

Oceanic / Offshore Race Incidents from September 2011 – August 2012

Following a request at the November 2008 meetings to produce an update paper that details some of the notable incidents reported from oceanic and offshore races. The list below is a collection of a selection of press articles to form this yearly supporting paper.

1. March 2012 - San Diego(USA) –Porto Vallarta(MEX)

The TP 52 Rio had a problem nearing the finish of the SD-PV race (hit a reef) and the bulb fell off the keel fin.

2. April 2012 – Melbourne to Port Fairy Ocean Race (AUS)

Beneteau 50 'Inception' sank, 6 crew rescued by Elan 434 'Trybooking.com' from the water at night in strong winds.

'Race heros-the crew of Trybooking.com: Peter Fetch, Ross Fisher, Grant Dunoon, Skipper and Kim Walker - ORCV Melbourne to Port Fairy Race This morning all crews are safe as the scattered racing fleet limped into safe harbours.

The boats in the fleet were hammered by big confused seas whipped up by storm force winds gusting up to 70 knots at times. Six crew members from Inception were forced to abandon ship and were rescued from the water by another race competitor Trybooking.com.

During the night Inception was pounded by big seas and took on water and sunk. At the time they were approximately 7 miles off the coast and roughly half way between Cape Otway and Warnambool. Reports say the life raft was ripped from its deck fasteners by huge seas and washed overboard forcing the six crew to abandon ship and leap into the chilly water. The boat's EPIRB and the crews personal location beacons (PLB's) were activated and the GPS distress signal was quickly picked up by Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) in Canberra who alerted the ORCV's incident response team. Race Director, Ray Shaw headed the incident response team and coordinated the local search and rescue in Port Fairy. As part of the response team, Ray was supported by Peter Clancy, from Ocean Racing Melbourne. Peter is the resident radio operator well known to many competitors through the regular radio scheds. He was in constant contact with all the boats during the race posting updates and logging their positions and ETA's.

In dangerous conditions communications with all boats and shore support crews is crucial. The ORCV has implemented a number of communication advances that have improved safety in this sport. Through the use of the dedicated tracker system on their website the ORCV's incident response team was able to quickly identify Trybooking.com as the closest boat nearby the disabled yacht. They also used an extensive log of crew and boat details to contact next of kin by phone and keep them informed by SMS updates and website reporting throughout the race.

Using constant position updates of the Inception crews PLB signals, received by AMSA in Canberra, Peter Clancy was able to direct Trybooking.com via VHF to the position of the crew in the water. This is no mean feat in dark and stormy conditions, and big confused seas that obscure detection of smaller objects in the water.

This successful rescue was a testament to the comprehensive training and education programs set by the ORCV and has always been a hallmark of all ORCV activities. To enter a race all crews and boats must have attained mandatory levels of safety accreditation and training. The actions of the crew of Inception during their time in the water significantly

improved their chances of survival. All crew were wearing their safety harnesses and once in the water they managed to clip themselves together using the tether lines on their harness. Once banded together as a human raft they supported each other and held their strobe lights above their heads to make themselves more visible to the rescue helicopter and the rescue vessel Trybooking.com.

In a superb display of seamanship and heroism the four crew on board Try.booking.com plucked the six Inception crew members from the cold waters and gave them warm clothes and drinks then resumed their progress to Port Fairy, at times making only one knot of headway in still treacherous seas.

The crew of Trybooking.com must be commended for their valiant display of seamanship and camaraderie in the rescue of the Inception crew. They themselves were also feeling weary having already spent more than four hours battling 5 to 6 meter seas in exceptional weather conditions. Trybooking.com were also in survival mode and slowly inching their way towards the closest safe harbor of Port Fairy in a sustained blasts of 40 to 50 knots winds with gusts up to 70 knots at times. The Trybooking.com crew were wet and cold and becoming fatigued as they fought to balanced the boat in the very big seas and shelter from the constant spray of green water lashing the decks.

