Whitey up to his waist even on a 105litre board!

having it large

BY GUY CRIBB

INtuition Pro Technique series goes large with production board World Speed Record holder – Britain's Dave White.

DAVE WHITE	GUY CRIBB
Height 6'1"	Height 5'11"
Weight 129kg (!)	Weight 88kg
Age 44	Age 35
Board Tabou Rocket 69 (125litre freeride) with 40cm fin.	Board JP 105 X-Cite Ride (105litre freeride) with 35cm fin.
Sail Gaastra Matrix 8.0m (no-cam high performance freeride sail).	Sail Neil Pryde 5.8m Search (heavyweight's/choppy water wave sail).

Whitey once bet me £1000 that he could overtake me sailing out of his harness and footstraps! But by the morning hangovers, his understanding was that the race should only be over 100metres, and mine was that there was no limit... as such the very drunken bet never actually took place. BUT he did come flying past me unhooked and out of the footstraps a few times to wind me up, and at other times picking his nose, or very often giving me the bird -- or sometimes waving to me! Needless to say I,m pleased our bet never took place...Some people are just bloody fast, and the only trends I can see are they either come from a good racing heritage, or they're just enormously heavy and dedicate their life to speedsailing. I fall into the first category, and Whitey into the second, but put head-to-head with the big man on a speed course, my ass is grass, whether he's in or out of the footstraps and harness!

Whereas most of us go out windsurfing and remain just on the wrong side of control as Mother Nature shows us who is boss, Whitey shows her he's boss! With cedar tree thighs and the might of a rhino, nothing is going to overpower Whitey. The stiffest masts bend like spaghetti; the steepest chop gets flattened; and if it weren't for kit breakages, Whitey would probably keep on accelerating until he sailed off the edge of the world!

Unfortunately kit (and body) breakages are the only things that bring his130-kilo charge to a halt. Whether it's rolling a car, high siding a super-bike or going over the handle bars on his road bike into a lamp post or tree; getting catapulted through his sail or breaking his mast with his head (as he once did); puncturing his lungs with his handle bars or even getting cancer for a year … it takes a hell of a lot to stop Whitey! Hence the reason why he is the most feared person to be sat at a bar with, dishing out tequila suicides (where he knocks back a shot of tequila, squirts some lemon in his eye then snorts a line of salt) and then passes you one.

Which brings me to your first lesson in how to sail very fast – remove the fear part of your brain, because travelling at over 30mph, you cannot afford to start worrying. You need to be confident and relaxed, albeit muscular and focussed. But sailing very fast is in next month's article; for now we'll dissect the Mighty Whitey and see how he and his kit differs from mere mortals.

Having sailed Whitey's kit a number of times I know how he rigs it (not to mention having the very clear view of his leech on the numerous occasions he's shot past me!).

Being twice as heavy as the average windsurfer, but using off the shelf toys, Whitey has to think 'out of the box' when it comes to tuning, and as such rigs and sails his kit in a way that would destroy an average windsurfer's joy of the sport forever. But there is method behind this madness … and revealing his method by comparing it with the correct 'average' windsurfer's set up will enlighten you as to why I think his tuning is wrong for mortals, but inspiring for heavyweights … and offering lighter windsurfers hope to sail faster.

Before you wonder how I challenge Whitey's tuning, remember he is about 130kg and his primary objective when he's windsurfing is to break the world speed record. He is not out there trying to prevent catapults or spinout … and neither is he learning to gybe or use the footstraps like the majority of people. He is a phenomenally talented sportsman (despite his appearance!), and is an inspiration to everyone with his surprisingly gymnastic tricks and dainty footwork. His kit is tuned very specifically for the 130kg fearless wild-man that he is!

This photo allows you to see the comfort of me on my smaller kit with my sail twisting off beautifully giving me control. And Whitey on his bigger kit also managing to get his sail to twist off nicely (despite his lack of downhaul), best noted by the 'breaking' (diagonal creases) in his rig, indicating that his sail is twisting off well even in the head. But when I'm on his kit *(right)*, because I'm lighter, the sail with the lack of downhaul isn't twisting off. As such I am completely overpowered and if I had the misfortune of hitting rougher water I'd be history.

