

## Team Tips Up

Interviewer: Daniel Evans

Interviewees: Kayla and John (couldn't figure out last names)

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- Q     Okay. So I have a number of questions. And you know, the first one that is I think glaring, right, just staring at me when I look at your application, I'm like, what the what? Is a Hobie 16. This is something really interesting, because in your application, one of the things you wrote was "No racer has ever finished on a Hobie 16. Don't you think it's time?" But my brain says no racer has ever finished on a Hobie 16. Isn't that evidence of something? So defend -- first, to the best of your ability, describe a Hobie 16 and then please defend that choice.
- A     So Hobie 16 is -- it was a revolutionary beach cat when it came out, way ahead of its time, and

it's been raced all over the world for 50 years now, maybe more. And it's also one of the most numbers of Hobie 16 have been produced of any small sailboat. I think it's up there with the Laser, it's like more than 100,000. So they're all over the world. A ton of different people sail them. A bunch of people sailed them when they were kids, and there's a ton of people still racing them. So it's a really cool fleet. It's a fleet I grew up racing in. There's a really active Pacific Northwest fleet that had some amazing mentors for me as I was getting started in sailing. So my heart is with the Hobie 16. It was my first love in the sailing world, so there's certainly an emotional connection. But if you want to talk about the boat itself --

Q Hold on one sec. John, so you started sailing the Hobie when you were 14; right?

A Yeah, that's right.

Q And you've never -- I imagine you've sailed them but you've never taken them to the level he has. You were like kicking ass in 505s?

A And like club 420s.

Q And 420s. And he was rocking along in the world on the Hobie. Have I got that right?

A Yeah, that's right. We both sort of went through the club sailing world, competing in different boats.

Q Okay, cool. John, sorry to interrupt. Go for it.

A No problem. The specs of the Hobie 16 is it's called the 16, but it's actually closer -- if you round up it's 17 feet. So we got that going for us.

Q Rounding up? You have that going for you. Okay. All right. Keep going, keep going.

A It is a really sturdy boat, and I've sailed it in all kinds of conditions. I've sailed it out of Victoria, Jericho catamaran classic. You get

huge rollers in there, big breeze. The South Africans sail them in those kind of conditions all year round all the time. The boats really do hold up to heavy conditions well. But that doesn't change the fact that it's a super exposed boat and you're on the water a bunch. You're wet. You know, we looked to the past racers who have done this race in beach cats, and put up some really, really impressive times. And so that's really inspiring to us. A lot of them did have slightly larger beach cats and beach cats with wings on them, which definitely helps. So this is definitely stepping it up another notch.

Q Well, I just -- I think for those of you who don't know what beach cats are, I would encourage people to look up Hobie 16 online right now. And I'm going to break it down a little bit. It is a trampoline. A not very large trampoline that's held up by two poles and

a mast and a jib and nowhere to hide from the weather. Nowhere. And sturdy, yes. Exposed, yes. Small. Even rounding up I would say small.

A I was going to say one other plug for the boat is sort of historically it's been raced in the Worrell 1000 around Florida. So it's -- and also the Everglades challenge, which is another like beach catamaran Hobie. Recently they started racing them more in Nakras [phonetic] but historically there was a lot of racing of Hobie 16s up and down the Florida coast. So the boats over the last 50 years have been tested in sort of that ocean condition. Obviously not as cold, you know, as you might see racing to Alaska. But still the same, like currents and winds and exposure that you would get. Yeah.

Q I mean, I would say that -- I wouldn't necessarily agree with you on that. The conditions going up the inside passage have -- are pretty unique. And I am excited to watch

you all kind of take it on, because it is --  
it's a race course that has proven to be good at  
one thing, which is to find the weakness in  
every team. And often times the teams don't  
know what that weakness is. But I'm curious, if  
you were to guess what weakness the race course  
was going to find in you,  
what do you think that would be? And you  
might be working to make it better. I'm not  
saying that.

A I think it relates to the previous question,  
which is the exposure level on the boat. You  
can't --

A Can't hide.

