



# The Everglades Challenge in a Wooden Boat

**300 miles of racing and adventure** by Tom Pamperin

The WaterTribe Everglades Challenge website describes the 300-mile Tampa-to-Key Largo race as “an unsupported, expedition style adventure race for kayaks, canoes, and small boats.” I’d seen the Everglades Challenge from the sidelines in 2010, when I shuttled a truck and boat trailer to the finish line for Mike Monies and Andrew Linn, who were racing that year. Even as a spectator, I was intrigued by WaterTribe’s eclectic community of boats, paddlers, and sailors—an endearingly oddball group that made me feel like less of a lunatic for wanting to spend days or even weeks at a time in small boats.

By the time I got to Checkpoint Two that year, I was already thinking about entering someday. I asked one competitor—a trim white-haired man in his 70s, a veteran of half a dozen Everglades Challenges—if there was anything he wished someone had told him before he did the race for the first time. He looked at me oddly for a moment, almost as if he were staring into a mirror.

“Yeah,” he said. “I wish someone had told me, ‘Don’t do it.’” We both laughed.

When I asked WaterTribe founder Steve Isaac (aka Chief; tribal names are *de rigueur* for WaterTribers) about the Everglades Challenge, he told me what to prepare for: Anything. That, he explained, is what early March in Florida can give you, in the form of gales and calms, northerlies and easterlies, southerlies and westerlies, heat stroke and hypothermia, heavy surf and breaking waves. For the

race, add to that sleep deprivation and hallucinations. And then there are the unmarked channels, swarms of mosquitoes, shallow water, and waist-deep mud.

“It’s not a sailing race, it’s not a paddling race, it’s an adventure race,” Chief insisted. To make sure the whole thing wasn’t too easy, there were “filters”—bridges too low to sail under, channels too narrow to tack in, tides too strong to row against, and mandatory checkpoints and deadlines. And all boats had to be launched from the beach, starting above the high-tide line, without a trailer and without help. Once launched, racers have eight days to reach Key Largo.

Make it to the finish, and the reward is a shark’s tooth and the respect of your fellow competitors. Row, sail, or paddle the 99-mile Wilderness Waterway through the Everglades interior along the way—including a mandatory quarter-mile portage—and you can earn a ‘gator tooth, too. Opinion was divided about the possibility of getting a sailboat through the Wilderness Waterway, though, since sometimes paddlers had trouble getting kayaks through the narrow mangrove channels, particularly an overgrown stretch known as “The Nightmare.”

It all sounded good to me. But the strip-planked 18’ boat I had been building was sitting through another Wisconsin winter in an unheated garage, still far from ready to launch. Fortunately my brother, Lance, had his Ross Lillistone-designed Phoenix III ready to go, and we had already sailed her all over the Great Lakes together (see *Small Boats* 2013). I knew if I offered to pay the entrance fee, Lance would provide the boat.



TOM PAMPERIN

**Above**—On the beach at Fort De Soto Park the day before the March 2 start of the 2013 Everglades Challenge, the author’s brother, Lance Pamperin, tweaks rigging to prepare his Wisconsin-based, 15’ LOA Phoenix III for six straight days of sailing. **Right**—The varied course winds through Florida’s interior waterways, but also open water, between St. Petersburg and Key Largo.



Getting ready for a race 1,200 miles away wasn’t easy. “I thought you knew more about all this,” Lance kept telling me when I couldn’t answer any of his questions. Which passes are safe? How’s the portage at Flamingo? How are the tides and currents? I figured we’d find out when we got there. My brother, though, tends to think ahead a little more than I do. “You could program the coordinates for some of those passes into the GPS,” he suggested when we got together to sort our gear. But I didn’t even know how to use the GPS. Neither did Lance, who had just pulled it out of the box. Somehow we never got around to doing anything except choosing our tribal names (Phoenix1 for Lance, Phoenix2 for me), tying a knife and personal locator beacon to each life jacket, making up our mandatory hypothermia kits (balls of dryer lint smeared with Vaseline as a fire starter, waterproof matches, space blanket, candle lantern), and rigging a set of wheels for the portage.

