

2012 Pac Cup Seminar, DIY Return delivery (Do It Yourself)

By Mike Priest, USCG Lic. Captain, offshore racer and delivery captain.

If you intend to deliver your own boat back to the mainland after the Pac Cup, the first most important advice I can give is: THE RACE IS OVER.

Slow down and catch your breath, enjoy the accomplishment of Pac Cup and THEN set about getting home. My biggest regret in years of racing and then delivering boats was to take less than 5 days after the Tahiti Race, spending it all getting the boat and crew ready for the trip home and setting sail.

You do need to plan well in advance and have things lined up, but be sure for some scheduled down time as well.

If you have a ULDB or any boat under 40 feet, look seriously at shipping options. The cost vs. time and wear and tear needs a close look. Most deliveries back to the mainland start at 14 days and go to 20 or more days, and that is if they are without any "situations" during the trip.

Crew selection is key. If you are lucky, you have friends that you have already sailed some miles with, you know their strong and weak points and then only have to find out how they handle time at sea. Most of us end up getting referrals of "friends of friends" or from postings on websites of people anxious to do the crossing or a multitude of other sources. Use your judgment, and listen to your inner instincts. Before signing crew up, set your own guidelines and stick to them as best you can.

Each boat will find different crew scenarios. Number of crew can be 2 to 7 depending on size and budget. Unlike "hot bunking" during the race, each crew should have their own bunk, and area for their "stuff". Again, each boat is different, but I like to be sure the crew is comfortable and does not have to spend money out of pocket to help get my boat home. Clean, dry, fresh bedding at the start of the trip is usually provided. I carry "sealed" spare dry bedding in case of a deck leak or??? On a case by case basis, some crew deserve some "scholarship", others are happy to pay their own way and join in on the adventure. BE SURE to check any requirements your insurance company may have and do not cut corners. Most insurers offer a "paid crew" endorsement on policies. It has many ramifications and is based in Federal law and the Jones Act. Find out what the definitions are and follow the rules, you would not want to have a claim denied on a technicality.

If you don't allow smoking or have other personal preferences, don't be afraid to state all those things. (I highly discourage having crew use the two+ weeks as their time to stop smoking... hint: Hide a pack to give them if/when they become twisted!) Other stumbling blocks are highly specific diets. No matter how accommodating they want to be, working around special concerns are usually not worth the hassle. (This goes both ways. IE: if you are or aren't a vegetarian/vegan/kosher etc. it can become a major stumbling block to a fun and safe passage to try to have two menus.)

Be SURE you know the essentials of your delivery crew. I was stunned to come below and see a crew member with a hypodermic needle in the leg... they didn't want to bother me with the fact they were diabetic.... This is good info to know BEFORE departing. Go through most of the same steps you are

required to go through for your race crew. God forbid there are any major issues to deal with, but you need to have good contact info for each crew member. Also do your best to keep shore crew informed, if the tracker and website support it, use it for the trip back. Look into "Spot" devices or similar.

Another feature of remembering that THE RACE IS OVER: You need to **shift to cruising mode**.

Many facets of this thought. You no longer need to be as weight conscious; your menu can expand from freeze dried to real meal planning. You will probably have fewer mouths to feed and you can afford to take a bit more time to prepare each meal. The down side is how many more days at sea to plan for, and generally being "on the wind" at the beginning of the trip. I generally plan meals for an optimistic "normal" number of days, but carry enough to double the number of days, in the form of freeze dried and emergency food, also with an eye to NOT needing to add water, in case watermaker or other supply problems arise.

I try to **share the jobs**. If at all possible, get the delivery crew together before the race to let them meet and greet, see what skill sets are already there and what the combined new crew want to accomplish. Do they want to try celestial navigation, sail repair, cooking, knot tying, etc. They are usually looking to you to expand their experience. Be open to all that and more. I try to set up an informal OD Schedule (Officer of the Day) where some of the mundane chores get switched from crew to crew, and while each member is responsible for keeping all things tidy, when someone is OD, they get to do a little extra like being sure the icebox is tidy, the coffee cups are back in the right spot...all that. I have had fun with the OD also in charge of "Happy Hour" and scraping together some form of snack or indulgence for a mid-afternoon crew get together. It can become competitive and creative. (With small crew, not so much) Be sure to establish house rules on things like alcohol etc.

