

Texas 200 Rambo's Venture 2023

“It’s remarkable how quickly a good and favorable wind can sweep away the maddening frustrations of shore living.” Ernest K. Gann

And the Wind Blew!

Texas 200 Year Four for the Rambo’s sailing our Cam-Pac Sun Cat *Sandpiper*

Fast and Furious Prep Days

After losing our White Sands reservations in Port Isabel because of the need for housing for tornado victims and quickly scrambling to find other accommodations for part of the Renegade North Bounders crew, I luckily found a beautiful house on a canal with slips to tie up our boats. Ziggy, the Robertsons, Buddy, Dana, Bob, and I enjoyed having a beautiful place and boat slips for relaxing, readying boats, and enjoying our sailing compadres.

Sunday morning, we are up early to attend the Captain’s Meeting. Chuck Pierce outlines the event specifics, and burgees and meal tokens are handed out. Bob and every one towing trailers back to Magnolia Beach hit the road. The rest of the gang runs errands and work on boats until the bus returns and loading the boats begins.

Day 1 Monday

Seven MPH in a Sinking Ship

The wind blew, the waves kicked up, and water rushed into the Sun Cat bilge through the scuppers. Bob and I pump furiously only to keep the water level in the bilge the same. We run the electric bilge and hand pump. We pump as the minutes stretch into hours. Sandpiper sails like she’s never sailed before through small craft advisories and following seas. We pump. It’s hot, and we are sweating as much water as we are pumping. We pump. Finally, we reach Camp 1 across from Port Mansfield, where many boats have gone for repairs and to call it quits, including Will and Paul. Buddy came to the rescue at Camp 1 and worked an hour turning the scuppers around. The Sun Cat had a dry bilge for the rest of the trip.

Day 2 Tuesday

Reef/No Reef/Reef

Day 2 begins as windy and choppy as day 1. I encourage Jeremy and Courtney to continue sailing with us in these challenging conditions as more sailors decide to take out in Port Mansfield. Today’s challenge is to remove reefs and put them back in as we fly across Redfish Bay at 7.5 MPH to the land cut. We meet up with the Tomsetts and the Bennetts and decide to camp next to Hap’s Cut. The Tomsetts’ Glen-L, *The Mighty Scrat*, ran neck and neck with our Sun Cat *Sandpiper* all day up the Land Cut.

Day 3 Wednesday

Small Craft Advisories in a Small Craft

So on we sail. The wind blows. The waves crash. All through Upper Laguna Madre and Baffin Bay, our *Sandpiper*, the Tomasett's *Mighty Scrat*, and the Bennett's Mikesboat *Not Penny's Boat* fight the 25 to 32 mph gusts and heavy chop. As we close in on our destination, Marker 37 and Corpus Christi, the Bennett's decide to head to Padre Island Yacht Club to repair a torn sail. They take out the next day because of problems with their engine. It's a challenging year for everyone. When we get to Marker 37, the owner has invited the Texas 200 sailors to stay and enjoy the marina, docks, food, beer, and water hoses to rinse off. Most of us decide to stay. That invite proves too tempting, so we tie up and enjoy a fish dinner with the Tomsetts at Snoopys next door.

Day 4 Thursday

Picked up the Hitchhiker as Crew!

Oh, happy day! We picked up Paul, *Sandbar Boats*, as crew in the morning before we left Marker 37. Paul had taken out in Port Mansfield, where he and Will sailed on Monday after boat failure left them unable to make Camp 1. Paul had decided to hitchhike through the Texas 200 this year after his boat sank on our Magnolia Beach shakedown in May. He planned to sail with Will, us, the Bennetts, and anyone else who wanted to pick him up. I enjoy having Paul on board, and so does Bob. We let Paul do all the monkey work to reef and unreef! Camp 3 is Paul's Mott. And we bring Paul to the Mott! Buddy shoots off his cannon, and Matt Scheimer speaks remembrances for a sailor who has passed away this year. Remembering our fellow Texas 200 members who have passed away is one of our club traditions.

Day 5 Friday

Not Another Broken Mast!

As we were loading Paul's gear and getting ready to sail in the morning, a shackle came down from the rigging, slid across the cabin, and plopped into the water. Paul and I, with looks of astonishment on our faces, peer down into the water. With feelings of *deja vu* of 2020 mast failure, Paul and I look down onto the water. Paul said he would get it. I just held my breath as Paul reached into the murky water and pulled up the shackle!

Next came an anxiety-ridden half-hour as Bob and Paul worked to repair the mast. I watch the last boats leave Paul's Mott, which may end our 2023 adventure. Finally, the mast repair is complete, and we are sailing on to Army Hole, one of our favorite campsites.

We chose to take the ICW to San Antonio Bay, cut through Panther Cut, and sail into Espirito Bay. In the ICW, we ran into many barges that had doubled up to help fight the force of the 20 to 25-knot winds. A dredging rig provided challenging to keep the boat in the narrow channel. San Antonio Bay always provides lots of shallow, choppy water for roller coaster rides across the bay. After sailing through Panther Cut and into Espirito Santos, we can relax and enjoy a nice sail into Army Hole. Luckily, there was room at the boat docks, and Buddy greeted and guided us into a prime dockside slip. Everyone who has yet to take out early is here at Army Hole. Will

and his sister, Jennifer, are here too. Army Hole is one of the club's favorite camps for its nice docks and beautiful sunsets. Amazingly, we still have cold beer to enjoy with the last of our fajitas, beans, and tortillas as we share our adventures with this year's unbeaten and undefeated Texas 200 sailors!

Day 6 Homeward Bound

I'm sorry to leave our last camp in the morning and sail back to Magnolia Beach and real life. But this year, I have something to look forward to. I retired just a few days before we left for Port Isabel after 43 years in Education, and I have many adventures ahead of me.

We sail home leisurely and are greeted and welcomed at Maggie Beach by the Renegade Northbounders and friends who made it to the beach before us and gathered to celebrate our adventure with a shrimp boil and beverages.

We packed the Indianola Social Club and the house after the shrimp boil on the beach to swim in the pool, shower, and enjoy our sailing family for our last evening together. We say goodbye to Pat and Sharron Hollabaugh, who have been the house and beach rescue crew and have gone out of their way to make the celebration on the beach run smoothly. So we wrap up another Texas 200 as the rest of our friends depart for home after a challenging week on the water.

Note:

The Renegade Northbounders are participants who, in 2020, sailed from Port Mansfield to Magnolia Beach by choosing to sail the traditional route. The Club did not provide a shuttle option due to Covid concerns. We made strong bonds that year and continue to get together to share our love of sailing and each other. We welcome all who share the spirit of the Renegades to join us. The theme in 2020 was Escape to Quarantine Shores, and I encourage all Renegade Northbounders to fly their 2020 burgee upside down to show our uniqueness.

