

THIS ISSUE: **COMPETING IN THE EVERGLADES CHALLENGE**

SMALL CRAFT

A D V I S O R



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SOPRANINO • EVERGLADES CHALLENGE '06 • INSTALL A NEW RUDDER
 COMPANIONWAY SEAT • MANTIS' CANOE SEA-TRIALS • KIDS ON THE WATER
 SIREN 17 REVIEW • MYSTERY BOAT • BACKSTAY TENSION
 BOARDING LADDERS • 21-FOOT CIRCUMNAVIGATOR
 OLD SALT IN WALES • DEVLIN SEASWIFT STUDY

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“The Core Sound’s already in the water! Go! Go! Go!” Helen cried.

Caught off guard, Gary and I shoved his Frolic2, *Oaracle* down the rollers and into the waters of Tampa Bay for the March 4 beginning of the 2006 Watertribe Everglades Challenge. We set the sails and pointed out into the open Gulf, as many of the kayakers headed for the Intracoastal Waterway and the more protected route to the first checkpoint at Grand Tours. We ran down the coast past the high-rise condos along the beaches of Sarasota and Venice. We passed a Triton and a kayak or two, but couldn’t catch the Hobie cat, the G-Cat or the Core Sound 17—the leaders of our Class IV.

The Everglades Challenge is billed as an “expedition-style adventure race for sea kayaks, canoes and small boats.” It starts at Fort Desoto near Tampa/St. Petersburg and runs some 300 miles, ending at Key Largo, around the tip of the Florida peninsula. Three checkpoints (Placida, Chokoloskee and Flamingo) with deadlines for each preclude lollygagging. The really hardcore guys (10 this time, of which 7 finished) go all the way around Florida. From Key Largo, they head back up the east coast to the mouth of the St. Mary’s river (the border between Florida and Georgia); go up that river; portage 40 miles then enter the Suwannee River and float back down to the Gulf, and finish at Fort Desoto. This 1200 mile race is called the Ultimate Florida Challenge. The

ABOVE—Florida Bay just after we passed the Seapearl that was stuck in the mud. It had Savannahdan and Paddlemaker aboard. It was our last day—they missed the wind shift and needed another day to finish.

OPPOSITE—Dawn on Saturday at the start of the race. The beautiful Sunshine Skyway Bridge in the background. *Photo by Bill Paxton*

Ultimate Challenge is a separate race that ends in Placida, a distance of about 80 miles.

I flew to Tampa on Thursday where Bruce Hector picked me up. He’s the host of the popular Kingston, Ontario Messabout and promoter of such wacky boat building ideas as the Civilian Aircraft Carrier and The Infinite Modular Sharpie (TIMS—a series of simple barges brought to a messabout by attendees and connected together for as long a boat as the units permit. I think the official record is 95 feet—some eleven individual units).

On Friday morning Bruce dropped me at Gary and Helen’s campsite at Fort Desoto. We left shortly for the beach where the race would start the following morning. With the help of some fellow racers, we got the boat off its trailer and began experimenting with the 2 x2’s and 3” PVC pipe with which we’d move the boat down from the high tide mark into the bay. The race is designed to be winnable by either a kayak or a small sailboat. Several “filters” are part of the race and help create a level playing field for all types of small boats. The first filter is the requirement to move your boat from the high tide mark to the water.



Friday was like a mess-about or other small-boat gathering. Guys relaxed and admired each other's boats. I took a look at Matt Layden's new boat *Enigma*. Matt is best known for his *Paradox* design. Another of his boat designs is *Little Cruiser*, a tiny enclosed boat that has taken its owners, Dave and Mindy Bolduc, to the Bahamas several times. Matt asked how to pronounce the name of Jim Michalak (like Mechanic but with an 'l' in place of the 'n'). Jim is the designer of Frolic2 the boat Gary built and named *Oaracle*.

That afternoon we attended the captains' meeting. Looking around the group of forty or so entrants, I was struck by the amount of grey hair. Gary and I decided that it would be tough for young guys to cough up the \$295 entry fee and get a week off to race.