Be sure to keep a separate page during the race of "TO DO" items and set about those early after arrival. Even if I am using the same jib on the furler for the delivery that was perfect for the race, I lower it and inspect the sail, halyard, attachment points. Plan to do a full rig inspection and solve anything that is less than perfect if you can. (Looking at a halyard and saying that the bit of chafe is OK for now, will likely come back to haunt you at the least convenient time) Can you reverse or shorten halyards or maybe it does need to be replaced. West Marine has yet to open a store in the middle of the Pacific High!

Getting underway is a huge hurdle. Again, my assumption is that your crew will be less experienced than your race crew, and you are heading out into the big unknown. The best weather forecasts only go out about a week, and those are less than perfect much of the time. Don't be in too much of a rush, nor can you wait for it to be perfect. It rarely is. Again, back to THE RACE IS OVER; I usually start with a huge reef tucked in the main (even in a small delivery main) and small jib or even the storm jib. If typical summer North Pacific August conditions exist; you will be on the wind on starboard tack for days coming away from Hawaii. Many times these conditions lead to seasick crew and rough and tumble conditions below deck. You are anxious to get north, but I will at least once a day, heave to or run off (as slowly as possible) to eat and or get the whole crew time to use the head. It is amazing how that time sets up the crew to see that it usually seems worse than it is, and reassure them that they will both get used to the conditions and it will usually get better. THE RACE IS OVER... you do not need to be sheeted all the way

in, or change sails with every little weather change. Reduce sail at dusk. Yeah... all those lessons you read about in cruising articles!

Manage your systems! Fuel/water/power /sails. I still carry lessons forward that I learned on my first crossing. Be zealous about conserving all resources aboard. Monitor everything and SHARE the responsibility with the crew. If you walk in the head and the light was left on, don't just turn it off, remind the crew that you found it on. It will take x amount of engine time to recharge that battery...

If a faucet is dripping fresh water... fix it. Don't be afraid to TEACH someone how to wash dishes with the least possible amount of fresh water.

Keep track of fuel consumption while sailing (recharging batteries or gen set) and while motoring through the high. Get in the mindset that you need to be ready for all the bad things that can happen... the wind can die, a storm can show up, the engine may not start; the mast could fall down, etc. etc. Without becoming paranoid, do the mental exercise of what you would do, so you have a starting point if things go awry. Beside setting up a watch schedule and being ready to modify it along the trip, discuss "chain of command"- it helps the crew to know who is trusted to do what. Imagine if you were incapacitated....

I have been lucky (careful) not to have run out of fuel. I try to carry enough fuel to motor in economy mode for 6 days. (144 hrs) Any efficient fuel jug system that works for you. I prefer 10 -15 gallon sizes, as they can be moved by hand, and yet not have to deal with securing twice as many 5-6 gallon cans. They need to be checked regularly as secured and sealed. The best \$20 you'll ever spend...

<http://www.superjiggler.com/>

Keep you log current, try the discipline of the race with daily position at the same time each day, track miles from Hawaii and miles to home. As you travel the great circle and weather routing, many days seem unproductive if you only look at the miles to go on the GPS, but viewed as miles from Hawaii, feels like you are making way. Chat with others in Hawaii and compare schedules and departure plans and set up your own flotilla to keep in touch with and look after. Many use the same schedule and frequencies as the race over, some set their own. It is comforting to know that others are around, and you may be of assistance to them as well.

As a reward for the time they are about to spend... many boats take a few days extra and head over to Kauai and anchor in Hanalei Bay. This can serve as a fun stop and as a shake down for crew and systems.

During the crossing I try to save the auto pilot for the boring times in the high. If it is going to fail, it will probably fail in the rougher conditions at the start of the trip. Hand steering usually helps focus crew if they are a bit green in the gills and it is real sailing! I try to do all the stuff you read about as well. I leave the VHF on 16, I use proper running lights, harnesses and floatation at night and when conditions or maneuvers call for it.

