

## **Top 200 Crewing Tips from the top.**

*Having crewed for Jim Hunt in Enterprises and survived crewing for Greg O'Brien; Nikki Cook has been recognised as a top crew in much demand. She is also well known for gossiping and a wicked sense of humour. She won the 1999 RS200 Nationals with Geoff Carveth. There is much for the crew to do in a 200 and the crew/helm have to work hard together to get the best of the boat. Here Nikki gives us her thoughts on crewing a 200.*

### **Hoisting the spinnaker**

Quickly crack off the jib and re-cleat it so that it is set and pulling and you don't have to waste time after the spinnaker is up.

Pass the spinnaker sheet to the helm so that he can control it as you hoist and hopefully prevent it twisting. Stand facing forwards in the boat, never sit whilst hoisting. (Your boat will need a free floating block just behind the cleat for the crew to hoist facing forward, see the December newsletter – ed)

Pull up the spinnaker, trying to pull to shoulder height with each pull, which is quicker than lots of short pulls. It's really important to make sure it's all the way up first time as it wastes time to go back into the boat to re-hoist and requires a lot of strength with the kite set. Also a partially hoisted spinnaker will be more likely to capsize you to leeward.

*Top tip - put a fluorescent marker on the halyard where it enters the cleat with the kite fully up, then you can tell when the spinnaker is right up.*

Once the spinnaker is hoisted it's important to get it working straight away in order to create some space between you and the boat behind. Once there's clear air and the boat is under control reset jib or control lines as necessary. Doing this straight away may slow you down allowing other boats to sail other the top of you.

If on starboard lay-line in light airs, start hoisting the spinnaker as you approach the mark so that you're ready to accelerate away as you round the mark.

If on the starboard lay-line in strong winds, let the jib off slightly, but keep weight aft and lean out as necessary. This keeps the bow out of the water so that the helm can control the boat. If you move into the centre of the boat before they've born off, the boat is harder to steer and you may hit the mark or lose control of the boat.

### **Gybing the spinnaker**

Whilst the spinnaker is up you need to do a quick eyeball check that no ropes are potentially twisted it's better than finding out mid gybe!

Before gybing quickly re-sheet jib on other side then take up slack in new spinnaker sheet.

As boat gybes, pull spinnaker across quickly so that there isn't time for it to develop a twist. Be careful not to over sheet it.

### **Windy gybes**

Hope that Geoff is at the back of the boat not my husband! (Sorry cookie, I do accept 50% of the blame each time we capsize!)

### **Trimming the spinnaker**

Constantly keep your eye on the spinnaker and keep playing it. I usually let the luff of the spinnaker curl 2 inches to ensure that it is pulling maximally. It's important that it is not in too tight.

In light winds I prefer to sit to windward to have a better view of the spinnaker, but it depends on the helm!

### **Roll tacking.**

I'm far more familiar with Enterprises which are really quick, if anyone knows how to roll tack RS 200s please let me know!

I tend to do a slow roll to windward, but not too much roll as it's hard to clear the water quickly if you take any on board.

I pull the jib across midline quickly but then slowly pull it in to set it as the boat flattens out. This allows you to accelerate out of the tack. Cleating it tight too quickly can stall the boat.

### **Technique in waves**

Watch fore and aft position so that the bow doesn't dig in too much.

As wave approaches move upper body back a bit as go up the wave and move forwards to accelerate the boat down the face of the wave taking care not to dig the bow into the face of the oncoming wave.

Give one pull on the spinnaker whilst on the wave to encourage planing. Helm should trim main at same time.

### **Advice and information to the helm.**

**Pre race;** The obvious things like course, starting sequence, penalty taking, finishing sequence, tally system etc. Getting drinks and knowing what snacks your helm likes in between races

i.e. Geoff likes bananas

Greg – it has to be Mars bars!!!

**During the race;** Keep a commentary going on any areas of the course that looks to have more wind.

Any boats coming up on starboard, whether it's better to tack or duck behind them.

Also what's beyond the starboard boat, as it may be better to tack to remain in clear air than duck the boat to stay on a lift but get buried in a pack of boats with no clear air.

Any port boats as the helm may prefer to call them to carry on rather than tack and cause you to tack.

Any big waves as the helm needs to bear off rather than hit it head on and fill up with water.

Any changes in compass readings.

Any sudden knocks in the wind that may have hit a boat in front.

Obviously keep the boat flat whilst going up wind, but be careful when leaning out that you don't obscure the helm's view of the bow of the boat. So if the wind drops slightly stay flat but slide your bum in rather than sitting bolt upright and getting in the way.

**In between races;** Quick check of all ropes and blocks, then catch up on GOSSIP !