

## The 200

Chuck

Again - many thanks for organising the trip i thoroughly enjoyed myself. I can only thank those that helped me when i needed it, and wish i had helped others more. not sure of the route or my abilities over such a long haul, there was a real survival mode thing going.

As to the trip;

To prepare for the 200 I Built out the storage in forepeak and installed a new deepcycle battery forward to help balance the weight. Rewired the lights.

Added an XM radio house antenna and adapted/fixd a homebase rig to play through a boombox. barely used it for fear of using up the battery and loosing the depthsounder.



The furler jib has been replaced by a 135% jib with a downhaul. points a little better and adds speed.

Rebuilt a larger rudder to try to balance the massive weather helm I got as the afternoon wind built last year. moving the centerboard back will likely help too.

Used a wheelbarrow handle to make a longer tiller to allow me to move my weight forward and better balance the boat.

Installed my third Norcross Depth finder (on them, they were very helpful) and that works - I hope. The alarm feature is a great help.

Built a temporary mooring buoy - contraption to try anchoring out and being able to haul it back in to shore - again we'll see <http://cid-b2be5099244d955c.skydrive.live.com/self.aspx/BoatMods/RudderUpgrade1.jpg>

Saturday

Lesson learned - drive around awhile before launch.

I reached the public ramp and Carl - with the beautiful Horizon Cat - was rigging, others were there and I too slowly rigged. The ramp is on the north side, and thus the lee shore. As is usual with me I managed to confuse the outboard twist grip, as I took too long, boats converged on the ramp and I got blown offcourse, and then rammed the concrete wall and a jon boat. Fortunately I hit the concrete hard and glanced off the jon boat. neither the Jon boat the wall or the Cortez worse for wear.

Found a place to park next to Bobby C's San Juan 21 on the other side with no further misshape. He refused to split the cost - so many acts of generosity. John "TieFighter" kindly gave me a ride back to my truck. Met the other Cortez with Adam and Carrie. Pleasant evening with a late meal with Joe C (Windrider 16) and Carl.

Sunday the swap around - people still arriving. Long drive and bus ride back emphasize the length of the trip ahead of us.

Monday

Lesson learned - take a spare.

Start out at 8. Five miles out the wind is blowing good. I have the main up with a reef (fast) and put up the 135% jib (faster). While we are downwind, it is not direct and I cannot hold wing on wing, or get full benefit of the jib on a broad reach. The boat is yawing as we surf down the waves and I decide to pull out my homemade whisker pole. Get that set and we are moving fast, but then suddenly the boat is not responding to the helm. I look down at the rudder and my efforts to build it bigger and better have evidently failed.

I have learned to rig an anchor ready to deploy and so anchor on the spot. The sails are down and lashed, and I pull the rudder. Here I thank my wife - who, viewing my amateur carpentry with the rudder, suggested I bring a spare. So I had epoxied the old one back to life. It holds, and works well for the rest of the

trip. Carl, Adam and Carrie have been hovering around for the 45 minutes it takes me to get back on track. 9:30 am Claw back to windward and continue. Here I might make the point that when sailing alone on the ICW it is quite difficult to keep from grounding. With my lines not led back to the cockpit any manoeuvre takes your hand off the tiller and the boat is blown to the lee. The ICW is narrow and you get to do one thing, claw to windward, do the next, claw to windward etc. In 25 mph winds the danger multiplies. Once on the lee shore it can be very difficult to get off.

With BabyBlue (Adam and Carrie) we came upon Rodney in his Newport16 pulled up on the windward side (good move) He has lost a halyard up the mast, and then discovered rusted bolts in the maststep. Only one is holding and the whole thing rotates. He has the mast down. Adam and I help him get set up again. Later he sets a bolt through the deck to hold it.

