

On Board 'Spirit of Bermuda' with Laurie Fullerton - Day 3

The 'Spirit of Bermuda' continued its pace towards Bermuda after a challenging crossing of the Gulf Stream and a final exit accompanied by a squall, thunder and lighting early in the morning. The uniquely challenging sea state began to subside, giving passengers a chance to move about the vessel or sit on deck without getting drenched by waves crashing over the boat. The remainder of the night was marked by lighting flashes, and by our passing the US Naval Academy yacht 'Defiance' who are racing in the Founders Division, but whom the Spirit had in its sights for some of the night.

"To say the conditions have been challenging, we have to note that we have been sailing with a reefed mainsail, and no mizzen or forward jib," said Jim Butterfield, president and CEO of Butterfield & Vallis who chartered the Spirit of Bermuda as a team building experience for his staff. "It is unusual for us to sail with such reduced sail area so this helps to explain how rough it has been."

With the Butterfield & Vallis crew split into three watches, each watch received a heavy dosage of the Gulf Stream with its sea state giving the Spirit a wild ride under a reefed main and jib. Under the careful guide of navigator Larry Rosenfeld, the Spirit of Bermuda benefited from 3 knots of favorable current through the Gulf Stream to push us along down the track to Bermuda.

With the vessel now out of the Gulf Stream and on course for Bermuda, many of the trainees and the crew have now passed muster and have pulled together as a team to reef the main, steer, make a sail change, or trim sails whenever called upon. While the captain did undertake some actual team building exercises, the teams have already shown that they mean business and mean to stick together.

"We are feeling pretty defiant as we passed by the racing yacht Defiance in the early hours of the a.m.," said 'Spirit of Bermuda' regular crewman James Doughty.

As far as the Governor of Bermuda sees it, this is all a learning experience. He is on the 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. watch, and said that "I realize that it would be best if I had my coffee at the beginning of the watch, because I had been driving the boat for some time in the first two hours of the watch, but have only woken up just now." The Governor's sense of humor has added some great flavor to this voyage and although still a challenging race ahead, the Governor added, "it has been great to see the sea settle down somewhat this morning as we head off-watch."

With average speeds of 9 to 10 knots, the 'pirit of Bermuda' has about 300 nautical miles to the finish line, having added additional nautical miles to the trip as a way of catching the best currents through the Gulf Stream. All of the Butterfield & Vallis staffers have come forward to steer this 118-foot vessel and have been able to put the moment they were "driving the Spirit of Bermuda at 11 knots through the Gulf Stream" off their bucket list, even if they were not aware this was on their 'list' in the first place.

For most of the crew on board Spirit, this is their first-time ever sailing while for others it is their

first ocean crossing. When asked what is it that makes a sea voyage unique – especially for the first timers, many found it hard to explain.

The consensus seems to be by far the humbling, relentless ocean all around – with no land in sight and no chance of seeing land for a few more days. The fact that a non-sailor is on an ocean voyage like this one is mind-boggling and could not be accomplished without the highly competent full-time crew on ‘pirit of Bermuda’. Additionally, because the reality of offshore sailing is that it can be wet, uncomfortable, and a routine that only offers the diversion of eating, sleeping or being on watch, life becomes perhaps uncomplicated and goals are better defined. There is no way that one can undertake this kind of voyage and not learn something, somehow.

While the ‘pirit of Bermuda’ marches along at 9 knots, there is still some ways to go with 300 nautical miles remaining. According to many of the passengers, their families are already picking out their spot to be able to wave to and cheer for Spirit of Bermuda after the vessel crosses the finish line. See you soon!