

# Beware the Dreaded MDS

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When I first contemplated buying *Presto*, Howard Wright, her previous owner, pumped me up with a bunch of hairball stories about offshore racing. As he spoke, I would look at that little 24-ft dinghy and then back at Howard. I was certain that this man was either a boldfaced [sic] liar or a Dr. Demento type with a bizarre death wish he was struggling to overcome.

What was most disturbing, though, was that even after purchasing the little daysailer, I kept running into other Moore 24 sailors who seemed to suffer from exactly the same dementia as Howard. While to all outward appearances these people seemed normal, they delighted in telling bizarre stories of taking Moores offshore on Northern California waters where gale-force conditions are routine, icy waters the norm, and great white sharks gather in great numbers to feast on elephant seals and then gobble surfers for dessert.

Now I know.

Even though it's probably too late for me, I feel it is my duty to put out a warning in hopes that some other souls might be saved before falling victim to the heretofore unpublicized ailment MDS -- Moore Dementia Syndrome.

## Causes of MDS

MDS is caused by the unfortunate conjunction of three fatal circumstances:

1. *The Moore is addictive to sail.* Even a relatively experienced sailor finds that its performance characteristics cause one to develop an insatiable craving for 'just one more Moore sailing fix.'
2. *The Moore is actually an incredibly able blue-water boat.* Now don't get me wrong here. I didn't say it was roomy, or dry, or well-appointed. What I mean is, you can take it offshore with three or four people, go incredibly fast and almost certainly live to tell about it.
3. *Each year there are several offshore races that Moores can and do actually win!* While stories about Moores racing to San Diego, Catalina and Santa Barbara all seem to date back some years, several among our number have successfully tackled the Farallones, Boreas, and Windjammers, to name a few. Here I caution the reader that every one of these sailors tests positive for TMDS (Tertiary Moore Dementia Syndrome). TMDS is the most advanced stage of the disease and is considered by most to be incurable.

## Prevention of MDS -- Lessons Drawn from Tragic Experience

1. *When addressing a Moore 24 sailor, always consider him or her to be infected with MDS until you see a certificate showing that they have been tested 'clean.'* My illness began when Mary Vaden joined me aboard *Presto* in an abortive attempt to do this year's Doublehanded Farallones Race. I decided to attempt this race because several infected sailors assured me that this race's reputation was bogus and that it would be a cakewalk. Regrettably, I failed to demand proof of their remission. A little more than halfway to the Lightbucket we, along with about 100 other boats, turned tail and ran for home in 35+ knots of wind. But not even planing along at 18 knots down near-vertical face waves will enable you to outrun the dreaded MDS pathenogen.
2. *Never assume that because you suddenly have a revelation that taking a Moore 24 offshore is insanity, you are safe from MDS.* Given my Farallones experience, one would suppose that I would be effectively immune to MDS, since I had been 'vaccinated' with a strong dose of terror. Do not be deceived! In fact, I had contracted PMDS, Pre-Moore Dementia Syndrome. My infection was assured that same day when I watched three seriously infected Moore 24 crews finish the race first (*Adios*), second (*Anna Banana*), and third (*Snafu*), race committee buffoonery notwithstanding.
3. *Should you ever find yourself tempted to race offshore in a Moore 24, immediately purchase a one-way bus ticket to Furnace Springs, where the only water to be found comes in Evian bottles.* I could say that 'like a fool' I decided to take *Presto* in the Boreas Race, but that is clearly not the case. You see, I was infected and although my PMDS condition was not yet well developed, I made the mistake of allowing Dan Nitake (now a known carrier of TMDS) near me. This was like lighting a match to check your gas tank for leaks. To the unwary, a condition such as his may pass for mere enthusiasm. Do not be deceived. HE IS SICK! Once you commit to racing a Moore offshore you're almost certainly going to be irrevocably infected.
4. *If you race your Moore offshore, avoid wind and waves at all costs.* In the Boreas race, we sailed for many hours with little wind. It was mild. It was tame. It was booooring. Had these conditions persisted, the disease might have gone into remission. But should you be so unfortunate as to encounter wind and waves (as we did, and is the rule in these climes and times), abandon all hope. Your little Moore will bend to the wind and lift up upon the waves and all aboard her will begin hooting in strange tongues as the she surfs along at 14, 16, 18 knots or more! It is also likely that you will personally see and speak with God.
5. *Never, I repeat, NEVER, place in one of these events.* Now let me offer a caveat here. Among those I have known with TMDS, several have actually taken firsts in these events. Hence their incurability goes without mention and the depths of their depravity can certainly not be fathomed by a lay person such as myself. So here I speak of occurrences to which I can personally testify, for we aboard *Presto* did

get just a lowly third place. Which I'm sure is the only reason I am still able to write this, and not have been hauled away the guys in white a long time ago.

But let it be known that we did beat the hell out of many other vessels much larger and more expensive than our own! And we did righteously shred waves and case asunder all evil doers. And the unholy did bow before us as we carried home the flame of truth, justice and... Oh my God -- they're coming! Oh no! Go way, get back! I have to warn people. I said stay away!...

-- *Marc Hersch*