Lack of cooperation lead to grounding

The 1000TEU container vessel departed the berth after loading. During the loading there had been some delay and the gantry cranes had stopped operating because of strong winds, so the Master was eager to depart. The navigation officer had prepared the bridge before departure. On the bridge was the Master, pilot, lookout and Chief Officer. A tug assisted the vessel during departure. The Master gave the pilot the pilot card and offered him some coffee. After this the Master gave the pilot the conn.

The pilot was steering from the port side bridge wing. The berth had a heading of 317° and there were still WSW winds at Beaufort scale 9. The vessel was moored at the end of the berth. The fairway leaving the port had a heading of 230°. The pilot's plan was for the vessel to go astern and swing to port and clear the end of the berth and then follow the fairway. However, he did not explain the plan to the Master and the Master didn't ask the pilot about any plan.

The Master ordered all lines let go. The bow started to fall off quicker than the stern as the wind pushed on the vessel's port side, off the berth. The pilot ordered half astern and the plan was to use the bow thruster to let the vessel's bow swing past the end of the berth and to position the vessel to sail out in the fairway. At this time the vessel had a course of 310°.

The tug assisted with pushing the vessel on the starboard side. The vessel was now moving astern at 2 knots and towards the south side of the fairway, which was the opposite side of the fairway. There were several buoys marking the fairway. The closest buoy was on the starboard quarter about 50 m away. The wind continued to push the vessel from the portside causing the vessel to drift SE in the fairway towards the south side of the fairway. The vessel had a stern thruster and it was set full to starboard to assist the vessel in turning to port. The vessel started to slowly come around and had a heading of 291° but was still drifting SE towards the buoy.

The 2 nd Officer was on the stern and warned the Chief Officer over the UHF that a buoy was only 30 m away on the starboard quarter. The vessel now had a heading of 320° which is a 90° angle towards the fairways. The Chief Officer informed the pilot and Master but neither of them acknowledged or took any action. The 2nd Officer now informed the Chief Officer that the buoy was only 10 m away. The pilot ordered half ahead on the engines. For some reason the stern thruster was stopped. At the same time the pilot received a job-related mobile phone call which he answered. The vessel continued its movement astern and hit the buoy on the starboard quarter. The entire buoy was dragged underneath the vessel and damaged the propeller, rudder and rudder stock. The damage caused the vessel to lose its steering and because of the damage the Master stopped the main engine. This caused the vessel to start drifting even quicker SE towards shallow waters.

The pilot suggested that the anchor should be dropped, and the master ordered the port anchor to be dropped. This was delayed as the 2nd Officer had to go from the stern to the bow. When he got to the bow and the bosun tried to drop the anchor it got entangled and it took a minute before it was released. At the same time the vessel ran aground.

Discussion

Go to the “File“ menu and select “Save as...“ to save the pdf-file on your computer.

You can place the marker below each question to write the answer directly into the file.

When discussing this case please consider that the actions taken at the time made sense for all involved. Do not only judge but also ask why you think these actions were taken and could this happen on your vessel?

1. What were the immediate causes of this accident?

2. Is there a risk that this kind of accident could happen on our vessel?

3. How could this accident have been prevented?

4. Do we have a pre-departure meeting with all the people involved in the departure regarding what the plan is and what to expect? (These issues in this case apply for arrival as well)

5. Do we let the pilot manoeuvre the vessel?

6. If we do is the plan for departure discussed with the pilot and entire bridge team?

7. What are the environmental limits for departure?

8. How do we ensure that if a tug is ordered that it is sufficient for the prevailing winds?

9. Has everyone in the bridge team received MRM training?

10. Do we use closed-loop communication on the bridge?

11. What sections of our SMS would have been breached if any?

12. Does our SMS address these risks?

13. How could we improve our SMS to address these issues?

14. What do you think was the root cause of this accident?

15. Is there any kind of training that we should do that addresses these issues?