

Luna Blu Offshore Race Preparations 2019

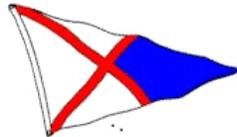


**70th Down the Bay Race
for the Virginia Cruising Cup
Friday, May 24, 2019**



JUNE 7 & 8, 2019

**Third
Summer Solstice
Ocean Race
Saturday, June 22nd, 2019**



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- **The Plan**

- Begin planning early and use the Down the Bay Race 2019 as a dry run for A2N- if nothing breaks, will have all required safety equipment and personal safety items for SSOR 19
- Use A2N as prep for A2B 2020

- **Plan Breakdown- 3 key areas:**

- Boat Preparation
- Crew Preparation
- Race Tactics and Planning

The Boat

- 1966 Bristol 39- first successful fiberglass production boat, 58 produced. Luna Blu is believed to be first of the class-Bristol Yachts Hull #13, Bristol 39 Hull # 1. Built to CCA rules, her LOA is 39.2 Ft, 10.8 Ft beam and 26.5 LWL, 17,850 lbs displacement. Ted Hood was her designer, builder and owner for her first two years, and he raced her in several races from 66-68. It is believed she was the third of the many boats that Hood named “ROBIN”.



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- Boat Preparation

- Key to preparing a boat for any long-distance race is to focus on requirements. Deficiencies can be made up in a long day race or even a two-day race, but a multi-day race with the potential of any kind of weather means the boat has to be prepared for ANYTHING.
- Strip the boat and only those items that are absolutely needed go back aboard. Be anal about it. I did not do that until late in the process. Earlier is easier. Mark everything that goes back on board.
- Primary basis for determining if the boat is ready for an offshore race is compliance with the Safety Equipment Regulations (SER) 2019, which is in a checklist format divided by Ocean Race, Offshore Race and Chesapeake Bay Race requirements. I also consulted with seasoned Skippers and crew of boats that have completed the race before.
- Critical to thoroughly read and understand the NOR and any SER changes for the particular race. (i.e., there is a different Safety at Sea Course requirement between A2N and A2B). If there are questions, the Race Committee are available to consult, and they were very responsive and helpful.

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- Boat Preparation

- I developed a Luna Blu A2N To Do List which was started in December 2018 and updated as there were changes. The initial list was developed during my initial review of the SER where I highlighted those items, I knew to be deficient and prioritized it by criticality, cost and relative ease to correct it. My first list had 57 items on it.
- Luna Blu had an extensive overhaul in 2017 and a rig inspection in 2018. A new Number 1 for offshore sailing was ordered from Ullman Sails as well as trysail, heavy weather jib and storm jib were ordered in December of 2018.
- My goal was to completely comply with all SER items with no waivers and to have the boat secured for sea, with a clear cabin deck and all gear and equipment stored and secured. Although I did complete the SER with no discrepancies (so I thought) , I failed to really think out sail, food & drink stowage and personal gear stowage.

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- Boat Preparation Cont'd:
 - Wanted to have the boat ready for A2N in March- did not make that deadline. Major issues in terms of cost or complexity:
 - A boat's hull, including, deck, coach roof, windows, hatches and all other parts, shall form an integral watertight unit, and any openings in it shall be capable of being immediately secured to maintain this integrity. (1.7)
 - Companionway hatch boards need to be replaced so that they are “capable of being blocked off to main deck level (sheerline). The method of blocking should be solid, watertight, and rigidly secured, if not permanent. (2.1.1).
 - Heel of mast must be securely fastened to mast step or adjoining structure. (2.6).
 - A boat shall have a method of receiving weather information in addition to the fixed mount and hand held VHF radio. (3.13). NOR 9.5 stated “Boats shall carry a Single Side Band radio or satellite phone.”

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- Boat Preparation Cont'd:
 - A boat shall have adequate clipping points or jacklines that allow the crew to clip on before coming on deck and unclip after going below. (3.2.2)
 - A boat shall carry a trysail, with the boat's sail number displayed on both sides, which can be set independently of the main boom, has an area less than 17.5% of $E \times P$, and which is capable of being attached to the mast. Storm sails manufactured after 01/01/2014 shall be constructed from a highly visible material. (3.33.2)
 - A boat shall carry a heavy-weather jib (or heavy-weather sail in a yacht with no forestay) of area not greater than 13.5% height of the foretriangle squared. (3.33.3)
 - A boat shall carry a storm jib not exceeding 5% of the yacht's I dimension squared, an equipped with an alternative means of attachment to the headstay in the event of a failure of the head foil. Storm sails manufactured after 01/01/2014 shall be constructed from a highly visible material. (3.33.4)