So, the more downhaul you use the more control you have, and for most people control equals more speed. 130kg Whitey sailing in totally flat water is a very rare exception to this rule, and as such his technique should not be tried without parental guidance!

DOWNHAUL

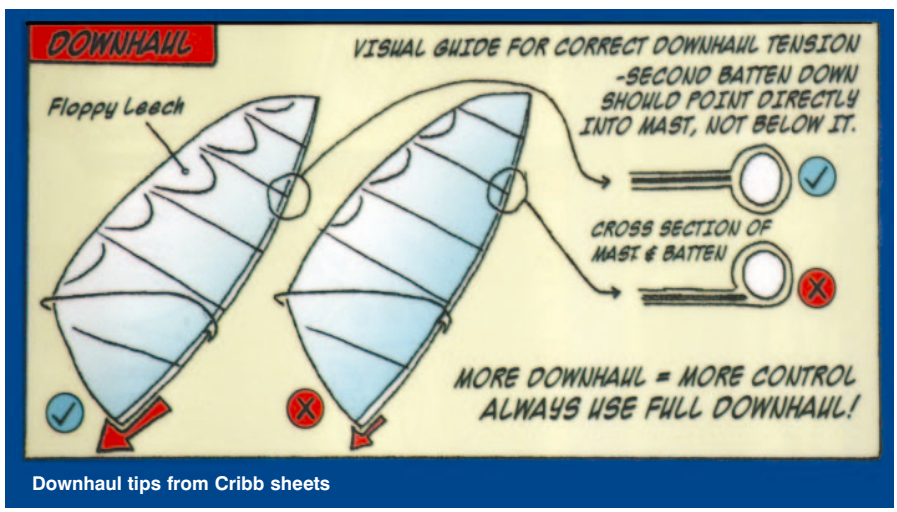
Increasing your downhaul dramatically improves your control (and therefore your top speed) and increases your sail's wind range. This is a fact for every intermediate windsurfer and anyone up to 110kg.

However, Whitey just wants raw power … his ideal sail would be an Admiral's Cup spinnaker! As such, he uses about as much downhaul as there is in my gran's Sunday dress – zilch! BUT (and this is a major but), although Whitey's got no downhaul, when a gust hits his rig, it twists off almost as well as when a gust hits mine. You see, he's 130kg hanging onto an 8.0m, when I'm 90kg hanging on to a 5.8m. With his weight, if his sail had the recommended downhaul tension, it would twist off so much that it almost be like a flag and wouldn't drive him forwards. So he uses much less downhaul and when the wind hits his sail, his enormous weight prevents it from quickly accelerating forwards, so it has to twist to leeward anyway. So he gets away with rigging his sail 'badly'. A lighter sailor using Whitey's set up would instantly be catapulted.

Check out my rig – a very powerful wave / freeride sail designed for great acceleration, but still with loads of twist in the head to dump the excess power in gusts or landing jumps. Whereas Whitey's is all raw power, not only being over 2.0metres bigger, but being fuller much higher up and without the correct downhaul, bellowing about halfway up the leech instead of twisting off progressively towards the head. You'd have to be at least 130kg to hang onto it…

Visual guide for correct downhaul tension – the second batten down should point directly into the mast, not below it.

Not enough downhaul – the second batten down is pointing below the mast, rather than towards it.



Downhaul tips from Cribb sheets

HARNESS LINES & BOOM HEIGHT

If you've been following this series on INtuition Pro Technique you'll know that literally all the world's best windsurfers use their harness lines within millimetres of each other and their boom heights are all within a few inches of each other. I call this perfect set up the G-Spot and you can apply it to your kit easily if you get a 'Cribb Sheet' from guycribb.com/shop, which measures everything for you.

