

Wannabe a Wavesailor



PART 6:

In the latest instalment of his comprehensive series covering every aspect of wavesailing, **Jem Hall** gets you onto the wave and enjoying some frontside riding – and sets you a backside riding homework drill... Pix by **Gregg Dunnett** and **Andrzej Jozwik**.

FULL SPEED & FRONTSIDE

So, you've learned how to catch waves, and you've done some backside riding. Now it's time for the big one – the frontside ride. While backside riding is reserved mainly for cross-on to onshore winds, frontside can be performed in cross-on to cross-off winds. However, it's considerably easier in cross-shore and cross-off winds, so we'll save cross-on frontside technique and all its complications for a later date.

Thrills

Frontside is also described as 'down-the-line' (DTL) riding, and accelerating down the line of the wave as you bear away is some thrill indeed. Because you are turning off the wind and using the wave's energy, there is an immense feeling of speed and excitement. You really can't beat it – *this is wavesailing!*

Skills

In previous instalments we've already covered the various core skills that you'll need here, such

as good, fast gybes, 360s, and step-gybes. If these skills and your tuning are not on song, then frontside will be harder to dial. So, as always, the onus is on you to improve and learn these skills.

Feet

The key to frontside riding is all in the name – you have to turn off the front foot like a surfer and push the whole downwind / toeside rail into the water. So, leaning forward, pulling down on the boom and stretching out with that front arm will be *de rigueur* in the most important part of DTL riding – the bottom turn. As top UK wavesailor John 'Skyeboy' Skye recommends: *"It's a lot easier to make speed if you hold the rig forward, as opposed to laying it down. I have often gone out waveriding with one goal in mind – extend my front arm. Simple, but very effective."*

Progression

There is a definite order of progression to becoming a wave sailor:

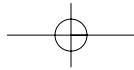
Holy trinity: Plane early, sail fast and fly upwind. Without it you're fish food!

Wave selection: Choose the right wave and it's so much easier.

Speed DTL: From catching the wave to bearing away, you have to be going *quick* to pull off a proper front foot bottom turn (as opposed to just pivoting round on the tail). The board wants to carve when going fast.

Head and hands: Look and carve downwind, with the back hand way back down the boom in the bottom turn, then look upwind and bring the back hand back up close to the front hand for the top turn. This is *so* important, and will make you stylish and prevent some big crashes.

Getting more vertical: Aiming the board back up the wave so that it's redirected by and with the wave's energy. This is essentially what we're all aiming to achieve. →



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➤ Head upwind and look out for the wave peaking

➤ Bear away and get that speed

Setting Up

To enjoy all this fantastic action on offer you must first catch your wave (check out last month), and then keep speed on it. It's usually a good idea to get some credit in the upwind bank by angling your board towards the wind as you're waiting for the wave to build, and looking up and down for the peak. In this sequence on a point break in Jericoacoara, Brazil, my upwind line is taking me towards the shallower water where the wave will 'peak' – i.e. get steeper. I'm waiting for the wave to wall up before I scissor the board to bear away downwind to pick up speed for my DTL ride.

The Frontside Ride

- 1** Watch the wave get steeper, and spot your peak downwind. You can see it here directly downwind of me; this is what you want to hit. Bear away and come down the wave with your hands together, then move them apart through the bottom turn. It's like you're going into a gybe but with both feet in the straps. You've rolled your bodyweight across and over your toeside as your back hand goes down the boom, and you're starting to carve gradually off your front foot.
- 2** As the rail bites, hold that rig forward and increase your carving front foot pressure. Extend that front arm and keep looking at what you're about to hit.
- 3** Drop your bodyweight even lower to pull down on the boom, and now you're giving it max carving. This is the position you would be in dead downwind in a good step gybe (hmmm, better improve those, then). Check out the arms – extended, wide, and way back down the boom. You're out in front of the wave and transferring more carving pressure onto the back foot, balanced by the rig being forward.
- 4** The rig starts to come upright here as you open the sail (easy with that back hand way back, like in a gybe), and you prepare yourself for the top turn. The board will start to flatten off, ready to change rails.
- 5** This is the transition from rail to rail as your head starts to turn and the back hand gets

ready to slide back up the boom. Your mantra of "hands apart then hands together" will serve you well here.