The founder of the Wattribe is Steve Isaac. He goes by "Chief" and is duly authoritative. Someone said he is an ex-Marine, and it fits. He is sixty-ish with an athletic build and a buzz cut. He is knowledgeable but not pedantic. He seemed genuinely concerned for our well being and success in the race. He looked a bit harried as he barked out the rules and made some last minute announcements. He reminded us that we'd be largely on our own out there and that we could easily die. Finally he mentioned insurance. "This won't pay if you hurt yourself," he said. "We only have liability insurance, so don't damage anything, because we don't want our premiums to go up."

Later, we returned to camp and spent a restless night. For



SURVIVING THE RACE

There are many reasons not all entrants completed the Everglades Challenge. Some of the ingredients I consider most important for success are:

- 1 – Obviously, you need a well found boat—one that is seaworthy and stout. You will be in occasionally heavy seas and perhaps bumping shallow bottoms. You do not want the boat to swamp, sink or break up.
- 2 – The course covers 300 miles. It is grueling. You will be called upon to perform physically. You must be healthy and in good shape. There are a lot of middle aged folks in the race, but don't kid yourself—these guys are tough.
- 3 – A big mistake is to bring a boat to the race that you have never sailed in—or in all the conditions the open Gulf can offer. Unbelievably, some folks did just that.
- 4 – There are several low bridges that require you to strike and stow your mast and sail. This needs to be easily done and you should practice until you can do it quickly.
- 5 – Wind is a huge variable. Be prepared to row or paddle when you can't sail.
- 6 – I can't stress this enough: The Gulf of Mexico is not the North Atlantic, but it is big water and it can get rough. Practice recovering from a knock-down.
- 7 – Whether you use GPS or not, carry and be able to read charts, plot a course and sail a compass heading. Study charts of the entire course beforehand—you should have alternative plans in case of changes in the weather.
- 8 – For the EC, you must physically move your boat from the high tide mark to the water. Most sailboats will be too heavy to carry so will require some kind of rollers or tackle. You must be familiar with whatever system you use.
- 9 – This seems obvious but it is not as easy as it sounds: You need to practice sailing to windward. Try it pinched or a bit free to see how your boat actually sails under different conditions. A GPS can be a great aid in this by showing your actual course made good. —CL

Gary and I, this was the beginning of a long dreamed of expedition.

I got up before light and ate a quick breakfast of Sandra's homemade Granola—not degraded too much by the instant milk I'd brought along for the race. As the sun rose, a couple of hundred folks prepared their boats, took pictures, and otherwise watched the pre-race pandemonium. Our friends, Bill Paxton and his wife Nancy from Minneapolis, and Bill Turnbull from the Tampa area, were on hand to wish us good luck. A film crew from Fox News was reported to be on the way, so after a group picture, we were more or less on hold. Suddenly, Helen was yelling for us to get the boat in the water—the race had begun!

By mid afternoon we were pretty much by ourselves, running south in 15-20 mph north winds and lumpy seas. At one point, we almost broached on a breaking wave, so we reefed the balanced lug and the boat became more controllable. The balanced lugsail is a wonder. I don't know why so many sailors think the modern Bermuda rig is the only one to have. Traditional lug, gaff and spritsails work very well on all points of sail—not just downwind—but hard on the wind too. They point almost as high as racing sails and excel on a reach or a run. But the big advantage in my book is that they use shorter masts and therefore less rigging, carry less weight aloft, and provide a lower center of effort.

The weather report said the wind would continue into the night. We wouldn't be able to make the entrance at Gasparilla Pass before sunset. Negotiating a strange entrance in the dark isn't smart anyway, so at dusk we headed into Stump Pass about 10 miles north of Placida.

Coming in, we saw a dredge right in the pass. As we got closer, we noticed three small tugs quickly approaching the dredge from the inside. We attempted to sail up the pass, but the three-knot current was against us and the traffic was getting worse, so we took the beach on the south side of the opening. The tugs moved on, but we could not see a way to walk the boat past the swift current without sailing to the north shore. As we headed across, we noticed a small boat with a square sail landing.

"It's Matt!" I yelled.

"It must be a good idea to come inside here if he's doing it too," reasoned Gary.

We watched Matt land and walk his little *Enigma* along the shore for 50 or 60 yards. We were right behind him.

"Good evening, gentlemen" Matt said with a bow.

We discussed the merits of coming into this pass at this time and agreed on the wisdom of the move all around. Then Matt took off and we headed after him, vainly looking for channel markers in the waning light and happy to be out of the rough water of the Gulf. We ran aground almost immediately and watched Matt's little masthead light fade into the gloom. That was the last time we saw him.

