

Bondage in Miami !
By Dave "Sorta" Bradly

Well, it all started innocently enough – the idea that Leith and I would venture down to Miami for a week's sailing in a good fleet of 49'ers during the darkest of winters here in Canada. Here is an incomplete, biased and somewhat un-informed recount of what may or may not have happened, for which I take no responsibility what so ever, so sue me!

After various plans made and broken, the final Canadian contingent was as follows :
Sorta (me) & Puppet Fluffer (Leith) to sail on Bondage Barbie
Lakota (Greg) & Lumber (Nick) to sail on Giffels
Ikea (Cunno) & LawnBoy (Rob) to sail on some boat named after a bank (National Bank Financial)
Gordo & Ben
Foxy and Hogan to sail on some USA registered boat
Hunter & Rob
Andrew & Rob

I think you need to be called Rob to be in the Canadian Sailing Team.

Great Canadian numbers here : 7 boats out of a fleet of 32.
Also 8 out of the top ten 49'ers in the world were at the Cat 1 event. Very cool.

The Montreal Boys were complete pussies and conspicuous by their absence. Sorry Trevor, but it had to be said ☺

1 Week before departure :
Sorta drives to Toronto with 49'er and two kids in tow. Not sure which went on the trailer. The boat was delivered to Lakota's place so we could get the tandem rig ready for him and Lumber to drive to Miami in the next few days, behind his wife's (Terri) Escape. How apt.

3 days before racing :
Lakota and Lumber leave TO a couple of hours late as Lakota was reported to have a small electronic gadget stuck to his ear to allow him to make *another* million dollars before he could leave. Lakota sent an email to the team each gas stop on the way down. They made great time and never encountered any bad weather at all. I am not sure what happened on the trip, but Lakota and Lumber were inseparable for the rest of the week. Mmmmm.

Saturday :
Rig and the boys arrive & setup Giffels, and also go for a sail. Nice rock star weather (10 knots & flat water). Launching was a bit problematic and would prove to be a major issue for the week. I arrived Saturday evening. We all stayed at a colleague & friend of mine : Ivanka. She was amazing to offer her place to 4 (likely very drunk & not so clean) sailors for a whole week. She proved to us all that it is never the things that you remember from a trip, but the people. Consequently, I will likely thank her several times through this

little story. A really nice dinner at a Cuban restaurant was the order of the day – we were in Miami after all.

Sunday :

I had promised to take Ivanka for a ride on the 49'er as a bonus for her letting us stay in her little castle. How hard can it be, right? Well, if you are reading this, you are likely a 49'er or skiff sailor of some sort, so will appreciate the challenge when I tell you that Ivanka, although supremely fit, had never sailed a dinghy of any description before, it was my first sail of any kind for about 4 months, the wind was blowing 15 knots and we still had to get out of that bloody harbour!! Add to this the fact that there were about 20 other 49'ers milling around carefully watching and sizing up the competition as this was the last day before racing. A quick run through the boat and we were assisted in to the harbour by several of the Canadian team. The bear-away and multiple gybes were a little hairy to say the least. That being said, we did make it out the harbour without hitting anything or capsizing, which is more than some people were able to do (more later).

Actually there was a loud cheer as we finally made it out, more I think because they realized what level of competition Bondage Barbie was likely to be ☺ After a few gybes more and a couple of good twin wire two sail reaches (no, I decided not to hoist kite) we dumped. It was fine, inevitable, warm and somehow a relief – kind of like sex with a good friend really. After getting Bondage Barbie back upright, it wasn't long before we took another, much more damaging, spill. I was thrown spinning in to the gunwale and then the dagger board. Resulting damage to the boat : slightly bent tiller extension. Resulting damage to me : stitches required (but not got) in left leg, right leg bleeding profusely, and a bruise the size of Luxembourg on my right thigh. Wow, what a great sail, but the boat definitely won. Fluffer arrived and we picked him up in true Miami style – Ivanka's convertible Saab. Nice. Opening ceremonies and free food (always good) at the US Sailing Centre. Missed the regatta hats as, like during the rest of the week, we were late to register!!

Monday :

First day of official racing. A light wind day was in prospect with between 5-8 knots of breeze. Fluffer and I felt great going out to the start area (about 1 mile SE of the Key Biscayne Yacht Club). We are playing around in the pre-start stuff when we got a little too close to a fleet of racing Ynglings, and in reaction to this, I over-steered and we capsized to windward, right in front of the committee boat. Great. Oh well, I thought that was OK to get the first one out of the way, so when we righted the boat I was gutted to find out that I had a broken tiller (not the usual extensions) and as such we had to drop our sails and have the ignominious embarrassment of a tow in without having raced a single yard. Bugger.

Once back in the Yacht Club, we took the thing apart and started drinking a couple of beers. Later that night we went for dinner to some Italian place with the rest of Team Canada – very fun, but at this point I realized that huge gap between us (weekend warriors) and the serious boys. They all ate sensibly, didn't drink and were home to bed by 10pm for a good night's rest. Wonder what happened to us? Later that evening, I was able to rebuild the tiller with the generous help of Lawn Boy and a box of carbon/epoxy. Great fun and a good thing to learn as I have never done that. The thought of stuffing a

cutup pop bottle up the hole in the end of a rod to make it stiff will no doubt be a lesson I can hold as valuable through my entire life !!

