

2016 Texas 200

My Texas 200 story was one of boat failures and medical problems that made me drop out on the end of the first day. Still, it was great fun! As you read on, it may sound like the spinnaker was a disaster but the reality was that everything could have been prevented and I learned a great deal. The spinnaker was just too much fun, and with a few mods, will stay on the boat. During the trip I thought I was having problems with my blood sugar being too low but in reality my cortisol levels were too low due to exertion and my Addison's disease. This would not have been an issue were it not for the mechanical errors I was about to experience. I had made modifications within weeks of the regatta and that itself was a mistake. Too little time to work out and test the mods. Here is what happened to me.

Launched and as I tried to unfurl the main, realized I had an unrecoverable snag on my spin/mast. Returned to launch site to demast to fix it.

After sailing into open water, I attempted to raise the spin. It got half way up but would go no further. I then realized that the spin halyard had flipped up over the wind indicator and I could not raise the half raised spin up further or bring it down. This required an open water demasting with a flailing half raised spin. It required all the strength I could to do it in 15mph winds.

As time passed, I looked down to see my left rear aka had come out of the crossbrace. The insert was now only half in. I was unable to push the aka back into a locking position. Furled the sails and secured the ama with rope. No good options but to sail on, keeping a close eye on the half inserted aka. I would later find out that the cross bar had actually come loose and shifted 1 inch to the right! Never heard of that before. Ultimately fixable days later by repositioning the bar and tightening the hex bolts.

While taking a picture with my phone (bone head move), I see out of the corner of my eye a channel marker and I am quickly bearing down on it. Attempted to steer but sea weed had jammed my rudder. Only time to save my valuables -phone, keys and wallet and ram the boat or clear the rudder and steer risking losing valuables. Chose the valuables. Looked for my small valuables dry bag but could not find it. Wasting valuable seconds I notice it floating in the front of the cockpit. As soon as the valuables were secured, my boat rammed into the marker breaking the aka pin but nothing else. Safety lines held. Replaced the aka pin and sailed on.

I later managed to push the aka pack into the support. I tightened the backup support rope while I had the chance.

At times I notice that I was sitting deeper in water and that waves were consistently coming over the cockpit now. Had to furl and stop sailing to open the hatch. Got the bilge and started bailing but more water would crash over the hull and into the hatch than I could bail. Stopped bailing and continued on. Too far out into open water to return back. I had repaired the front hatch 2 weeks earlier and assumed it was failing. It was not. Little did I know, my hull's drain plug was only half way in and loose. I would discover this a few days later.

Looked down and my aka had come out again. Could not secure it. Left it roped on and continued to sail. Took medication, very needed now.

At this point I was sinking slowly and the nose of the boat would submarine under every other wave. Found a spoil island and got out of the boat to bail the hull.

Took off sailing again. I could not open the main sail. Turns out the spin halyard had another unrecoverable snag. Had to demast in open water and fix. Had I been smart I would have bagged up the spin but at this point I was over heating and exhausted.

Shortly thereafter I was sailing and attempted to furl the main. I could not do it. I had a difficult but this time recoverable snag (after 15 min of working the snag. Sailed on.

Got to the jetties where we were to sail upwind 6 miles to camp. It was now too late in the day and winds made tacking grueling. Ran aground. Tide now coming in and now passage was impossible. Walked the boat to deeper water and sailed to a spoil island in hope of bedding down on my own. Ran aground at my target island and as I dragged the boat closer it was apparent that the island was too shallow and it may be underwater once the tide rolled in. Bailed the boat again. Took some overdue medication.

Dusk would be coming soon so I elected plan B and would sail across the now rough bay back to Port Mansfield in hopes for options.

Made it to an island where a few other boats in the same predicament. I was exhausted and unfortunately as I approached the island my dagger board dug into the mud. I had to walk the boat into deeper water and pull up board and walk boat back to the beach. Every square foot of sand on the beach contained bird eggs. This was a wildlife protected area and there would be no camping. One guy said there was a park 1/4 mile south of Port Mansfield. Took off again for Port Mansfield.

As I attempted to leave the island, I ran aground once more. Walked boat to deeper waters and took off.

Sailed to the park and could not see a ramp as heavy winds were blowing me by the park. I had to land the boat between two piers on whatever I would find along the shore- hopefully a sandy beach. Turned out to be big pipe bulkhead and there was no way to pull the boat onto the beach. Once I reached the bulkhead I was exhausted, I just got out of the boat and held on to it to protect it until I could catch my breath. A guy came up and said there was an area to land the boat if I had just gone one pier further.

Got in the boat and attempted to sail it one more pier over but the winds just blew and exhausted me into the pier I could not fight it. I used the paddle to minimize the crash and somehow nothing was damage. But now I had no way out. Winds kept bashing the boat into the pier and eventually under the pier. This continued for over the next five minutes with no apparent options. I decided to reverse the mirage drive and back out from under the per with all my might. This would blow me back to the pipe bulkhead but at least i would not be ramming my boat into the pier over and over. Eventually I was successful and hanging onto my boat at the bulkhead again. The same guy suggested I walk the boat along the shoreline to the prior upwind dock and tie it off. That's what I did.

I grabed a few bags and put them on shore. Sat down until my body recovered and my mind cleared. Check my blood sugar and it was getting low. I had a huge headache and was likely headed for an insulin reaction. As it turned out, I was actually going in an Addison's adrenal crisis due to a lack of cortisol. This is another medical condition that I have that causes me to weaken quickly and eventually collapse. It creates a balancing act between the cortisol and insulin needs. I removed

more bags and cooked some soup.

After regaining some energy, I sailed the boat to the better landing area, made camp.

Blood sugar was not going up like normal after the meal so I made the decision I could not continue further. Reviewed the forecast. The next 2 days of the trip were now showing winds of 22mph with gust of 28-30 mph. Notified wife and sailing partner in another Hobie island that I was done and could not see another 5 days of this.

The next morning I found that the one dry bag had failed and was full water and GPS batteries. No GPS, not good.

My wife picked me up the next day. After a day of physical recovery and making boat repairs, I meet back with the regatta for one more day of sailing and camping before heading home.

As far as the spinnaker, I had cut about 3 inches off the PVC at the mast head prior to this trip. Big mistake, as it was working fine before the trip. The snuffer bag needs to be supported on long excursions like this. I will have to build something if I don't want to use the tramps, which I did not. I will pack lighter and make a checklist for the boat next time, not just the items I need to take. I will have to adjust my medications for the extreme heat and activity. Live and learn. I'll be back next year and probably many more to come. I had no idea how much fun this would be.

Greg Matt

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