

Chris, Cathy and Meredith

Day 1: Port Isabel to Mansfield Jetty, Outside Route

We left early to take advantage of light morning winds. Since we didn't have a motor and Breaux, on his Folding Schooner Elsie B did, we accepted a tow from him at the White Sands hotel in Port Isabel to the channel at the Port Isabel Jetties to save time. When we got to the jetties, we could see Gordo and Matthew on Laguna Uno and the 2 Geese ahead of us. Once outside the jetties, we made radio contact with the other 3 boats for a radio check. There was a bit of a swell closer in to the beach, probably running 3 to 5 feet, so Chris and I decided to head farther out to see if conditions were any better. We went about a mile out and Gordo radioed us and asked us to send him a postcard from Cuba! There was still a pretty good swell out there but it held a more consistent pattern without the random side swipes we had been experiencing closer in. We radioed the group and they started making their way out as well.



Cathy

About halfway to the Mansfield Jetty entrance, Meredith started feeling a bit queasy. I guess the swells proved too much for her and she laid down in the bottom of the boat to sleep it off. I wasn't too concerned about this as she did the same thing on the first day of the TX200 when we did it on Dingleberry in 2009. John on the Goose was also experiencing a bit of mal de mer and actually accepted a tow from Laguna Uno for a short while.



Chris

As the day went on and we approached the Mansfield Jetty, the wind increased, thus increasing the size and pattern of the swells, probably running about 5 to 7 feet. It became apparent that we were on the verge of being out of control as we were surfing down the waves (11 knots!!) so we decided to take the jib down and put up the smaller staysail. This staysail is actually the sail from a windsurfer that Chris had salvaged and I had done a little sewing on. Chris had modified our boat to have all the lines running aft so we were able to take the jib down without leaving the cockpit. However, the lazyjack hung up on the gaff jaw and I went forward to try to release it. I was too short to get it loose so I returned to the cockpit and Chris went forward. He was able to get it released and, one second the boat was under him and

the next second it was not. Man Overboard! This is the really scary part. He never let go of the boat when he fell in so that was a good thing but when he tried to hoist himself back onto the boat, he couldn't manage it. I radioed the other boats to alert them of our situation and asked that they stand by in case we needed help. Meredith had popped up from her bunk and, while I held the boat into the wind, she took my knife and quickly cut the swim ladder free from its storage spot, hooked it onto the side of the boat, and Chris was able to get back in. She mentioned to Chris, "Well, at least you had a chance to pee." and Chris responded, "I was so scared, I forgot to." We all had a good laugh about that and then we set about getting the staysail rigged up.

I was pretty nervous about entering the Port Mansfield Jetty because we had heard that we would have breaking swells at the entrance. I was at the helm and Chris was handling the sails. Meredith was standing by, ready to assist as needed. I don't know what she planned to do but at least she was ready to do it. I knew the boat surfed well because that is pretty much what we had been doing all day, but I was concerned that I wouldn't be able to hold the boat perpendicular to the waves. Breax had entered the jetties before us and had apparently made it through to the beach as we didn't see any evidence of carnage. As it turned out, the jetty entrance was not much different than what we had been sailing in all day long, with the exception of about one minute of confused seas, and the boat handled it all exceptionally well. We were able to radio Laguna Uno (towing a Goose) and Kevin on his Goose, 101010, to let them know it wasn't going to be a problem for them. We arrived at the beach and were warmly greeted by Chuck and Sandra, Breaux, and those that had arrived via the land cut.



Meredith

I can't really say what the experiences of the other boats out there with us that day were like because we were too spread out, but the rugged beauty of the barrier island, the sea turtles, the dolphins, birds, the clarity of the water, all made the trip worthwhile. We trolled a spoon lure behind the boat for 30 miles and never got a hit. Oh well, the real fisherman of the TX200 was Gordo's son, Matthew, but that is his story to tell.

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Athansor