Tuesday :

Refitted the newly strengthened tiller which had cured really nicely. Winds a little better. We did complete all 3 races, not usually last, but were out of time in one of them. For some reason the race committee in its infinite wisdom had decided to set a 10 minute time limit with a target race time of 40 minutes. This would have been a stretch for us in any case as getting 10 minutes adrift from the top guys is very easily done, especially if you throw in a capsized or two. As it turned out, the races were usually at least an hour, sometimes 75 minutes, but still with a 10 minute time limit. No wonder we didn't make the results sheet in one of these. As Princess would say "we were kicking ass at the back of the fleet", but having great fun doing it. Still I was a little shaky on the boat and as the waves got progressively bigger through the week, that would prove to be more and more of a factor in our performance (or lack of it).

Awesome home cooked steak dinner by Lumber, Fluffer and Sorta, which (unfortunately?) resulted in Ivanke not just falling off the wagon, but dousing herself in flaming Slibovitz, lighting it, and taking a swan dive from a third storey window. Whoops, seems like we led another lamb astray.

Wednesday :

Winds up to about 12 knots. We soldiered on bravely to miss the time limit in the first two races and then retire early from the third. As it would turn out, this would be our pattern for the week as we got more tired and the wind increased. Lakota was not called Lakota at the beginning of the week, but on this evening he was spotted after maybe 9-10 Millers (the champagne of beers, you know) putting Lakota arthritis remedy on his joints for about 2 hours straight. He commented at the time that "This stuff works really well, but it is burning the hell out of my skin". To that, Fluffer replied "yes, well that's cos you use it like I use oxygen, dumb ass". You decide. Life and recollection gets a little hazy at this point.

Thursday :

Plan was to finish all races this day as playfully pointed out by Lumber (thanks for the encouragement). By the end of the day, we had actually achieved the absolute opposite (completed none), made the photo board on the website (with yet another great shot of a capsized) and bent another tiller extension. Not shaping up to be much of a week for results. Let it be said at this point that we were still going out every day and racing in whatever the conditions were and LOVING it. It is a great boat, very challenging (especially in bigger waves), but completely rewarding when you get it right. We had another fantastic kite run down to the race area which was now about 2 miles off and we did this in under 10 minutes. We learned so much about how to "pimp" the boat and get things a little better on many of the systems. There is pretty much nothing you can't fix on a 49'er without a spool of spectra or bungee. Lakota & Lumber returned this day early (after one race, I believe) with a broken helm and broken wing, which one was the result of the other. I got almost hypothermic on the way in as I was exhausted, it was windy

(about 15 knots with gusts to 18) and the beat home took nearly an hour. Ironic in such a lovely warm place. Be careful!

Friday :

It was an earlier start time scheduled for us mere mortals (the non-top 10 people). The winds were really up now to about 18 knots with some very big puffs in to the mid twenties. We watched in amazement as Ikea and LawnBoy made a mess of getting out the harbour, but then pulled off the best bear away I think I have ever seen – real windsurfer stuff. All captured on film too. Way too much wind for us, so we started the long, sad and slow process of packing up. Then one of the other “weekend warriors” (Macy Nelson) offered me a ride on a big speed boat to go out and watch the Medal Race. Major thanks to Fernando (?) for allowing and encouraging this event to take place from his parents’ home where he kept this ridiculously fast boat. Naturally, I jumped at the chance, grabbed my long “titty” lens, extra film and went afloat one more time. This was on a 32’ speed / fishing boat with twin 250 horse power outboards on the back. Very cool and by far the fastest boat on the course. We went all over the place and saw pretty much everything worth seeing, including one spectacular wipe out at the pin boat end of the finish line when one of the competitors snagged the boat’s anchor rode doing about 20 knots down wind with the kite up. Wow. See the photos for what happened next, but appreciate that it was definitely the committees fault (in my opinion) for the way the anchor was set, and that a much better way to know what happened would be to add sound to this sequence – can you imagine the language!!

Shake-a-leg party that night with free food and beer was a good start, then on to Ikea & LawnBoy’s place for some more beer. Lawn Boy took it upon himself to single-handedly reduce the export deficit for Canadian Club whiskey – Well done! Not sure if Gordo would agree, but much “group hugging” and coaching allowed most things to proceed without major upset. Then in to Coconut Grove for a seriously silly evening where, in short, we were very drunk, suitably lecherous, got thrown out of the bar, got back in, poured beer on various people, continued to be very drunk, found out what a Yngling sailor weighs (!?) and were home in time for medals and cake!!

Saturday :

Up way too f***ing early for a flight home.

Comments :

Canadian team camaraderie is GREAT. We really felt part of everything and were freely invited to briefings etc..

An event of this caliber is a very good way to get your boat setup right, although you should really have it done and dialed in before you get there.

Try to arrive a few days early to practice as during the winter, I really got the wobbles. Bring spare everything. You never know what breaks.

Please score everyone who makes the trip if they are standing when some arbitrary time limit clicks as this will help fleet growth. Us few “weekend warriors” were a little upset to be written off officially, but it will not stop me turning up again next year assuming Ivanka will have us (thanks again).

All the race results can be found at :

http://www.ussailing.org/olympics/RolexMiamiOCR/results/49er_06.asp