



THE LIGHT

LAGUNA MADRE YACHT CLUB

August 2009



Rough Weather Sailing - SPI Style

Brian Mikiten

Signs of Losing Control

- 1) Rounding up.
- 2) Water coming over the rail.
- 3) Excessive heeling
- 4) Significant tiller/wheel pressure.
- 5) Sails trimmed to "dump" wind with limited results.
- 6) Radical changes in boat speed due to direction changes or waves.
- 7) Crew concerns
- 8) Other boaters reefing or heading to safe harbors.
- 9) Increasing wind and waves.
- 10) Any significant out of the ordinary event.

If you have ever discussed sailing with anyone outside of SPI and Port Isabel, you'll probably find that their perception of heavy air is a bit different from ours. It seems that we can have a predicted wind speed of 10-15 knots on the Island or in Brownsville but experience 15-25 knots or more offshore or even in the bay. As a result, we as sailors learn to deal with higher wind speeds - the challenges that others may see on a rare basis, but we live with and enjoy. It makes for a wonderful location for sailing and a promise of high performance outings but there are times that we need to take a bit of care and make preparations in case the wind gets ahead of us.

During the last two runs up the coast to El Jefe's we experienced the typical higher winds but in both races, we saw gusts to 30 and almost 40 knots. I found it interesting to watch the many different approaches taken by everyone when the wind whipped up. The responses by sailors ranged from furling headsails and reefing mains to putting up more headsails. The approaches varied based on experience and perception of the dangers.

The bottom line is that everyone has a different view of wind and what should be done as well as when. Boat size has a tremendous affect on how sailors respond as well but there are certain items that everyone should think about before they head out

Does your radio work?

While many boaters carry a handheld radio, it has a limited range and may not provide coverage when out at sea. Consider a higher power cockpit mounted unit that includes a mast mounted antenna. Most boating radios are line of site so a mast-top antenna will be most beneficial.

Did you check the weather report for the day? The next day?

Weather reports are getting better but weather systems change quickly due to heating and cooling effects, and other weather systems that may not be accounted for locally. A good plan is to check the weather from several sources (www.weather.com and www.wunderground.com as well as www.sailflow.com are all excellent sites) and compare the results. Check the weather for the next day as well to get a better feeling for what may be in store for your area and account for rapidly moving fronts.

Do you know where your foul weather gear is located?

I know from recent experience that by the time you need your foul weather gear that it is probably too wild on deck to think about going to the lockers below. A good plan is to get out the gear when you think about reefing. If you know it will be a heavy weather day, consider leaving it in a deck locker close to the crew.

**Are the hatches closed?**

A report from Boat US stated that open hatches are a common cause of boats at sea being flooded while under sail. Closing and securing hatches when the weather starts to be a concern is a good first step.

Do you know your boat?

This question may seem simple but many sailors do not know how their boats will respond in different weather conditions especially under power. Additionally, the response of sailboat motors can be significantly retarded when run in heavy seas where currents and windage become a problem.

Do you have reefing lines?

Again, from personal experience when sailing my new boat, I found that the reefing system had not been installed properly and didn't function when it came time to reef the sail. Reefing in light air to test the system was done but in heavy air when I needed it, I found that the system jammed due to the type of line used in the boom.

Are your PFDs on?

The expense incurred when purchasing good quality PFDs is well worth it when you have to make the decision to don the vests early and wear them for hours. The additional cost of PFDs with integrated rings for life-line use is even more justified the first time you have to run to the foredeck alone with inexperienced crew or an autopilot in control.

Each of these ideas should be considered above and beyond the rough weather sailing techniques used on the sea. Boat care and maintenance obviously have a great affect on your success at sea as does the crew's physical conditioning. All of these factors combine to ensure a successful and fun trip our favorite coast.

Reminder: We are always looking for ideas and articles. Please feel free to send email contributions.

Club Notes and News

We've added this space to ensure that club members are aware of recent Board and Club activities. Please feel free to add your comments here via email.

