



THE LIGHT LAGUNA MADRE YACHT CLUB

May 2008

Laguna
Madre
Yacht
Club



No, this isn't Rocky

Brian Mikiten

This isn't Rocky Poovey on Night Magic but it could have been during the recent April 26th race. The weather report Thursday night showed winds from ESE at 8 - 10 knots for the next few days and I had a feeling that the race would be slow but safe - an important part of sailing for me and my 13 year old crew on my Beneteau First 305. Jim had put out the race information about Ocean Challenge #1 and since then I had been planning on racing so the weather news was a bit discouraging but I know that at SPI, things are rarely predictable. Friday was spent cleaning the muck off the boat from a recent Northerly and by the evening, we were ready to go and prepared for a fun day and 30 nm of around the buoy racing.

At dawn on Saturday morning the NOAA and weather underground web sites both showed slightly higher winds nearing 15 knots and shifting the to East in the afternoon. It all looked good even though the wind was dead calm as we packed the car and headed over the bridge.

By the time we arrived at the dock it was clear that the wind was going to pick up and improve. We stowed our gear and headed out. As we neared the swing bridge my son pointed to the East and we both noticed that there was a storm cell headed our way. There was some weather related chatter on the the radio

Broach Prevention

- 1) Reduce sail area by changing sails or reefing.
- 2) Play the mainsheet to dump the wind from aloft.
- 3) Work your traveller to reduce the sail effectiveness while maintaining some control.
- 4) Change your point of sail.
- 5) Avoid waves hitting abeam.
- 6) Tension the backstay.
- 7) Be aware of your own and your boat's abilities in heavy air. Don't go out if you have concerns.





but I could see the other side of the storm and the high clouds didn't worry me too much - a bit of rain would just clean the hull of any dirt we had missed during Friday's cleaning.

As we headed East under power in the channel to the starting line, the wind was up to 25 knots and was gusting to 30. When I realized that our headway was minimal at best, we heard the call from the Race Committee that we would postpone the race till 11:00 - one hour later than the original time. I'm glad it happened - it took us almost another hour just to fight the current and winds to get to the starting line under power.

The starting line had four other boats in attendance - down from the seven expected from the prior night's captain's meeting. None of them had sails up and it was 15 minutes before the race official start time. The wind was not cooperating. The GPS beeped to indicate 10:50 CST and the race officially began its pre-start countdown. Night Magic hoisted a mizzen sail, Felicity was starting to raise her main and the other Wist was tentatively doing the same. On Due South, we started to raise the main while pointed head-to-wind only to find the main halyard driven around the steaming light by the wind. As my crew steadied the helm, I corrected the problem and we hoist our main. The boat immediately powered up and jerked ahead throwing up a splash behind her and healing in response to the partially reefed main.

Ahead, we could see Felicity and Night Magic dealing with the harsh winds and the waves formed at the inlet of the channel. A strong tidal surge kept the boats from making much headway to the mark and what the day before was planned to be a clever close reach through the marks and then out to the gas platform turning into a tacking fiasco. As boats neared the mouth of the channel, a combination of the tidal in-flow and the strong 30+ knot Easterly winds made any movement out of the channel much less to the first mark almost impossible. These conditions alone were going to make for a long and difficult race.

Back on Due South we healed over while playing the main to steady the boat. My 13 year old crew started to point out the fact that Rocky and others were almost broaching. The 8 foot seas in the channel made things worse as boats sailed to the crest of the waves only to be dropped in the troughs. From our perspective, hulls disappeared as masts assumed a nearly horizontal position. It was Cowes race week here at SPI!

"We should go back". It was both a suggestion and a statement. My young son had heard me say "safety first" often enough that he knew the difference between a good vigorous sailboat race and danger. As we turned, we noticed that Wist was not far behind. We headed back under just the main on a long run that saw 8-9 knots and ended up being the highlight of the day.

When we got back, I received an email from Jim stating that Zephyr and Felicity had both had encounters with either rocks or the beach headed out from the fingers. It certainly wasn't what they had planned for the day and we all hope the boats and crews fared well. There were so many conditions on Saturday that were not expected and certainly uncontrollable. All the sailors were experienced and from what I observed, more than reasonable safe sailing techniques were employed.

