

TEXAS 200: Post game report:

This is Kevin. It's Saturday afternoon, I'm back home. Had a great trip. I have a few details to add, in no particular order:

There was a lot of wind, over 20 knots by 11 am every day but Friday. It was nice for fast sailing, but it sure did a job on the fleet, there was quite a bit of carnage every night.

Once again, every single Puddle Duck that started the thing finished. Amazing. Laurent and I pulled up on the beach at Stingray Hole, the entrance to the Corpus Ship Channel, we wanted to sort a few things out and I'd heard something on the radio, I wasn't sure what, so I wanted to stop and see what was up. There were the five Puddle Ducks there, and the Bolger Folding Schooner. While we were there, the Bolger Cartopper rowed and dragged his boat over the point. He had capsized in the bay and lost his rig. The Puddleduckers built him a rig out of spare spars and a small lugsail they were carrying, trimmed the bottom of the mast with an axe so it would fit in his mast step, and had it up and ready to go in ten minutes. Seriously, ten minutes. He was planning to sail to Fin&Feathers across the channel and drop out, but in the middle of the channel he turned upwind and headed on. I guess it felt ok to him. He finished the whole 200 miles under that rig. Ten minutes, out of spare parts carried in 8 foot boats.



Laurent sheared a rudder pin in the Upper Laguna Madre on Day 1. Then, as he was sitting sideways to the 2' to 3' swell, his mast bounced off the mast step and the rig fell down. Dan and Brian were behind him, stopped to make sure he was ok, and said he was using French words they were not familiar with from their high school French classes. He said he was ok, that he had plenty of water, and that he was going to paddle to the shore, beach the boat and walk back across the King Ranch to Port Mansfield. They went on to Camp 1 and reported this. We were all sad. The next morning, I heard behind me "Good morning, Kevin!", and there he was. He had paddled the boat a couple of miles to shore, landed, spent six hours building a jury rig and re-stepping the mast, taken off in the dark, and sailed 20 miles up the intercoastal in the company of some barges the size of my high school to arrive at 2 am. He sailed it on Day 2 to Padre Island Yacht Club, we hauled it up the bank to the parking lot and left it there, and he joined

me on my boat. I was happy to have him, sailing my boat by myself was a chore.

John Lucius, pictured below with the Tie Fighter looking Raider dinghy, had a funny story. He went over in San Antonio Bay and lost a big waterproof drybag. A shrimp boat was passing by, towing another shrimp boat. "Hey, get my bag!" Ok, the shrimp boat got the bag. Then they took off with it. John was mad, he told me this about three or four hours after it happened and he was still mad. So he got his sail up and chased them all the way into Rockport, about ten miles. The shrimp boat dropped off the other shrimp boat and then came back out and gave John the bag. Hey, thanks man. John said, "I could see it right there on the back deck the whole way. Just kick it off and I'll pick it up!"

My best day was Day 2, from the Land Cut to the Yot Club. The ICW is always a little like sailing on a street, you don't have to navigate, you just sail from buoy to buoy. This time it was like being in a parade. I took off at 8:30, after most of the fleet, and I didn't reef because I didn't feel like it, I guess. I had up both mains and no jib. It was blowing like stink. All day long I just sailed at the next sail I saw. Dan and Brian were behind me on the Hobie 18/Tamanu, but not gaining very fast. Unknown to me, David, the kid on the Hobie 14 Turbo, was behind them and was gaining. We ran the whole fleet down, there were 40-odd boats ahead of us and we passed them all. About five miles from the Yot club I saw two more sails; Traveller, Charlie and Laura's little trimaran, and John on the Tie Fighter dinghy, planing down waves. I was very surprised to catch him downwind. Then ahead of me was one more sail, the Bolger Folding Schooner, at the head of the fleet, walloping along on a reach. And then Dan and Brian passed me, dammit. And then the kid on the 14. But he dropped his hat, went back for it, hit a shoal and kicked his rudders up and spun out, and sat there for a little bit, he was out of it. The schooner was messing around at the mouth of the Yot club entry, Dan sailed right by him. Then I sailed past him, centered the leeboard and shunted up the channel, about 1/4 mile up a 200' wide channel to windward. That was the best bit of sailing I've done in that boat. I'll let Dan tell you what it looked like from shore, but from the boat it felt pretty good. I should have a gps track to post here in a bit, that will be nice to see. It turns out the folding schooner had a broken leeboard, so they left the boat at the mouth of the channel.

Skip on his P-52 proa was going well, but broke his mast off in the middle of Corpus Christi Bay. We talked about his plans for the boat a bit today, but I'll let him post any details he wants. The boat was sailing well from what I saw, moving easily and looked easy to sail even downwind.

The entry to Ayres Dugout was not at all clear on the approach, and lots of people ended up to lee of the channel in 3" of water and then thigh deep mud and sharp oyster shells, or to windward of the island where you had to tack back out, or go through about a mile of thigh deep mud and sharp oyster shells... Even the locals got fooled, Charlie and Laura went out too far to lee in the tri and had to haul it out, and Yves on his pretty Selway Fischer boat got stuck out there and cut his finger really badly on a shell getting out. After I left John apparently rolled his Potter 15 Tetra out there, and gave the hull to Andrew on the spot.

