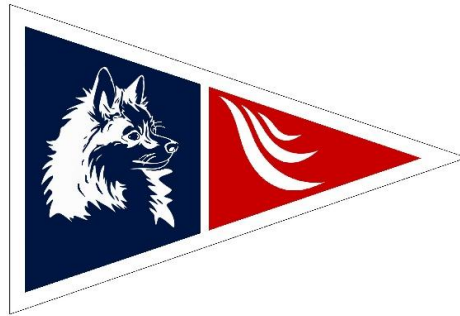


Synopsis of my 2026 Texas 200

By Eric Dahlkamp

- Worked 2 1/2 years modifying a 1979 O'Day Daysailer for this event. Named her 'Spirit-of-Chance' in memory of my dog, One-Man-Chance, who died while I was on my last 200 in 2023. Crushed me.
- Gave him his own burgee and a boat name decal on the stern. Carry him with me now, no more guilt.



- Drove well over 4,000 miles round trip to Texas and back.
- One trailer tire blew-out. Ruined the rim and lost the fender. Better than the year I lost four tires!
- Hot wheel hub caused overnight delay while I waited for shop to open having forgotten my grease gun. Worrisome. Was nothing. All was well. But it ran cool after repacking. Rather curious.



- Boat sat on rebuilt trailer very well the entire trip. Only required two adjustments to re-center keel. Perhaps road camber shifted her weight to starboard for an extended period increasing pressure on that bearing. That could explain the heat in the starboard wheel hub (tire shop hypothesis).
- Was first to arrive. I come early to acclimate myself to the heat and humidity coming as I do from the altitude and dry heat of northern Utah. Sure enjoyed seeing everyone when they arrived. But as always, just not enough time to visit with everyone. And, I'm too tired at camp mingle much.



- Between Monday and Saturday, I'd be on the water portions of 3 days of a the possible 6, sail portions of 2 days, motor a great deal and camp just two nights; one being at The Jetties, the other Army Hole. A very different Texas 200 experience for me dropping out then hauling boat north to relaunch.
- I pulled out after Day 1 due to oncoming tropical storm Arthur which then didn't materialize in any significant way except rain. But I had already hauled out. So, at my wife's urging, I drove north, relaunched, and reversed course to meet the fleet the last night at Army Hole. Glad I did, but that little exercise took its toll on this mid 70s sailor. Thanks for your support Julie!



- The rain at The Jetties had filled her cockpit which then leaked into the inner hull overnight. Unknown to me she was "sinking" despite my pumping out the swimming pool in the cockpit three times. Fortunately, I caught it in Port Mansfield while on the ramp and drained it. Pool noodle floatation did its job though. Displaced a LOT of water. The added water weight would have put tremendous stress on foils and rudder hardware had I continued and not drained her once I got her back on the trailer. Plus, it continued to rain off-and-on as the fleet moved north which would just have made things worse. Small miracle. Yet to inspect and determine entry path. Probably floor mounted inspection ports for centerboard pin.
- Overall, I prepped and launched the boat 2X; pulled her out and broke her down 2X; packed the car and boat for trailering 3X (includes my Utah prep). Exhausting in that Texas heat!
- Motored long periods directly into strong winds and heavy chop 2X. Also, motor-sailed twice to make better headway.
- Motored through a heavy rain squall the last day for at least 40 minutes.
- Total motoring 24 miles. Again, miraculously had just enough gas each time.



- Total sailing only 60 miles. Best off-wind sail was Day 1 from Port Isabel to Mansfield Channel. Full main with two jibs flying jib-on-jib. Surprisingly caught and passed a good part of the fleet. To be fair, most were reefed down though. But it felt good. Best upwind sail was my Day 2 on the water both out of Magnolia Beach (although far too brief), and crossing Espiritu Santo Bay to Army Hole. A bit of a bust in this category (watery horizon sailing is what motivates me to make the grueling pilgrimage from Utah).
- Sailed at different times with two different crew members, and also solo. A big thank you to both Brent Martin and Nenad Manoilov for joining me at different times. It was interesting, helpful and fun having you aboard.
- Personal observation: although having company can be welcoming and certainly helps with sail handling and relieving fatigue, I do prefer going solo. That's just me.
- Only had one barge captain blow his horn at me. He did it twice just in case I didn't hear the first time. Didn't mean to annoy him. Knew exactly where I was and where I would be when he got there. Oh well. Afterthought: Maybe his 2 blasts were to advise me to pass Port-to-Port although the spacing between blasts was so long it didn't register at the time. I did anyway simply because it was my preferred course.



- Camped 2 nights. Extremely muggy and hot due to storm effect. Worse - slept in boat cabin at The Jetties bouncing off the bottom as tide changed the majority of the night. Had not positioned boat well. Lesson learned. Plus, the thunder, lightning and hard rain kept me up. To top it off there was very little ventilation while it poured since I had to batten down pretty tight to keep dry inside. This severely restricted airflow. Then the fan stopped working. Miserable! Only slightly better - slept in my 2-man pop-up tent at Army Hole and was almost carried away by hordes of mosquitoes. Narrowly escaped with my life. Biggest challenge were the excruciating leg cramps on both those nights. Awful. Very poor sleep overall.



- Happily, no injuries or losses of equipment. Nothing broke. No capsizes or grounding. No repairs needed underway or at camp. Awesome.
- Did have to doctor a deep open slice cut on my foot the entire time. It finally "healed over" the day I got home.
- Received a whole lot of help, kindness and patience from a whole lot of people. Hardly expressed my thanks adequately. Thank you all so much!
- Had fun sort of, at least am beginning to think I did. Type 2 fun mostly. When I get to looking at my GoPro videos it'll help a lot. A big thank you to all who took such cool footage of my boat. Incorporated these into my own videos which I primarily make to get me through the long winters.
- But sadly, I didn't laugh near as much this time as I like to. Nor was I as enthusiastic and outgoing. The fatigue from the humid heat, lack of sleep, hauling out, driving north and relaunching my boat dampened that real quick. I'm no spring chicken.
- Was grumpy two times. Apologies to those impacted.
- Big shout out to Spirit-of-Chance. She sailed very well. Performed as designed. Surprised me how dry. Sure do wish she could have "played" more instead of being dragged from here to there and back again. She got to show off some, but deserved better. Cool boat.
- Will I be back? Very likely, 'se Deus quiser'. It was my fifth. My first non-completion. A new experience for me. Processing it. I'll need about a month's sleep to mull it all over. If only old Murphy and Mayhem would promise to take a week off next year. Wishful thinking I know. At least one more completion would sure be nice.

After Action Assessment: 1) lubricate the sail track, 2) create access for bilge hand pump, 3) rig line steerage system for handling foresails solo, 4) store tent up under the cabin roof top, 5) seat motor clamps in dedicated holes, 6) prevent haul-down pennant from snagging on rudder swivel bolt head, 7) rig jib in-haul barber haulers, 8) install inner shroud disconnects for jib clew to sheet as far inboard as possible when barber hauler in use, 9) move secondary jib tack (roller-furler drum) to end of bowsprit, 10) anchor to ride out squalls versus motoring through.



Eric Out...