But we got to Fort De Soto Park near St. Petersburg the day before the race, put the boat on the beach at the end of a long line of other boats, and started piling up gear. Dry bags. Water bottles. Tent and sleeping bags, stove and food. Hypothermia kit. PFD with attached safety knife and PLB. It was reassuring to know that

I’d be able to cut or burn something if I had to. I was feeling more prepared than usual. Lance kept saying how surprised he was that I didn’t know more about the race. Now and then someone would stop to ask about the boat and tell us what a beauty it was. I wasn’t sure how much that mattered but figured it couldn’t hurt.

Everglades Challenge veteran Gary Blankenship (aka Lugnut), who this year was sailing with Chuck Leinweber (aka Chuck the Duck), the founder of the online magazine *Duckworks*, offered to do our mandatory safety inspection. Hypothermia kit? Check. VHF? Check. PLBs? Check. Reefing system? Check—one fairly deep reef, and one *very* deep reef that turned the 76-sq-ft balance lug into a 25-sq-ft lateen. Finally all our gear was piled aboard, so I wandered down the beach taking pictures of other boats and wondering what we were getting ourselves into. Lance kept fiddling with the boat to adjust sail ties, cleats, whatever. After a dinner of stuffed flounder and conch fritters with Gary, we returned to the campground. I put on a headlamp and tried to comment on the latest round of papers from a writing class I was teaching. Finally I gave up, turned off the light, and fell asleep to the sound of squabbling raccoons.



## DAY 1 Fort DeSoto to Checkpoint One



TOM PAMPERIN



**Above left**—Because each boat must be self-contained, organization and preparation are the keys to success. “Filters,” such as a mandatory ¼-mile portage, limit the size of participating boats but not their variety. **Above right**—For the author, the first day to Cape Haze Marina involved narrow passages, low bridges, and all-night rowing.

We got up at 4:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 2, to pack up, drop the car and trailer at a long-term parking lot, return to the boat, rearrange gear, and make a final bathroom stop. It was a frantic rush, with no time for thinking. A diverse armada of kayaks, catamarans, sailboats, trimarans, canoes, and stand-up paddleboards stretched along the beach. It was still dark, and headlamps were bobbing and weaving among the boats. The sky grew lighter, revealing the Tampa Bay Bridge off to the east, and the wide expanse of Tampa Bay itself stretching southward. As the sun rose, Chief herded us together for a final talk and our group photo. At 7 a.m., people started rolling and dragging and pushing their boats to the water’s edge. After most of the others had launched, we shoved some fenders under the Phoenix III’s hull and rolled the boat into the water. Lance hoisted the sail, and I pulled us out into knee-deep water and hopped aboard. We were off, heading south across Tampa Bay, following the long line of boats already well ahead of us.

Our route to Checkpoint One, 65 miles away, would take us inside a long chain of barrier islands. We were sailing in protected waters with favorable winds, easy navigation, and comfortable conditions. We had time to relax and enjoy the sailing, reminding ourselves that we knew what we were doing.

Twelve miles later I jibed unexpectedly, clobbering Lance with the boom and knocking him half senseless

into the cockpit—it was like getting hit with a baseball bat, he said later—and when he sat up 20 seconds later there was already a good-sized lump on his temple.

Eight miles farther south, while running down Sarasota Bay at 5 knots, I dropped the chart overboard. It sank before we could beat back to it. We stopped at a marina for a replacement, but all they had was a random collection of tightly rolled charts with no catalog or index. After unrolling a few and struggling to roll them up again when they weren’t the ones I needed, I gave up and instead bought a copy of *Dozier’s Waterway Guide* for \$40. Its 540 pages carried a few mini-charts that would almost—but not *quite*—get us to a point where we could switch to the next full-sized chart in the succession of those we’d brought with us.

