

Almost Arctic, Continued

Daily Log of the Ladyhawk Delivery from Maryland to Miami in the Dead of Winter



Forgot To Shave



A Little Cold, But Happy To Be Sailing

Day 4

Friday, January 24, 2003

We are waiting for the gale force winds to subside and then leave at 1:30. Just prior to that, the local marina owner says, "Looks good. You have a one day weather window." We aren't sure if he was being sarcastic or not. The winds are predicted to be out of the north, 20-25 kts. Out the way out of the Chesapeake Bay, Pete hits 11.7 kts. Later in his watch, he gets an eerie feeling and then looks around. The sea swells are huge with little ripples on top. Not Haagen Daas – the Gulf Stream. We take a hard right and get back into friendlier waters. The winds are actually out of the east and then the south, so we end up motoring a fair bit during the night.

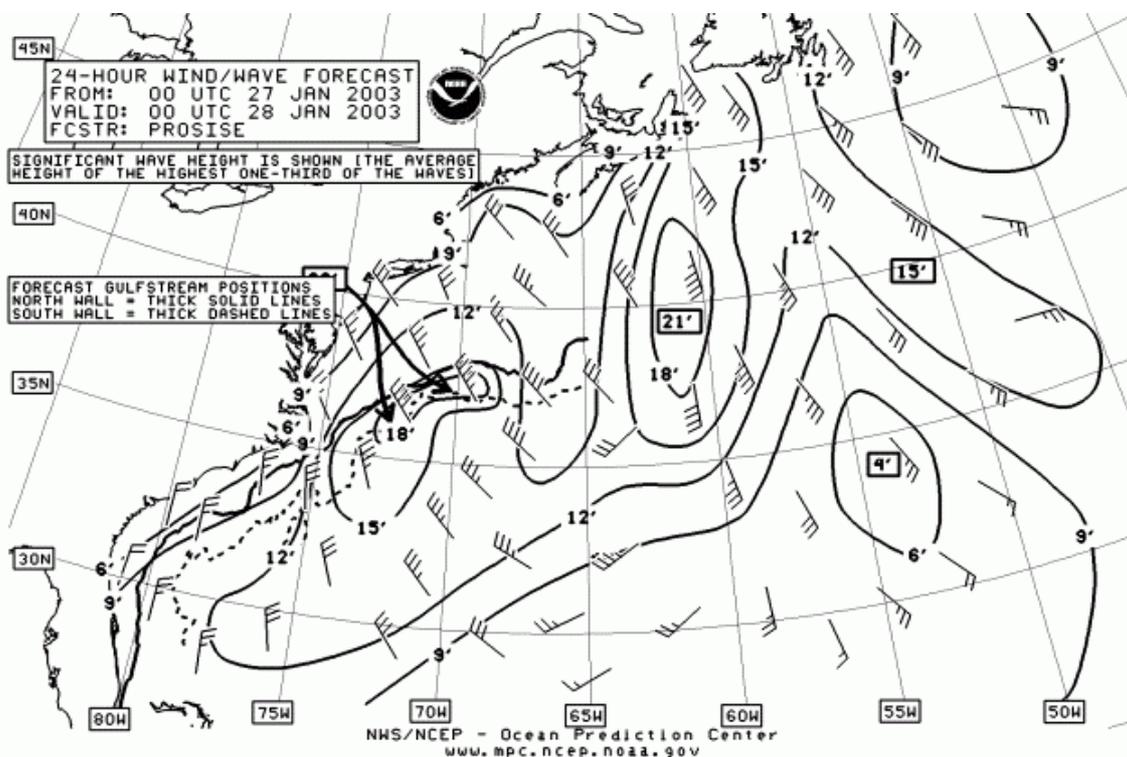


Celebrating Rogan's Birth and Rounding Cape Hatteras

Day 5

Saturday, January 25, 2003

The winds shift to the southwest and we make 150 miles in 24 hours. At this rate, we'll be in Miami in four more days. We pass Cape Hatteras in the afternoon and it's treacherous Diamond Shoals in the afternoon. At one point a bit later, we smell rotten eggs. We blame James, but look for some eggs in all lockers anyway. No luck. At 10pm, the local VHF forecast disagrees with the weatherfax and predicts gale force winds and big seas tomorrow night, so we look for the nearest harbor, but we're offshore and the closest harbor is 100 miles away, near Cape Fear. We sneak through Cape Lookout's shoals and try to make for Masonboro Inlet in North Carolina, which is directly upwind and forces us to claw our way there.



Typical Weatherfax (This one is for two days later) Lines are wave heights, Arrows are wind force and direction. Each dash on the arrow indications 10 knots of wind.

Day 6

Sunday, January 26, 2003

At 10am, we predict that we will arrive by 7pm – well after the sun has set and it is tricky channel in. More egg smell. On the way, the wind picks up to about 20 kts and we haven't reefed. It is pretty exciting with the windward ama flying sometimes three or more feet over the water. We're not sure how far we can safely push it, but we are having a lot of fun. Pete and George instinctively lean back when a big wave heels the boat. We decide to reef and hit 10+ kts, still with the ama flying. We get lifted all day, and make it on single starboard tack by 4:30pm – well in the day light. The engine won't start and there's a rip at the inlet, with stone jetties very close. Fortunately, Richard told us about the house battery switch-over before we left, so we switch over and the engine starts up.