"I saw a color screen GPS in his boat" Gary said with envy. "No wonder he stayed in the channel."

We put rubber boots on, got out and pushed the boat back into deeper water. The Mag-Lite came out and it took two of us to negotiate the ICW down to the Swing Bridge at Placida. As we drifted along in the dark, a group of kayaks

passed us, the paddlers chattering away.

We did not need to ask the bridge to swing as we had to lower our mast anyway. Gary rowed while I tried to navigate in the dark—down a private channel to the dock at Grand Tours and checkpoint one. Unfortunately, I couldn't find markers and ran us aground. We could see where we needed to go, but we had to push the boat in about 6 inches of water for 100 yards or so. It was tiring and we saw our hopes of winning the race starting to slip away. Back in the channel, we still had to negotiate the next "filter," this bridge on the way to Grand Tours. With openings some 9 feet high and 10 feet wide, it slows sailboats. There are also shortcuts through the Everglades that bypass Cape Sable and cut miles off the course—good for kayaks but generally not passable for sailboats.

Gary rowed us to the narrow bridge using the "oardles," his combination oar/paddle creations. The bridge is too narrow to row so we jerked the oardles from their sockets and paddled like crazy. The current was against us so we couldn't stop. Once beyond the concrete columns under the bridge, Gary rowed again. It was a mile or so to Grand Tours against the current and by the time he got the 20-foot sailboat to the dock, he was tired.

Chief greeted us. I think he was a little surprised we'd made it this far, this fast. We signed in, posted a few comments, and headed back out. It was much easier going back under the filter bridge with the current. Still, it was dark and we were tired so we decided to stop for the night and sleep. We knew that one of the Sea Pearls was anchored just ahead. It was the only solo class IV boat and it was captained by a very capable DaveonCudjoe (Dave Combs). We anchored nearby.

Our little cabin had just enough room for one person to stretch out and one to curl up. I got the long berth the first night. After a snack that passed for dinner, I crawled into my sleeping bag with my fleece pants and jacket on over my PFD. I was damp but warm, and I slept well.

Sunday morning we peeked out of our cabin to see Dave heading out in his Sea Pearl and another Pearl with Savannahdan and Paddlemaker preparing to sail. With a sudden sense of urgency, we wolfed down breakfast and headed out the channel. The weather report called for light wind from the northeast, so we headed down Pine Island Sound rather than face the leftover waves from the Gulf. We had good sailing until around midday when we were left with nothing but Sunday powerboat wakes. By sunset, we'd covered the 35 miles to the pass at Sanibel Island and sailed under the causeway back into the open Gulf.

The forecast was 10-12 from the north, so we decided to sail all night. The gulf was much more pleasant than it had been on Saturday and we sailed about two miles offshore past the bright lights and high-rise condos of Fort Meyers at 3-3.5 mph. The night air was relatively warm as I took the first watch. We made steady progress south toward Cape Romano. At midnight, Gary got up and I slept for a while, again in all my clothes, fleece and life jacket.

Around 3:30 I woke up as Gary moved around the cockpit. He was on his fourth cup of hot cocoa and getting sleepy, so I got up for another watch. The wind had died down to

ANATOMY OF AN EVERGLADES CHALLENGE BOAT

Designer, **Graham Byrnes**, gives us the story behind his 1st place finishing Core Sound 17



There has been a lot talk and speculation that I designed the Core Sound 17, *Green Heron*, specifically for this race—or at least specifically as a racer. Nothing could be further from reality.

The Core Sound design evolved from my Bay River Skiff, a multifunctional utility boat, born of the best tradition of Carolina workboats. I used modern materials and design theory and married it to the best of the coastal and river skiffs and an old fashioned but highly practical cat ketch rig. That model could sail, row and motor and was primarily an inshore and near-coastal boat that could be converted for weekend camping.

I was asked by a client to try to preserve the Bay River Skiff's best qualities and rig, but make it more of a "blue water boat," as he planned to use it in the Gulf of Mexico to fish under sail, camp-cruise with family, and as a yacht tender to be towed by his 31' boat. The result was the Core Sound 17. The design emphasis of the boat shifted slightly toward the sailing and living/sleeping accommodation side. Her convex bow sections would increase buoyancy in the bow, albeit at the expense of the "traditional Carolina style-flavor."

