

Life Vests are my Friend

A picture is worth a thousand words (www.youtube.com 2015 Dauphin Island Race). I can only give a personal opinion of what took place, but the Coast Guard Report had three main issues. One: Everybody needed to wear a life jacket or at least know where they were located on the boat. Hence all races should start with the crew wearing life jackets. Two: Races have to have a crew list to know if all participants have been found in the event of an accident. Third: Have a VHF radio on to monitor weather forecast. They had other issues, but remember this race was started in blue skies with a forecast of afternoon showers and none of the deaths that occurred were caused by trauma, all drowned (NO LIFE JACKET!). I personally lost situational awareness (Total White Out) when the storm hit because I had not changed my GPS from racing data to Map display and could not see where S/V Free Spirit was in the Dauphin Island Harbor channel. Within ten seconds, Free Spirit was blown out of the channel and was aground. I did not know which side of the channel I was on until the GPS map display came up. Then Free Spirit got back in the channel and had to motor hard to hold position until after Cat's Paw had passed, some thirty minutes later. Finally we were on to the harbor where you can observe in the videos all of the early arrivals being wrecked because their anchors were too small for 70 knot winds. Look at a few of the videos and you can certainly see the error of our ways.

Ole Tom