A Can't really hide from the weather. If it gets  
cold, if it's wet out -- it's going to be wet,  
whether it's raining or not, because of the  
spray. But if it gets really cold, we're doing  
our best to plan our layers and our dry suits,  
but if we make a mistake in letting certain

layers get wet or letting sleeping bags get wet, that type of management is going to be super important. So it's front of mind, but that is probably something that will get exposed.

A Yeah.

A If we make any mistakes.

Q You know, it brings up another question I had, which is both of you are through hikers. I mean, you definitely are adventurous. You're through hikers, ultra marathoners. I think you listed your BMI, which was a very small number, which made me think you were not very sea lion like. And they are really -- they're the ones that are built for that type of water. Do you think of that much when you know, you're talking about your preparation, how you're going to keep the calories up, how you're going to stay warm being constantly awash in you know 48 degree water?

A Yeah. I think for -- yeah, I think kind of like

you said, it's definitely a combination of like what we're eating, how we're dressing, how we're moving about in the day and I think really knowing those limits. I think one really nice thing that our through hiking experience has given us is I feel pretty confident that we both know where our cold limit is and when to say, like, we're getting close to it. We need to anchor, we need to stop. We need to throw a tent up. Because obviously going past that limit is when things start to get really dangerous.

I think on the food side we're definitely thinking a lot about our calorie intake.

Something we've done a lot on our through hikes is watching our calories and making sure that we're eating enough to match our outputs. So thinking about the freeze-dried food we're going to eat, the fats that we're going to eat. And obviously we're planning on wearing drysuits



with multiple layers, and wearing layers that would still be warm even if they got wet. I mean, in theory you shouldn't be wet if you're wearing a drysuit, but obviously you never know. So things like that we're thinking a lot about.

A Yeah. I was going to say exactly the same thing. I think the through hiking experience is especially relevant because for four months you're pushing yourself as hard as you can every day and hiking maybe 20 to 30 or more miles a day. And to be able to keep doing that day after day, you're going through 4,000, 5,000, 6,000 calories a day and you're carrying all those calories on your back. So you really want to make sure you're always bringing food you know you can get down, food you know you're going to eat, and food that's as light as possible. So we have spreadsheets and a lot of history of recording and looking at the --

A Calories per ounce.

A Calories per ounce of every --

Q Calories per ounce, really?

A Big on the calories per ounce.

A Kayla can probably quote you the calories per ounce of every type of nut.

A Well, olive oil is 200 to 220. Most chocolates are around 140 or so. But we definitely have a baseline rule that all of your food needs to minimally be above 100 calories per ounce and typically we're shooting for 120 plus.

Q No way. Does that mean one of your meals might be shots of olive oil with chocolate bars?

A It's always a joke.

Q I'm in --

A We will definitely probably be bringing olive oil. It's definitely one of the best fats that keeps you warm. Yeah. Olive oil, peanut butter, chocolate. That's why you see a lot of through hikers eating Snickers and candy bars. You've got the peanuts, the chocolate, the caramel

There's so much energy.

Q Another thing that's interesting about your strategy, and I'm just wondering what you thought about this. You know, you're on a beach cat. You're carrying your food. You're obviously going for high impact food which totally makes sense. But you know, the thing that always bounces around in my head is that a Hobie 16 is a beach cat. The word beach. Beach. Beach. Have you tried to count how many beaches are between Victoria and Ketchikan? I think the last time I counted it was somewhere around one, and I'm pretty sure that most people called it a sand bar. I'm reminded of one sailor a while back who would -- so he could find sleep -- he was going solo. He had such a hard time finding places to land that he started jamming his mast in the overhanging trees to hold him in place so he could sleep for a little while until the tide dropped enough that his

mast would slip out and he pushed on.

A Oh my god. Creative.

Q Have you thought about what your rhythm is going to be? Are you going to go overnight any time? Are you always looking for a place to pull up in the evenings? What's your strategy?

A Yeah. It's definitely something that we've done some research and have a lot more research to do. One of our research has actually been watching race to Alaska documentaries from other sailors. We've been so appreciative of that, seeing where did they sleep, watching the tracker to find out what kind of inlets people are going into. There's also the BC Marine Trails has a lot of really cool campgrounds towards like the bottom of sort of Vancouver Island side. So we've been looking a lot at that. I think some strategies we've been talking about is do we sort of like make some kind of roller thing that will allow us to sort

of beach cat over rocky area terrain.