An hour before sunset, we nearly got swept under Blackburn Point Bridge. Rowing hard, I was just able to hold position against the sudden current while Lance dropped the mast. Afterward, he agreed that it might have been smarter to get prepared a little farther away from the bridge. Then it got dark.

The rest of the night passed in a blur of cold, exhaustion, and stupidity, including a near miss at another bridge where the chart reported a vertical clearance of 26’. I barely made it to the halyard in time to drop the sail before we were swept beneath it, our 13’ mast almost scraping the girders. Once we were safely past, I shuffled through the pages I had ripped out of *Dozier’s*



**In tight quarters or when the wind failed, rowing became a necessity. Here, Tom Pamperin rows out of Flamingo into Florida Bay.**

“We’re back at Lemon Bay,” I said. I had spent the last few miles navigating by *Dozier’s* mini-chart of Lemon Bay, too tired to realize my mistake. Now here we were again. “How many times do you think we’ve got to sail through here?” I asked Lance. The “26” bridge, I saw, had a vertical clearance of 14’.

Too tired to think, we had kept rowing all night, even when we could have been sailing, and now we had to backtrack. Navigating by the Lemon Bay chart (for real, this time), we missed Checkpoint One at the Cape Haze Marina by half a mile and had to backtrack. We arrived at the checkpoint an hour after sunrise to find that even two 7’ prams had beaten us there. Twenty-four hours to go 65 miles. At this rate, we’d never make it. Too cold to care, we staggered ashore for hot showers, coffee, and our official sign-in with the checkpoint volunteers. I think we both would have been happy to quit except that we had no way to get back to the car. We were in it now; easier to press on than to drop out.

but couldn’t figure out where I had gone wrong. The mini-charts were almost too small to read by daylight, never mind by our headlamp’s dim red glow.

We had a long slog through the Venice canal, where we passed a few kayaks, then lost the wind, and finally rowed off the pages of *Dozier’s* and onto the new chart: Lemon Bay, just 12 miles from Cape Haze Marina and Checkpoint One. Suddenly I started laughing.

“What’s up?” Lance asked.

## DAYS 2–5 Checkpoints Two and Three



**Above—Preparations for cold were as important as preparations for heat, especially when sailing late into the night or in the very early morning.**

**B**ut that was the end of the mistakes, the bad luck, even the bad weather. We left Checkpoint One a couple of hours later on a northerly wind under sunny skies and higher temperatures. Despite our layers of long underwear, fleece, and foulweather gear, rowing had been the only way to stay warm through the night. Now it looked as though we might return to Wisconsin with at least the start of a tan. We broad-reached down Pine Island Sound at 6 knots until a sudden squall

found us just off Sanibel Island, sending the boat on a screaming reach across the wavetops; the GPS hit 13 knots before we managed to drop the rig. We sailed into the lee of York Island at 3 knots under bare poles and found a tiny beach among the mangroves just as another WaterTriber was leaving. We set up the tent and slept for the first

time in 35 hours.

The next day, Monday, we headed outside along the coast. It was dark by the time we reached Big Marco Pass, where we’d hoped to cut in. By now, Lance had figured out the GPS, so we had a waypoint to aim for, but as we headed inshore we could hear roaring breakers ahead. Lined up on the channel markers a half mile out, we were already surfing down some big rollers. It was too dark to see exactly *how* big—4’? 6’?—but the mouth of

Big Marco Pass suddenly seemed like a bad place to be. We later found out that at least two other WaterTribers ran into trouble here. A double kayak had capsized and a Hobie trimaran flipped and was wrecked on the nearby rocks. Lance swung us around, and we headed offshore instead, where we ran out of wind and spent the night rowing around Cape Romano. All night the stars rotated around the sky above us, spinning slowly in their endless circles as we traded shifts to keep warm.

