

Reports from Will Haynie aboard E's Alee

Sat. 3:15 PM

Wow, how things changed since my last posting.

We were anchored within sight of land last night about dusk, and our spirits sank with the anchor. At least we had a nice supper made by Scott Sale, one of our Ocean Sailing Academy instructors. Then, about 2 hours later, the wind filled in. And it filled in, and it filled in, and just kept building. Finally, we were off to Bermuda for real. After midnight, we had over 30 knots apparent wind we shortened the foresail, and amid some steep seas and washing up to the foot of the mast, our two instructors - Scott and captain Steve Enloe- tethered on and went forward to put a reef in the main. I was at the helm and it was howling so loudly, I couldn't hear anything they were trying to say to me. Although the challenge was fun, my crewmates and I joked that it was NOT the type of weather they put in the in OSA brochure! It wasn't dangerous weather, just not comfortable weather. Morning found us somewhere near the Gulf Stream, and we could tell because the NE wind going against its northerly flow made for some challenging sea conditions. Breakfast was nothing but granolas and fruit - too rough to cook or make coffee.

Now, Saturday afternoon, things have really calmed down and it is beautiful and pleasant. My crewmates Elin, Mike, Bill, Johann, and the Scott (student) are learning more about each other and getting along fine. Sailing skills are definitely improving, boatspeed is up, seas are down, and things are going easily on E's Alee!

Sunday

During the midnight to 4 AM watch, our crew saw a Coast Guard plane and two helicopters that looked like they were performing a search and rescue out on the horizon to the SW. They didn't hear anything on the VHF, so nobody knows what was going on. Sunday morning, we'd been becalmed since my crewmates Bill, Scott and I went off watch at 4 AM. AT 7:30 AM, we were still becalmed. So what do you do in the middle of the Gulf Stream on a clear, warm day when you can't sail? You swim, and that's what we did. Scott, Johann, Elin and I decided to give it a try. The water temp was almost 85, and my biodegradable soap got its first use on this trip. Afterwards, we were clean, refreshed, and awake. Conditions stayed frustrating until shortly after 8 when we finally got some breeze. Several hours later, we had good enough wind to fly our asymmetrical spinnaker for the first time, and it was great to be flying along. Scott, who is an Arkansas police officer and recently retired Army reservist who served in Iraq, put on a "bubba shirt" with cut off sleeves and a ball cap that that looked like camo, and with his facial hair, I dawned on me that he looked a lot like Larry the Cable Guy.

So Scott the Cable guy was doing a great job at the helm - something all the Ocean Sailing Academy students get plenty of practice (and coaching) doing on the trip - and I settled in on the windward rail reading Patti Henry's new novel "Between the Tides." She sent me an auto-graphed pre-release copy just so I'd have something to read on this trip. I was just getting into her Lowcountry story when I was interrupted by a call to help douse the spinnaker. Although we were flying along nicely, the angle needed to fly the asymmetrical was too far off our desired course. Now we're wing-and-wing, which feels slow but actually we're making pretty decent time. Supper tonight is Brunswick stew. It'll be hard to beat the crab cakes Johann served up last night. For now, back to Patti's novel. All the crew sends our love to our families.