

TEXAS 200 report:

by Dan St. Gean

It was a race to get to the T200 in the first place. We started in January and were really pressing to get it finished up enough to take. Rather than detail the race to finish up here, I'll add that stuff on the build page. We decided to lay down some primer or some rattle can paint to keep the S. Texas sun from making the ply super hot. That was done Thursday night before we left. We also had to alter the H18 trailer to let the Tamanu hulls ride securely. Although we wanted to get an early Friday start, with all the last minute stuff to do we actually left about 4 pm on Friday. We figured we'd just drive till we got tired and then pull off. We ended up driving through the night to get to Port Mansfield by Saturday evening about 8 pm. We left the boat stuff on the trailer and got together for a late dinner with Pete and Tom. Laurent and Yves stopped by but the kitchen had just stopped serving dinner, so they left for the other restaurant in town. This year, rather than stay at the less than appealing Fred Stone County Park, we stayed in the clean and relatively empty motel right in town.

I'll let Brian chime in with another font or whatever. He kept a much more detailed log of the trip.

SUNDAY--With all the assembly we had to do on the boat (it's 9' beam precluded driving down assembled), I thought it would be best if I stayed and assembled the boat. We didn't have some mission critical pieces for rigging the boat, as we had never assembled the whole boat or stepped the rig before. I know, I know it's kinda dumb to have a maiden voyage be a 20+ knot wind affair with an 80 mile run before civilization. However, we were committed to making the Tamanu hulls work. Chuck had the skipper's meeting which emphasized the remoteness of the setting and the need to be ON TIME for the shuttle. Brian dropped off the stuff and headed to Corpus Christi Waste Marine for some amsteel line to lash the stays. We needed a bit of extra stay length due to the wider beam. Between that run and a stop at Home Depot, and a quick direction issue, Brian was late for the bus--which did in fact stay thankfully.

Meanwhile, with the crew of Pilgrim helping out a bit, I assembled the double Tamanu/Hobie 18--hereafter referred to as the double Tamanu. It was hot windy work and took most of the day to accomplish. In retrospect it would have been immensely better in almost all respects to have the boat be 8'6" and transport it fully assembled. After wrestling with it for about 5 hours, it was together and had the rig temporarily stepped. Naturally I forgot to remove the trailering flag from the masthead which came back to bite me in the butt on Monday. Brian made a profuse apology to the rest of the busload and was able to secure a seat despite my making him late. Brian and I had dinner that night with Kevin,

Laurent, Yves, Pete, and Tom. After crashing again at our motel, Monday morning left quite a bit to do to the boat to be ready to launch. We had left our gear in the (under renovation) Port Mansfield Marina building which will be up and running by late summer. Thanks guys!



Waiting to fit the forestay bridle. Note mower guy blowing dirt everywhere... but the owner had generously let us store our stuff securely in his marina building the night before.

MONDAY--Despite hearing a bunch of reports from the year prior, we decided to set up and launch from the North parking lot. If you've been to S. Texas, that means its to Leeward. Note to self--launch from windward ramps. Both Laurent on his proa and Brian and I on the double Tamanu had a tough time getting out of there, as there was tons of wind, some nasty concrete, steel beams, and rip rap on either side of the ramp. That means some upwind sailing right of the bat. We were parked in a ramp from about 9-12 am with Laurent. That's a huge No No with so many fishermen about. However we were after the morning rush to launch, and there were only about two other boats launching during our stay in the ramp. We had to launch early because we needed about 6 to carry the boats from the parking lot to the water in the ramp. With all the rigging we had to do that ended up being way before we were ready to go. As such, Laurent's proa and our double Tamanu had to do some last minute packing and rigging on the water to get ready to go. Sadly, we blocked Laurent in and kinda rushed to get out under jib alone. Did I mention forgetting my jib sheets sitting on my

Ulua's ama back in Chicago? Minor problem circumvented by Gerard's generosity with line and a BIG box of spares. Anyone who's sailed a H18 knows they don't go to windward under just jib with the stock board location. So as soon as we poked our nose out of the finger piers, we were blown unceremoniously across the three ramps and into the finger piers with startling force. Luckily that didn't include the steel beams you can see below. However, we were no longer blocking Laurent, so we helped him pull his proa around the corner. He wanted to make sure that he could sail off on one shunt. That meant flipping his boat end for end and tying up in front of the concrete wall whose top was about 5' off the water level. Eventually we were able to get him off, and his boat was quick and weatherly. Brian and I learned a little something from his attempt. We had to try with full main in order to get upwind. Remember this is the first time this boat has been in the water. Also remember that little trial stepping of the mast and forgetting to remove the trailering flag? Well the main wouldn't go up with the little wire blocking the halyard's clean run. With some amazing help all morning from Gerard, we unstepped the rig, removed the flag, resteped the rig, and hoisted sail. Everything had been stowed and there was only getting off the dock between us and a nice downwind slide. My heart was in my throat. I didn't know if my leeboard placement would work under main alone to get upwind, off the dock, and away from the boat eating ugliness to leeward. We got a running start and made it!



