

2016 Texas 200

This was my 5th Texas200. My first was 2008, the inaugural, with the prototype Mikesboat “Embers Watch” completed in Port Mansfield the night before the start. This year, 2016, was similar in that I once again flew in the face of logic and common sense and sailed a maiden voyage in a prototype build, the D'Arcy Bryn by Jim Michalak. Once again a big hurry to get her finished up, which is what led to my first failure of the Texas200s. (see my build blog for more on the rush)

My last minute crew Ed Einhorn, D'Arcy Bryn, and I did not make the Bird Island Camp. These are the extenuating circumstances, but ultimately it was my fault and I paid the price as you will see. I only had time to download the waypoints on the T200 website to my GPS and did not work on a course or route planning. I wanted to, I should have, but there was no point without a completed boat to sail. Ed had his charting GPS with him, but no waypoints. We used his for the first camps and basically followed others with only the camp entered on the GPS. My GPS, the one with all the points, had mysteriously disappeared; no where to be found. I had checked every possible logical place plus some others as well.

The night before leaving for Bird Island, we hurriedly got the co-ordinates and marker number to turn at from John Hippe, a great sailor, a greater guy, and an extraordinary father! Marker 35 as we both recalled. Next morning we were one of the first to leave and proceeded to sail ahead. Then I discovered that Ed's GPS would not acquire satellites and had a ridiculous distance to camp of 19 miles! So we went to the chart only to discover that the marker numbers were screwy (they had been changed since I bought my Hook n Line chart) and we really did not know where to turn. After a while, we sailed up to a Catalina 22 and asked if they knew where we were supposed to turn for Bird Island. Glances were exchanged, then, “We passed it 30 minutes ago; didn't you see all the masts to the left?” Turns out they were skipping this camp on purpose because of their 2.5' draft and the camp's shallow nature

Well no, we did not see those masts! Not aware that it was a super short day, we weren't even getting READY to start looking; plus pouring over the outdated chart and trying to get Ed's GPS to boot up correctly and get a position interfered with our vision. So I missed the camp. First time for me and as Matt Schiemer pointed out to me later, since I missed that camp, I did not do the Texas 200 this year! I know he was only joking, but as they say in Spain, “bromiando se dice la verdad”; i.e. jokingly, one tells the truth... So the two boats continued to the next logical deep water stop, the Padre Island Yacht club.

D'Arcy Bryn had so far sailed just fine. With the rig off my Mikesboat, she is over canvassed, so we sailed with single or double reefs most of the time, and were double reefed when we turned into the channel for the Yacht Club. This would be the first real upwind test. We tacked up the 150' wide channel several times, making headway at each tack, before I missed a tack next to the downwind concrete wall by the Club. It turns out that the tiller could not be put fully to port because of interference with the outboard motor head. This meant I had to lift the tiller up to clear it, and then the tiller would become intertwined with the 3 to 1 main sheet falls and need fiddling with after passing through stays. So just as I needed to be firming up on the new tack, I had to unwind the tiller/main sheet. I managed it OK several times, but finally missed one. We went ahead and motored the last hundred or so feet to the dock, but I was encouraged that the D'Arcy Bryn, with double reefs, would make way upwind! As you will have noted in previous post's photos, she has a lot of cabin and windage, but so far it looks like things will work out.

Ah, the agony of defeat! There we were, tied up to a mud-free dock at the Yacht club. The Vice Admirable came down to question us and, when told we were with the Texas 200, only asked when the other boats were due; not wanting to rock the boat (sic), we only said they were behind us! He gave his blessing for our over night stay. Shortly thereafter, another man showed up to fish, and when Ed asked if it would be all right if he slept on one of the picnic tables on the patio the gruff reply was “Why don't you sleep inside with the A/C?” Indeed, why not. And on top of that added trial, we had to endure hot showers and a toilet! Such are the punishments for missing a scheduled camp...

As it turns out, some idiot put MY GPS in the food bin! But I found it despite his best efforts and we were able to make all camps and courses to follow till we reached Maggie Beach. My thanks to Matt and the board for another great Texas 200. I might have to do this again...

Un Abrazo,
Bill