Another thing is like we've seen some teams that

have just carried a little anchor. I think

Hobie makes an OEM anchor for the Hobie cat.

Doing that and camping on the boat, tucking into

safer harbors or inlets.

A Yeah. And then also docks. Docks are available, tying up at the dock seems especially easy. Obviously more in the southern half of the race. And then the other thing that you asked about was going at night and how we think about that. Our initial thought was, well, it's only dark for about six hours, you know, because it's such a good time of year. So maybe we should -- maybe we should just take that as an opportunity to sleep and try and start running early. Seems like some of the smaller boats do do that. I think our thinking is evolving somewhat in that we would keep going if a tide gate required it and push through

there. Yeah. But for the most part, I think we envision not going at night.

A Yeah. More like starting at like -- unanchoring or undocking at 4 A.M. and then start right before sunrise and make sure you're rolling into your anchor, dock or whatever, beach at, you know, the second it gets dark.

A Do you think -- there was a 20 foot catamaran, I think it was team Catch Me If You Can, and I don't think they stopped at all. They may have stopped once. But they had the most impressive run of all the catamarans. And of all the small catamarans. And yeah, so that's a source of inspiration for us and I think in our training we're going to keep thinking about how we want to approach this question because it's a really important one.

Q Yeah. And that was their second year going at it. You know, they had tried the year prior and so they had a lot to base it on. But you're

right. They were an impressive run. Counter-balanced by the number of beach cats that ended up upside down or hauled out along the way. It's absolutely true. I mean one of my favorites is team Mao [phonetic] in the first year which found themselves capsized. And before they crashed against the rocks, their mast underwater fetched up on a rock and caused the whole boat to flip upright once again. And they realized with great joy, it's in tact. And they climbed in and sailed out in a 30-knot breeze. Yeah. And were able to keep going, which was kind of amazing.

A Wow.

Q Yeah, they're tough boats. Like you say, they are tough boats. But okay, let's get onto an important one too, which is kind of your motivation. You know, this has a number of sacrifices. The race has a lot of sacrifice to it. It's borne of sacrifice. The amount of

time, the amount of effort, the risk that you're putting out there. You all have done enough things. You have taken your sailing racing to the highest points. You know, you've gone to TransPac. You've raced in worlds. You've raced international worlds. You've done nationals. You've been on varsity teams at MIT for Christ's sake. That's brilliant. So why? You're through hike, ultra marathon. My god, haven't you proved it already? What in that pantheon of challenge need that you have are you deciding that this is going to fill a hole that you have yet to fill up?

A I think it has to do with everything you mentioned. And really just continuing to push ourselves and see what we're capable of, you know. We want to become better sailors. We're always looking to become better sailors. We love competing, and you know, we love the part about Race to Alaska that it requires you to not



just be a sailor, but also an endurance athlete because of the duration of the race and because of the human powered element. It just takes a lot of the things we've done before and a lot of the things we've loved doing in our lives and ratchets up the pressure and the level of performance that's demanded of both of us if we're going to do this and do it safely and do it well.

Q You mentioned that you like to compete. You're competitors, right? So I think obvious question is who are you competing against?

A Honestly, for a lot of the activities we've done, a lot of it is competition within ourselves, to be better athletes, to push ourselves. I think when we do the Appalachian trail together a few years ago, one of our main goals going into that was we want to push ourselves. We want to work hard. We're not like hiking to set a record or anything like that, but we're hiking

to make ourselves better people and to work hard. So I think that's a lot of my -- I think both of our sense of competition is, you know, push ourselves to learn more, to sail harder, to work harder and just --

A I think that's completely true. And we both feel that. I think we're also both competitive to the point that we'll compete with whatever is in front of us and whoever is in front of us. So whoever else registers for Race to Alaska in 2024 we're going to be thinking how can we beat that boat.

Q So how about this, what does losing look like?

A So we could lose before we get there. If we're not prepared to do the race safely, that's going to be total failure, really disappointing if we feel like we're scrambling at the 11th hour to do the important stuff on our lists, that's going to be really disappointing for us. And after the race starts, losing would be not

making it to Ketchikan I think.