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- **Boat Preparation Cont'd:**

- A boat shall carry adequate inflatable life raft(s) designed for saving life at sea with designed capacity for containing the entire crew. The raft shall be SOLAS, ISAF, ISO 9650-1 or ORC approved. The raft shall be stored in such a way that it is capable of being launched within 15 seconds. Boats built after 01/06/2001 shall have the life raft stowed in a deck mounted rigid container or stowed in watertight or self-draining purpose-built rigid compartment(s) opening adjacent to the cockpit or the working deck. Boats built prior to 01/06/2001 may alternatively stow the life raft in a valise not weighing over 88 lbs. securely below deck and adjacent to the companionway. The life raft(s) shall hold current certificate(s) of inspection.(3.33.9).
- Every PLB on board registered with rescue authority (5.07.1)
- Safety tether (2m (6'6")) with colored flag for each crew (5.02.1)
- Thigh or crotch straps for each PFD (5.01.1).
- Emergency antenna for each type of installed radio antenna (3.29.01)

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- Boat Preparation Cont'd:
 - Identify the crew target number and potential crew members early. I started out thinking Luna Blu could handle 9 crew, until I read:
A boat shall have bunks sufficient to accommodate the off-watch crew. (2.3.2).
- **Meal Planning: Planning started out well, but execution not so much.**
 - I sent out a Meal Survey early to each crew member for them to return to ensure that no crew was allergic to any particular food and get preferences for meals/snacks/drink.
 - Food and water for a crew of six is a lot of food for a 3-4-day race. High calories burned and constant work in the sun are big issues. I wanted the crew to have at least one hot meal a day.
 - I elected to use an Igloo cooler with dry ice to keep frozen 5 ready to heat meals in aluminum tins (each served at least 8) (mac'n cheese, lasagna, vegetable lasagna, Sheppard's pie, chicken & rice) which was stowed in the cabin. Camping experience says each will probably serve 4.
 - Had a variety of cold cut meats, hot dogs, peanut butter and jelly, Pop Tarts, cereal, Protein Bars, High Energy Trail Mix and snacks, 3 cases of water (stowed in vee-berth), 2 cases of Gatorade, 5 6-packs of beer, 4 fifths of rum, 3 fifths of bourbon and a bottle of gin. Tequilla drinker was out of luck- no more room!
 - Of note, because of the events that transpired in Annapolis, I failed to get to the grocery store to replenish the bread, cold cuts, and milk so when we got underway for the race we were down to 1 loaf of bread and 2 bags of hot dog buns. Lessons learned- delegate!

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- **Boat Preparation Cont'd:**

- A boat shall carry 1 gallon (3.785 liters) per crewmember of emergency drinking water in sealed containers in addition to any other water carried aboard the boat and it shall be aboard after finishing. (3.37). Storage for 12 gallons of water on a 52 year old CCA Rule Boat is an issue, as the jugs do take up space that could be used for other items. We marked each jug as “Emergency Water” and stowed them in the starboard cockpit locker.
- Plan on 8 bottles of water as a minimum.

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- **Crew Preparation**

Safety at Sea Course: At least 30% of those aboard the boat, but not fewer than two members of the crew, unless racing single-handed, including the person in charge, shall have attended a one-day or two-day US Sailing Safety at Sea Seminar within the last 5 years, including online courses when available, or other courses as accepted by US Sailing or other national authority. (4.3.1)

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• Crew Preparation

- Crew Gear Stowage: I sent out a gentle hint through an article on what to bring for an offshore race that minimized the amount of personal gear one should bring. That hint was not heeded and we had personal gear stowed in the cabin, in the vee-berth and in the head. In retrospect, I should have limited the crew to one 30L waterproof bag excluding foul weather gear and provided a list of gear that should be brought.
- All crew gear needs to be stored where it is accessible without bothering sleeping crew. This is significant in foul weather as gear needs to not be stored where hand holds are in the cabin.
- I left the spare foul weather gear in the hanging gear locker which deprived the crew space for their foul weather gear to be hung where it could be easily accessible without bothering a sleeping crewmate.
- Everyone should have a headlamp with a red-light feature, most of my crew did. I forgot mine, which made it difficult to plot fixes on the chart using the existing red lighting at the Nav Table.
- I provided each crew member a waterproof flashlight and a rigger's knife, with spares onboard and spare batteries for the flashlights. I also equipped each PFB with an ACR PLB-375, an ACR Firefly Strobe light, a waterproof LED penlight and spray hood. For the foredeck crew, I added a MOB1 to their PFD.

