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## Risk management

*Holland native, crew set for boat race from Chicago to Mackinac*



**By MIKE GENET**

*Special to The Sentinel*

In a way, the super-yacht "Genuine Risk" took just that with its practice run in Lake Michigan Wednesday, thanks to the severe afternoon storm that flew across the Macatawa Bay area.

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PULLING IN: The racing yacht "Genuine Risk" sails into port at Eldean Shipyard on Lake Macatawa Wednesday evening.

*Sentinel/Dan Irving*

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Randall Pittman had docked his 90-foot boat at Eldean's Shipyard before sailing across the lake today for Saturday's Chicago-Mackinac Race.

"It was pretty nice until the storm hit," said Pittman, 50, who grew up in Holland and now hails from Ann Arbor. "We were just going to go out and test a couple sails. Some of the heavier sails we didn't have a chance to look at."

After waiting out the uncooperative weather, the vessel with its 24-man crew motored through the channel and into Eldean's. Crew member Charlie McKee said while lightning is always worrisome, he's dealt with worst storms in more than 30 years of racing.



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The racing yacht "Genuine Risk" sails into port at Eldean Shipyard on Lake Macatawa Wednesday evening.

*Sentinel/Dan Irving*

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According to Pittman, designing the yacht took two years and building it another two. Genuine Risk was manufactured in New South Wales, Australia. The company there is one of the world's few that can produce a carbon fiber yacht.

At less than 40,000 pounds, Pittman says his vessel is "ultra light."

Genuine Risk came to Eldean's after competing in the Port Huron-Mackinac Race last weekend, it's first race. She was the first to finish, but didn't win because it owed at least 31 1/2 hours of handicap to every yacht, "an unbelievable amount of time," Pittman said.

In addition, the crew had to install new mast the night before racing after the initial one cracked during a practice.

"That shows what a great crew we have," he said.

"That's the kind of things you deal with racing here," McKee said. "The weather in the Midwest changes so fast."

McKee and his brother, Jonathan, are part of the top-notch crew Pittman assembled to race his three-month old vessel. They are both Olympic medal winners.

At 90-feet long and boasting a 125-foot mast, Genuine Risk is believed to be the longest and tallest race boat to dock at Eldean's. It is also made entirely of carbon fiber, and sports a keel that can rotate 55 degrees either way.

Pittman, who names his boats after horses, picked "Genuine Risk" because the namesake was a Kentucky Derby-winning filly and because of its cutting-edge design.



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For Pittman, who has been racing for 40 years, Saturday's race is his fourth-consecutive Chicago-Mackinac race. The 333-mile trek will provide another training run before prestigious fall races in Sardinia and Malta.

Pittman knows his vessel has an advantage due to its length and long mast, but acknowledges the crew still has more to learn about how it races.

"We still have to sail it well," he said.

Contact Mike Genet at [randy.benson@hollandsentinel.com](mailto:randy.benson@hollandsentinel.com) or (616) 546-4272.