Getting off from there has me grounding twice before I get going. BabyBlue is still stuck and I finally turn around but they are loose before I get back. So I ground turning around. Note the Cortez is 1000 lbs or so loaded, a stub keel with 400 plus pounds at least, and floats in 8-12". To get it off I have a high setting on the outboard bracket that puts the prop in that 8-12" to use in such a situation. Adam and Carrie were having problems starting their outboard. And so to the Land Cut. 5:15 pm Knee deep mud.

Tuesday - Take a good camera

8 am Float out from mooring and drift up taking picture of everyone. Its an old camera used for work. Later seeing the quality realise i should take a better camera, everything is muddy & blurry. Long day, reasonably uneventful - mistook the entrance to PIYC for oil pipeline markers, then had to motor in. So many boats had to tie up on the concrete wall leading to the club and clamber around the fence - Thanks to Wind Waker for straddling it to make that easier. Showers and A/C, plus a visit to Snoopys for supper. Many thanks to --- in the Motor Home who made the trip all the way from Florida only to discover a leak that kept him from even starting. Then joins us on the way up and gives multiple trips to and from Snoopys that night. Later at the clubhouse much discussion of route. I am not fond of the idea of Scorpion Cut, but am persuaded. John and his Tetra, a Potter 14, will leads 'Task Force One'. His boat is damaged on the wall, the rail is below the overhang, but catches on every swell or as he moves his weight. he is much disturbed and does not sleep well.

Wednesday - Do not land on a lee shore

7 am start. The two Cortez 16's, BlueByu and BabyBlue, Johns Potter 14 - Tetra, and the two Potter 19's Aldebaran and WindWaker have a reasonable time of it across Corpus Christi Bay, although I get to see Tetra's bottom when hoisted on

a few waves. I loaf across and follow my plotted route which takes me well north of everyone else. Thus embarrassed by being different I cut the corner as I approach Stingray and my depthfinder screams at me continually. I feel the rudder touch, but it holds and does not kick up. I am through. Others later are not so lucky. When the rudder kicks up the wind has you - often the shallows follow.

Now we are in the main Corpus to Port A channel. From the 6.5 feet of Corpus bay we are now in 50 feet or better of water with the current on our nose, beating to weather. We make about 2.5 kts up to Port A. Pass Ocean going vessels (imposing and scary), dodge the Ferrys (they make no accommodation to your passing) and turn into the Lydia Ann Channel. All is well again. At this point we had outrun our group, Baby Blue was ahead of me, but the Potters were behind. By the time we emptied into Aransas Bay the Potter 19's had caught up, but we had lost track of Tetra. Beat across the bay to the lee of the islands and then a reach / run to Pauls Mott. I decide that I want to land on the shore and walk the boat around - Baby Blue follows. Then you find that the waves of the fetch and the wind will drive your boat up higher and higher. Big as I am there is no way I can stop Blue from crawling up on the beach. Without timely help of four guys pushing me out (and risking my outboard while doing it) the blues would have had a hard time of it. - So - follow your plotted route Noel - it was just fine.

Next time I'll bring my fabric strap comealong to kedge out if I am alone.

Much discussion that night of the choice of next days route. I finally abandon the idea of going through Ayres and Carlos Bay and we will go back to the ICW and cut back in at Rattlesnake Island. Bobby C and John Turpin make the fateful decision to try it. A good thing we did not. The Ducks had their hands full helping them. If we had added four more boats to that it would have been a real disaster. Thanks for persuading me Chuck.

Adam on Baby Blue fixes his rudder and gets a bunch of help. John T turns up and we hear of the carnage at Ayres Reef.

Thursday

Both Blues are up on the beach. I think it was a tide issue, but careless to have not set the boat out another few feet. Even after helping hands got us out I still spent a little while pulling the boat out a ways before I could get going. No issues till Rattlesnake. But there is only 2.5 feet in the shallows between the ICW and the south end of San Antonio Bay there. That kicks up my rudder, for Baby Blue too. We haul sails and start motors before we hit the lee side of the ICW with its concrete wall. As we got to the turn Aldebaran was wisely hauling sails and preparing to motor in the lee of Rattlesnake (must remember to take

hints better)> Dingle berry is around at that time, then disappears off my radar as I fight the boat off the shallows. I had no idea they were having problems. That was one well ordered boat, they always looked shipshape - what a story they got to tell - glad it turned out well, OK lets say alls well that ends...