Note nasty steel beams to Leeward. There were whitecaps by the opposite edge of the harbor despite only about 75 yards of fetch.

We headed out of the Port Mansfield harbor as my pulse began to settle a bit. We headed out towards the ICW and scandalized the main since we were

hitting 11-12 knots with every wave we surfed. While messing with the halyard to let the head of the sail down past the stupid comp tip, my fingers began to cramp up. I was super dehydrated. Dangerously dehydrated. 95 degrees and 20+ knots of wind will take it out of you. I turned over the helm to Brian, crawled under the boom and the pile of sail covering the leeward side of the tramp and drank fluids. And drank. And drank. Eventually I had to urinate, but as I got up from my tramp my legs got into the cramping action as well. My dehydration issue was serious, but I had lots of shade and fluids. Eventually I felt better and was able to share the helm with Brian. We were listening to the VHF and heard Laurent had dismasted because his mast foot had bounced off the step in boisterous conditions. We were coming up to his location and offered any assistance we could. He was concerned his rig, which he had been able to get aboard, might damage our boat if we came too close. His plan was to paddle to the King ranch, taking care to stay below the high tide line, and walk back to Port Mansfield. I was pretty concerned about that plan, but trusted his judgement. I should have attempted to anchor and tie him off, so we could have had a more thorough discussion, but I did not. Stupid of me in retrospect, and forced him into solo heroics only madmen and Frenchmen are capable of pulling off. We continued down to the land cut and passed only a couple boats all day. We saw the Tupperware Tri's and the the homebuilt tri that had dismasted. He was on the leeward shore and didn't hear our hailing on the VHF or our shouts as we passed. Not wanting to get pinned on a leeward shore, we continued. Eventually, we got to the Hap's Cut late in the afternoon. We decided to land quite a ways up the "beach" to avoid what we knew to be foot sucking mud down on the point to the cut. We did some swimming in Hap's cut in the evening and then set up the screen tent. It did little to stop the mosquitos from keeping me up after midnight though. The following morning we saw Laurent on the beach. That was a huge relief. He managed to paddle to shore, restep his rig solo, and sail under jib. His 2 am arrival and tales of getting lit up by the monster spots of two separate tugs were a bit harrowing. Not a lot of room in the land cut.



Here's Laurent's proa with his resteped rig and jib only since his main got shredded.



AM cruise down the land cut.

Tuesday--We got an early start after Monday's hectic launch. We sailed under both main alone and full sail for a while. We pretty much cruised down the ICW again and reeled in most everyone. As we crossed some of the open bays, we

got more wind than we were comfortable with. Passing Kevin's proa was fun, and I was able to video his setup. After hearing about some heavier weather behind us, we doused the main and continued on under jib. The main problem was still not being able to go to windward with just the jib. Some of the fast boats like John's planing dingy and David on the H14 reeled us in with our jib only setup. I just wanted to keep the boat together and not break a new boat. We ended up fending off everyone but the folding schooner. Knowing we'd have a tough beat up to the Padre Island Yacht Club, we swung head to wind to roll up the jib and hoist the main. We got the job mostly done when the wind grabbed the bows and sent us into the shallows to the east of the ICW. My rudder tension was my curse again! Last year we got spun out in a hairy situation involving a stuck barge and an idiot of a Captain. Having a tough day already he decided to rev his engines which spun us directly into him. After an emergency tack and a second attempt to pass way out of the channel, we broke a rudder. Well, the shallows claimed the other rudder this year without the need of a surly tug captain. I think the tension needs to be eased on the rudders, and the UV rays of the last 27 years fatally weakened the plastic Hobie rudders. We dragged the crippled rudder on board and proceeded to harden up on the wind as we came up the channel. I had Brian ready on the sheets with paddles at the ready to help the bows around. Our first tack was smooth, but the wind caught the hat I borrowed (sorry Kevin!) and blew it down the channel. Our third tack was short, and I managed to T-bone the red daymarker. Our bow bridles allowed a soft collision thankfully. After another two tacks, we pulled into the docks as one of the first boats in.



Rafted up at the PIYC.

This allowed me to both have time to work on the broken rudder and watch the other boats make their attempt to tack up. Kevin showed how its done shunting singlehanded. Bruce, the Commodore of the PIYC met us at the dock and was not so surprised to see us with a broken rudder. Last year he had put the word out, and I was able to get an old H16 blade from an Inter 20 sailor from Corpus.