We row-sailed up Indian Key Pass on Tuesday morning accompanied by a few dolphins, reaching Checkpoint Two at Chokoloskee by mid-afternoon. From there we headed down the Wilderness Waterway. The first stretch was a series of broad bays that made for pleasant sailing, but at Last Huston Bay we ran out of wind and

daylight. Unable to row against the incoming tide, we tossed an anchor overboard and slept on the boat for a few hours, tucked in among the mangroves. When the tide turned in the early hour of Wednesday, we rowed down the Chatham River back to the Gulf, mistakenly thinking we'd never make the remaining checkpoints in time unless we gave up on the 'gator tooth.

Once we got outside, a few hours of reaching southward along the coast at 5 knots brought us to Shark River, the entrance to Whitewater Bay. Here we cut inside, heading back into the Everglades instead of rounding Cape Sable. We ran down the bay at 6 knots and arrived at Flamingo and the final checkpoint at dark, having come almost 50 miles—a good trade for the 'gator tooth we wouldn't be getting.

## DAY 6 Key Largo



LANCE PAMPERIN

**Above**—The author at the helm on the final day of the race, sailing in fine weather and making Key Largo in time for dinner. **Left**—Once in Florida Bay, the only challenge was the narrow channel of Crocodile Dragover.

Thursday we woke before dawn, got the boat onto its rickety portage rig (a 2×4 and two cheap wheels), and rolled her across to the marina on the Florida Bay side. By sunrise, we were rowing out into the narrow, twisting channels and bright blue waters of Florida Bay. Stray outside the marked channels here, and even a boat that floats in 6" of water will be aground in thick mud that can make escape almost impossible. But the passes were well marked, and our timing was perfect: low tide, early morning, northerly winds. We rowed through a brief calm at Crocodile Dragover, a channel so narrow that the tips of both oars were outside the markers, and sailed into Buttonwood Sound later that afternoon in shorts and T-shirts, coming out of the final pass and pointing straight for the finish line at Key Largo's Bay Cove Motel.

By five o'clock Thursday evening, Lance and I were eating conch fritters at Mrs. Mac's Kitchen, after a middle-of-the-pack-finish, and we went home with the traditional shark's tooth necklaces. In all, 62 boats finished and 25 did not. We had an easy year, though, or at least a fast one. In 2012, the fleet hit brutal headwinds, and only 17 of 60 boats made it to Key Largo. Gary Blankenship and John Wright (aka Karank) won the class for small monohull sailboats, earning the peculiar distinction of the slowest-ever winning time by arriving in Key Largo just after midnight on Friday morning. Just one

other boat in their class made it. Chief is right—anything can happen, and in the long run, it will. Some years favor paddlers, some sailors, and some seem to favor no one at all.

Other than the lost chart, our boat and gear held up just fine. When I finally got to a shower and rinsed the salt and grime away, I found a pretty good tan underneath. Chuck Leinweber convinced Lance to stack his boat on top of his Walkabout for the drive back to Fort De Soto, saving us 18 hours of driving and the cost of a rental car. Then there were those breakfasts at Mrs. Mac's and Denny's Latin Café—all in all, a successful rookie year. I'll have to come back for my 'gator tooth, though. I'm pretty sure I can do it next time. 🦎

*Tom Pamperin is a freelance writer who lives in northwestern Wisconsin. He spends his summers cruising small boats throughout Wisconsin, the North Channel, and along the Texas coast.*

To learn more about the Everglades Challenge and WaterTribe's similar small-boat adventure races, visit [www.watertribe.org](http://www.watertribe.org). Pay attention to warnings and the required safety gear. The equipment list may seem like overkill to some, but when WaterTriber Joseph Frohock (aka Puma) holed his boat and had it sink beneath him offshore this year, he needed the knife tied to his PFD to cut himself free of the rigging, and rescuers relied on his PLB to find him and bring him safely home.



# Wooden Boats of the Everglades Challenge

Although production fiberglass boats make up the bulk of the Everglades Challenge fleet, a fair number of wooden boats compete as well. Typically, they make up about 10 to 20 percent of all entries, Chief figures. Here are a few examples that stood out this year.