New Burgees - New burgees will be ordered in the near future. Please contact Jim Godfrey for more information.

New Captain's Chairs for the clubhouse will be ordered by Peggy Godfrey in the fall. If you have interest in representing your boat in the club house, please let her know.

Air Conditioning Concerns - there have been some significant problems controlling the air conditioner in the club house. As you can imagine, with the large number of people accessing the club, there is more than ample opportunity to set the temperature lower for use and then forgetting to set it back up prior to leaving. This results in not only a large expense to the club but is wasteful. The club house is for members and there is a concern that non-members may be accessing it and changing the temperatures. Please leave the thermostat at the temperature set

New Changes

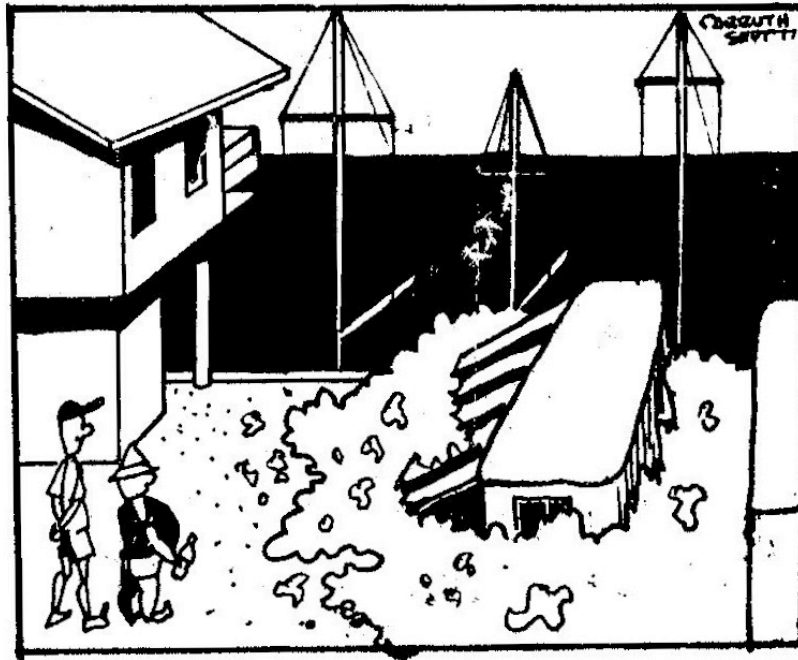
1. The combination of all locks will be changed.
2. Members will be given the combination on an as-needed basis. Bob Christenson, Bill Maples and Jim Godfrey will be responsible for giving out the combinations and maintaining the list of members who have the combination.
3. Giving the combination to others will be discouraged.
4. Members who enter/use the clubhouse between club events will be asked to sign in and out.
5. Industrial locking thermostat covers will be installed.

Web Updates

Don't forget to check out the club website for regular updates, copies of The Light and information on upcoming events. We update the site regularly and there is an opportunity for all members to comment on the content on-line. Please feel free to contact the Board Members with your ideas for improvement or additional content.

For changes or comments email
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A Cartoon by Tommy Carruth



OH THAT!!! DR. MARTIN'S PIÑA COLADA
MACHINE GOT OUT OF CONTROL!!!!!!

TC Writes:

When the club house on top of the restrooms at Anchor Marina, Dr. Archie Martin decided we were having so much fun that he bought a trailer and put it next to the club house so we wouldn't miss anything. His cocktail parties were infamous.

2009 Race and Cruise Schedule

- September 19, Fall Series Gulf Race
- September 20, Fall Series Bay Race
- October 17, Fall Series Gulf Race
- October 18, Fall Series Bay Race
- November 21, Fall Series Gulf Race
- November 22, Fall Series Bay Race

Remember, you don't have to own a racing boat to race. Everyone is welcome under our handicapping rules where the best sailed boat and not the fastest wins.

2009 Flag Officers

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Port Isabel, Laguna Madre, Texas

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