

[GUY CRIBB INTUITION]

WAVE SAILING WITH JASON POLAKOW

READING BETWEEN THE LINES HERE YOU'LL FIND TECHNIQUE AND TUNING TIPS TO TRY AND MAKE YOUR WAVE SAILING MORE LIKE JASON POLAKOW'S, THE MANY TIMES WORLD WAVE SAILING CHAMPION. YOU MIGHT ALSO FIND SOME BASIC TIPS THAT'LL IMPROVE YOUR EVERYDAY WINDSURFING TOO. BUT YOU WON'T FIND A DEDICATED INTUITION TECHNIQUE FEATURE, NOR A CRIBBY IN DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH A LEGEND.

These articles over the next months are to prove to you there is really only one way to windsurf, albeit with fractionally different styles, because all the world's best use the same basic technique and tuning, and if you wander too far from their style, you are going to find yourself sailing down dead ends and struggling.

This series introduces my Cribb Sheets (**Fig One**) a simple product that helps tune all your kit from downhaul to footstrap size – it even sets up your harness line position accurately every time. It works wonders with all my guests giving them a much smoother time on the water every time. If you want one, email me guy@guycribb.com

Having sailed both Robby Swift's and Ricardo Campellos's kit lots before, I knew the Cribb Sheets emulated their set up completely. I'd also tested my harness line theory on Bjorn Dunkerbeck's kit some years ago and it was precise. The first thing I did with Jason's kit was check his harness line position – once again – 100% precise using my Cribb Sheets. More on tuning next month. Time to show the rest of the world the perfect set up using many of the world's best windsurfers. All the necessary arrangements had been made and everything was going to plan en route to Hawaii until as I was literally about to board the plane with Anna, having packed only three sails (Swiftly was going to lend me boards, masts and booms etc out there). I got a call from Swiftly who was in France. To cut a short story shorter, I had no kit waiting for me on Maui after all.

Missing my first day windsurfing in Maui wasn't so bad – it was over mast high at Ho'okipa and people were getting seriously trashed on the rocks. Jason Polakow was ripping, and seeing him sail in the flesh, as opposed to the videos and mags, is a wonderful experience for any windsurfer. So when he came in and offered to lend me his kit, it was like Michael Schumacher pulling into the pits at the end of a Grand Prix and saying, "Cribby, borrow this for a few weeks," chucking me the keys to his Ferrari.

JASON POLAKOW

Jason is revered amongst the windsurfing crowd as the world's most radical wave sailor. He is also quite the legendary surfer too, appearing in the surfing press and movies for his fearless tow-in / big wave surfing. But this isn't enough to fuel his gun ho attitude, he's a former motor cross champion and if it weren't for breaking a load of bones in his body on an annual basis, he'd still be motor cross riding, (and hold many more world windsurfing titles the hospital bed kept him from claiming).

He has pilot licences for planes and helicopters (including an acrobat licence), heavy articulated trucks; he has his own motor cross track, two incredible houses – one in his home town Torquay, Australia and one on Maui. He leaps from one moment to another as his concentration races, his metabolism has recently been measured to reveal if he wanted to put on weight, he would need to eat a whole chicken and five eggs for breakfast, the smallest of four meals a day! He looks like he's made of rubber whilst windsurfing,

but has balls of steel. He's the kind of person who would have been a champion at any sport he put his mind to. He's the founder of JP Australia and if you want to know more about him, check out 'About Time', his amazing windsurfing video released a few years ago.

I don't know a single friend or acquaintance of his who doesn't have a story about his insane behaviour. One such story is this one:

Jason took a friend of his Hedgie up in a stunt plane, but didn't tell him it was a stunt plane. Jason pretended to panic as he faked losing control, dropping the plane from 5000ft into a controlled spin dive, doing about three or four rotations a second. Hedgie, white as a sheet, thinking he was about to die grabbed the controls and pulled back – the worst thing possible, throwing the plane completely out of control. Jason had to fight Hedgie off the controls, (which was almost impossible since Hedgie was all adrenalin) only regaining control of the plane, seconds from impact. Hedgie, not surprisingly was all tears and vomit by the time they landed. "Looking back it was a bit unfair," Jason reassured me. I have heard similar stories about jetski's, helicopters, motorbikes, cars, windsurfing, surfing, scooters and I'm convinced being Jason Polakow is unlike being anyone else.

