

Thoughts from a Rookie who completed the Texas 200.

Boat: Compac 16
18" draft Bulb Keel
#485 ballast
#1000 total weight
No engine

Crew members two (both Oklahoma Rookies. Those bays are not a freshwater lake.)

First, I must say that although this boat drafts a bit much for the Texas 200, it is extremely stable. I made a lot of mistakes and due to wavering on my decision to go, did not properly prepare for the event. However, here are some ideas from a rookie; so, that, others may be better prepared.

You **MUST** show up in a boat that you have confidence in. You **CANNOT** be wondering if your boat is capable when the winds start piping up to 35 mph plus, and the seas start running four to five feet.

We were forced into rescue duty the first day; because as Matt said, we are the safety net for ourselves and others. The winds were blowing, and the sea was running four to five feet. Another boat had capsized in front of us (and in the path of a barge). The captain of the capsized boat was attempting to climb on to upright the boat; however, his passenger had floated too far to get to the boat. Another 200 member managed to get on anchor; but the sea was too rough to do much.

I made a pass to see what was needed and what I could possibly do. I **DID NOT** want the rescuing boat (me) to become the rescuee in the situation. We made another tack (after seriously fighting the wind to turn); however, we were too far away from the floating passenger to get her a line. So, we made another pass, and got her a line.

That is when I went into irons as we worked to get her on board. So, we were

sideways to the waves, no power, and three members on board. That is when I seen the four to five foot wave coming at us (although not breaking), and I thought this is going to hurt. The boat took care of us as it rolled away from the wave, settled, and popped to the top of the wave like a cork. While the little Compac did not have a name prior to the trip, I believe she certainly earned the name FEARLESS on the trip!

Somehow, in the fray, the rigging for the main-sheet came untied; so, I had no control over it as we were maneuvering to pick up the wayward passenger. I simply trimmed it by pulling on the boom with one hand while standing and steering with the other hand. So, there is your first tip: **Check all knots, lines, cleats, and other attachment points on your boat. Be ready with anchor, ropes, and ladders to rescue others.**

Now, the reason that I was past the turn off for the Mansfield cut, and in a position to save others who missed the cut is because; I did not get any charts prior to the event. **Buy the laminated fishing charts PRIOR to the event.** I have a lot of excuses why this happened; however, none of them are good. **You cannot rely on your phone or NOAA charts.** It just will not work. **Also, don't rely on just following the ICW markers.** You will get lost (yes I know this for a fact).

Mandatory equipment (for me):

Hat- Sturdy full brim that will not flop in the wind (mine did). You may want to tether the hat to your shirt as well as under you chin.

Sunglasses- with leash preferably

Long Sleeve Shirt – Quick Drying

Sunblock

Neck Gator- very valuable

Long Pants- Quick Drying

Sturdy Shoes with durable sole

Marine Radio- Barge Traffic and Rescue for yourself and others

Inflatable PFD- more comfortable than regular PFD can be automatic or manual

GPS – another item I did not have; therefore, I did not attempt Army Hole.

Charts – as previously mentioned.

Tidal Charts – may be handy if your dumb enough to camp overnight in an unmarked basin.

Seabags- so your stuff stays dry. If in open I suggest tying to boat.

Waterproof Camera – You can now buy a digital camera that is waterproof, and makes videos for less than \$150.00. Take a lot of pictures and post them on the web page.

(Someday you will be old and need to remember the crazy stuff you did).

Anchor, ropes, mandatory boating safety equipment, etc...

If your boat will capsize or you think it will, or even if it don't, **practice deep water recovery**. My boat will not capsize; but I need to know how to get back in by myself in deep water. If your boat does capsize, then you need to know how to recover it yourself, and your passengers need to know what this looks like too.

You need to know how to get your boat unstuck from the Texas bottom land that is usually gooey, sticky mud. We found that when camping in a basin the first night that was shallow the night before, and become more shallow in the morning, that we could turn the boat on its side and walk it slowly out using great effort in doing so. (helps one sleep better at night). The main halyard rolled it smartly to the side. Then pushing and tugging we were able to get into deeper water eventually. So, keep tidal charts handy and know the effect wind a tide have on your camping experiences. One experienced member told me his boat drafts three inches, and he was one mile from the intercostal when the wind blew all the water out of the backwater bay, and he had a difficult time getting to deep enough water to float.

I learned that my boat can sail off groundings by setting the sail on a close reach, then having the crew lean to the same side to sail out of trouble. However, this is an advance technique that will only be learned not taught. Also, I discovered my boat has a built in “blind man stick”. When that rudder starts bumping, it is time to do a ninety and

head to deeper water!

Charts are great; however, they are not worth a hoot if you cannot read them. Ten time veterans will talk about shoals moving and things of that nature. Meanwhile, I spend thirty minutes trying to find the right chart and another hour trying to locate myself on that chart. Then, I am so elated and proud that I don't even bother to look at water depth.

So, buy your charts early, study them often, and start learning how to use them!

Don't count on buying them in Port Isabel.

Check you boat thoroughly. Mine is a tank; however, I still went over the running rigging and the standing rigging earlier. The rudder system on mine is built to last being full aluminum with an aluminum rudder blade; but others were not so lucky. There is a lot of stress on tiller handles rudders, and rudder attachments when the wind pipes up. Keels are another weak point on small boats. While mine is a torpedo, most are not made to bury in the mud and then turn sideways; so, bad things happen to these keels.

Although, I chose not to make all the camps, I still had a wonderful experience. We camped in total darkness without so much of a hint of a town in site. We sailed with the porpoises many days, and on the last day a pod of about fifteen spent over thirty minutes with us. The water was clear enough to see them going under, around and by the boat. That experience was awesome.

I have already ordered an underwater camera; so, I can take many more pictures and videos next time. Others, **AFTER THE FACT**, told me about an app called Navonics that they have on their phone. GPS and charts all in one app! However, I am still ordering a GPS with chart downloading capabilities.

Again, my boat is Fearless. We were heading out into bays that others were

retreating from. The first day, I did not realize how bad it was until others started telling me it was a bad day. However, we were running four knots with no sails of any sort up so...

My thanks to the Padre Island Yacht Club for their hospitality. I cannot tell you how nice it was to get a shower (or two) in the middle of the week. While I still slept on my boat, I know that others appreciated the air conditioning. Also, the hamburgers were awesome, and they were a welcome change of pace from my canned foods.

Take care of those who take care of you. JT's One Stop in Magnolia Beach has a wonderful hamburger (OK several wonderful hamburgers). He allows free parking for the vehicles, and expects nothing in return; however, that does not keep us from buying fuel and burgers from him; so, please do that when you go.

I'm considering a second round with the 200, and I started looking at boat plans. My boat was wonderful; but the draft could have been less on some occasions. Additionally, I really want to build a boat. I like the Mayfly; but I also like to be a little bit different. Plus, as I stated, I like sleeping on my boat; so, I am considering an AF3.