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- DTB Race Execution
 - DTB SER requirements are not onerous, RC provides plenty of leeway.
 - Race provided first use of jacklines. Having clip-in point on port side cabin bulkhead where crew can clip-in before coming topside worked out well.
 - Pre-race planning proved to be good and was followed- winds were as predicted.
 - 8 is almost too many crew even for an overnight long distance race on Luna Blu.
 - We failed to maintain a strict watch rotation. Did not impact the race though.
 - We only had one hot meal and that was warmed up subs so did not learn anything about preparing full meals for a crew of 8 during the race.

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- A2N Last minute preps and Race Execution
 - Iridium Go antenna cable wired day before we left for Annapolis which did not provide me time to familiarize myself with its use. It is complicated enough that significant practice is needed, even for basic use. Using it to procure weather!
 - Reefer died the night before DTB, replacement was installed day before we left for Annapolis, installation began at 1500 and completed at 0200- started the A2N trek with little sleep.
 - New fixed VHF radio installation in Annapolis had us trying to connect a NMEA 2000 cable to the radio, requiring the cable to be run through a bulkhead to allow the connection. That resulted in an accidental ¼" hole being drilled through the hull, requiring Luna Blu to be lifted and a bolt inserted into the hole with plenty of caulk. The good to come out of that was the hull was power washed and scrapped so we had a good bottom for the race. Not so good on my nerves. Should have had the radio installation completed before we left Hampton.
 - Unplanned lift caused me to forget to-do list which included going to the grocery store as previously mentioned
 - Hand held radios- 4 onboard, (2 with DSC) failed to ensure all were fully charged before we shoved off. Did not have a dedicated AC plug-in to keep one handheld fully charged. Keep at least one charged from the beginning and designate emergency use only so you always know one is charged and ready.

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- A2N Last minute preps and Race Execution
 - Great start, we stayed with the Fleet and may have even caught some boats even though most had spinnakers up at the start. We sailed to the east side of the Bay and remained on that side almost to Smith Point Light and made good time.
 - Good communication between sail trimmers and helm for the first 12 hours of the race, but as crew began to tire sail trim suffered to some extent- but especially after passing CBBT around 0730. Winds increased during the night and was 18-21 kts the following morning. We put the first reef in the main and furled the genoa to about 20%.
 - By the time we reached Chesapeake Light, we were seeing northeast winds 21-27 Kts and swells 3-5 ft. I contemplated putting a second reef in but other than the swells, she was on her feet and handling the seas well for the most part.
 - Helmsmen had to contend with a lot of weather helm and arms tired quickly, requiring more frequent helm rotation than I anticipated.

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- A2N Last minute preps and Race Execution Cont'd:
 - Plan was to continue sailing east past Chesapeake Light perhaps as far 25-30 miles before tacking north as it appeared when we arrived at the light that most of the fleet was stalled just north of Cape Charles. Would have been a good plan as Figaro demonstrated.
 - Remember the very first bullet about the boat being watertight? At about 1130 after passing Chesapeake Light, we tacked to see what we could make north and perhaps catch up to some of our competition. When we did, water came rushing into the cabin from the storage cabinets on the starboard side, soaking the sofa cushion and putting water onto the sole. From my position at the helm, I could not determine where the water was coming from or how much but report from crew that were below said that water was coming into the boat from the seam at the hull and deck joint like a waterfall. I had them check the bilge, nothing there. There was no water coming into the boat on starboard tack, but my thought was that the high winds and seas had placed such stress on the rig, hull and deck that it might have opened up the hull-deck joint on the starboard side allowing the water intrusion.
 - I questioned whether it was wise to continue the race as in addition to the water intrusion problem we had two crewmembers that were seasick, one almost totally incapacitated. Knowing that we would have to battle the wind and seas all the way up the coast shorthanded and with a leak, I consulted the crew and decided to retire.

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- Final Thoughts:
 - Decide to enter the race early to provide plenty of prep time
 - Use the time wisely, prioritize the items that will take time to complete and don't procrastinate
 - Be brutally honest in assessing your boat's compliance with each item on the SER-THINKING you are in compliance may not be satisfactory
 - Consult the RC for any item you are unsure about
 - Consult Skippers with similar sized boat for advice on how they did it
 - Practice with everything well before hand, including all navigation and weather tools using the as they will be used on the boat. Network speeds significantly affect weather apps.

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