

I came in sight of land and could see the entrance to Lewis Bay when within minutes the wind built to over 20 with gust of 20–30. Waves grew to 5-6 feet. Being on a beam reach, they were hitting me broadside. I rolled in the jib to just a scrap to keep the head up and avoid too much weather helm and strain on the rudder. The boom began hitting the water. I thought about taking down the main but wasn't sure I could let go of anything for even a second. Would I have been able to heave to? I wasn't sure. I thought my best bet was to try to hang on for another 30 minutes until I got in the harbor. It wasn't to be. A gust hit at the same time as a big wave. Water began pouring over the side and I couldn't stop it. Down she slid and over she went.

I've practiced righting the boat but in calm conditions. This was howling winds and big waves. I gathered my wits and calmed myself. I got the sails down and made an attempt to right the boat. Up she came and proceeded to turn right over and turtle. Masthead buoyancy didn't seem to do much good with those waves. I got on top, got on the board and righted her again and sure enough over she went again. Help arrived in the form of the high speed ferry to Nantucket. Embarrassment now became my main concern as hundreds of onlookers were pointing to the poor guy in the little boat. The captain asked if I needed help and by that time I knew I would. He said he would radio for a tow boat. I was pretty impressed that the ferry full of passengers eager to get on with their vacations would remain with me for fifteen minutes until the tow boat arrived.

SEA TOW arrived and tied on to my bow line. One big problem was that the boom and attached main sail had floated away from the boat and were now drifting 15 feet from the boat at the end of the halyard. I had to cut the halyard and heave the boom and main onto the tow boat. With the boat righted and a little forward motion she quickly emptied. I struggled to steer behind the tow boat as she sometimes veered off. Followings wave pushed me dangerously close to the tow boat.

Once back at the dock the Harbor Master, who had followed us in, asked, "So what were you doing out there in those conditions in that little boat?" He must have thought I was nuts because by now there were small craft warnings. I hemmed and hawed for awhile then responded, "Before you declare me foolish and reckless let me say that I have sailed this boat to Martha's Vineyard, the Elizabeth Islands, Chatham, as well as off the coast of Maine. I was just returning from Nantucket where I'd sailed to yesterday." Now nobody sails to Nantucket with less than a 20 foot keel

boat. But after hearing my story I think he was impressed with my sense of adventure and with the capability of my "little boat".

In hindsight, my safest option would probably have been to heave to and get the main down. If I wouldn't have been able to get back to Hyannis harbor, I could have run before the wind with a scrap of jib and gone into Bass River, a few miles downwind to the east from where I could have towed the boat home.

Next trip: the north side of Cape Cod where I'll head northeast to Wellfleet and Provincetown.

BLACKBEARD SAILING CLUB

August 26, 27, 2017 New Bern, NC

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There we were splayed out on the water before God, Country, and race committee, I wasn't certain what specific event led to this capsize, but the floating was nice. We were on the finish line, with boats coming in so we needed to clean things up. I got busy on the board, Michele released the sheets, the boat came up, and I swam to the transom. Michele grabbed the back of my life vest, dragged me in like a gaffed tuna, with such force, my head ended up under the thwart. We wallowed across the line in the half full boat, and thus ended our third race and the first day of racing at the 2017 BSC One Design Regatta.

It had been a windy day. Wind out of the north, northeast, and mid-teens average with gusts to 20. The fleet of 10 Wayfarers was granted the first start. It was nice to have the course to ourselves for the first leg but left us all to decide on how to attack it.

The starting line was short and took only 17 seconds to traverse. With less than 10 seconds to go the fleet converged on the line with all boats heading to the left hand side of the course. Drowning in bad air, we tacked off but soon tacked to get back in sync with the fleet that had gone left, but by this time the fleet had split. At the beginning of the season Michele and I decided that we wanted to focus more on racing against the other boats and not just sail to the marks. With the fleet split, we defaulted to just trying to get to the mark. Michele kept track of the angles and we arrived at the windward mark just behind *Intrepid* sailed by AnnMarie Covington and Bob Williams.

Spinnakers are sailing's nuclear weapons. If one boat launches everyone feels compelled to maintain the balance of terror. *Intrepid* pulled her chute first and we followed. Not all boats did, hoping we two would

achieve mutually assured destruction. *Intrepid* maintained her lead on the second beat and run to win the race. A good solid win, the result of good calm decision making and execution.