I envisioned the vessel being used by the average family. The Core Sound 17 is stable, comfortable and easy to sail with children and non-sailors aboard, and can be built by a competent amateur for a nominal cost.

I grew up sailing Aussie Skiffs, so I have zero tolerance for ugly, poorly performing or handling boats. Just because a boat is recreational, or "cruising" is no excuse for sluggishness or irritating traits. Secondly, I don't believe in designing "down" to amateurs. The average, reasonably intelligent home-builder, given the proper information is totally capable of building a beautiful high quality boat.

I maximized the boat's upper-range per-

formance by giving her a fairly high C_p (prismatic coefficient) and good form stability for good sail carrying power. I paid special attention to a clean run aft to facilitate planing and surfing. I realize that emphasizing the heavier air, high-speed end of the spectrum comes at the expense of light air, lower-speed performance. However, I rationalize that it is better to give up a small fraction of a knot in light airs to gain several knots at the upper end of the speed range. For example, in the '05 Everglades Challenge race, when sailing side by side with the Norseboat, we were faster in all conditions. Even in very light airs, when they were rowing and sailing, we sailed only, and were able to pull away. When we were both rowing, we were still able to remain fairly equal. I say this only to show that the emphasis on the upper speed range does not make the boat a light-air slouch as compared to a design which has been more optimized for that speed range.

There are two sail options for the boat: luff slides and battened, or sleeve or laced luff and unbattened. The latter being a little simpler and cheaper although less able to wring out the last knot of performance.

My own boat, *Green Heron*, is a standard Core Sound 17, hull #34, built by one of our amateur builders. In race trim with all stores, supplies and safety equipment aboard, she weighed about 900 pounds. This gave her a sailing displacement-to-length number of around 115. This means she is no lightweight flyer but still has the ability to exceed her theoretical hull speed and surf very easily. Given the wide range of conditions encountered during this race we were able to use variable geometry to improve the light air performance: By positioning ourselves forward and also heeling the boat we could trim slightly down by the bow and lift the stern, thereby reducing both wetted surface and transom drag.

After the experience of two Everglades

Challenges in *Green Heron*, I've had a good deal of time to cogitate on what changes I would make to the design. The one fault I found with the boat is that it can be wet at high speeds in a chop. The bow throws the water off and it tends to blow back on the crew. This year, Fred and I got completely doused the first night out. On the other hand, the boat was able to continue on in that weather with no problems. All other competitors that went offshore Saturday night from the Boca Grande channel stopped for all or part of that night because of the conditions. At no time that night were we concerned about the boat being up to the job. If we weren't racing, it would have been easy to reef down more and not slam into the waves and create all that spray. Slowing down is always an option for prudent seamanship as well as simple comfort. If I fined down her bow I would have to do the same at the stern to keep her well balanced; would I lose some other qualities at the same time? Would I still be able to crawl forward to retie the reefing line in the middle of the night? There I was, twelve miles offshore, my head two feet from the bow as we surfed at ten knots. Even with my weight forward, when the bow slammed into a wave, she never buried or was difficult to steer.

Having a boat with good all around performance is only half of the equation. You need a fair amount of luck and a crew that can keep driving the boat 24 hours a day for three or four days. I got my first sleep about 40 hours after the start. The crew must be proficient in boat handling and navigation, and must know the course. In the 2005 race we gave up the lead because we did not know how to cross the very shallow Florida Bay at night in strong winds. We learned from the experience. This year we were prepared—and we were able to win. —GB



5 mph or so and we drifted near Marco Island as Gary drifted off to dreamland. It was then I noticed that the long line of lights on shore had an end. In the darkness (even the moon had set) the lights stopped at the south end of Marco Island. Beyond that was cape Romano, the beginning of the Everglades.

Ahead it was like a black wall. We might have been sailing off the edge of the earth. I thought about alligators and panthers and about the pythons that have been released and now call the Everglades home. What if we had to crash-land on that shore? Would anyone ever find us?

By dawn the wind had gone. Gary got up and decided to row us on around the cape. As we got closer and the sun got higher, I noticed an odd structure on the beach. It looked like a series of domes. I called Sandra on the cell phone to report our position. She Googled the domes and found a story by some kayakers who said it was an abandoned house. Ain't technology great?