Whitey is the first of the world's best sailors not to fit snugly into the G-Spot theory … and I'm kind of thankful for that as he is a truly exceptional case. But, he is still very close to it!

Whitey's harness line position is about 20mm (the width of one finger) behind the G-spot, but his boom height about five inches lower.

His harness line position is understandable – he's using at least a 2.0m bigger sail than anyone else on the water and needs all the help he can get to keep it sheeted in, so he's moved his rear harness line literally only 20mm further back than other pro sailors.

His front harness line though is significantly further forward than the rest of the world's best. This is partly due to the fact that because his sails are rigged with so little downhaul, they're unstable … hence the spread of his lines to handle the wandering 'centre of effort'. Also, because he is slow to plane he therefore has heaps of power in the front of the sail for longer than the average pro windsurfer, which he needs to put into his harness before his arms explode. So he moves his front harness line forwards to generate a spread of about two to three large fists wide! They're also further forwards because on a broad reach (the optimum speed sailing angle) the pull comes from further forwards in the sail. His harness line length is 26", which is 'normal' to 'short' for freeriding and racing.

BOOM HEIGHT

The fundamental difference between Whitey's windsurfing and the rest of the world is his lower boom, which puts a tremendous amount of weight onto his front leg, not just whilst he's accelerating, but also when he's going at full speed. Of all the aspects of his tuning, from the lack of downhaul and unusual harness line position, the lower boom has the most significant effect on his stance, and as such his stance is virtually unique amongst the world's best windsurfers.

In a word, it puts more weight through his front leg, which pushes the windward rail of the board down into the water more.

For the advanced windsurfer, lowering the boom has the same effect and is advisable in extremely rough water or overpowered conditions, digging the windward rail in, and improving your control. However using a boom as low as Whitey's for the intermediate to advanced windsurfer in normal conditions creates these typical ailments:

- Very hard to get planing.
- Board keeps swerving/pointing into the wind, especially when not planing.
- Frequent catapults.
- Less mastfoot pressure / downforce.

All of which are some of the most annoying aspects of windsurfing whether you're learning how to use the footstraps or simply have a good day blasting. And all of which are vastly improved by putting your boom higher.

Raising your boom basically takes the weight off your front foot and puts it onto the mastfoot, which improves your acceleration and directional stability no end.

Taking your weight off your front foot also makes it easier to get into the footstraps.

The higher boom also means that when you're sailing at full speed there is more weight on your back foot, which is fine up to about 30mph, but after that, you start wanting to have a bit more control over the widest part of the board that's beginning to have a mind of its own … hence lowering the boom to get more weight onto you front foot.

For the average windsurfer needing to have smooth acceleration, good control in the gybes or getting into footstraps, and likes to sail fast (but isn't about to blow away the world speed record), having your boom at the correct height (with slight adjustments either higher or lower for flatter / easier conditions or rougher / more overpowered conditions respectively), is the way forwards. (More INfo at guycribb.com / technique or on Cribb Sheets at guycribb.com / shop)

Note:

The fact Whitey uses a seat harness will account for his boom going down an inch or so lower than someone using a waist harness, but not lowering his boom over five inches, (thought I'd get that in there before it appears on a forum!).

Boom heights

BENT OR STRAIGHT?

Over the past decade windsurfing has developed 'easier to use' kit and the current trend of wave sailing and freestyle have made using a waist harness with relatively long harness lines (28inch) the norm, even in freeriding.

A waist harness with long lines creates a more bent, crouched sailing stance that allows you to sail coiled like a cat about to spring, setting you up ready to pounce into the next gybe, freestyle trick or jump. As opposed to the seat harness with shorter lines that locks your body into a straighter position, which isn't much good for entering gybes or tricks, but is good for straight line blasting.

As you can see from these pics, I'm more bent than Whitey. (although if you saw the photos of Dave driving his beach buggy in the 80s, you'd probably think otherwise!).

I am bent because this is a better stance to:

- Prepare me for my next move
- Increase my early planing and high wind control
- Give me the flexibility to make sudden changes of direction
- Hook in and out easier and smoother

All of which suits my sailing and I can still sail very fast.