There was a lot of breakage, on both homebuilt and commercial boats. The Tie Fighter dinghy broke his carbon rudder housing on Day 1 and was fixing it every night after that. The Hobie Adventure Islands must have sheared about ten rudder pins, and sheared off the roller furling gear on one of them. The Windrider tri had some trouble with his amas' attachment points coming loose, I'm not sure of details. Several broken masts, lots of broken rudders. Lots of wind and 2' to 3' following seas are hard on rudders, I guess. A Sea Pearl capsized in the Laguna Madre on Day 1 and lost the rig, but got a tow back to Port M. The last day Dan discovered his front beam was coming apart, that was a bummer. Luckily the last day was short and downwind, and less wind than we'd had the rest of the week. All in all, lots of carnage.

So we had fun, but I have to confess it was marred a bit in the middle of the week wondering if someone had gotten badly hurt or something, it was not clear that everyone was ok until we all met up on the beach at the finish. I was really worried about the guy who got washed off his brand new varnished soap-slick no-straps no-antiskid dinghy, it's worrying to hear on the radio that a boat's been found upside down and the driver is nowhere around. He turned up, but man, that's scary stuff, and I don't like the fact that the Coasties got called on us, I was hoping we could not have that happen. I'm not sure what anyone can do about this, it's not really an organized 'event' as much as it is just a bunch of people who decided to get together and sail up the coast and camp. There were clearly some people who shouldn't have taken off in those conditions, either due to inadequate boats or poor sailing skill. Some people with great boats and skills, like Laurent and the guy on the Tie Fighter and Dan on the Tamanu/H18, had breakages too, but it was the people who didn't seem to have the sailing skills that I worried about getting hurt.

Anyway, we had fun. Here we are at the finish:



The photo was taken by my lovely wife Joy, who met us at the finish. Hurray! She looked good, too.

That's all, folks! If you have a post-race account, please email it to me uaneill AT gmail DOT com and I'll post it here, I think Marie has done her bit for the sailing community. Thanks Marie!

Now I think I'll go eat a big burger.

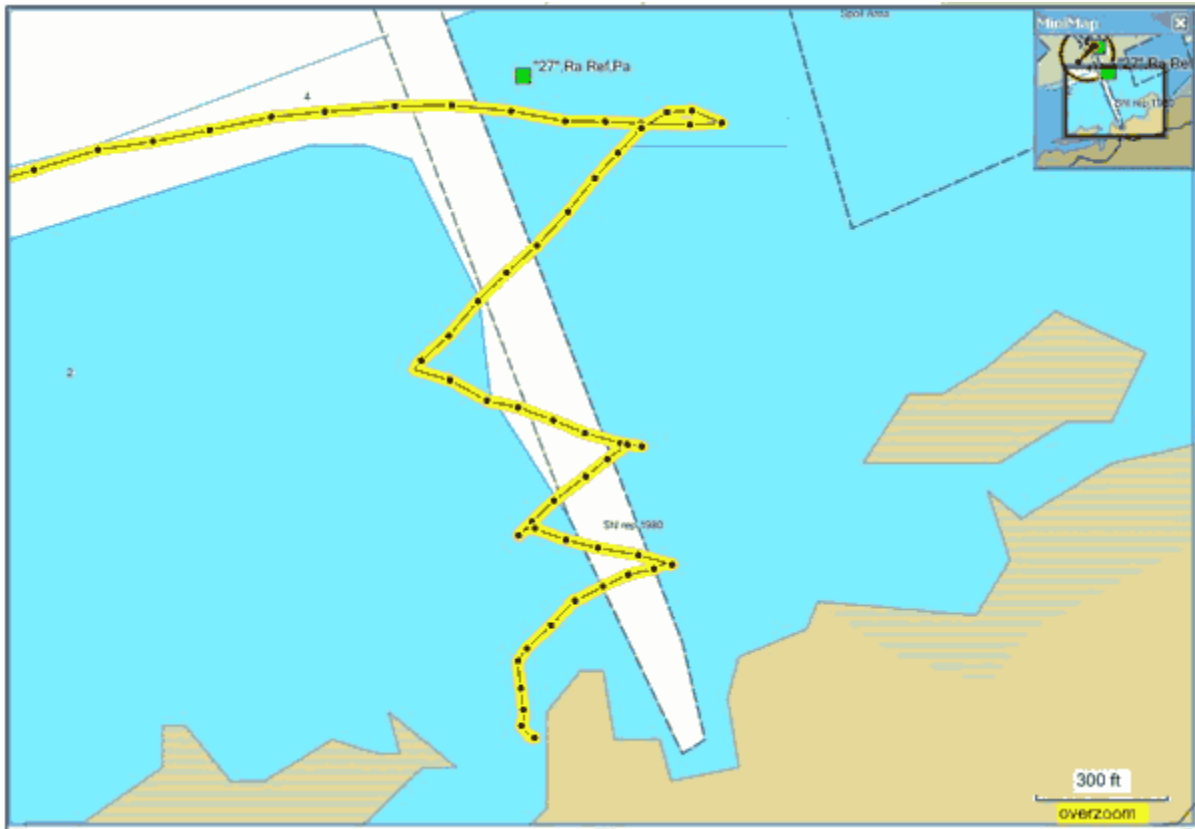
Addendum - Shunting:

Tracks into PIYC



This is the track into PIYC. The long leg was as high as I could point. The short leg across the channel wasn't, I was close enough and was mostly paying attention to where I was going to raft up next to Dan, so the angle between the tacks isn't indicative of how high I could go.

Tracks into Army Hole



This is the track into Army Hole. This is with no board! We hit bottom the first shunt and popped the block that controls the board, we had no board all the way in. I stood on the back of the boat to make it bear off, Laurent steered, we left the aft sail luffing and drove in on the front sail. Interesting to see that we could still make good progress without the board. It was a pig to come about, though, not an enjoyable way to sail the boat.