Trybooking.com with all sailors safely onboard were escorted into Port Fairy river to the cheers of crowds lining the river around 10.30am this morning by the Port Fairy Rescue boat. A fleet of ambulances were waiting to the ferry crew to hospital if required. One crew member was reported to be suffering from mild hyperthermia and as a precaution was admitted to hospital for a routine observation. All crew were clearly very pleased to be in Port Fairy and are being well cared for by the Commodore and members of the Port Fairy Yacht Club.

by Jennifer Cook www.sail-world.com

3. May 2012 - Newport (USA)-Ensenada(MEX)

PORTSMOUTH, R.I. (May 14, 2012) – The US Coast Guard of San Diego has requested that US Sailing, the National Governing Body for the sport, conduct an independent review of the sailing accident that occurred during the 2012 Newport to Ensenada Yacht Race resulting in the deaths of four sailors. Aegean, a 37-foot Hunter 376, and her crew of four were victims of an accident that destroyed their boat a few miles offshore near Mexico's Coronado Islands at about 1:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 28. These were the first deaths in the 65-year history of the race.

<http://www.wavetrain.net/news-a-views/393-aegean-tragedy-us-sailing-final-report-preview>

"We're still waiting for final reports from both the U.S. Coast Guard and an independent U.S. Sailing review panel, though the U.S. Sailing group has already announced a preliminary finding that *Aegean* did in fact crash on North Coronado. One member of the U.S. Sailing panel, Evans Starzinger published [a post](#) on Sailing Anarchy:

My personal thoughts and conclusions are (these are my thoughts not necessarily the official panel conclusions):

1. It's an important tactical decision in this race whether to go inside or outside the islands. In previous races the skipper of Aegean set a waypoint a mile or so in front of the islands to signal they needed to make a decision which way to go. And they used waypoint alarms.

Normally it is good practice to offset waypoints away from hazards so you will not run into the hazard if you over run the waypoint a little. However, in this particular race, the tactic of putting a waypoint just in front of the island is reasonable to allow you to decide which side to go with the minimum distance wasted. But if so you sure want to be paying attention when you arrive at that waypoint.

2. In previous races they did run radar but did not use a guard zone alarm because there were so many targets (race boats) it would just be going off all the time. However if they had set a small guard zone (say 1nm) it would still have given them time to react and would not have had too many 'false alarms', at least a few hours after the start as the competitors were spread out.

3. In previous races there were always at least 2 on watch at night, never did they leave only one on watch. The skipper usually went to sleep for an hour during the night motoring period.

4. The weather was calm (5kts of breeze) calm seas but a long ocean swell that was breaking on the island. It was clear with good visibility but dark with the moon just set.

Assuming they did these things as they had in previous races, then you have to conclude that at least a couple people on watch were for some reason not paying attention to a known hazard and that they did not hear or respond to the waypoint alarm. Unfortunately the human body likes to sleep at 1:30am and you really need to exercise discipline to stay alert then. There are historic procedures that have been developed to help crew stay alert - like regularly making log entries and plotting positions and setting timers to do every 10 minute horizon and radar/plotter scans, etc.

The autopsy reports found no indication of CO poisoning and no alcohol. My personal conclusion is that they were complacent after doing 6 of these races and just fell asleep. I can't see any other reasonable conclusion.

4. Some of the crew were alive and alert after the impact as someone pushed the SPOT SOS button approximately 7 minutes after the impact. Unfortunately this SPOT SOS message did not get communicated to the authorities and no search was launched until the next day when other vessels found the debris field. A DSC may day would have been much more effective (with all the racing boats near by) but it may be that their mast fell down quite quickly on impact. An EPIRB would also have been more effective (USCG San Diego would have launched assets within 30 minutes with a gpib signal) but they did not have an epirb.

5. I believe the natural human inclination in this situation would be to try to swim toward land but in this case there was no safety that way only rocks and a cliff. They might have survived if they had tried to swim out away from land but at night they could probably not see that. Water temps were 62F. They died of blunt trauma, bashed on the rocks by the swell (3 died directly from blunt trauma and one drown due to traumatic injuries).