Cribby's going into his gybe with more bent legs, improving control, especially in rougher water.

Whitey is going into his gybe with straighter legs because his stance on the approach to the gybe was straighter.

For want of a better expression, I'm more bent than Whitey! He's completely straight. Whitey's lower boom brings his weight forwards, extending his back leg and back arm straighter.

Whitey is straight; his lower harness and shorter lines transfer the enormous power from his rig, through his elephant-like legs into his board as efficiently as a steel crank shaft where nothing is going to give. And he can sail blindingly fast, but is at a disadvantage going into manoeuvres as he has to change from being totally straight to totally bent, upsetting the balance of his kit, whereas I'm already in position. That said Whitey does all sorts of freestyle that makes a mockery of most people's windsurfing, but the point is the straight body position as used by many windsurfers, especially those with seat harnesses or from old school windsurfing, doesn't help their manoeuvres.

Here's me entering a bottom turn – my crouched stance on the approach to this moment has enabled me to hardly flinch to unhook and remain low, keeping everything well under control...

...allowing an aggressively low bottom turn, which is basically what you should aspire to, going into your gybe.

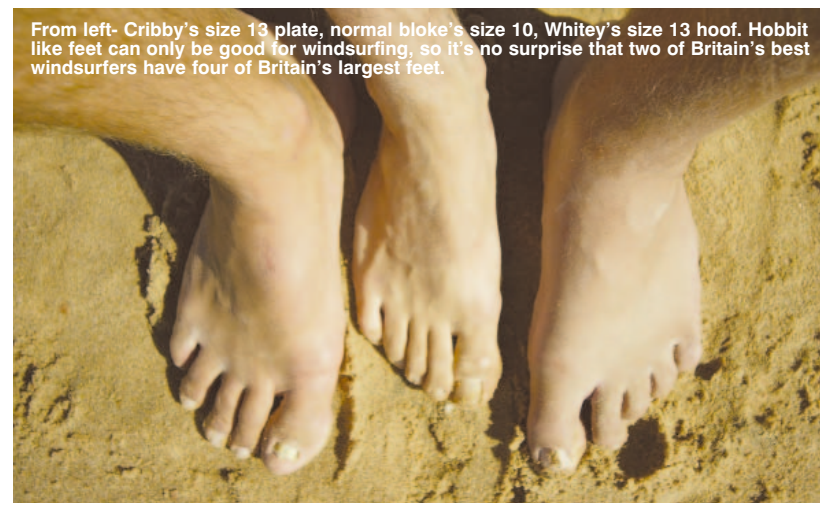
THE RESULT

The result of Whitey's lower boom is that he leans further forwards onto his front leg than most pro windsurfers. Although our legs are obscured by our sails in this photo, it's still clear that I've got more weight over my back leg than Whitey. This gives me a more versatile stance and I'm much quicker to accelerate up to full speed (35mph ish in normal conditions), but shortly after that, Whitey shows up and just pulls away as though I'm hardly moving.

For the extra acceleration, you'll find the average height of a racer's boom is higher than that of a speed sailor's boom.

Whitey is always overpowered and always sailing beyond the limit his kit was designed to be used in; hence, his radical tuning to suit his extraordinary style just wouldn't be suitable for you (unless you're over 120kgs and travelling at average speed of 40mph!). Just like sitting at the bar with Whitey, his windsurfing comes with a health warning!

Next month I'll show you how to go very fast, with a touch of Whitey's magic and INtuition's technique tips.



From left- Cribby's size 13 plate, normal bloke's size 10, Whitey's size 13 hoof. Hobbit like feet can only be good for windsurfing, so it's no surprise that two of Britain's best windsurfers have four of Britain's largest feet.

PICS: TWB, STEVE COOK AND DAVE FULLER. CRIBB BOTTOM TURN SHOTS BY BRENDAN PYATT © GUY CRIBB 2006