## B&B YACHT DESIGN'S CORE SOUND SERIES

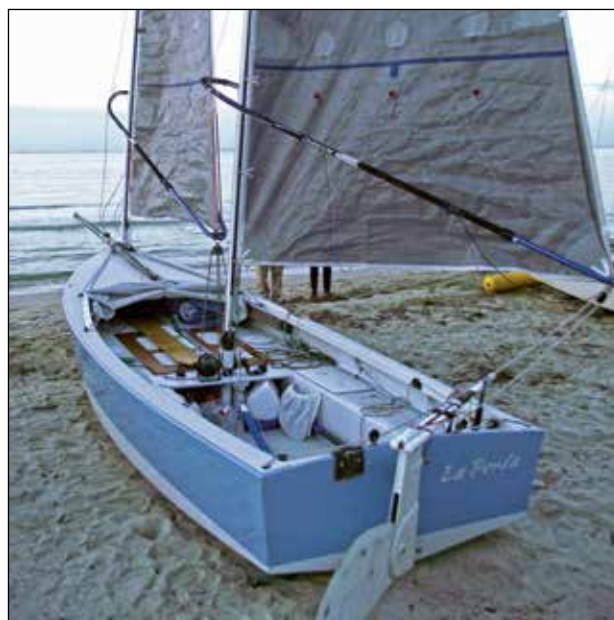
**CORE SOUND 20**  
20' LOA, 6' 3" beam, sail area 155 sq ft



TOM PAMPERIN (BOTH)

**Above**—The Core Sound 20 DAWN PATROL, which has a high cuddy that the builders added for shelter, took first place overall and set a record finishing time for monohulls. **Right**—The Core Sound 17 built by Phil Garland placed second.

**CORE SOUND 17**  
17' LOA, 5' 10" beam, sail area 119 sq ft



Those intent on actually racing the Everglades Challenge should take a look at the Core Sound series designed by Graham Byrnes of Vandemere, North Carolina (see [www.bandbyachtdesigns.com](http://www.bandbyachtdesigns.com)). Monohull sailboats have won the Everglades Challenge outright only six times, and three of those victories were achieved in Byrnes designs—twice with Byrnes himself at the helm. Various B&B designs have accumulated ten finishes in the overall top five, along with six of the seven fastest-finish times ever recorded by monohulls. This year, a Core Sound 20 and a Core Sound 17 took first and second places overall, beating the previous record time set by Byrnes in a Core Sound 17 in 2006.

Though fast, the Core Sound boats are relatively inexpensive and easy to build. The lengths are 15', 17', and 20' overall, and all three use a sprit-boomed cat-ketch rig with unstayed masts. The V-bottomed hulls are beamy enough to stand up to their sail area, planing at 10 knots or better when the wind picks up. Construction is stitch-and-glue plywood. All three use a technique Byrnes calls the "butterfly method," in which

the bottom panels are wired in place first and then the sides are taped in place at the bow but left spread open like wings, after which a lone builder can easily walk each side panel around to the transom, wiring the hull together along the way. Phil Garland, who took second place with Dan Neri in a Core Sound 17 this year, was impressed with the process. "It all sort of happens in about two to three minutes," he said. "It's really pretty amazing."

Byrnes makes a precut hull panel kit for the Core Sound 17 to speed things up even more. Kits are also available, and soon plans will be too, for the Core Sound 20mk2, a new version updated with a small cabin, water ballast, a self-draining cockpit, increased freeboard, and a mainmast tabernacle.

Alan Stewart, who won this year's Everglades Challenge with his father, Paul, in their Core Sound 20 named DAWN PATROL, seems to agree with Byrnes's claim that despite their speed, the boats aren't all-out racers. "In our boat we kind of lay back and do nothing while the boat goes fast downwind," Stewart said. Not a bad way to win races.