What happened to our race day? It was, as is often the case, a combination of many factors - the wind was the least in my opinion as most of the boats and crews would have had few problems handling it. The waves, cross currents and the slot effect of the channel entrance were much more of an issue. It is a reminder that we must be aware of our surroundings, plan for success and disaster and always, always trust our inner sense of safety. When it is time to race, do so and race hard. When you hear "we should go back" take heed and do the right thing. Safety First.

See the Captain's report for more details about this race.



Sailing with Kids

I learned to sail when I was 15 years old. As a younger child, I had built models of clipper ships and spent hours drawing standing rigging and hulls - sails were never my speciality. My first boat was a Ghost 13 - it was selected because of the price and that fact that I could tow it behind my VW Rabbit. I had sailed a few times in a rented Laser on a lake while I taught myself the basics but had no real sense for the different boats or designs. Move forward past a Vagabond 17, two C-15s, a Flying Scot, and a Soling to my present Beneteau 305 and you'll find the same person who used to draw boats for fun just with a bigger toy. I have never been able to explain my love of sailing or the feeling I get on the water but when I found out that my youngest son enjoyed it as well (thanks to a weekend sail with Rocky about two years ago), I found myself regularly thinking of ways we could sail and learn together. Over these last few years, I've gather a few thoughts on the subject that I'd like to share.

- 1) Teach before getting out on the water. This can be as simple as time spent on the boat while not under sail learning the names of the equipment to doing dry-drills. It is amazing how much can be done without actually leaving the dock. We have worked on winch operation, tacking maneuvers, helm control and safety all without setting sail.
- 2) Use a pre-sail checklist to be sure everyone is briefed and reminded of the rules under sail.
- 3) Always practice safety first. Work through safety procedures prior to heading out. Over plan, over train.
- 4) Listen to your crew - when they want to come in, do so. There is nothing like a bad experience on the water to turn away a new or beginning sailor.
- 5) Work on short, successful trips instead of long events in the beginning.
- 6) Ginger cookies and fresh air are a great way to calm the beginnings of sea sickness or that queasy feeling heading out of the channel.

Have you taken anyone younger out sailing lately? Grow the club and the community by inviting others on your boat.



For Sale Coming Soon

We are adding a For Sale section in the newsletter. If you have any boating related items you'd like to sell, please contact me with a short description, contact method and a phone number. bmikiten@idworld.net.



Anchoring at SPI

Anchoring in the SPI area can be a rewarding experience and allow you to spend more time on the boat whether you are out sailing or motoring for the day. Wes Thom was kind enough to impart some of his knowledge during a recent chat. Take some time to chat with him in order to get more details on specific areas.

Our discussion was divided into two areas - anchoring on the bay and options for the Gulf. As I'm about to sail up to Rockport and didn't want to sail all night if possible, we started with the Gulf. Wes explained that there are really only two viable anchoring options in the deep water - tie off to a rig and the use of a parachute anchor. The option of tying off to a rig is pretty straight forward. Select the rig, identify any drift considerations and possible shifts in tide and wind. Wes noted that the actual tying off process can be a bit harrowing in rolling seas and that the best method was to run a line from your boat, around the rig and then back to your boat to make it simpler to leave. Other considerations included checking with manned rigs to be sure they didn't have a problem with your actions and being aware of chafe.

The other option in the Gulf was one that I had not considered but that is used by the shrimpers - a parachute anchor. The anchor is deployed in deeper water under bare poles (or by some accounts a very small sail for balance) and left to stabilize the boat as you sleep. Several people are testing this and I'll give you some feedback on it in the future.

The bay and its feeders provide another set of opportunities and techniques. Barracuda cove is probably the most common area I see boats anchoring during the summer. It provides a safe harbor and when you select a spot far enough away from the commercial traffic, you'll find it to be quite a pleasant experience. Wes also mentioned that Children's Beach on the backside of Barracuda Cove can be quite good but that some boats - especially those with fin keels - might consider bow and stern anchoring to ensure stability and comfort. Finally Dolphin cove upwind from the sandbar, rocks and jetties can be quite popular as well but in all cases, other boaters should be a concern when setting the anchor.

As is the case with all anchoring decisions, you'll need to consider the bottom composition before setting the anchor and determining the scope of your line. Wes gave a few examples of fellow boaters who got into trouble over the last few years because they forgot to consider bottom conditions - often sandy at SPI and therefore requiring specific anchor types and techniques. In other cases, mechanical issues kept the anchors from setting or deck fittings caused a failure while at anchor.