A Yeah, I think not making it to Ketchikan, but kind of like you said too first is if we're not prepared and we have to quit because of our own doing. You know, not like a safety thing or the -- there's a thousand reasons to quit and it's a great idea to quit. But if we have to quit for a reason that was self-inflicted like we made a really silly decision or weren't working as a team to make something happen, I think that would be a loss in the race.

Q Roger that. What a great answer, that whole thing. That's fantastic. I'm curious about one thing too. I noticed, John, that you set a perhaps self proclaimed but worthy record during one of your TransPacs of pooping at 27.4 knots.

A That's right.

Q Which is impressive I got to say. I was reading your stuff and that really shined out.

A Thank you. Thank you.

Q And I realize we don't have that kind of record yet in Race to Alaska yet so I'm really hoping that you add to your wish list somewhere that you can set that record as well.

A That's pretty awesome, yeah.

A We'll train up on it. We'll get back to you.

Q That would be really good. That would be really good. If you were going to elevate or -- if you were going to tell people why you think it's a good idea to do this race, what would you say?

Okay, we'll move on. Good. I have another question then. I noticed, Kayla, too, that I felt like in some ways that you were trying to better your record for -- or at least increase the list of all the miserable places you have sailed or the miserable conditions you have sailed in. One of the things I noticed a lot of times was how cold it was where you sailed, how much wind was going, how much snow was in the pictures. How do you think it's going to

compare to other situations you've been in, sailing in snow storms, sailing in near freezing weather?

A Having not spent a lot of time in the inner passage of Vancouver Island, I like to tell myself that it's probably not going to snow while we're sailing. But I think my guess is the hardest part is you know, even after a really long day of sailing, you know, you get to go inside and take a warm shower. So I think the weather part doesn't bother me. Yeah, it's probably going to rain all day. So what, we'll have hats on and drysuits. I think the hardest part is going to be like that -- bad weather happening day after day after day and not being able to go inside and get that warmth. Obviously we'll have a tent. There's going to be that. But I don't know. I think the weather hopefully won't be as bad as some of the New England spring. You know, the water is not 33

degrees in the summer on the West Coast, so that I think for me, that's one of the biggest pluses. I'm not as afraid of the bad weather so much as making sure we're prepared to handle it day after day.

Q I have found sometimes the hardest time for me was getting out of my tent.

A Yeah.

Q You're in your sleeping bag, all tucked away, your situation is stable. And you're about to introduce as much variable into your day as you can possibly imagine by getting up.

A That's so true.

A One of Kayla's sailing partners in college had a quote that I really liked any time the weather got bad and it started to rain. She'd say splish splash, bitches, it's time to get wet.

A That was so good.

A So humor helps a lot.

A Humor helps a lot, yeah.

A Kayla and I, in all of our adventures together like to think of ourselves as the good news gang. I think there's a lot of bad news out there. A lot of people who --

A It's going to rain.

A Yeah, hype up the rainstorm that's coming, hype up how steep the next hill is, hype up how big the waves were, whatever. And I think we both keep our heads screwed on straight by saying yeah, maybe, but maybe that's bad news and maybe we're going to be okay.

A Yeah.

A A lot of times it works out for us.

Q The good news gang. I like that. That should be your alternate team name.

A That would be a good team name. I think it might have been on the list.

Q Oh, you want to say anything about your Tips Up, the team name, why you went with that? I know the skiing connection on a lift. Is that it?

A Yeah, more or less kind of because obviously we moved to Boulder, Colorado, a little over a year ago, so there's sort of like that skiing connection. You always see the signs saying "tips up" when you are about to get off the ski lift. Obviously the Hobie 16 you've got the two bananas, the two little tips that you don't want to dig in the water.

A The first training session we did this year on the Hobie 16, it was windy. Kayla gets on the helm. A really competent driver because she's driven so many boats for so long. But the catamaran behaves a little differently. Really likes to stick the tips in and go head over heels. So anyway, she found that out in the very first puff as soon as we turned downwind from the dock.

Q Really?

A Yeah, immediately pitch poled. It was like, cool.



