

Chase Day: May 5, 2001

Contributed by Chris Nuttall
Monday, 07 May 2001
Last Updated Saturday, 14 June 2008

There were some Tornado Warnings for Norman and the southern portions of the OKC Metro the day before. The storm system causing the severe weather wasn't going anywhere fast, so it looked like we would have a few days of constant chase potential. The dryline had retreated back west into western Oklahoma and Texas from May 4. There was a great deal of instability, and it looked like a great day for some chase action.

This turned out to be a pretty good day. Although, it was also very interesting for reasons other than the weather.

Target: Throckmorton, TX

SPC Event Log

Photos from the Chase

Videos from the Chase

Chase Partners:

Aaron Kennedy, Thomas Norman V, Dusty Maddox,

Kyle Mozley, Nathan White

Location:
W Oklahoma

Miles Traveled:

461

Total Time:

12 Hours

During the morning, some overnight convection pushed off the dryline into western and central Oklahoma. This resulted in a nonexistent cap and weak instability. There, we all agreed to head toward Throckmorton, TX.

At 12:15pm, we left Norman and headed for Throckmorton, TX. About 3:00pm, a Tornado Watch was issued covering most of Oklahoma and north Texas. We stopped in Seymour, TX, for gas, some data, and lunch at Sonic. We decided to backtrack and headed north on US-283, camping out for a bit to watch the sky. We noticed some cumulus towers trying to build, but they weren't having much look. We decided to continue north to Altus, OK, and stop along the way in Vernon, TX, to make some phone calls for a nowcast.

And here is where the day turned bonkers. We were driving north towards Altus doing the 65 mph speed limit. Two cars in front of us are doing under 50. Naturally, we tried to pass them, and of course, they immediately sped up as we attempted to pass forcing us to speed up in order to safely complete the pass. Then, we see this little black car in the distance growing bigger. Well, we are already committed to the pass, so we floor the gas to complete it. All of a sudden the little black car turns on its lights. Yup, the car was Oklahoma High Patrol. We get pulled over. I'm thinking, "Great, there goes my car insurance." The officer walked up to my window and told me I was okay to go on. I was amazed. He said he knew I was speeding too, but he clocked Dusty, not me. We pulled away leaving our partners behind. We never saw them again on the chase, even though we were in the same general area. They would later see the tornado that we didn't.

About 6:15pm, we headed west out of Altus to view a storm that was developing to our north (Storm-A). We checked the map and decided that we needed a direct route north immediately if we wanted to intercept the cell. We backtracked and took County Road N2030 northbound. We needed a road that would bypass Altus and the

traffic lights. This was a rough, dirt road, and we continued to watch Storm-A build just to our north. The road was tough on my car, and Aaron wouldn't give me a straight answer as to how far the highway was.

Eventually, we turned came up on US-283, then turned north onto OK-6. We had a good view since was due north of us. It continued to get better organized and cycled through a couple of wall clouds. The contrast provided for incredible photos and video. Storm-A was a lop-topped LP, and never really anviled, but it did produce some nice views. We also closely watched a new cell developing southwest of us (Storm-B).

At 7:01pm, we watched a very distinct and ominous lower drop halfway to the ground out of Storm-A, but nothing touched down (1.8 MB). As we approached Granite, OK, we lost our view behind some terrain. So, we turned east on OK-9 to run parallel with Storm-A. We saw another funnel try to drop out of Storm-A. However, it soon dissipated and we continued on through the town of Lone Wolf, OK. Storm-B was also rapidly developing behind us. We were beginning to get worried because if it became tornadic, we were directly in its path. We headed north on OK-44 to stay within 2 miles of Storm-A.

Storm-A continued to build and we had a great angle for video (2.7 MB). We soon got in a perfect position on OK-55 in Sentinel, OK. As we left town, Aaron and Thomas were watching the storm to our north. Suddenly, a green truck coming off a dirt road ran a stop sign pulled out in front of us; they were too busy watching the storm and not watching the road. I swerved at the last second and missed getting broadsided by a bout 6 inches.

The wall cloud and rotation appeared to be collapsing in Storm-A. At the same time, Storm-B was catching up with us to our SW. I figured Storm-A was going to be doomed after getting its inflow seeded from Storm-B. Storm-A actually wound up being just far enough away to avoid any influence. Aaron and I debated on how to proceed. He said we should continue NE following Storm-A. I thought we should drop south and watch Storm-B. I figured both cells would merge and form a line on top of us. Finally, Aaron quit arguing and we dropped south on US-183 to watch Storm-B.

We saw a very interesting orange sky as the set behind the precip core of Storm-B. It was very windy and very cold. At 8:05pm, a spotter reported a tornado on the ground just south of Cordell, OK, which was about 10 miles north of us. Storm-A had dropped a brief tornado. We were way out of position and had no way to get back to Storm-A. However, Dusty, Kyle, and Nathan did stay with Storm-A and saw the tornado.

With the loss of daylight, we called it a day and started the long drive back to Norman. We stopped in Anadarko for dinner and ice cream at Braum's. We arrived back at OU at 12:30am and hit the hay. It looked like the next day would be pretty active, too.

SUMMARY:

INCREDIBLE DAY! Saw the DOWs for the first time, almost got a ticket, almost got in a bad wreck, met a bunch of other chasers, and made a costly mistake on storm choice. I don't feel too bad. At least 80% of the chasers out there did the same thing I did. Misery loves company, I guess. Anyway, it was by the best chase I've had so far. I have always dreamed about seeing a storm with the contrast like Storm-A possessed. That's what I want to see. The beauty of Mother Nature.

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[Photos from the Chase](#)

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