We were becalmed. We rowed on and off and headed generally toward Chokoloskee via Indian Key pass through the Ten Thousand Islands. From here, though, it looked like a solid shoreline. We took advantage of the calm to eat breakfast. At some point in the morning a double kayak appeared, coming around the cape. Its two paddlers looked pretty blasted but they bravely paddled past us. Later we

TOP LEFT—Core Sound 17 TOP RIGHT—Triton Tandem Sailer.

BOTTOM LEFT—Matt Layden's *Enigma*.

BOTTOM RIGHT—The Pintail 14 did not finish.

OPPOSITE—Gary and I had just set up the mizzen (we should have done that before the start of the race) and were about to shove off.

Photos by Bill Paxton.

found it was IronBob and TheJuice. They were ahead of us now, but we would beat them to the finish by over a day.

We napped and rowed until the wind came back at around 10:30. We set sail for the pass and soon spied a powerboat coming our way. It turned out to be photographers doing a documentary on the race. They asked us a few questions on camera, then gave us cold drinks and headed off after another boat.

The wind was out of the north so we sailed free past the Everglades tour boats all the way to the beach and checkpoint 2 at Chokoloskee. Chokoloskee is a private marina/campground/RV-park. It has a motel where Chief rented a room for WaterTribers to take showers. Did he think that after three days of sailing and two nights sleeping in our clothes that we would need showers? We took them anyway. Our legs were rubbery as we made our way to the room. IronBob and TheJuice were crashed on the beds. They were in tough shape, having just arrived after 170 miles of pad-



dling. I felt a little guilty about having sailed the whole way. Their race seemed so much more grueling than ours. We overcame our guilt and made our way into town for a restaurant meal.

We decided to wait until morning to leave, as the coast here is exposed and we had 40 some odd miles to go before we could round Cape Sable. I slept in the cockpit that night, leaving the cabin to Gary.

In the morning, we had to tack back up the little bay into the north wind, but once we got to the channel that goes out Indian Key Pass we were able to sail right into the Gulf, passing two or three kayaks coming in. Once clear of the light, we headed almost due south toward the three promontories that make up Cape Sable: Northwest Cape, Middle Cape and East Cape. It was another rousing sleigh ride in lumpy seas with 15-20 mph wind in the afternoon. But once we rounded the first cape around 5 p.m., and got into the lee, it calmed down and we were able to reach right on into Flamingo in the dying wind.

We arrived at Flamingo around nine and noticed that everything was under construction. Apparently, a hurricane or two had wreaked havoc here and it was not even open for business. We found the login box easily and were writing comments when a fellow WaterTriber walked up. He introduced himself by his WaterTribe handle "Snore" and

groused that Chief had car trouble and didn't make it with the cart to help kayakers over the portage from freshwater of the everglades shortcut to the saltwater of Florida Bay. It turned out that our cell phone would not work here but his would, so he let us check in with our wives and we helped him carry his boat across the portage.

We decided to sleep in the boat and Snore napped ashore. Next morning we ate quickly and set out on the last—and as it turned out—most challenging leg of the race. Rowing out of the basin in the dawn gloom, the water looked rough. It was an illusion! It turned out to be vegetation exposed by low tide. Only the channel we were in had any water. Later as the tide came in and we got farther into the bay, the channels became harder to find. Soon we came upon the Sea Pearl crewed by Savannahdan and Paddlemaker. They had been blown out of the channel onto the mud.

As we passed them, Savannahdan hollered: "Don't get stuck in the mud!"

We agreed not to and sailed on by, but we would break that pledge several times. Soon they had caught up with us, and we sailed more or less together for a while. This was a lot more like a race and I imagined it being like this all the way to the finish. Little did I know that we would beat them to the finish, some 35 miles away, by almost a day.

Florida Bay is a labyrinth of tidal flats cut by poorly

marked passes, islands covered with Mangroves, and open basins. To get from one basin to the next, you usually have to transit a pass which is almost guaranteed to be upwind with a foul tide. These passes are maybe 30 or 40 feet wide—not wide enough to tack (as we found out). And if you run aground like the Sea Pearl did, you will find that you'll sink to your knees if not your hips in the muck.