This year I just traced the head profile and hole location from the broken blade. Bruce took me to his garage shop, hacked off the extra material, and used his drill press to punch a new pair of holes. The rudder linkage was also extended to correct the overly toed in situation that made the rudders ventilate at speed.

After Charlie and Laura rafted up three deep to us, I knew it might be a late departure. After a so so fish special at Snoopy's, we headed back to the PIYC. I decided to sleep in the air conditioning this year and was glad I did.

Wednesday--We left the PIYC about last out between being pinned in and helping out some other folks get out. The wind by then was howling, so we had some challenges getting out of there. After ripping down the channel and hanging a right, we managed to break the starboard rudder pin. The fiberglass pins were used because they were easier to turn down to the somewhat smaller diameter needed to fit the pintles. Bad call as it turns out. The aluminum pins would have been so much better, but they'd have been harder to fit with the improvised shop setup at Port Mansfield. We beached before the Corpus Cristi Channel to fix the pin. With the amount of wind we were dealing with, we

wanted to continue to proceed under jib alone. However the boat wouldn't go upwind with just the jib, and the channel was a close reach to a beat. We moved the leeboard to the forward edge of the front cockpit and hoped for a bit of balance and upwind ability. We also heard a bit of drama unfolding but at the tail end of it. Turns out that Chuck had fished out a sailor who had capsized and had his boat blow off faster than he could swim. Chuck motored over in his Caprice asking if we'd seen the boat. We hadn't sadly. I've had a capsized boat blow away from me, but on a small lake. I'm glad it ended well--if expensively.

Turns out that Tow Boat US had claimed salvage after the Coasties had spotted the craft and declared it a hazard to navigation. Later we saw David on the Hobie 14 blow by under main, and that's about all we saw of anyone that day.

We were able to make progress upwind under jib alone although slow by our usual standards. After turning down Lydia Ann channel, we waited to pass Mud Island before jibing. This led up across is fairly big bight of water and by 100 yards off land the whitecaps are forming. By a 1/2 mile fetch the waves are 2-3'.

This is the most slamming this boat has taken to date, and I am somewhat alarmed by the independent way the hulls are following the seas. This "walking" of the hulls isn't good, and the port side of the tramp let go from the mast beam.

I lashed the front edge as good as I could. We finally got into the lee of the land and the the beating relaxed. Our slow jib only slide got us into Paul's Mott pretty late in the day especially after our lunch repair stop prior to the ship channel.



See the green drybag? It's full of tools and spares. You can also see the tramp pulled out of the luff groove in the forward beam. With a second rudder pin to

repair, I didn't notice the beam had cracked inside of the luff groove. That spreading allowed the tramp to pop out.

Only a few boats and the flotilla of PDR's came in later. So much for early starts, speedy runs, and no breakage. That last continued with the third rudder breakage after the other Hobie fiberglass rod let go. So I spent the remainder of the evening putting the other aluminum rod and a bolt through. The PDR's got a standing ovation sailing in together at dusk.

Thursday--Morning came awfully early. We wanted to get a better start than the day before. Brian and I had cut across San Antonio Bay the previous year at about 10 knots of upwind speed through and over 2-3' waves. With the wind we'd been having, I was thinking of even bigger waves. That independent flex we'd seen heading upwind after Lydia Ann Channel made me nervous. I wanted to keep the boat together even after the spate of rudder issues. Cats are nice in that respect since they have two rudders. Lots of other boats also had rudder issues, but many were forced to stop and fix it on the water or withdraw from the cruise to effect repairs. We therefore decided to take the back way through the dugouts. We weren't first out that morning, but we got a good start and were second to Ayer's dugout. The Tupperware Tri's skippers, Andrew and Stephanie, had a fishing cabin there and had asked if anyone wanted to stop by for pancakes. Kevin was first in and the directions seemed a little challenging.

We hailed anyone on our common VHF channel and followed the directions without incident. LOTS of others had trouble on both sides of the dugout. While we were there many folks either didn't hear or ignored the directions to their own detriment. Lots of carnage that day. Even locals got stuck on the oyster reefs.

We hung out for a while watching the unfortunate action unfold, and then headed off to Army hole. As it turned out, the Duckers came to the rescue. Had we stayed longer and realized there were some people in trouble, we might have been able to help a bit. Lesson learned for me--Just because a boat will float in 4" or 10" or whatever does not mean it will sail upwind in that same depth. We stayed as close as possible to the shore since reaching and beating was putting the boat under more stress than I wanted to deal with. We saw Kevin, Yves, Blue Bayou, Baby Blue, and some others taking the same route.

