

# Texas 200 sailing event was ‘life-changing’



## Jack LaBarge

Jack LaBarge was one of almost 50 sailors in approximately 30 boats who participated in the Texas 200 this year. LaBarge said this year’s event was his third time to complete the race, and HE plans to participate again next year. LaBarge is the commodore of the Seadrift Sailing and Yacht Club. (Contributed photo)

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[Texas 200 sailing event was ‘life-changing’](#) By KAYLA MEYER Port Lavaca Wave |

After traversing 200 miles up the Texas coast from Port Isabel, sailors with the Texas 200 ended their five-day, four-night journey Friday at Magnolia Beach.

“I think, in general, everyone had a good time,” said Jack LaBarge, commodore of the Seadrift Sailing and Yacht Club.

The Texas 200 is a sailboat race along the Texas Gulf Coast, and this year’s event began in Port Isabel. Each day, sailors made their way to different stopping points along the coast.

Sailors headed to Port Mansfield on the first day, and the second day’s stop was the north end of the Land Cut near Baffin Bay. The third campsite was at Quarantine Shore, which is near the mouth of Corpus Christi Bayou, and the fourth campsite was at Army Hole in Espiritu Santo Bay. The final stop for the event was Magnolia Beach.

The 2013 Texas 200 marked the third time LaBarge has finished the event. From the start, the weather made the trek up the coast difficult a difficult one, LaBarge said.

“It was typical south Texas weather. If you don’t like the weather, wait five minutes, and it will change, though you may not like that either,” LaBarge laughed. “With the light winds and the long distances to

sail, it made it a real challenge.”

Not only did sailors experience little wind, which was needed to power the boats, but they also experienced hazy conditions with the occasional rain shower.

“You just never know about the weather. Sometimes there was a little fog or showers. Some days were bright, but there was no wind,” LaBarge said. “There wasn’t the 10 to 15 mile per hour winds the National Weather Service said there would be. If we had 10 knots, we were doing good.”

LaBarge, who sailed solo in the event, said that although the weather might not be perfect, any day on the water is a good day to sail.

“If you are out there sailing, it’s a good day to sail,” he said. “The people associated with the Texas 200, most of them feel the same way. It’s what they do, they sail. They have lives, but in their spare time, they sail their boats. Some are small, some medium and some large. We go and have fun. It’s our escape.”

Most people typically began sailing between 6:30 a.m. and 7 a.m. LaBarge said he was up around 4 a.m. during the trip to eat a light breakfast. He said he was also antsy for the first light to begin the day’s journey.

“I have one of the slower boats... I know how long it takes me to sail with no wind. I’d eat breakfast and wait for dawn,” LaBarge said. “They were long days. We would start sailing around 6:30 a.m., a quarter to seven, and we wouldn’t finish until about 6:30 at night. It was about 12 hours of sailing a day.”

LaBarge said the boats in the event came in all sizes, and there were about 30 boats and about 50 people that participated in the event.

“We had boats that were 26 to 27 feet long and some shorter boats that were probably 11 to 12 feet long, quite a range in the size of boats and the range in speed and most are homemade,” LaBarge said.

Chuck Pierce, the president of the Texas 200 board of directors, said that many of the participants were from throughout the country.

“We have people that come from all over,” Pierce said. “I’m not sure about everyone, but I know that this year we had people from Oklahoma, South Dakota, California and Oregon. In the past we’ve had people from both coasts and even Canada.”

LaBarge said because of the weather and the distance, he had a difficult “night two, but after a good night’s sleep, the next day was better. It is an all day adventure.” While most sailors, including LaBarge, finished the trip, he said there were a few who ran into trouble along the way.

“We lost two boats the first day,” LaBarge said. “A bunch of them went out into the gulf from Port Isabel to the jetties, and the gulf beat one boat up. It turned the boat upside down.”

“Nobody got hurt, but it’s always a disappointment seeing a boat hurt,” LaBarge added. “There’s always a danger involved when you’re doing something like this, and you’re praying it’s nothing serious. Boats can always be replaced, but not people.”

Although sailors faced many difficulties, LaBarge said the purpose of his journey is the personal challenge.

“Anybody that finishes is a winner. Everybody does for different reasons, but at the same time, they do it for the same reason,” LaBarge said. “For me, it is a personal challenge, and while I can’t answer for other people specifically, I think most do it to challenge themselves and for the camaraderie.”

Pierce also said that for many, participating in the Texas 200 is a life-altering event.

“For a lot of people, it’s a life-changing thing. You’re doing something pretty difficult and there is never a shortage of problems when you’re sailing 200 miles in five days. It is a difficult thing to do,” he said.

The final day of sailing was from Army Hole to Magnolia Beach, the shortest leg of the trip. LaBarge said the evening at Army Hole was filled with food and fun.

“At Army Hole, some people met us, and we had a barbecue that last night,” LaBarge said. “Plus, everyone had food left over, and people had brought out all kinds of stuff. I had pickled shrimp and ciabatta and rosemary breads. It was a feast.

“The next day was a short run from Army Hole, and it’s a nice downhill run, typically with no problems. Friday was a beautiful day.”

Upon the completion of the event, LaBarge and the other sailors were treated to a shrimp dinner from Bubba’s restaurant and refreshments from Spoetzl Brewery in Shiner.

“I got in that afternoon, about 1:30 p.m., and I got out at Indianola where it’s easier for me. Some people arrived an hour early at Magnolia Beach and some arrived between 4-5 p.m. Some slept in late that morning or got up and played around at Army Hole,” LaBarge said.

Days after the event, LaBarge said he is still sore after participating in it. Between adjusting the sails for steering and being out in the sun, he added that he is still recuperating from the journey.

“During the entire trip, we could watch the dolphins or the jelly fish. That’s always fun. There were all kinds of boats and barges going up and down the coast,” LaBarge said. “The Texas 200 is a tremendous physical challenge but it’s fun...I plan on signing up again next year.”