A So tips up.

A And after that we got off the water, John was like oh, shit, she's never going to want to do the Race to Alaska. And I was like okay, that was pretty not fun, but it's fine.

Q Yeah. Way to get it over with like right away.

A Yeah.

Q Just done.

A I know what that feels like. Don't need to do it again.

A Yeah. But the Hobie 16 has about 10 or maybe 15 ways that it likes to capsize, and there's all these different modes. You can get wind under the trampoline; you can capsize the leeward; you can dig the bows in upwind or downwind. The skipper or anybody can get washed off the trapeze and then they drag the boat over backwards. There's a lot of different modes, so we have a few more to find before the race.

Q What I hope you don't end up with when you roll

into Ketchikan is a list of all the ones that you actually did.

A Do you want to talk about the pedal drive system?

A Yeah, I would love to talk about the pedal drive. We're both engineers by training, and we -- I personally have really taken to this task of building the pedal drive and researching all the pedal drives that have been built for Race to Alaska before. And working with my professors a little bit from MIT and one of them wrote software for designing propellers, so we have a custom designed propeller. So the two of us will drive it and if we're producing 160 watts and it's working at maximal efficiency, and then we went out and did some towing testing with the boat to figure out what the drag curve is with speed, and it looks like on 160 watts we can get the boat to go 4 and a half knots. And that would be really, really cool. Getting the

power from our legs to the propeller has proven to be a big challenge. There's just no space on the little catamaran to create a system like that. And a few of the teams have had pedal drives on catamarans and I think a lot of them have broken during the race. But we're super excited about it. I've got Gates carbon drive. They make the belt drive bikes, they're in Denver near us. So we have some Gates components that we've been working with to avoid the rusting on the chain. And we both did a work out on my parents' Peloton this morning, so we're --

A Trying to start biking.

A We're getting in shape. So we're really excited about the pedal drive for sure. Hey, this is going back to your very first question. I totally forgot but in terms of defending our vessel, we talked about rounding up. And actually, the Hobie 16 has a big advantage,

which is that the trampoline is upset -- it's raised up above the hulls on some pylons and it's about 4 inches higher than a trampoline that's right at the level of the hull. So that's -- that 4 inches actually does make a huge difference because it keeps you drier and keeps you just that little bit further away from the water compared to like an Hobie 18 or even the Hobie 20. You are slightly --

A You're a little warmer.

A Slightly warmer, slightly drier.

Q Any defense is a good defense, but I of course am still reminded of the numerous beach cat sailors that got swept off their boats in the middle of the night on the Race to Alaska.

A Oh.

Q So I would advise surf board leashes or something like that.

A Yeah.

Q Which have proven good?

A To tether to the boat.

Q Yeah. And I am not gospel by any means, so you can totally blow me off.

A We're taking notes.

Q I mean plenty of people have done it without surf board leashes. I knew one guy, he will remain nameless, but about 2:00 A.M. he was on a beach cat hallucinating, and the only way he could get out of the hallucination was to throw himself off the boat, which woke him up. And then he climbed back on. All of that given evidence by his tracker, which was a very erratic line, and he later told me was an alternate reality in which he was sailing in a box in Texas.

A Awesome.

Q So yeah, beach cats.

A One last thing that I really would just like to mention is I don't know, just the gratitude that we have for the sailing community as a whole,

and for our families who supported us in getting into the sailing community when we were younger. It just -- it's a really special thing and I feel like the two of us have been especially blessed with families -- Kayla's dad, she started sailing before him. He wasn't a sailor yet. She got into it, started doing high school sailing and then he decided this is going to be my hobby too. And now he's a bad ass sailor 505. Knows everything about rigging. My grandma is the one who bought this Hobie 16 for us when I was 15 and working at West Coast sailing and making 12 bucks an hour. So we're just so grateful. And just wanted to put that out there.

Q Well, I mean thanks, y'all. All I can say is welcome to the Race to Alaska family. One more family that you get to be a part of. And we're all really excited that you are?

A Thank you. And thank you so much for talking to

us as well.

Q All right, y'all. Enjoy your holidays.

A Thank you, you as well.

Transcribed by Kelsey Fletcher