

Offshore Report from E's Alee by Will Haynie
Wed 10:30 AM

WE are in conditions that are outside the brochure again. No more lovely cruise for E's Alee..

The wind is coming out of the east and we are registering 23-27 knots apparent wind on our bow. We are sailing close hauled in rough seas. The bow gets buried and spray covers the entire boat. Nobody is dry, and during our 4-hour overnight watches, we all took turns at the helm in 30-minute intervals because it will wear you out.

As this current weather system set in last evening, Scott Sale told my crewmate Bill and me that we needed to go up to the mast and put a reef in the main sail. This is one of the great aspects of sailing on an Ocean Sailing Academy boat - every maneuver is a teaching moment, every watch shift with our instructors Steve and Scott is an opportunity to become a much better sailor. So Bill and I hooked our tethers to the jack line, climbed out of the cozy confines of the cockpit, and went up to the mast on the wildly pitching foredeck to reef the main. We did it in textbook manner, just as Scott and Steve had taught us, and when we got back to the cockpit, Steve said, "That'll get your adrenalin flowing, won't it?"

I sat down in my favorite perch, a cooler lashed to the deck just outside the cockpit on the port side, and wondered why people like us need this kind of sailing "fix?" Why can't we just be like most folks and get our kicks holing out a 60-foot sand wedge or sweating out an 8-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole?

Our esprit is really building. We are divided into two watch crews: Bill, Scott and I are the "Port Watch," while Elin, Johann, and Mike are the "Starboard Watch." We have friendly banter and rivalries between us. We change watch every 4 hours, and nights like last night can make that seem an eternity. Everyone takes a turn at the helm, and in these winds and seas, that's a workout. Elin, our only female crewmember, is impressing everybody. She's as petite as a woman can be, but she handles that helm with all the strength, determination, and skill that toughened war veterans Bill and Scott do! Girls rule!

We have noticed that on this side of the Gulf Stream, we've seen remarkably less wildlife – almost no birds, not a single dolphin, and no more flying fish, with whom we've grown quite fond.

We are wet, tired, and hungry, but determined. Looks like we might make it to Bermuda Friday morning, and we now know our time limit expires Saturday, not Thursday, so on we go.