I'm sure glad we went that way rather than cut across San Antonio Bay. I finally found out that when the tramp popped loose from the port side, it was because the beam had cracked in the luff groove all the way to the middle. We relashed the beams with stronger line (thanks Kevin) and knew we needed to baby the boat to get it home. Fortunately, the last day is a run, followed by a reach in flat ICW conditions, then another run to Magnolia Beach. Kevin was as concerned as I was about the beam and decided he and Laurent would shadow us on Friday. After the work on the boat was finished, I crashed in Brian's tent which was set up for the first time since we had to use one of the poles from the

screen tent after some breakage. We split some very good Cielo Anjeho with Kevin, Laurent, Yves and ourselves. A nice night all together with some good conversation to boot.

Friday--This morning saw Brian and I get a reasonable start and headed off under jib alone. Although we could have seen much better speeds in the only light air day, we thought protecting the boat was wiser. We slid downwind surfing up to 9 knots, hung a right going NE up the ICW. We watched Travis in Pilgrim slide by followed by Chuck the Duck in his Caprice. Real tempting to raise some sail, but prudence prevailed.



Dan driving, Brian chilling our, and double Tamanu going well under jib alone. Note forward leeboard location which allows progress on all points of sail under jib alone. The scuffed area behind it is the first leeboard location for full sail or main alone.



After the ICW we ran down Magnolia Bay with Kevin and Laurent in hailing distance the whole time.

Thanks for holding back with us guys. We beached just after Kevin and Laurent and just before David in his H14. Sorry David.... We pretty much unloaded the boat immediately. Laura came by with an offer for a ride back to the trailers behind their place. Brian wasn't feeling too good, but a blast of AC in the Jeep helped. We broke the boat down, loaded the trailer, used the outdoor shower at Charlie and Laura's house, and headed for Chicago early. We were kinda beat after a week on the water and didn't want to wait for the shrimp boil. I missed hanging with Pete and Tom, Kevin, Laurent, Yves, John and other friends made during the week, but the lure to get some miles under our belt was too strong. We managed to get all the way to Waco that evening. After a great meal we crashed at the Motel 6.

Saturday--Lots of driving. Got just past E. St. Louis.

Sunday--Driving again and home to Chicago by 2pm

Fun moments--Conversations with Brian. Solving the world's problems on the drive down while listening to First Wave radio. Seeing Laurent on Tuesday morning after thinking he'd still be walking back to Port Mansfield. Successfully dealing with new boat teething issues. Having designed a cobbled together hull and beachcat that worked. Not perfectly, but it worked.

Lessons learned--

- Hydrate!

- Test sail under challenging conditions or in our case at all.
- Be ready to render assistance to others if possible.
- Mosquitos like me, but I already knew that.
- Brian is the finest kind of crew. Lots of great people are into sailing small boats.
- Driving 28 hours straight through stinks.
- Staying at the motel in Port Mansfield was great, but renting a condo with a slip would be even better.
- UV'd out plastic rudders that are 27 years old aren't too great for reliability.
- Set rudder tension to pop up easily.
- The fiberglass rods I used are designed to be sacrificial and were.

Boat performance and related issues--

- Gary's Tamanu is a winner of a boat. It goes together quickly compared to my Ulua. The footwells are super for comfort. Fully decked canoes are great for seaworthiness. Double enders don't really mind overloading the stern much.
- That said, a transom will be more buoyant and easier to find hardware for rudders.
- Using rigs from other boats on current projects is fantastic! I couldn't have afforded or had even remotely enough time to build an entire boat. Using a proven rig and copying a dialed in boat's geometry saved lots of headaches.
- Cats are super comfortable.
- Combining rigid bolt connections with lashings wasn't a really great idea. I should have used a non stretch line for the lashing rather than the crappy nylon line that allowed so much independent movement.
- Leading the sidestays out to a point wider than the end of the beams introduced a turning movement only intensified by using such stretchy lashing line.
- Not gooping up the rudder hardware was a mistake as well. We had to bail the watertight (or almost in the port hull's case) sections in the stern since the hardware had 4 spots in each stern allowing water intrusion.
- Don't use crappy caulking from Lowes for bedding hatches even if you're in a hurry.
- Have a deep reef point in the main.
- Lots of helm running in a sloop without a polled out jib or something.
- This hull is great for outrigger use, but it is an awesome cat platform as well.

- An 8'6" beam boat has so many advantages over it's wider counterpart, I'd have to think long and hard about a reason to go wider in a beachcruising design or one that is going to be set up and taken down for less than 2 weeks at a stretch. Or even more. After reading about the 32' Gougeon cats, I'm tempted to include costal cruising in there as well.
- If I'd have had the time, it would have been better to have box beams rather than the fragile Hobie beams. They weren't built for the stress of such large hulls.
- It's stupid that beachcats don't have reef points standard. Even the long distance guys in the Worrell or similar didn't have them--that's not so smart. In the case of cruising, its about slowing down to an acceptable level and keeping it pointy side up.