## CHESAPEAKE LIGHT CRAFT'S EASTPORT PRAM

**7'9" LOA, 4' beam, sail area 42 sq ft**

John Harris of Chesapeake Light Craft in Annapolis, Maryland (see [www.clcboats.com](http://www.clcboats.com)), is less surprised than you might think to find out that a modified version of his balance-lug-rigged 7'9" Eastport Pram finished this year's Everglades Challenge. "The amount of fun and capability packed into less than 8' is hard to overstate," Harris said. "It seems a bit ludicrous from ashore, but when you're out sailing that little boat, you start thinking, 'You know, with a few dry bags and some

At 7'9" LOA, the glued-lapstrake Eastport pram needed some modifications to be suitable for sailing a 300-nautical-mile race.

tie-downs I could go a long way."

Which is exactly what Marian Buszko did, arriving in Key Largo a week after setting out from Tampa in his CLC pram ROCKING BABY. As final preparations began for the Saturday morning awards ceremony, Buszko was tending to his tiny boat in front of a growing audience of paddlers and sailors. "How many times were you scared out there?" someone asked.

"All the time!" Buszko said, laughing. "But hey, I'm here. I'm happy." He grinned. "I'm very happy." Later, Buszko good-naturedly blamed his wife for his unorthodox choice of cruising boat. "She says, 'You have this boat. Use what you have,'" he explains. So he did—with a few modifications. Buszko decked over most of the boat, adding flotation, storage, and even a sleeping platform. He also had a carbon-fiber mast made to reduce weight aloft. "With no modifications, she is absolutely unsuitable for this event," Buszko warned me. Still, here he was in Key Largo.

"The Eastport Pram is a good example of how even tiny boats benefit from thoughtful design," Harris told me. "But I think the takeaway here is that (A) Marian is a skilled and resourceful boatman, and (B) any boat in this size class that's carefully outfitted can be a cruising machine."

TOM PAMPERIN



## PYGMY BOATS' OSPREY TRIPLE

20' LOA, 30" beam, 13.5" depth

It was Friday evening when David Wicks and Dan Lockwood arrived at Key Largo, paddling Wicks's Osprey Triple kayak from Pygmy Boats of Port Townsend, Washington (see [www.pygmyboats.com](http://www.pygmyboats.com)). A number of other sailors and paddlers had gathered to watch; another bystander told me it was the duo's 12th finish. Someone called out as they neared the beach: "Time to retire that boat, isn't it?" Another voice answered, "Time to retire those paddlers!" Everyone laughed.

Later, Wicks told me that he and Lockwood, who have paddled double kayaks together for 40 years, have done the Everglades Challenge only nine times, not

**David Wicks, a nine-time Everglades Challenge veteran, built a triple kayak from Pygmy Boats with his daughter, who was 11 at the time.**

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twelve. But Wicks's Osprey Triple is one of the few regularly appearing boats without a single DNF, not even from the notoriously tough 2012 race.

"It's a great family boat, but it's also a dynamite expedition boat," Wicks said, noting the Osprey Triple's comfort, load-carrying capacity, and stability in heavy seas. "We went through the waves of Big Marco River with no trouble," he continued, "while this year two other double kayak entries crashed and burned." With two paddlers, the boat moves along easily at 4 mph. Surfing downwind with a sailing rig from Pacific Action Sails, Wicks and Lockwood have hit 13 mph.

The Osprey Triple is remarkably versatile. Three can paddle in synch, a single paddler can handle the boat from the center cockpit, or two can paddle at each end, leaving the center cockpit clear for a child, a dog, or heaps of gear. Like all Pygmy boats, construction is stitch-and-glue, and the boat is available as a full kit or plans only. Wicks assembled his kit with his 11-year-old daughter.

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(For a two-part how-to-build article on the Osprey Triple, see WB Nos. 131 and 132. For Wicks's account of the building the boat with his daughter, see [www.duckworksmagazine.com/07/gatherings/ec/index.htm](http://www.duckworksmagazine.com/07/gatherings/ec/index.htm).)



