

Magellan GPS Sport Trak vs The Imperfect Storm

To say a GPS saved my life, and the life of my family would be a lie. I could however say, that my Magellan GPS Sport Trak was a reassuring tool during a real life threatening situation. And that would be the truth. More...It was only the second year our family had been sailing, and we decided to venture a little further from our home port. The perfect starter trip, presented itself, when two other family friends decided to take their two boats on a short weekend sail from Bayfield to Goderich Ontario. It's a pretty short distance. a couple hours sailing there on a Saturday, a stay overnight in different marina, and a couple hours sail home the next day. It also seemed like a perfect chance to try out the new GPS.

GPS And The Real World

The entire trip would be insight of land, and a GPS was probably not really necessary. But, as with all tech gadgets, there is a bit of a learning curve. So, I figured it would be a good chance to learn a bit more about the GPS in a very practical environment. With the added benefit, of something to amuse the cyber kids during a potentially long and boring (translation: no computer games) adventure. The trip up took a little longer then planned, as the wind was of course very light, and not blowing the direction we were heading. It was a nice sunny day, making a longer trip more pleasant. All three boats arrived just fine. The GPS worked fine, and it was kinda cool seeing it track our trip over the lake. Much more fun that watching it track my speed, as I walk around the block. That's what I did the first day I had it, since it's really not much fun to play with a GPS standing still.

GPS Bread Crumbs

After a pleasant dinner and fun time in the Goderich marina, we headed of for sleep, with plans to head home early the next day. The next day brought a little more weather early on, so it seem to be prudent to head off early. The wind picked up quickly, and pretty soon we were sailing in 20 knot winds with 3 to six foot waves. The wind of course blowing the opposite direction from where we were heading. A little rough, but we were managing, and we could easily find our way back home by following the shoreline, or our previous days trip, still stored in the Magellan GPS. About 5 miles directly off shore from our home marina, we made our last tack in and could see our home port in the distance. Thinking smugly that we had avoided any storms I relaxed a little. I noticed the big black wall heading toward us from the south, but was sure we had it beat. About 2 miles from our port, I realized just how wrong I was.

A GPS Makes A Crummy Umbrella

The line squall hit us dead on. Winds went from 20 to 30 knots, and the rain poured. We furled our head sail, and sent the kids below for safety's sake (which of course sent one racing for the head to deposit her breakfast). Over the radio, helpful advice from our friends boats attempted to assure us we would be fine. The worst thing, was that the shoreline completely disappeared. Nothing but black. Sailboats like water, but they don't do so well crashing into land. As one boating friend tells me, "In a boat, the land is not your friend". And here we were heading for land, but just not sure where it was. Not a good thing. Fortunately, our GPS had our home port as a waypoint, and all we could do was follow it's course. Actually all three boats had their GPS set for the home port, and they were following their GPS heading just as we were. Fortunately, it was a quick storm (only 15 minutes or so), a great beginners introductory storm. As the black dissolved, and the sun shone, our GPS had been true. We were right on target at the mouth of the Bayfield river, and it was pretty simple to just sail in and tie up. Fifteen minutes later, we watched the next squall blow through from the safety of our dock. Who says tech gadgets are just toys? My GPS was a real life saver.

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About the Author

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