- 6** Move your back hand right forward and shift your bodyweight from over your toeside to more over the board. You're now moving closer to the peak of what you have seen and are aiming to hit.
- 7** All change, please! Your hands are together and your head's looking to where you want to go, which is now back down the wave. Shift your bodyweight outboard as you begin to weight the heelside to show the board's bottom to the wave.
- 8** Get really outboard and low. This allows you to push hard through your heelside as your back leg is more bent. It's like you're pushing the board down through the wave. With your arms extended and close together, get away from the rig and start to pull it forward to balance your heelside-driving back foot.
- 9** Aim to bring the rig forward here to open the sail and keep it out of the wave, which might otherwise catch the clew and earn you a good rinsing. As you develop, at this point you will have more choice as to what to do. Opting to go for the pose factor here, I have gone for a hard carve to throw some spray and am checking out how much I'm throwing, when I should in fact be looking right over my front shoulder or under my armpit (naughty Jemmy!) More on style, slides, gouges, one-handed action and aerials in later issues...

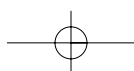


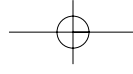
➤ Skyeboy frontside at Ponta Preta. Pic: PWA

HALL'S HOMEWORK

Please look back over all the homework I have already set and ensure that you are working on this. It's now in three parts:

- Off the water – get really fit and strong, eat well, read *Surf Science* and fitness books, plus of course all the articles in this series thus far.
- On the water, light winds – practice tacks, backing off, heli-tacks, and non-planing gybes.
- On the water, windy, flat – holy trinity, carve tacks, step-gybes, chop-hops and one-handers.
- On the water, wavy – go wavesailing! Get out, get high, get a wave – and rip it up...





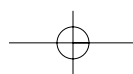
ADVANCING & ENHANCING

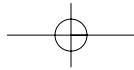


TOP TIPS & CROSS-OFF

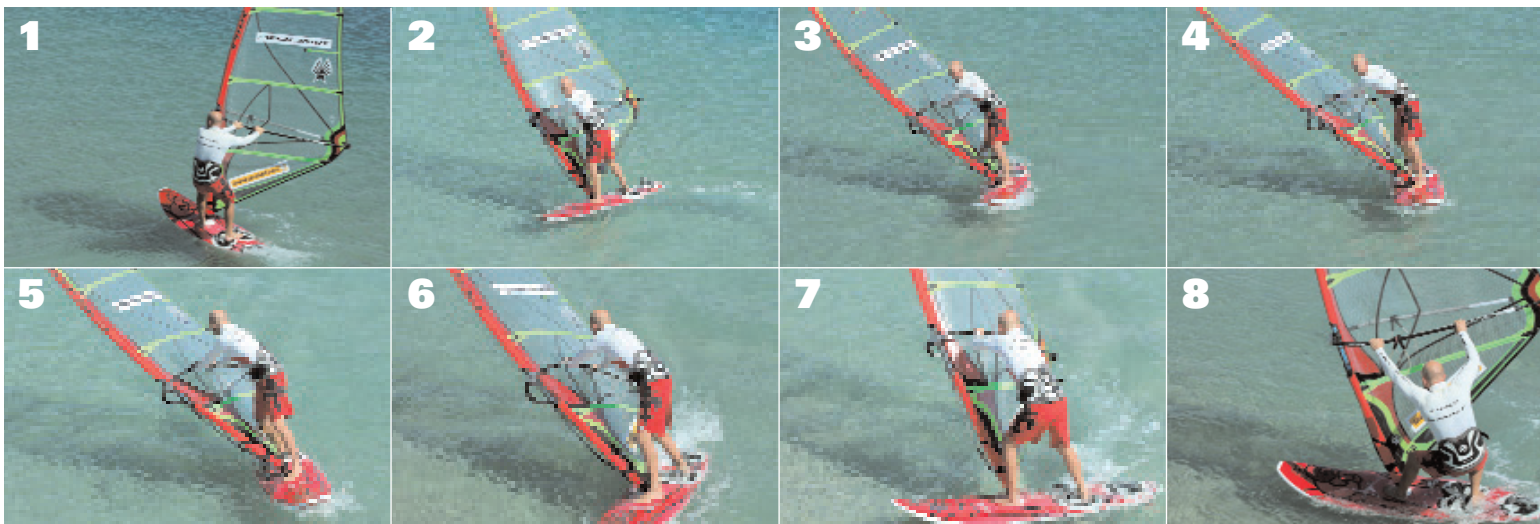
Choose a good wave and get speed on it. Aim to make turns along the wave and work on your head and hands. If you're blessed with cross-off wind then you blast along the middle of the wave and gain more speed as the wave builds, prior to your first turns. You can also make more turns and get into a rhythm of hands apart and toeside, to hands together and heelside.

