

# Probably The Best Sail In The World!

16 May 2010 21:40:12 32:18.6N 064:35.6W

*GPS Position: 32:18.6N 064:35.6W*

*Sea Miles (previous 24 Hours): 140nMs*

*Sea Miles to date: 1017nMs*

*Present Course Over Ground: 358°M*

*Present Boat Speed 7.4kts*

*Average Boat Speed (previous 24 hours): 5.8kts*

*Average Boat Speed to date: 6.2kts*

*\*\*\*Velocity Made Good (VMG) to date: 5.6kts \*\*\**

*Estimated GPS Position in 24 hours time: 32:23N 064:41W (Berthed in Bermuda)*

*Sea State: Calm*

*Wind Speed and Direction: 13kts SW!!!!*

*Barometric Pressure: 1011mB*

*(VMG - An accurate measure of the average velocity achieved to date along our chosen rhumb line from Antigua to Dartmouth, UK)*

The windless zone continued until 1715 hours, Saturday. The sun shone, the motor purred, the diesel burned, the sails remained firmly bagged up, the sea was glassy, the foredeck became a sun bathing platform and the ocean became a dolphin circus for an hour mid-afternoon. We even caught a fish that provided the evening meal, although being quite small, it was necessary to supplement it with sausage and mash, baked beans and onion gravy! Not a great combination but “wha’ever”.

Then, with no warning, a south westerly light breeze appeared and teased us with things to come. This is the first wind from anywhere other than the east we have experienced for 6 months. Sails up and we were on port tack for the first time since leaving Grenada nearly 1,400 nMs ago! This was good news for Nigel because for the first time in weeks he was unlikely to fall out of his bunk. Indeed the new angle of the boat would ensure that he was firmly pinned in! The same unfortunately cannot be said for David, who snugly and smugly has been sleeping on port only now to find himself clinging on for dear life behind his lee cloth. (Tee Hee!)

At 0200 hours this morning (Sunday) we arrived 30 nMs off the Bermudan coastline. Being absolute sticklers for protocol and reminiscent of the marine communication formality only found around the shores of Britain,

Nigel crawled out of a deep sleep and attempted to follow VHF procedure with the Bermuda Harbour Radio: “Bermuda Harbour Radio, this is sailing yacht Oboe, over.” “Oboe, for routine traffic go channel 27.” Fumble with radio, switch it off by mistake, end up on channel 28 and after a period of total confusion, go back to channel 16 and try all over again! There followed a challenging Q & A session with a displaced Scot with a decidedly Scouse twang and a total lack of sense of humour, demanding information about firearms on board, the Hexadecimal Address Code of our EPIRB (Willie will relate to this as only an old Basic Assembler Language programmer can!) and other extremely demanding questions, such as description of any animals on board, to which I replied none except our first mate Ryan, which didn’t seem to please him.

Back to bed for the skipper, traumatised, only to be hailed every 10 nMs by the Bermuda authorities, who were tracking our progress on radar! Nothing better to do or what? 10 nMs out and dawn having broken we were radioed and asked to hold station while a Scandinavian cruise liner motored towards Bermuda and into the approach channel ahead of us. We were then asked by the harbour master to act as lead vessel for an American ketch, crewed by an arguing husband and wife team

that has no charts and “no clue” as to how to navigate through the narrows into the safe haven of St George’s harbour. In fact they had apparently been wandering around lost for much of the night.

Eventually, sliding gently across the reef and into the huge natural harbour that is St George’s, we were struck by the beauty of the island for the first time. We were warmly welcomed by the authorities and assisted in finding a berth in the heart of the town. There in our berth, however, was a very familiar yacht - Knightime! We had caught up with Mike Blackledge and crew, also on their way back to Dartmouth. (Race on!) An enthusiastic reunion with an old friend ensued, followed by an agreement to raft up alongside Knightime and perhaps share a beverage or two, as only crews that have been at sea for weeks (well days anyway) can do. Beers were purchased and England was cheered on the pub big screen for stuffing the Aussies in the final of the 20 20 cricket world cup! At least, I think it was cricket but I wasn’t sure, as the teams were wearing funny coloured outfits.

Tomorrow will see the return of seriousness, as we strive to mend broken bits (of the boat!), restock, re-gird the loins and weather permitting, depart for the Azores 1,800nMs to the west, 12 - 14 days away.

On a slightly sober note, however, we lose Wendy in Bermuda. Sea sickness has got the better of her and she has decided to fly home, hopefully to be there to greet us on our arrival into Dartmouth. Her sailing skills and experience will be missed, as will her homemade bread and Victoria Sponge cake!

Nigel

Date: 16 May 2010