Anytime you are at anchor consider setting both a depth and drift alarm if your GPS supports this function. Regular shore sightings will also help you rest easier knowing that you are firmly held in position.

Whether stopping for lunch or anchoring down for the night, it is important to consider proper anchoring techniques. Be sure your equipment and technique are ready!

~ *Fleet Captain's Report* ~

Spring Series Racing

On Saturday, April 19th, 7 boats crossed the line for the start of the second Gulf race of the season. The winds were east, 12-18 knots, and blowing straight down the jet-ties. The start was beautiful and the finish was close. One boat, *Tucan*, suffered gear failure and did not finish. The other boats finished as follows on corrected time:

Night Magic
Wist
Windsong III
Corps Trip
Felicity
Zephyr

It was great to see *Corps Trip* out sailing again after such a long time stuck inside Port Isabel Harbor.

The committee boat was unusual for this race. Some called it a double-wide ComPac 27; others said it was a mating pair of ComPac's. Jimmy and Kay were anchored at the perfect spot for the committee boat so when *Summerwind* came out to set the buoys, they offered to let her raft alongside. It made for a fun afternoon.

Sunday's Bay Races saw 5 boats on the starting line in West Bay. The winds were challenging creating some exciting racing involving cabin surfing, port hole glass bottom viewing, wild 720 degree turns and all kinds of extra circular activities. All said and done, the corrected finish order was:

	<u>1st race</u>	<u>2nd race</u>
Windsong III	1	2
Night Magic	2	1
Wist	3	DNS
Zephyr	4	3
Felicity	5	4

The Van Atten's did their usual fantastic job of providing committee boat services the Bay races on Sunday. I understand from their crew that everyone was glad that Jim decided to bring the big boat to the races. It was a tad bouncy out there. We all owe them a big thank you for their help!



Ocean Challenge Race #1

April 26th was a day for the books. The winds were supposed to be east 10-15 knots with seas of 2-4 feet. Alas, the weather guessers forgot to tell us of a huge storm developing around us. When it hit the winds were suddenly 25-35 knots! TowBoatUS told us it was closer to 40 knots at times.

7 boats planned to race – only 4 made it to the starting line. *Summerwind* and *Wind-song III* chose discretion over valor and stayed in the slip. *Zephyr* got caught in the entrance of the Port Isabel Harbor just as the squall line hit. She was immediately blown out of the narrow channel and grounded hard on the west side. Each successive wave drove her harder and harder ashore. By the time TowBoatUS, Wes Thom, and others arrived to help, things were getting really dicey. Only *Night Magic*, *Felicity*, *Due South* and *Wist* were still in the game and they decided to delay the start one hour in the hopes conditions would improve – they didn't. At 11:00 the four intrepid boats started the race and tried to get to the open sea. *Due South* made it 5 minutes into the race but decided that this was not the day to teach sailing to his crew and returned after the start. Passage past the buoys proved extremely difficult with a huge sea and strong currents in the entrance. Only *Night Magic* made it out – and only just. The other boats soon retired not being able to make much progress against wind and current. *Night Magic* returned soon thereafter with tales of a wild ride through the entrance. I don't think the sailors who participated in this race will soon forget this day. 7 entrants, 4 starters, no finishers.

May Fleet Events

May 17 (Saturday)	Spring Series, Gulf Race
May 18 (Sunday)	Spring Series, Bay Races (2 races)
May 24 (Saturday)	Memorial Day Cruise (More details coming soon)



2008 Flag Officers

- COMMODORE..... Wes Thom 956-233-7628
- VICE COMMODORE..... Rocky Poovey 956-943-1540
- REAR COMMODORE..... Brian Mikiten 210-863-5245
- SECRETARY..... JoAnne Lesieutre 956-761-3169
- TREASURER..... Tom Gossman 956-371-9299
- FLEET CAPTAIN..... Jim Godfrey 956-943-4718
- STEWARD..... Peggy Godfrey 956-943-6427
- FLEET SURGEON..... Bob Christenson 956-486-7360
- FLEET BARRISTER..... John Pinkerman 956-943-1082

Social announcements will now be made via email to ensure that they are timely. If you are not getting them, please contact Peggy. Last month's response to the social was wonderful!

Thanks to Jim and Wes Thom for their contributions.

Brian Mikiten - Editor and Rear Commodore

For changes or comments email bmikiten@idworld.net

Queen Isabella Causeway (east end), Texas

May 2008

