

OGAWA - Lessons Learned - November 2022

Wee Birlinn - Capsize at last Gybe Mark during Retro Race

Lessons Learned:

- Sailing with very experienced but not regular crew (only a few times sailing together in this boat) – don't assume crew will know exactly how you normally handle mainsail in a gybe.
- Excitement of being well up in the fleet and possibility of winning on handicap probably diverted attention from increasing and gusty wind conditions.
- In the leadup to the gybe the boat was running on port with the centreboard completely raised. Crew moved across for the gybe too early in the turn causing the boat to heel to leeward, crew rapidly pulled the mainsheet in to hasten the gybing of the boom to hopefully correct the heel. Boat gybed and then capsized to leeward on starboard.
- Boat went over on her side with board right up and mainsheet jammed in at about beam reach position.
- Both crew scrambled on to side of boat – noticed boat was deeper in water than on practice capsizes but did not immediately think of taking our weight off boat before righting.
- Used righting rope to bring boat upright but as we both climbed in boat was too low in water to bail out – had to ask crew to jump out again and hang on while I set up to start bailing.
- Procedure: dropped mainsail, set in place centrecase cover with its four spring clamps to prevent backflow through case.
- Had rescue boat tow us to nearest mooring, but if they were not there we would have just anchored or even allowed boat to drift ashore.
- While furiously bailing to get water down below top of centrecase, I was standing beside case and inadvertently knocked clamps off, allowing water back in and defeating my efforts – reset clamps and moved aft away from case.
- Was able to bail fast enough to get water down and allow crew back on board to assist with bailing.
- Could have then reset sail and beat back to launch ramp but would have had to reef and probably an hour's beat – rescue boat offer of tow back was gladly accepted.
- Everything stayed with boat except: Coffee thermos, water bottle, sunscreen and three sail ties – thermos retrieved by rescue boat (hot coffee most welcome), water bottle and sunscreen retrieved from beach later – only the sail ties lost – they had been loose in the boat.
- One buoyancy bag rotated around thwart – need to fasten better.
- Some waterproof bags were not, but most important gear was double wrapped and stayed dry – only casualty was my binoculars – a ziplok bag is just not good enough.
- Very glad I had practiced capsizing so knew exactly what to do, where everything was, and that nothing vital would sink or float away so could concentrate on recovery without distraction.