Gary, to his credit, was admirably prepared. Not only did he have a route through the maze of passes but he had programmed the positions of the entrances into his GPS. So as we headed around Buoy Key, Gary knew to head straight for Dump Keys and the channel that ran between them.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology touches all parts of our lives, and a race like the Everglades Challenge is no exception. Some of what we saw there was cutting edge and some less so—but still remarkable. We were in a wooden boat but certainly not iron men. What would sailors of the past think about us?

Here are some of the things that I noticed:

GPS – By now, almost everyone uses these things. The more advanced guys have color chart types with waypoints entered in beforehand. Some even have sections of the course saved as tracks from previous years. Tyros will read the latitude and longitude off the device and find that spot on the paper chart they've used for years.

Cell Phones – One is required for each boat. We kept ours in a waterproof case except when actually using it. Coverage gets spotty down in the everglades. There is a tower at Flamingo, but it didn't talk to our phone.

Kevlar/Carbon Fiber – Even our low-tech plywood boat had a bit of CF in the oardle handles and our mizzen sprit, but some boats were built entirely from these spaceage fibers.

Electrical Systems – We had a small lead-acid battery that ran the cabin and compass LED lights and charged the cell phone, but many did not. We also had a photovoltaic cell to charge the main battery. We saw several of those. One boat even carried a Honda generator.

LEDs – These were ubiquitous—from those lights worn on the head, to navigation and anchor lights, to flashlights of all sizes. We had battery powered LED nav lights and a red LED compass light.

Clothing – I thought I was up to date with my Polar-Fleece pants and jacket (and they did keep me warm), but there were all kinds of super-duper garments on display at the EC. I was afraid to ask what some were, much less what they cost.

VHF Radios – Also required for each boat. Our little handheld gave us up to date NOAA weather reports any time we wanted. We were told to use channel 16 in case of an emergency. Curiously, there was no designated channel for race chatter.

Internet – Not only were updates from each contestant posted on the Watertribe Web site instantly (each boat had a contact who was called by cell phone—who then posted the position via computer), but many other sites followed the race as well. The internet played a huge part in most contestants' preparations. We downloaded charts from <http://www.freeboatingcharts.com/> and got advice on the WaterTribe forum from folks who had been there before. The Watertribe Web site (<http://www.watertribe.com/>) is pretty active with give and take all year long. As a communication tool the World Wide Web is unrivaled. Perhaps one day we'll have onboard Internet access.

Unfortunately, the Pearl began heading farther south. We figured they were going another way, but shortly they altered course to follow us. As we headed for the pass, we looked back and saw that they were aground again. Then we ran aground, but were able to get our lighter boat off the mud with the Oardles. The Dump Key channel goes due east for almost a mile and as we cleared the end of it, the wind shifted from north to NE. We looked back and saw the Pearl and noted that they would have real trouble negotiating this pass now.

We were just able to make our ESE course in the freshening NE wind. We had to stop once and tie a reef in the lugsail. We got through the aptly named Twisty Mile Pass, but the second one, "Jimmie Channel" defeated us. The wind and tide were foul. We sailed the first part and rowed a few yards when it turned ENE. We were soon on the shoal with 50 yards of channel still to go. Out of the boat we went, already panting from rowing, and up to our knees we went in the muck.

The wind was blowing 15-20 by this point—not making big waves here in Florida Bay, but once we were out of the boat, it wanted to sail off with out us. So we agreed to just hold the boat and catch our breath. Looking around we figured out the best place to try to launch with any hope of getting off the lee shore. Slowly we moved the boat up to that point. Then while I held the boat in waist deep water, Gary got the sail ready to sheet in and the leeboard set.

Jim Michalak's leeboard is really an off-center centerboard. What ever you call it, it is a thing of amazing simplicity and efficiency. People who do not know much about leeboards think them to be inefficient and ugly. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, but you can't argue with performance like this. The whole assembly is outside the boat where it does not impose on the limited space of the cockpit or cabin. That in itself is enough for me as I like to be able to move around and sleep in a boat. Imagine how much more space your favorite dinghy would have if you removed that leaky, ugly centerboard trunk. In addition, the leeboard is easily reached for examination – not buried in a dark box where you have to guess what is going on. Break the pennant? Not a problem: tie a new one on. Gravel causing it to stick? Can't happen. My 25 footer has one of these wonderful contrivances and as much as I preach the advantages of these pivoting leeboards, most folks just think I'm crazy. It's frustrating.

