

Re: Etrex Vista C and circular race route

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- *From:* Jack Erbes <jackerbes@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
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freeheelfunhog wrote:

Hi,

I use an etrex Vista C to navigate a rowing racing course in San Francisco Bay. The course starts and ends in the same place (runs under the Golden Gate bridge, around various buoys and near various points).

I would like to be able to:

- 1) have the GPS unit display the route waypoints in the proper order from Start to Finish
or specifically, display the directional arrow and distance to the next waypoint with Heading

Have you looked at using the Highway page?

That will show your position relative to a black line that represents the projected course from the starting point to the next waypoint. It shows your position relative to that line so you can see your cross track error or deviation from the planned course.

You can also turn on the display of data boxes to with that page. Those will give you a display of any of about 40 different elements of info. Press Menu, get you manual out, it's all in there.

- 2) be able to do this with no hands (they are busy with oars)

The critical part is displaying the information in order as one navigates the course.

You would have to place waypoints to mark or define the turning points in the route. I assume all the legs in the route a straight lines from one turning point to the next. That would be a point to point route (or Off Road route in Garmin speak). Once you place the points and put them

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in a route, you can choose the route and activate it. The highway display will give you a display to the first waypoint in the route and process them in the sequence in your route. No further use of your hands would be necessary.

The logic for advancing the display from one waypoint to the next can be based on proximity or on the logic in the Auto mode. The Auto mode is probably best for all practical purposes. It advances to the next waypoint when your current waypoints falls behind a line that is perpendicular to your direction of travel. But you may like the way the proximity mode works better.

Once you start getting close to the actual turning mark or buoy, you have to pretty much ignore the GPS receiver and use your eyes and head to guide the boat. This is because the logic in the GPS is very literal and will want to point you directly at the waypoint regardless of where that is relative to the real world and the object that you want to get to and pass by as closely as possible.

Never place a waypoint directly on an object you do not want to hit. You might get unlucky and hit it. :>)

Currently, the behavior is something like this:

- 1) the first waypoint is skipped no matter what. It's a throwaway.

Your first waypoint should be the first turning point, mark, or destination in the route. Your starting point is where you are at the moment you activate the route (the location of your present fix). If you put a waypoint behind or at the starting line, the GPS will want to take you to it.

But what you really want to do is be behind the starting line, milling around with the other boats I'd assume, and using your head and eyes to stay behind the line and get a good start. All you need to know from the GPS is where you want to go once you cross the line.

I don't think you will to be on the rhumb line at many times as you will be steering a course that compensates for winds and currents. But knowing where you are relative to it is a good thing. Also being able to see the effects of wind and currents on the rhumb line can be a good thing.

I lived in The City and up in Sonoma for some years, I know the Golden Gate area area. I'd be very surprised to hear that they no longer have winds and currents there. Watch out for the potato patch over there behind the light house, it can be very distracting. :>)

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2) If the finish is the same as the start (it usually is in these races), then the etrex Vista C tells me I have arrived at the finish (true enough, but not the information I would like.)

You can put the waypoint for the finish line at the end of the route. There is no way the GPS will know what is the best place for you to cross the finish line. If that is the info you say you "would like", you'll have to decide all that as you close on the finish line.

If the finish line has some width to it, I place the last waypoint at the windward end of the line. If it was fairly narrow set of gates or something like that, I'd probably place it in the center.

Several of us have resorted to not inputting the finish and just navigating by sight (horrors), which is tough in rowing because you're not facing the direction you're traveling (so you have to constantly look over your shoulder).

You probably want your display set to the Track Up (as opposed to North UP) mode. Then you'll be looking at your progress along the projected course but it will be upside down.

You could mount the GPS upside down and it would look right but the text in the data boxes would be upside down.

But it won't take long to get in the habit of steering intuitively to get back to the line. Unfortunately, Garmin does not offer a Track Down mode nor can you invert the data box displays.

During the pre-start maneuvering you could place a waypoint at the starting line (at your intended finish point) and then add it to your route and hope that nothing moves too far during the race.

Also, you want to activate your route just before the start. Or you can recalculate it in the closing moments and it will give you the best possible relationship between your starting fix and the first waypoint.

The Vista C works fairly well in every other regard (for my uses).

Don't take it as an insult but it seems that many new GPS users are under the impression that having a GPS will relieve them of much of the thinking that should go into driving or boating. Or maybe even provide them with some great advantage or magic solution if they just pay attention to it.

On the highways some people seem to be tuning out the real world and

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wanting the GPS to do the thinking. These are the people that drive to the wrong street with the right name, or drive into streets that are too narrow, or try to drive under bridges that are too low, or even take their cars down streets that have been closed or turned into pedestrian or bicycle only through ways.

There is probably a parallel mindset out there on the waters. I know of people that have put their waypoints on big, heavy, floating objects like aids to navigation, engaged an autopilot, and then ran into the NAVAID. And then acted like it was not their fault. Bizarre, no?

Jack

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