## WELSFORD WALKABOUT

18' LOA, 5' beam, sail area 100 sq ft

“Walkabout’s really a good all-around boat,” said Chuck Leinweber, founder of *Duckworks*. “It sails well, it rows well, and you can put a lot of stuff in it.” I’m not sure there’s a better definition of a sail-and-oar beach cruiser, which is exactly what New Zealand designer John Welsford intended ([www.jwboatdesigns.co.nz](http://www.jwboatdesigns.co.nz) or [www.duckworks.com](http://www.duckworks.com)). At Welsford’s suggestion, Leinweber scaled his hull up to 18’ to make room for his crew, Gary Blankenship, and increased the sail area to about 100 sq ft.

The rest is faithful to the plans: plenty of flotation, an offset centerboard that allows a generous sleeping area, simple unstayed masts, relatively low freeboard, and a cat-yawl rig that offers real advantages for cruising. “That mizzen,” Welsford explained, “is big enough to hold her head-to-wind while the coffee brews, the chart is consulted, or a reef is tied into the main.” Construction is well suited for patient amateurs, with a flat bottom and glued-lapstrake planking installed over stringers. The stringers define the shape and hold the planks fair, meaning the planks can be fitted in short lengths without scarfing.

To get around the mizzenmast, which is stepped in a centerline tube, the Walkabout’s tiller, which is fitted with a quadrant, pivots on the tube itself. Steering lines



TOM PAMPERIN

**A handy yawl rig of modest proportions makes the Welsford Walkabout well suited to the course.**

run from the quadrant aft to a rudderhead yoke. “That was the thing I liked least about it, going in,” Leinweber admitted. “But once we got it sorted out, there was never a problem.” Even better, by adjusting the steering lines to keep the rudder amidships while the tiller is pushed to one side, a passenger can sit in the center of the stern seat, providing better balance for rowing.

Perhaps one good way to judge a cruising boat’s performance is the level of drama that it evokes. There wasn’t any this year; whether rowing at 3 mph or sailing at 6 or 7, the adventure race was more of a pleasure cruise. “It was pretty pleasant the whole way,” Leinweber said.



## REDFISH KAYAKS' SPRING RUN

17'9" LOA, 23<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" beam  
(a 16' version is also available)

At the finish line in Key Largo, an elegant strip-built sea kayak stood out from the crowd of plastic boats. It was a 17'9" Spring Run from the Redfish Custom Wooden Kayak and Canoe Company of Port Townsend, Washington (see [www.redfishkayak.com](http://www.redfishkayak.com)). The Spring Run was drawn by Redfish designer Joe Greenley, who also teaches wood-strip kayak workshops at the Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building.

First-time strip-builder John Algera completed his Spring Run from a Redfish kit in about 14 months. He was in no hurry to finish: "The building was as much a joy as the paddling," he said.

But Algera is happy with the boat's performance, too. "It tracks well and in medium weather doesn't even weathercock that much," he said. And for this year's conditions—strong but mostly favorable winds—a sailing rig by Flat Earth Kayak Sails proved especially useful. "In some of those 20-knot winds on Sarasota Bay and Oyster Bay, I struggled to keep her straight since I was steering with my paddle," Algera said, noting that the boat is designed without a skeg or rudder. "The fact that she did as well as she did is a testimony to the design."

The boat's quality also impressed Algera. "The first day,



TOM FAMPERIN

**A Redfish rudderless kayak can be a challenge to steer for long hours in a blow but has a "no-moving-parts" simplicity.**

I was surfing through Sarasota Bay and the front hatch was under water more than it was out." The result? Not a drop of water inside. Other kit components—the ability to choose your own strips for contrasting color and designs, the custom one-piece seat in lightweight closed-cell foam, and pre-laminated coamings—add to the appeal. And better yet, Algera was able to contact Greenley directly with questions throughout the assembly. "That was worth a lot," he said.

—TP