

K E V O ' S

Boating Tips

The Lanyard

It seemed like it was foggy out the morning of Sunday, the 5th of July, at Mandeville Tip when I woke up and went outside to get a bottle of water... or was that just me!? The fog lifted after a hot cup of coffee. Huh, that's peculiar.

The morning was typical for the day after the big party: folks searching around their boats for their brains. Women were cursing out their men for whatever it was they did but couldn't remember the night before. One by one raft-outs and individual boats around us weighed anchor and departed. It was kind of sad. I was about to cry... But then:

At about 11 a.m. I noticed what at first appeared to be a remote-control offshore model boat ripping up the water about 200 yards from our boat. I didn't think much of it at the time, but after a few minutes I

noticed the boat seemed to be out of control and too large to be a model.

Against the admiral's orders to mind my own business, I jumped in the dink and motored over to see what was going on. What I found was incredible: One of these small replicas of an offshore boat called a "Water Mouse" with a 15-hp outboard motor was unmanned, running at full throttle (about 25 mph) and spinning around in a circle about 50 yards in diameter.

Apparently, the driver of the boat was using it to pull up his auxiliary anchor. He followed the scope while standing up in the craft (while it was running). The boat was in neutral and he successfully broke the anchor free by pulling on the rode while the boat was over the anchor. So far so good... then things got (very) nasty in a hurry...

The rode had (apparently)



BY KEVIN O'LEARY

wrapped around the shifter/throttle as he was hauling it in. The boat went into gear (forward) at full throttle and took off. The driver was ejected immediately. Because of the rotation of the prop (left handed), the boat's helm was pinned to port and the boat started going around counterclockwise in circles.

Now, in my opinion, it was a miracle that the ejected driver was not struck (and seriously injured or worse) by the boat on the first pass – not to mention those around him! He managed to end up outside the perimeter of the circling boat.

This is about the time when I got close enough to grasp what was really happening. Mind you, this has been going on for about 20 minutes! It is rumored that when one of the owners was asked when the boat would run out of gas, the answer was: Tuesday!

By now boats around this potential disaster had had enough and were retreating in haste. People were pulling up anchors and shouting at 1st mates... "No, not THAT port, the other one!!!" And so on.

Just as I was approaching, I noticed my two friends Stefan and Howie approaching the scene in a dink. Howie was driving and Stefan was making sure the driver was not injured. He was safe and had been



A Water Mouse. (Notice lack of lanyard?)

picked up by another vessel, so they turned their attention to stopping this “disaster waiting to happen.”

Stefan asked the owner where the kill switch was and if there was a lanyard on the out-of-control boat. Apparently, the driver was in shock and not much help. What to do?

Option one was to get close enough to the boat and then jump in it and stop it (sort of like changing horses in the middle of a stream). Well, after getting close enough to see what the chances of success would be and the sure potential for serious injury, they decided that was not such a good idea and retreated to rethink.

So Stefan looks around and says to Howie: “Wait a minute... I’ve got an idea. Take us over to that boat over there.” There was a lady in the back of the boat looking at the situation in horror when Stefan asks out of the clear blue sky if he could

borrow the beach towel draped over the transom. She agreed. Howie and Stefan motored back over to the perimeter of the spinning boat with towel in hand.

By now, everyone was watching and wondering what Stefan had in mind for the towel. He got into position and waited patiently to take his best shot. Just before the boat came around Stefan threw the towel into the path of the runaway boat. The prop got snagged in the towel and the engine (and boat) stopped just like that. What a guy!!!

The crowd roared and gave Stefan and Howie a standing ovation for saving the day. Thanks to them, no one got hurt and no property was damaged (except for maybe the towel). HA!

Howie and Stefan obliged the crowd by standing up in their dink and taking a bow (excuse the pun).


After saving the day, they rode off (what, another pun!?) into the sunset back to their mother ships. Seriously, these two guys deserve praise for their quick thinking and for putting themselves in danger trying to help others. Good job guys!

Kevo's Tip:

This entire potential disaster could have been prevented by having a functioning lanyard on the vessel. A lanyard disconnects (electrical) power to the engine should the operator fall overboard.

If your vessel has a lanyard system, USE IT! If your boat should have one but doesn't, GET ONE. It could save your life.

Be safe & happy boating!

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