

Corpus Christi Bay in late July

By Mark Foster

Welcome to the 2021 J22 World Championship. For the past 50+ years I have raced and sailed in Corpus Christi and would like to share with you some of my experiences with the wind, waves and current patterns that normally occur during a July afternoon.

The sea breeze will be fairly consistent with small shifts. The pressure will build from the left side of the course. The normal SE sea breeze develops with the heating of the land and takes about 10 degrees of temperature differential to develop. The bay water in Late July should be in the mid 80s. The sea breeze can start as far left as 90 degrees and as far right as 170 degrees, it usually settles in around 125 to 140 and starts at 8 knots and builds to 15 to 18 knots, gusting to 20.

Pull out a bay chart and locate the Nueces Bay Causeway. When sailing out of the gap you will see the low long bridge with a small hump in it that is the Nueces Bay Causeway. From the Causeway looking upwind to the race course, you will notice more wind pressure over the length of the Causeway. The wind will build faster due to the fact it is not blocked by the downtown buildings. So, while the general consensus is to go right, due to the geographical shift it can pay to work the left side of the course as the winds build from 8 to 15.

The wave pattern is consistent across the course. Look at the chart and note that the bay averages 10 to 14 feet deep. With the SE breeze the waves have an 8 to 10 mile fetch before they reach the race course. When big waves come, they are in sets of three and you are advised to try and avoid them at all cost. Notice going upwind, that starboard tack is more into the waves and port tack is more across the waves. You should set your sail trim for each tack. In general you will find that port tack is faster than starboard.

What is the best way to sail around the waves upwind? My advice is to steer down hill. How you do that, is by keeping the bow pointing to the next low spot so that the boat is going down hill as often as possible.

The sea breeze will set up a wind driven current that flows northwest towards the Harbor Bridge and returns up the bay inside Alta Vista reef. The current is consistent across the course and usually does not exceed 3/8 knot. The Alta Vista reef runs parallel to the shore, approximately 1/2 mile off the bay front, marked by two markers. Number 1 which is a piling with a red triangle on the north end and Number 3 which is a piling with a day marker on the south end and are noted on the bay chart. The race course will be set outside the reef and current should not be a factor in the racing.

Best part of racing is the sail to the dock after racing. It is a 1/2 mile run to the gap and a 1/2 mile reach to the dock after you finish the last race of the day. Where a cold beer and the pool at CCYC awaits you.

Hopefully this gives you some insight to the local sailing conditions in Corpus Christi. Have a great time during the 2021 J22 World Championship.