Finally off to a long run to the north end of Panther Reef. Put up the jib and run, but once there I hit bottom and the rudder kicks up, I am just blown across, no harm. Put down the rudder again and we are off. Though I get to wait on everyone. Stan Roberts in his boat catches us about then. So we have five boats strung out across the east side of San Antonio Bay. We cluster up again at South Pass.

No drama there as there are two posts for ranging in on your starboard. Then 60° out. Matched my GPS line. And on to Army Hole, I am zigzagging as usual to wait on the others.

We get to Army Hole and Travis V is, of course already there along with the other speed machines, and he kindly guides us in. As is usual running my outboard leads me to run into the pier and this time Baby Blue. Still no damage but I gotta go somewhere and practice sometime - this is getting ridiculous.

I haul out way too much charcoal and too few hotdogs and start up the one remaining grill. The Light Schooner hands me a beer - and it's cold!!!! Can life be better.

Friday

Am determined with an easy day to put the pedal to the metal. Cut the corner to the ICW and almost beat Chucks Caprice into the cut to the ICW, then Travis with Pilgrim comes in and I pull over to avoid being run down by that express train. As I pull away up the ICW Travis and Chuck pull away from me. At the turn at O'Connor Bobby C in Reflections 2 has caught me just on the jib. But he is concerned for his boat and never raises his main. I go wing on wing and move on. Yves in his Selway Fisher Coble catches me and pulls away, the Deansbox does too, finally the Reinell 22 comes by just before the beach.

As I pull by the beach I hear a clatter on the foredeck and look up to see my turnbuckle body lying there. Careless not to check it in five days of sailing, lucky not to have that happen on a beat. Lucky that I have a forestay and the jibstay or the mast could have gone down. I go forward and reattach it. Then run back and beach.

As a sidebar i later loose my trailer wiring harness and meet Dan Rogers who wired me a get home rig. He brought his Balboa 16 from California only to get in late at Port mansfield and then run afoul of the shallows with a 3 foot keel. Ended up pulling out and then could not extricte his trailer from the parking at magnolia until we all got there. All in all I don't think he had much fun. Much

enjoyed his company tho for the time Bill, Wayne and I spent with him, but then all was winding up at that point on the Saturday, everyone was pulling out. Dan, if you read this - don't give up on us, we just ain't as well organised as you Calleefornians. You had the impression we knew one another. And while some of us do, in the main I haven't a clue who is who, but i'm working on it. try us again next year and bring a shallower boat.

I'll be back - next year - right now I'm glad tro be in A/C on a comfortable bed with all the modern conveniences.

What I did right -

Slathered with SPF 50 first thing every morning, Aloe vera every night.

Really good shoes.

Drank 1 ½ gallons of water a day

had a scarf/ sheet that i dragged in the water and wrapped around my neck.

had a large straw hat and another as spare.

used towels to cover my knees and arms/hands as necessary. I resist long pants as when wet they severely restrict movement when your legs are as long as mine. It does mean stumbling on oyster shell is bad news.

rigged an anchor from the forward cleat and stowed in the cockpit locker - I can chuck it out and stop NOW

put a reef in the main and tied it , and lashed it, so I would not be tempted to shake it out EVER. The area of the reefed main matches the large jib so downwind wing on wing was very balanced.

dropped the centerboard a foot for control, but not so much i could trip if the boat got sideways.

had one of the snap cleats that chuck sells that allows the rudder to kick up in shallow water.

really knew the charts

and then have a boat that is damn near unbroachable and unbreakable and worried I might do both.

Noël