6. None of the bodies were wearing pfd's. When you abandon ship you should really don a pfd.

Bottom line . . . we all make mistakes, unfortunately the outcome was truly severe in this case. I am still surprised that all died in this incident. It is an intense reminder of the basics of seamanship - keeping a real watch at 1:30am, navigating to avoid hazards even if you miss a waypoint, and properly making mayday/abandoning ship.

Though Evans notes he is speaking only for himself, I expect his ultimate conclusion, that they had to be asleep, will be shared by the rest of the panel. “

4. June 2012 Taiwan Strait Race Hong Kong (HKG) – Taiwan (TPE)

Source <http://www.sail-world.com/Australia/Taiwan-Strait-Race---Topsy-Frenz-lost-at-sea-but-crew-safe/97971>

Taiwan Strait Race - Topsy Frenz' lost at sea but crew safe

At 0237hrs local hours on Sunday 3 June, Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club (RHKYC) Sailing Manager, Alex Johnston, received a mayday call via satellite phone from the skipper of Topsy Frenz, Dr Leon Chan, reporting that the yacht was taking on water. Topsy Frenz, a Wauqueiz Centurion 45S, is one of four yachts competing in the RHKYC organized Taiwan Strait Race.

The crew had activated the yacht's EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) and subsequently abandoned ship using the yacht's two life rafts. MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre) were informed of the mayday via EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) and phone and immediately activated a rescue plan involving coordination with commercial shipping, Taiwan Search and Rescue and Hong Kong Government Flying Services.

The RHKYC also set into motion their Crisis Management Plan with the team assembling at RHKYC Kellett Island. At 0630hrs, RHKYC received confirmation by SatPhone from Hong Kong MRCC that all eleven crew were recovered safely onboard the Hong Kong flagged cargo ship 'Easy Success'.

The ship is bound for Manila where the eleven Topsy Frenz crew will disembark. Dr Chan confirmed by phone from the bridge of Easy Success that all eleven crew onboard were fit, well and uninjured. He believed that Topsy Frenz had most likely sunk. The cause of the water ingress is unknown at this time. He praised HK MRCC and the captain and crew of the Easy Success for their quick response and consummate professionalism.

Weather reports for the area at the time of the incident indicated wind speeds of 20-25kts from the North East and seas of three to four metres.

The remaining yachts are expected to arrive in Kaoshiung between Sunday 3 June late PM and midday on 4 June. The event is sailed under ISAF (International Sailing Federation) Category 1 Offshore regulations which require at least 30% of the crew to have completed a sea survival course and first aid training.

In the case of Topsy Frenz, six of the eleven crew have had sea survival training and in addition four of the crew are medical professionals.

The Taiwan Strait Race 2012 is organised and conducted by the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club (RHKYC) with assistance and support from Kaohsiung Sailing Association (KSA) and the Chinese Taipei Sailing Association (CTSA).

RHKYC website.

5. June 2012 – Australia/New Zealand – Noumea Race (New Caledonia)

Maxi Beau Gest – Hull Damage

In an interview with Radio New Zealand, Beau Geste skipper Gavin Brady has compared the 80ft Farr design to being close to doing a 'OneAustralia' after the yacht sustained damage in the Evolution Sails Sail Noumea 2012 race.

Speaking from Norfolk Island where the yacht is anchored and awaiting assessment, Brady said that she was close to sinking, and they were advised to get off the boat by the designer. Because the wind was blowing at 50kts at the time, they elected to stay with the yacht. But all crew were assembled and counted off on deck. Half had been below decks when the break was noticed.

The hull fracture break occurred around 1850hrs on June 4, 2012. One of the crew noticed a crack in the deck which ran right around the hull. Beau Geste immediately began taking on water. In an interview on 3News, Brady said that there were big waves, when the breeze increased and a big bang.

He told of how another crew member discovered a crack in the hull.

'As it turned out one of the crew members was walking around the deck and tripped over a crater in the deck of the boat, and that set the alarm bells off, we looked over the side and we had a crack all the way down underneath the boat and below the waterline, and from the inside of the boat it was cracked, so it was cracked on both sides which is pretty catastrophic.'