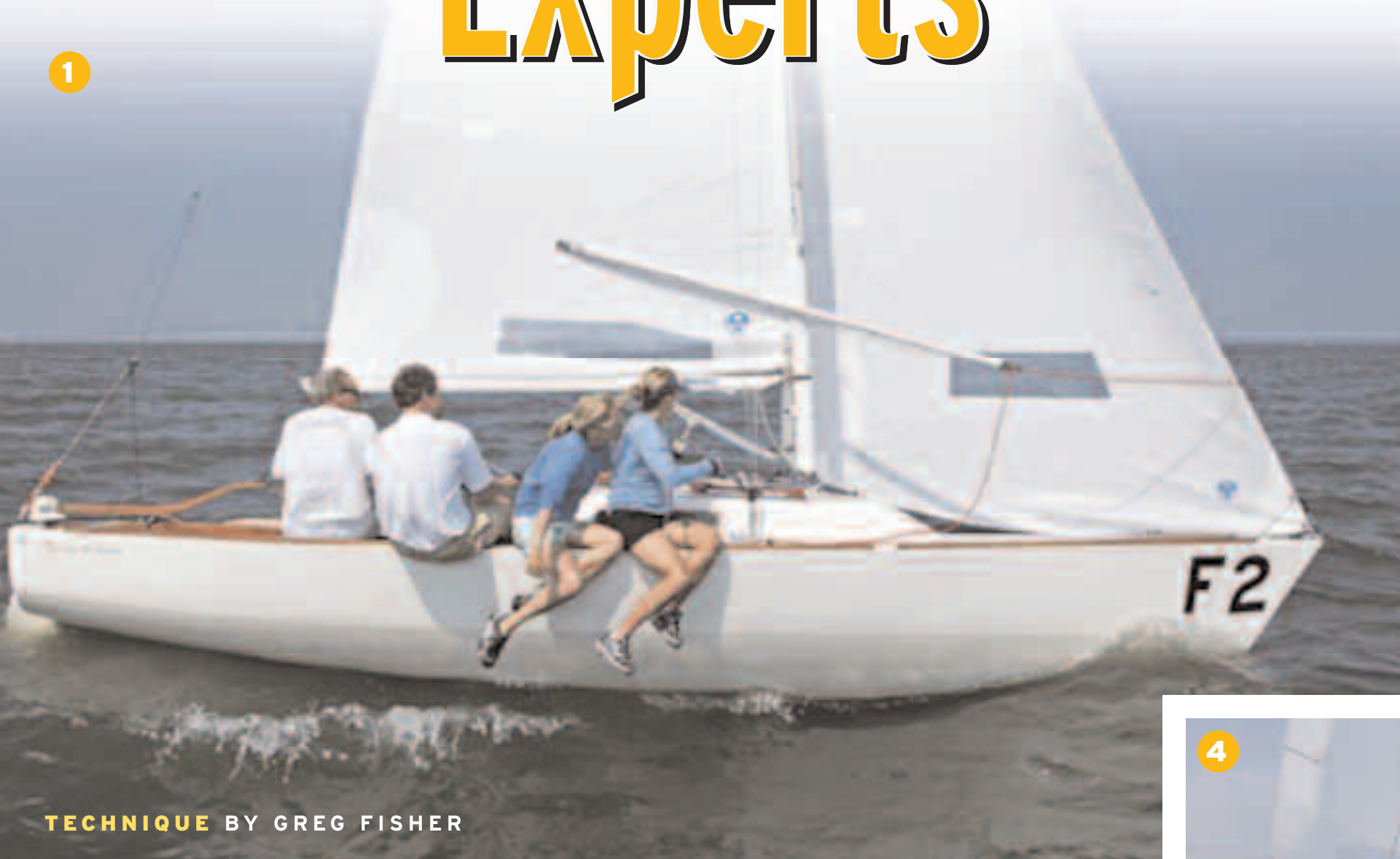


# From the Experts

1



TECHNIQUE BY GREG FISHER

## Faster Sets and Douses

We've all learned at one point or another how much distance can be gained or lost during the most basic mark-rounding maneuvers. While getting the spinnaker up and down quickly should always be the focus, the ultimate goal is to get the job done with as little boatspeed loss as possible. Follow my team—Jeff Eiber, Meg Halsup (pit), and my wife Jo Ann (bow)—as we do our best to maintain speed through a set and douse.

