

## WINNING TIPS FROM THE 2019 CHAMPS

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Boats begin arriving in Marblehead for the 2021 Rhodes 19 Nationals today and no doubt skippers and crews are already getting their heads in the game – looking at the forecast, talking through what they know about local conditions, and sizing up the competition. To help all the racers get dialed in, we asked 2019 winners Chris and Debbie Schreiber to walk us through their impressive performance in Hingham, a venue they'd never sailed in before.



*2019 Champs Christopher, Debbie & Chris Schreiber*

### Setting the Scene

Hosted by the Hingham and Hull Yacht Clubs (Fleet 40), conditions were light and variable the first two days, which favored the Schreiber's lighter crew weight. Sailing with their son Christopher, team Schreiber's combined crew weight was in the low 400s. Due to the light winds, only four races were in the books at the end of day two, but day three was a totally different story. The 36-boat fleet was treated to a 12-17 knot northeasterly that came in hard. The race committee took full advantage, giving the competitors four races. Team Schreiber proved they could get the job done in all conditions with a strategy centered on always staying in touch with the lead group. In the end, the Schreibers had all top three finishes except for a seven on day one that ended up being their throw out.

### You won the event by an impressive 14 points. What were the keys to your win?

The starts on day two made a difference. We didn't feel ridiculously fast even though our crew weight was in the low 400s. Clean starts, going fast downwind, looking for the pressure because it was very spotty. We did a lot of gybing to stay in the pressure and we really felt that optimizing for course to the mark was more important than staying up for speed. Rhodes are displacement boats, so they don't go all that much faster heading higher. Overall, we really just tried to be consistent and not do anything ugly – no over earlies. Of course, we had that seven in the first day because we got caught in a clump at the weather mark, but thankfully, that was our throw out.

### The bay between Hingham and Hull can be challenging with strong current and wind variables around the shorelines. Did you try to glean some local knowledge before the regatta?

We'd never sailed there before and we listened to the locals telling us to pay attention to the current. We looked at the charts and lobster pots. It was hard to justify banging a corner to play the current unless you really know, so we just tried to play more toward the middle, don't get too far out to a corner. About a third of the way up the beat, we'd assess and get a sense of which side to be on. Maybe don't hit a corner but be in the top group. That was our game plan. The current actually wasn't as big a factor as the breeze.

**What was your mindset going into the last day with a lead, but knowing the conditions were going to be very different from the first two days?**

It's always important to pay attention to where the good guys are in the regatta, but the last day, we really paid attention to Dave (Nelson). We wanted to stay with the competition, watch where they were going. Throughout the regatta, a certain group of boats would separate, usually the top six or eight. We didn't feel dominant, just consistent, so we took that mindset into the final day.

**What are your words of wisdom going into the 2021 Nationals?**

Don't get caught up in the little things. Keep your eye on the big picture, stay out of trouble. In Hingham, we did a lot of changing gears, so keep the communication going – get good crew input. And, really 90 percent of a Rhodes (speed) is because of what happens before you leave the dock.