this shore avoiding the strong current until the port tack will allow you to point across to East Head. Here the shore is steep so a close approach is beneficial. Near East Head Spit keep really tight to the shore until the tack to starboard over the Winner Bank is possible. If you have done this well then the race should be yours.



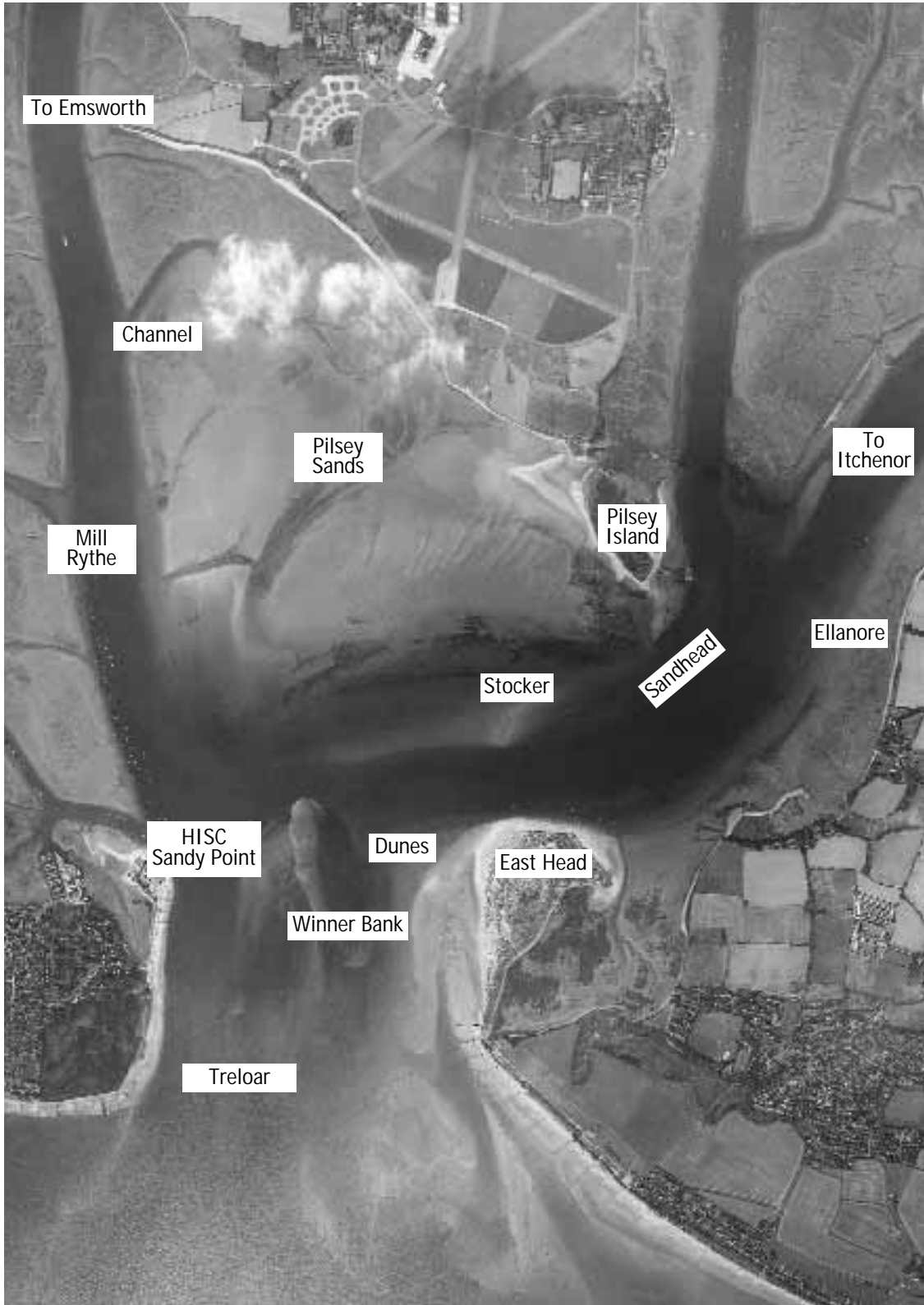
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Westerly Wind (250°-280°)

The start will be in the area of Ellanore/Pilsey to a weather mark near Channel. Avoid the flood tide by staying low (to the north) over the Pilsey Sands. Use the lee-bow on starboard at the end to approach the mark. If the start is nearer to East Head then the starboard lee-bow on the entrance tide over the Winner can be used all the way to the main channel by Hayling where a quick passage to the north is possible on the very strong flow in the channel up towards Emsworth.

North Westerly Wind (290°-330°)

With a start over the Winner use the main channel flood. Maximum tidal flow is in the middle of the channel off the Hayling Causeway and just outside the outer trots of HISC on the way up to Channel/Mill Rythe.

Avoid sailing into the adverse eddy near Hayling Club as this will hinder progress.

Northerly Winds (340°-010°)

Starting near Treloar use the main flood up the channel towards Emsworth. Avoid the fan tide towards Itchenor and the back eddy near the Hayling Club. Northerly winds are always shifty so get into a rhythm with the shifts and always sail the lifted tack.

With tide under you, the apparent wind strength is enhanced, so tune for stronger winds and don't forget to ease off after the first leg.

North-Easterly (030°-070°)

Starting near Treloar to N.E. Sandhead the flood will take the fleet northwards so use the tidal flow through the half tide channel to the east of Dunes and then take advantage of the wind bends around East Head.

Easterly (080°-100°)

From Sandy Point/N.W. Pilsey area the windward mark will be off East Head. Use shifts to stay left of the rhum line and approach on a longish port tack to obtain the lee-bow on the strongest tidal flow.

All the above comes with certain qualifications about all other things being equal which they often are not. Be warned! The wind direction can change and the Race Officer can signal a postponement which results in lesser tidal flow or even the opposite direction. That could be the subject of another article.

Whatever the Race Officer does make sure that you can sort it out and enjoy the course.

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An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Matt Simmons