

## **2007 Interclub Dinghy National Champions**

Molly and John Baxter (in the order of finish) of Larchmont YC, comment regarding the one of the most impressive sailing feats in IC Nationals history, besting a 50+ deeply seeded Interclub Nationals' fleet in a 9 races series, by finishing no lower than 5<sup>th</sup>, 33 points ahead of 5 time IC Champion Jim Bowers.

Comments from LYC's Frostbite group exchange:

Notes from Molly: My biggest focus at IC Nationals was on puffs, fleet management and compass headings. With so many boats, no drop races and the Z flag in effect, there was a lot of pressure to get off the line clean. I faced backwards pre-start to defend our leeward hole talking to John about boats behind us and speaking with boats trying to sneak into our hole. At this event, our typical start was sailing down the line from the pin and tacking in around 45 seconds. I would then ease vang completely to stop us from going forward, make sure board was straight up & down and watch boats behind while John focused on staying close to the boat to weather of us and the line itself. At the starts, we were very focused on having speed off the line and getting a clear lane.

As soon as we got up to speed off the line, I would talk about whether or not we could tack, boatspeed/pointing relative to the boats around us, and then tipped the board forward once we had good speed. In the lighter pressure, we kept the boat heeled slightly to leeward and when the pressure increased, we kept the boat as flat as possible to help our pointing. It was very shifty and puffs came down quickly so I constantly updated John on puffs and hiked out before they hit to keep the boat flat the entire time. In these varying conditions, my position in the boat was the "snake" move – slithering on my side so I would not get caught sitting and unable to move quickly. I also like to slide back and forth on the bench to adjust my weight without having to move much. I adjusted the board, cunningham and vang quite a bit because of the varying pressure.

Because it was so shifty, the compass was helpful to keep an eye on to see how big the shifts were. Downwind, we always sail with the board completely trunked unless we are right next to another boat and need to track a little or in a big puff. Our DW weather heel position seemed pretty fast – my goal in this mode is to lock my body in backwards while focusing on breeze, the boat behind us (are they higher or lower than us?), and managing the balance of the boat. My goal is to keep the edge of the weather rail right at the water level without letting any water in – in this mode you can almost surf the waves a little. Upwind we seemed to have good speed. In our tacks, I focused on crossing the boat as late as possible and then flattening as quickly as possible while finishing the tack to leeward to get a little heel as we got back up to speed.

Notes from John: The key to getting the results you desire is to have a set process to get better and to attack the regatta. Try to be systematic to your approach and figure out what are your strengths and what you need to work on. Our pre-race routine entails careful studying of the course looking for visual clues about what the race may

bring. We look first for breeze then current lines, clouds, etc. If there are 2 minutes to go to the start, Mol and I stand up (better visibility the higher you are) to look upwind and challenge ourselves to see what puff is going to be here in 2 minutes? All things being equal we think about what has worked well in the past. One thing we did differently at nationals was that we did not try to have a large leeward hole on the starting line until 10 seconds or so. A few times we worked hard at opening a large hole early only to have it taken by one of the 50 boats. There were very localized puffs so keeping your eyes out of the boat to see where they were coming next was important. On the runs, we challenged ourselves to think about what side of the course we would like for the beat and start thinking about which gate will enable us to get there quickest. We did have a good speed and used a new North RADIC06. If anyone has questions on our set-up feel free to e-mail me.

All the best,

Molly and John

#66