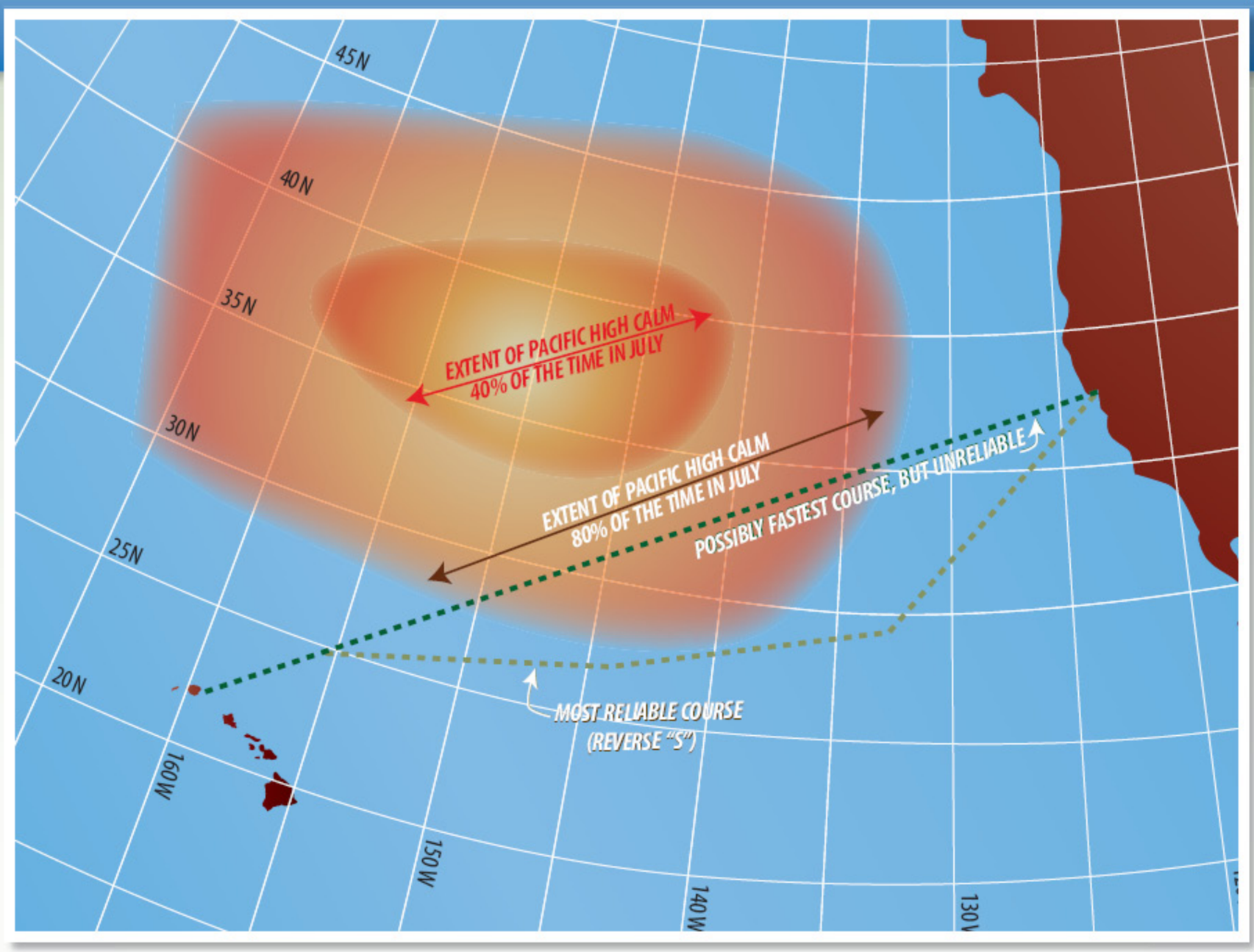

The amoeba-like calms of the Pacific High extend well south of the SHTP rhumb-line route. When the high moves northward, SHTP racers can sneak past on a shorter route.

Tricks of the Trade (winds)

In typical temperate-zone fashion, the fastest route isn't the shortest.

In the 30 years of the SHTP, superb weatherman, navigator, and seaman Stan Honey has navigated more winning boats to Hawaii than anyone else. His insightful and delightful "Slotcars to Hawaii" remains the definitive TransPac weather analysis, and is a must read for anyone considering the passage. (*http://www.pacificcup.org/node/42*)

My main tactical decision aboard *Wildflower* will be deciding early in the race between the rhumb-line course to Hawaii and the longer "Reverse S" southern route. The rhumb-line course is potentially several hundred miles shorter, and good for non-planing and displacement hulls like *Wildflower* that don't gain speed by reaching. It is also risky because of the proximity of the Pacific High and its enveloping calms. (See illustration above.)

The Reverse S southern course was pioneered by my father, Bob Allan, weatherman aboard the 98-foot schooner *Morning Star* when they broke the elapsed-time record from Los Angles to Honolulu in 1949. The Reverse S takes you well to the south and under the Pacific High, then west before the final jibe to port on approach to the islands. The extra miles sailed in the Reverse S can be made up by ULDBs and multihulls that sail several knots faster with the wind aft of abeam for most of the course.

The decision as to which course will rest with a careful eye on weather, both surface and upper air, for 72 to 96 hours in the future. *Wildflower* does not carry a computer-routing program, and professional routing assistance is limited to pre-race. However, I can collect weather fax and GRIB charts aboard with the SSB and Pactor modem. But beyond five to six days, weather forecasting for the Singlehanded TransPac is as much art as science.

Once past the danger area of the Pacific High, there are about a thousand miles of tradewinds ahead, with the wind from dead aft. Except for tropical depressions and waves passing to the south that clock the wind in their wake, long-range weather forecasts become less of a concern, and the daily diet of squalls and small localized windshifts call for sailing the closest jibe to Hawaii.

—S.A.