As soon as we dock, we pull out the engine battery. It is hot and warped. Very overcharged. Finding ourselves again in port, we find out about the local pub and head over to watch the Superbowl. James is a big Raiders fan and lets everyone know. A local befriends us and she takes us to another pub. Pete exchanges affectionate pleasantries (i.e., sucks face) with her at the bar and, giving lie to the metaphor(?), finds “any port in a storm”.

Day 7

Monday, January 27, 2003

George, his hangover, and the local marina owner go to West Marine to replace the battery. Not in stock, but fortunately Batteries Plus has it. There George learns that the no-maintenance batteries are not completely sealed and emit a hydrogen-sulfur gas when overheated. This gas is highly explosive – and is right by parts that can spark. Yesterday, we even cooked lunch on the propane stove with the smell around. After 134 phone calls, George learns how the electrical power systems work on Ladyhawk, trying to find out what subcomponent led to the overcharging. Richard is a huge help in resolving conflicting information from the various manufacturers, distributors, dealers, boat owners, and guys with fishing poles. In the end, it is determined that it was just a bad battery. The commercial fishing vessel next to us has the head of a tiger shark, freshly caught. Creepy, but cool. We leave at 4:00pm. As George is driving Ladyhawk off the dock, the rudder freezes. The marina is very tight with shoals 20 feet away. James jumps into the engine room to see the steering mechanism, but it is moving. Aha. Otto is on and thinks he’s in charge. We send him to his room and then motor off. Tonight we can sometimes take our gloves off without numbing our hands.



George Is Asleep - How Close Can We Get?

Day 8

Tuesday, January 28, 2003

Wind is from the North, going exactly our boatspeed, so it feels calm. The water is very smooth. At dawn, George hears some splashing and sees dolphins checking out the boat. They leave and come back 3 times. George sets the handline and within 30 minutes catches a 10 lb. bonito. Everyone is pretty excited, but Pete says they're not good to eat. We find a rod and reel, and set that up, too. We catch 8 fish. The best James has done in 20,000 miles at sea is catching 2 in a day. In the afternoon, two dolphins escort Ladyhawk and play in the bow wake, while the crew whistle. It's rumored that dolphin stick around longer if they hear "Jingle Bells". Foul weather gear is optional, as it is warming up. At 11pm, James sees a flashing white light, the international distress signal. For example, our life jackets have strobes, so we can be found at night if we fall overboard. James slows down, hoping not to hit any submerged boat and gets out the spotlight to see if he can highlight a life raft or person. It looks really close and we are all very nervous at what we will find. After an hour going straight for it, we don't seem to be getting closer. The charts show nothing. We make a VHF call to "unknown vessel with flashing white light" and someone answers, "It's a big, \$#ing tower.", but we thought that if we were in a life raft, we'd want someone to check it out. We get close enough an hour later to see that it is a big, \$#ing tower. We notice that our charts are 16 years old, but are nonetheless very unhappy that someone approved the use of flashing white lights for anything but distress.



Friendly Escort



No Sushi Today

Day 9

Wednesday, January 29, 2003

We've made it to Florida, four days later, but not yet to Miami, which is 350 miles distant. The water temperature is 77 degrees and the air 65. We're sweating it's so hot. The wind is on our nose and the seas are steep, really banging us sometimes. It is blowing 15-20 and we have two reefs in the main. We hear a load crack and the main starts flogging. We blew the second reef. The line in the block had chafed and broke, but there is no damage to the sail. Again in the Gulf Stream. We take another hard right and after two hours, everything calms down again. We are hard-to on a smooth port tack for four hours, with rolling seas, blue sky and a warm breeze. We're getting closer.

Day 10

Thursday, January 30, 2003

We are close enough to Miami to make it by 9am on the first, if we make only 3.5 knots. The light wind is from the stern and Pete is so frustrated that he wakes up James and offers him one million dollars if he can sail at 3.5 knots. It is calm all night, so we motor along, but the wind picks up in the morning. We set the asymmetrical spinnaker and move along quickly.

Day 11

Friday, January 31, 2003

We set the screecher and move along at 80% of wind speed. We are going to make Miami tonight. At dusk, George pulls in the hand line after catching two more bonitos earlier. The dive planer has a piece of plastic or something on it, something clear with little blue dots. He pulls at it, but the plastic is elastic and sticky. He tries a couple more times, until he succeeds, but then the plastic clings to his left hand, which starts to feel like it is being scalded by boiling hot water. %&\$#, %&\$#, %&\$#! “Pete, I’ve got Man-o-war on my hand! What do I do?” as George tries to peel it off his hand. “Either vinegar or urine.” “Come on, man, you’re not kidding me, are you?” “Nope.” Unfortunately, we didn’t have any vinegar. Around 10pm, we see the lights of South Beach.

Day 12

Saturday, February 1, 2003

We pull into Miami Beach Marina at 1am. We made it!