Keep your goals simple. Think about things like "extend my front arm in bottom turn, look out of top turn, bring hands together in top turn, get lower in top turn" – or, as one of my recent clients was saying in his head after one of my more insightful coaching debriefs: "Get more vertical, dude..."





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Above Light winds and flat water with a floater (110 FSW here), small fin and small to medium sail (5.8 for me).

BACKSIDE DRILL

Many people returning from my clinics have been so inspired by the benefits of the light wind practise that they've actually bought bigger boards to go out more in light winds. The result of their light wind practice over months and years is plain to see – they're more efficient, consistent and stylish, and they can tack, gybe and heli-tack better.

To heli-tack you have to be able to sail front-to-sail, which is best learnt in light winds. Then, taking yourself from front-to-sail to back through the wind is similar to the backside skills we looked at last month – particularly the pushing out on the back hand and scissoring the board off the wind. I call this 'backing off'.

This drill will therefore make your backside riding better while improving or helping you to

learn the heli-tack – which, as I remember, was in your homework. Light winds build windsurfers!

Backing Off

1 Spread your feet and get your hands together. Look upwind to turn upwind, move the rig back and body forward. Your feet scissor the nose through the wind, front foot pulling and back foot pushing until you're through the wind (and not before).

2 Now that you've come through the wind the rig comes across you and you're ready to take the power by leaning down on the boom. *Top Tip: Your feet should be biased to your toeside, so shuffle them a few inches over to your toeside rail.*

3 Now you're front to sail look forward to assess your sailing line – *vision*. Ensure your rig is back and down and the body is forward. You can now see the benefit of dipping your rail; it tracks you slightly upwind where the rig is less powerful. Phew!

4 Control the power by keeping the rig away on your extended front arm while the back arm pushes out slightly. Back foot and toeside pressure and leaning over the rig more will get you back in control should the wind get stronger. As you're looking forward you can assess the wind and are therefore ahead of the game.

5 OK, enough front to sail now. To take you back through the wind, start to look back and heavily weight the back foot on your toeside. Remember the head change in your backside riding?

6 Now the 'pushing out the back hand' comes in, just like in your backside riding. This will give you a counterbalance from where you can start pushing the nose off the wind and pull the tail towards the wind.

7 Push out on your back hand further to bring you upright and more outboard in readiness to bear away. You're now almost at head to wind, and to steer the last bit it's all front foot pushing and back foot pulling as you start to fall back and out.

8 You're now through the wind, so you can drop down and push the nose off the wind. Get your back hand down the boom to twist the rig. This dropping and scissoring is – yes, you guessed it – just like when you backside waveride.

So you're now improving two skills at the same time – *AND* you're developing your windsurfing balance, fitness and core stability. I can't sell this any harder! The water's warm(er) and the light winds are there to be used. Do it and improve – the onus is, as always, on you. Do you *wannabe a wavesailor?* ☺



Part 7: Next month we'll look at a light wind drill to improve your frontside riding, and then the mechanics of going for forwards. Lovely..

Jem Hall is sponsored by RRD boards & Ezzy Sails, Pro Limit, www.2xs.co.uk and his site www.jemhall.com is powered by Herringbone.co.uk.

Jem's best-selling new technique movie, *Beginner to Winner* is out now. If you seriously want to improve and have a fantastic holiday, book one of his coaching clinics now as they're almost sold out. UK coaching in July is now also available.

John Skye is sponsored by F2, Naish Sails & Helly Hansen
John has been coached by Jem during their time in Team Fakefish.

