

Although I'm a diligent reader of the posts in this Group, I'm an infrequent contributor. However, this Group has been a great resource to me as I prepared *Kinsale* to venture from Lake Erie to the Caribbean, and I'd like to offer an abbreviated update of my progress, and relate some of the events to recent topics of discussion.

At the end of August I sailed from Sandusky to Buffalo, laying in at Smith Boys to drop the mast and provision for the Canal. As an aside to Paul Nickerson, I had to do a 360 around the Seneca Shoals mark that I found so very hard to find at 5 am a couple years ago during the Lake Erie Solo! My wife and I transited the canal in 8 days, and two days later tied up at Half Moon Bay at Croton-on-the-Hudson, which was recommended to us by a few members of the Tartan Group.

After returning home for almost a month, I departed Croton on November 6th with a crew of 5 friends and family bound for Bermuda. My eventual destination was St. Martin, with a departure from Bermuda right after Thanksgiving. I debated about whether to use a weather router, but in the end decided to use Commanders. The weather at departure was threatening due to a Low that had formed over Nova Scotia which was expected to move SE. To hedge, rather than sailing the rhumbline - or rhumbline adjusted for eddies in the Gulf Stream - we headed due south. Our hope to buy some time while gaining south, and once the direction of the low was better known we would change course; hopefully SE to Bermuda. Commanders was extremely valuable in helping us sort out our strategy. As we gained miles offshore, the seas and wind rose very quickly and we were on a very fast downwind run. Every n'th wave was a real bugger. We decided to veer SW to try to reduce the wave fetch, and that helped considerably. A Satphone call to Commanders revealed that the Low had done a reverse 360 and was essentially chasing us south. I began to think this Low had it in for me.

As the winds and seas had built, we suffered a couple accidental gybes - of the violent variety - before we got the main down. The conditions had worsened very quickly, but I still knew better than to have the main up. The preventer system I was using was inadequate the first time, and not secured properly the second. A boom brake, which I didn't have, would have lessened or even prevented damage to the traveler. Thankfully the boom and gooseneck survived, however we did damage the starboard traveler sheaves. This damage, coupled with two of my crew suffering with a bad case of mal de mar, was cause enough to change course for the Chesapeake and we put in to Hampton a day and a half later. Not, however, without further incident. As we were beating into the channel and bay, surrounded by freighters and naval vessels (including a start or re-start of the Carib 1500), my steering cable broke! Replacing the cable (and making a spare) was one of those maintenance details that languished on my to-do list throughout 2009 and 2010 but in the end fell victim to too many other projects. Besides, how often does THAT happen? Well, once is enough and of naturally it will happen at a very poor time. This did, however, validate the decision to put into port. If this had happened in the ocean conditions we had ... !? My emergency tiller was readily accessible, and it got us into the dock just fine.

Less than 24 hours later, after completing all repairs, we set sail again. Commanders advised that Bermuda was not possible, so we raced to stay ahead of the Low and continued south, round Hatteras, and put into Charleston SC,

which is where the boat is now. Those few days were fantastic sailing; fast and spirited but without the seas we had experienced further offshore.

Since the end of August, we've logged almost 1,600 miles on *Kinsale* with about half of those offshore. We made one stop between Croton NY and Charleston SC.

Once I returned home I began to understand just how bad the conditions had been in the Atlantic. There was harrowing news of a sailboat that left Martha's Vineyard the same day we did - Nov 6th - headed for Bermuda and was rolled by a big wave two days out. One of the crew was lost to sea, and they drifted for 12 days before being rescued. Tragically, one of the Carib 1500 sailboats was lost on a reef while trying to make landfall in the Abacos, with one crew lost. And finally, noted sailor/author John Kretschmer departed Nova Scotia the same week we did, also headed for Bermuda, but lay hove-to for 12 hours before altering course to Lauderdale instead. He later commented "the Atlantic was just pissed off this November".

You spend a great deal of time and money prepping a boat for offshore sailing, and inevitably some things work as advertised, some surprise and others disappoint.

Stuff that worked: The Tartan 37. Everyone aboard sang the praises of the T37. I was very proud of her. She never made a sound in the wind and waves, and never once caused us concerns for our safety. All of our problems were essentially self-inflicted. The removable inner forestay. I almost decided against this improvement, and am glad I changed my mind. I bought the hardware and new sails from Mack Sails., and the install was pretty straightforward. I have a storm sail and a 70% working jib - both hank on. I also replaced the 155 genoa with a 130, which can be reefed effectively to about 105. These sails gave me lots of great options and were all I needed in the conditions, although we never resorted to the storm jib. ISATPHONE Pro. Relatively new and much less expensive than the Iridium. I always had signal and it afforded me the ability to contact Commanders whenever I wanted. AIS Transponder We came to rely on the AIS rather than the radar. It is much more energy efficient than the radar, and it was comforting to think that our position, heading and speed were being broadcast to others. Sailomat Windvane. I bought a used 601, and installed it the day before departure. We learned on the fly, and it proved to be relatively simple to set up. Every now and then a following wave would swing our rear around a bit too far and the vane would have trouble correcting. I think with more use I'll learn how to correct that.

Stuff that didn't: My preventer It was simply a double braid, tied mid-boom, and run a little forward on deck to a snatchblock and then back to the cockpit. I didn't have a dedicated cleat in the cockpit, and the tie mid-boom wasn't to a bail or other attachment, which allowed it to move. I'm in the process of installing padeyes to the aft end of the boom, and intend to run a dedicated 1/2 sta set from the boom to the bow, thru a snatch block and back to the cockpit to a dedicated cleat. Dedicated attachment points are the only way to go in my mind; otherwise something gets compromised. Original traveler I've tolerated this system too long, and am replacing with a Garhauer; adding almost a foot to it's length in the process. I'm anxious to see how it works.

Next destination is the Abacos in March

Sorry if this is too long. I could go on and on. But above everything - good decisions, bad decisions, good and bad equipment - the Tartan shined.

Doug Radabaugh
Kinsale T37 #22