"Go!" I said as I climbed back into the boat and shoved her off. I knew that if we missed this opportunity, we might as well wait for a wind shift as we would be blown onto a mud-bank from which there would be no escape. Thanks to Gary's skillful handling of the boat, we made it and tacked out into deeper water.

From there we found Manatee pass to the north and sailed right up through it before beginning a series of long tacks to Key Largo and the finish line. All we had to do at this point was miss the keys. There was plenty of deep water here in the eastern reaches of Florida Bay.

Just about dark, we sailed up to the beach at the America Outdoors campground. Chief had reserved the group camping area and there was a spot for us to anchor the boat for a couple of days. To our surprise, a dozen racers, including the winners, came down to the water to welcome us and congratulate us on finishing.



ABOVE—Gary took the helm as we raced the same Seapearl through the Twistymile Pass in Florida Bay.

Though the winners are announced, no trophies are given. The emphasis is on completing the course. Indeed, several boats did not make it by the Sunday noon deadline and were disqualified. Twenty-seven boats finished, of which we were twelfth overall and sixth in our class.

Graham Byrnes, an Australian, is the designer and captain of the winning Core Sound 17. He and Fred, his South African crewman raced the year before and lost to the Norseboat when they had to stop for six hours one dark night as they did not know the approaches to Flamingo. The Norseboat, with the latest GPS equipment was able to navigate at night (see tech sidebar). That cautious move cost the Core Sound 17 the race and they were out for blood this year. Fred seemed especially disappointed that the Norseboat was not back, claiming it was less than manly of them to not attempt to defend their title. Gary and I decided that they quit while they were ahead. We agreed that it was not an unwise move.

It was Wednesday night, four and a half days from the start—we finished way faster than we thought we would. There would be a supper and award ceremony on Saturday, but I was getting homesick and wanted to get home to my sweetie. Rather than wait until Sunday, I arranged to rent a car and began the trek back. Four hours of driving and three airplane flights later I was safe at home. It was a grand experience. I think I might have to go back. •SCA•

Chuck Leinweber dropped out of college and moved to Montana with his young wife, Sandra. There he worked occasionally at mining and ranching, but mostly in the timber industry. Now living back in the Texas Hill Country near their four children and two grandchildren, they operate the website Duckworks and build boats.

EVERGLADES CHALLENGE INTERNET RESOURCES

For more photos and additional story about the Everglades Challenge:
www.duckworksmagazine.com/06/gatherings/ec/

Watertribe: www.watertribe.com

Layden's *Little Cruiser* <http://www.microcruising.com/>

Core Sound 17 Info: www.bandbyachtdesigns.com and
www.GreatFallsBoatworks.com

Triton Trimaran: www.backbayboatworks.com

Duckworks Magazine: www.duckworksmagazine.com

Sea Pearl 21: www.marine-concepts.com

Norseboat: www.norseboat.com

TOP 10 FINISHERS IN CLASSES 3 AND 4 COMBINED

NAME	BOAT	*CLASS	TIME
Graham Byrnes and Fred Van Rensburg	CORE SOUND 17	4	2 days 18 hrs
David Durham and Peter Durham	18' G-CAT	4	2 days 21 hrs 14 min
Doug Cameron and Michael Collins	KRUGER CRUISER	3	3 days 01 hrs 14 min
Matthew Layden	EXPERIMENTAL 12' CRUISER	4	3 days 05 hrs 55 min
Larry Melat and Timothy Haskett	HOBIE 16	4	3 days 06 hrs 10 min
Mark Przedwojewski	KRUGER SEAWIND	3	4 days 04 hrs 40 min
David Combs	SEA PEARL 21	4	4 days 07 hrs 07 min
Gary Blankenship and Chuck Leinweber	MICHALAK FROLIC2	4	4 days 11 hrs 57 min
Bill Herrmann	KRUGER SEAWIND	3	4 days 23 hrs 50 min
Dan Lockwood	SEA PEARL 21	4	5 days 08 hrs 45 min

*CLASS 3=Stowable upwind rigs allowed. CLASS 4=Unlimited sailing rigs allowed.