

Ron Wisner
Marion MA

HOTSPUR

RHODES 41

1st Marion Bermuda 2009

HOW DO YOU SELECT YOUR CREW?

I was inexperienced offshore so I needed a crew with the experience I lacked. This is necessary to qualify for the race but it also makes good sense. Bob Raymond and Matthew Correira signed on as Navigator and Watch Captain bringing a wealth of offshore experience. I filled out the rest of the crew with other experienced sailors with whom I had raced.

MUPRHY'S LAW

The Marion Bermuda organization has stringent qualification requirements. I met with my courtesy inspector and my mentor who said, "If anything can break when you go offshore, it will". With this in mind, I hired a surveyor and a rigging inspection. As a result I replaced the headstay and a lower shroud, added a preventer, emergency tiller, new cockpit electronics and a few new sails. We also fixed lockers and sole plates with hold-downs. In spite of preparing early and passing our race inspection, last minute improvements were still being made on race day.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FIRST TIME SKIPPERS:

A wise sailor told me before the race to "beware of fast reaching". I believed we had taken a sober approach and aside from being pooped twice filling the cockpit and despite the stinging rain in our faces, the boat handled it just fine. Hotspur's full keel which made us the slowest boat meant also that we never came down hard on a sea. We felt very safe inside when we were off watch. We sailed all day on the storm jib with the wind still over forty knots. As night fell we saw fishing boats and a small freighter. It is not easy to judge distance and speed at night. Concerned about the possibility of being run down, we hailed everyone within range to alert them of our position. The freighter answered right away to announce that he was changing course to keep clear. Most never answer at all.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Since we had been dead reckoning for four days, we did not know our position for certain. When we decided to turn on the GPS, Bob had us within ten miles of our true position, which we all consider a minor miracle. The next few days were rainy and windy but nothing like before. There is nothing to compare with the camaraderie of six people in a small boat in a storm in the North Atlantic. We all filled in that gap in our sailing resumes that week. We didn't care that we arrived dead last.