The wind favored the right hand side of the course for the second race. We opted to start in the middle of the line and followed *Intrepid* and *Impulse*, sailed by Uwe Heine and Nancy Collins, to the right side of the course. We were third to the windward mark but pulled ahead on the run and were able to keep our lead and finish closely followed by *Impulse* and *Intrepid*.

There was a delay in race three while the course was squared. We arrived at the line early and ended up by the pin surrounded by boats and corrupted wind. Unfortunately we fouled *Impulse* and had to take a turn. In addition, by this third race our legs were sore from hiking, hands were cramping from holding the sheet, and we were crabby. There was a lot of tacking, covering, and escaping but somehow or another we ended up in the lead that would have been a final leg in the prior races. As we put up our chute, we saw the committee boat moving away from what had been the finish line. We had not read the "board" and only found it was a 3 L course from a passing laser.

We rounded the leeward mark with *Intrepid* once again on our transom. All we had to do was to stay between them and the finish line. But for some insane reason we tacked allowing them to get away. With the committee boat now set at the windward mark we saw a very small space between the committee boat and the orange tetrahedron; a more reasonable space between the tetrahedron and the orange offset ball. Uncertain we made a desperate tack crossing between the tetrahedron and the ball. Nothing happened!

Panicked, we tacked back to get to the line between the committee boat and the tetrahedron. In the process we passed behind *Intrepid* on our way to our fateful capsize. While standing on the centerboard, I could see *Morning Star* and *Impulse* heading toward us as well as two Lasers. Fortunately the boat came up and we finished with our vessel full of water. As the cockpit emptied, I began to calm down. The capsize brought me back to my senses and sense of humor.

I need to take a quick step back at this point from my naval gazing and give the day some context. It was the kind of day that had everyone taking a tack on the wild side. Uwe and Nancy had their chute flying with the justification that the waves were less than in Toronto. Evan and Mary Trudeau, not familiar with these conditions and mere yearlings in the class, hoisted their chute and kept it all under control. Jim Heffernan and

his brother, Brian, lost a shroud and had to fix it on the water with no assistance and without missing a beat. Phil and Cathy Leonard flew their chute every downwind leg and were rightfully pleased with their performance. Ali Kishbaugh and Trish McDermott, Mike Sigmund and Elle, Ken Butler and his borrowed crew all had good days and we finished tight as a fleet. It was the kind of day where finishing each race, and staying on top of the water, gave it all meaning well beyond that of just chasing buoys.

Sunday was Saturday on steroids. The winds were sustained in the high teens with gusts in the high twenties. A random puff could capsize the best prepared boat. The Race Committee placed the course mostly in Broad Creek which saved us from the waves of a long fetch but left us with a twitchy wind. Once again the starting line was short and the course was square. Our focus was on keeping the boat up and moving. At breakfast Jim Heffernan suggested footing out on the jib. That in combination with boom set level with the vang and sheeted to the corner of the boat, made the boat nearly self-correcting in the puffs, and allowed us to drive through the lulls. That said, *Intrepid* was first to the windward mark and *Morning Star* was just behind along with *Impulse*.

Intrepid rounded and put up her chute. We followed and I noticed as Michele was putting up the spinnaker pole that the bow was burying in the puffs. *Intrepid's* spinnaker pole came loose and in the process of trying to reattach the pole they broached and capsized. We flew our spinnaker for about another 100 yards and took it down. During all of this *Morning Star* took the lead. I'm not quite sure how but we led at the next windward mark and turned downwind without the spinnaker. On pins and needles we finished first.

Looking back up the course we could see several boats down, two Wayfarers and two Lasers. The crash boats were busy. *Dawn Treader* (Mike Sigmund and Elle Heywood) stopped to rescue Trish McDermott who had been left behind by the crash boat helping her skipper right her boat. As a fleet we decided to retire from the last race as did the rest of the boats in all other fleets.

The importance of this regatta is that we all had to push our boundaries. The competition in our class is fierce. By the end we had all taken excursions out of our comfort zones. It is difficult and often frightening but new techniques are learned, new confidence gained, and our comfort zone expands. Most important is the feeling of accomplishment and shared competitive camaraderie of this unique sailing weekend which renders all others somewhat dull in comparison.