**1** As we approach the weather mark, Jo Ann hoists the spinnaker pole from the rail, to a pre-marked position. Because the guy has been set in the jaw, the pole hangs secure against the mast. She doesn't leave the rail to put the pole on the mast until the bow is nearly on the mark. Keeping the boat flat, especially when it's breezy, is ultimately much more important than getting the spinnaker up as soon as the bow drops around the weather mark.

SKIP BROWN

2



**2** As we pass the mark, Jeff keeps the jib trimmed and I ease a lot of main-sheet. This sail trim minimizes weather helm and encourages the boat to bear off smoothly and sharply as we turn downwind. Jo Ann grabs the spinnaker halyard and faces aft (so she can see when and if it's ready to hoist). Meg moves to the cabin top to pre-feed the spinnaker tack from the companionway. Jeff then moves to the cockpit, ready to trim the guy.

**3** A sharp turn allows us to fall into a controlling position inside of any boats behind who might try to sail deeper and prevent us from jibing. How deep I bear off depends on how threatening the boats behind on our weather hip are. I hold the main in my hand to keep it properly trimmed.

3



4



**4** The key to the hoist is to get the spinnaker to weather, out from behind the main, where it can fill. Sometimes the pole slides aft as Jeff trims the guy, so Jo Ann will shove the pole forward forcefully while continuing to hoist. Jeff waits to trim the sheet until the guy nearly hits the jaws. Once the spinnaker is clear of the companionway, Meg uncleats the jib halyard and trims the jib sheet so the jib will stay onboard.

SKIP BROWN (4)

5



**5** As soon as the jib is down, Jo Ann looks aft for puffs. Meg positions herself to balance the boat and watch for traffic. Jeff stands in the cockpit, trimming both the sheet and the guy, which allows him to shift his weight as necessary to balance the boat. I position my weight to help maintain a neutral helm.



## The Douse

**1** When dropping the spinnaker, we're especially prone to slowing down because it's usually a rushed series of events that must happen simultaneously with a smooth, slow, and tactical turn around a mark. Keeping all the sails trimmed appropriately while the spinnaker comes down is important. Meg has hoisted the jib while we're still a comfortable distance from the mark; it's well eased and nearly luffing to avoid choking the spinnaker.



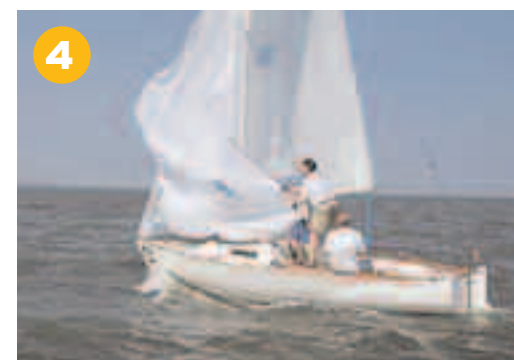
**2** Jo Ann releases the pole from the mast, first, then from the guy, and stows the pole. Many foredeck crews prefer the pole jaws up, but Jo Ann prefers to have the jaws down because once the trip line opens the jaws, she pushes the inboard end of the pole down, causing the outboard end to lift away from the guy. I release the weather twing, which allows Meg to hold the guy outboard to keep the spinnaker filled. With the guy in hand, she's ready to drag the spinnaker into the companionway.

SKIP BROWN (3)



**5** If the rounding is timed properly, the boat should be a half-length away from the mark, allowing me to make a smooth, wide turn, then round tight to the mark. As I start to steer the boat into the turn, Meg finishes stowing the spinnaker. Jeff keeps the jib well eased, which allows the bow to turn smoothly up to its closehauled course. In medium and heavy breeze, the boat should be kept flat through the turn in order to control the helm. In light winds, a slight heel to leeward will help the boat turn up and around the mark. Jeff trims the jib only when we're back on our closehauled course. Once he's confident we're at top speed, he sheets to max trim. ♦

SKIP BROWN (3)



**3-4** When it's time, Jeff tosses the spinnaker sheet free and helps Meg retrieve the spinnaker. If the sheet snags, I'll reach to leeward to help it run free. Jo Ann helps feed the spinnaker around the shrouds.