I ask the crew to be diligent about watch standing and not just sit at the wheel for their watch. I encourage them to think for themselves but to report all activity. I specifically ask them to **wake me for**

ANYTHING. If they see a ship on the horizon, they can usually tell if there are any crossing issues or such, but I like to come up and evaluate for myself. I quite often will call ships on channel 16-VHF and ask the traffic if they saw me on their radar (If you have AIS, you can usually call them by name and they are more likely to respond!) I've had some fun discussions with bored radio officers as well. The crew is also tasked with being aware of the needs of the boat... chaffing sails or lines, flickering running lights, loose fittings, on and on. I generally schedule 3 hour night watches and 4 hour daytime. If I have the luxury of numbers... with a total of 5 on board, I set the first day or two underway without me in the schedule, so I can participate in all the watches and cover for any possible seasick crew. After that, and possibly after catching up on some sleep, I either have a new rotation of all 5, or cover one of the crew spots giving them a full watch off.

Over the years the route home is more and more polluted and I have had to go in the water more often to clear nets and debris from the propeller. Have the gear, have a plan, **ONLY DO IT IN THE DAYLIGHT!** Seems obvious here, but: **SHUT THE ENGINE DOWN!** Always try to sail off of "junk", but if you must enter the water, stay attached to the boat and also trail a line with a float or fender attached while anyone is in the water. Even drifting at about 1-2 knots is difficult to stay alongside and take dives to clear the prop.

What to bring. Again, each boat in the Pac Cup is different. Delivery sails are heavier duty than racing sails. This is different than saying "Ship your old racing sails out to Hawaii" for the delivery! Unless they are reinforced and carefully set up for the purpose of a delivery, most "old" racing sails won't take the abuse of the first few days of the trip, and if they fail, you are then dealing with other issues. Racing mainsails usually do not have deep enough reefs.

I do use "storm jibs" a lot during deliveries. Storm-tri-sails are generally not well suited in most cases and should be only used for exceptional weather. I am fairly confident in saying that since 1979, I have NEVER flown a spinnaker during a delivery. Maybe one of my crew can find an exception, but I doubt it. The conditions rarely warrant thinking about it and "risk vs. reward" would take care of the rest of the discussion. If you are lucky enough to have some downwind time, wing on wing, with pole is great. I generally will put the pole away before dusk as dealing with it in the night is less than optimal.

If the boat was "stripped" for the race to Hawaii... shipping the dodger and bimini covers is a good thing, as well as the obvious auto-pilot. If you do not have digital copies of engine and electronics manuals, ship the paper copy out. (Many hours to read and solve problems!) Movies, books, CD's, all forms of entertainment to pass the time. iPods and headphones are great especially with different tastes in music, but caution to also be "listening" to the boat while on watch is important. (VHF, engine noises, rigging/sail noises)

If you are spending weeks after the race in Hawaii, sure, send over the paddleboards and other toys. Otherwise, keep it simple. Generally, no need for dinghy and outboard. I also ask the race crew to take their personal gear home on the plane if they can. If not, be sure it is stowed by them, and not left for delivery crew to deal with.

A friend once told an absolute novice to bring along some “personal comfort” items, so mid-pacific he showed up on deck in a wonderful cozy bathrobe and slippers. He was absolutely relaxed and enjoying his time off-watch. Like for the race crew, earplugs and eye masks are essential recommendations.

I also encourage people to get in the habit of having on watch and off watch wardrobes. Not as difficult as it may seem. Unless you have a fully enclosed wheelhouse, you will generally come off watch with some salt spray and dampness. Setting those clothes aside and getting dry socks and dry slip-on shoes/slippers etc. will make life below deck more comfortable and keep bunks cleaner and drier. Then, unless you took an absolute drenching, slip back into “work” clothes for watch standing.

I have used a basic check list to see what is and isn't on-board. It even includes measuring the oven and stovetop so when you are at Costco or wherever, you know how big a pre-made casserole dish you can fit! (See attached spread sheet)

I hope you can be in the “look forward” mode of THE RACE IS OVER, rather than dreading it. It is a major crossing, no less significant than the race over. With good planning, good crew, and good luck, you can have a great trip.

Carry On,

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