JASON'S BOARD

"Jason uses the smallest boards out of anyone. He's just that good that he gets them planing even in no wind." Nik Baker

"Jason's boards are really difficult to sail. To sail them you've got to pretend you're Jason, like a monkey right over the board." Mark Nelson, Mistral shaper.

Jason Polakow spends his life developing new boards, improving them millimetre by millimetre to suit his most radical style of wave riding. These are custom, hand built boards in Maui, Hawaii, that are the inspiration and R&D behind the JP production wave boards.

Until now, a favourite board of mine for wave riding was the JP 69litre Wave board, finding the looseness of such a small board amazing. On a 69litre board, if the wind drops, it's almost impossible for me, at 85kilos (plus UK wetsuit), to even wobble out on it, but with the slightest breeze I can just about hang in there, even when I'm knee deep and sinking.

Jason's board though was definitely even smaller – 237cm long, by 51cm wide and no thicker than a ham and cheese sandwich, it was by far the smallest board I've sailed – I reckon it was about 60litres. I could stand on it and be almost up to my chest under water! As such I had a drastically reduced sail area, and, was that far underwater I was involved in a whole new set of currents, and, at Ho'okipa, actually stuck on the reef.

My first day out on it I was overpowered on a 4.4m Combat Wave and it was mast high. This was my first proper wave



JASON POLAKOW

DOB: 10/11/71

Height: 6ft

Weight: 80kgs
12 1/4 stone

GUY CRIBB

DOB: 3/4/70

Height: 5ft 11

Weight: 85 kgs
13 stone

sailing experience in Hawaii, and to be honest I would have preferred smaller waves to get into the swing of things, especially as I was driving someone else's Ferrari.

On the wave face I have never been on a board anywhere near as good as this one. As I got more confident about laying the rig down at over 30mph, bottom turning in front of a mast high open mouth of Pacific Ocean, wanting to eat me, I realised that this board was made to be driven and pushed way beyond the limits of most boards, or the people riding them. It felt much more like my smallest surfboard than my smallest windsurf board.

The harder I pushed this board, the better it worked, the tighter I turned, the better it felt. The only thing holding this board back from looking like Jason's own style of riding, was me – too fat and too scared to do what he does! He literally waits for the wave to devour him before smacking off the lip, whereas I'd prefer not to be eaten by anything at sea.

There are two main differences about this board from any boards you will have ever sailed. Firstly its shape; and secondly how it's supposed to be sailed. They of course go hand in hand, in the same way that a JP X-Cite Ride is a board cleverly designed to give you plenty of thrills riding fast in control and gybing smoothly providing 'an exciting ride'. Jason's wave board gives a world champion the ability to turn on a sixpence at 30mph, pulling knee-crunching G-force as though you're on a fairground ride locked in by metal rails. This board simply doesn't slip an inch out of its turn. And when you're under the lip of a mast high wave, using every muscle and every cell of concentration, it's just as well this board is so reliable. This kit wasn't around in the 1990's. In fact, this board wasn't even around last year. This board is the state-of-the-art dog's danglies! And it's for sale! Jason wanted US\$1000 for it because there's something about a millimetre out on it, and he needs perfection to keep his sailing as precise and extreme as it is.

I was seriously tempted – if I lived on Maui, I would have bought it there and then, even though it was too small for me; I had never in my life worried about my weight, but for the first time ever I actually seriously had an incentive to shed my beer gut. If I could lose a few kilos, it would have been worth it just to be able to use that board a bit easier. As it was, sailing out on such a wee thing, through the inevitable currents and light winds in the impact zone, meant I usually drifted about 100-200m downwind every time I was wobbling out. I just couldn't quite pop it out of

the water and get it going; if it were a few litres larger, or if I were about 4-5kgs less, it would've been manageable.

"I have to be really careful about my weight – if I put on a couple of kilos I can't ride my boards any more. The volume distribution on them needs to be exactly right for me." Jason Polakow

I always make sure all my guests on my INTuition Surf Gods (wave sailing) courses set their boards up using the front hole option for their front footstraps, to get them as far forwards on the board as possible.

Jason's footstraps are another two-inch's further forwards than on a production board, giving him 18.5inches of spread! But this isn't because his legs are super long – when I ride someone like Nik Baker's or Robby Swift's boards who have short legs, their front straps are also well forwards. This enables Jason, and all good wave sailors, to bury more length of the board/rail into the water, crucial for handling high speed bottom turns.

Being further forwards on the board also helps your early planing, crucial for getting out over the white water, where ideally you're already in your footstraps even if you're not quite planing, so that when the board gets knocked around, you remain in firm contact with it.

Despite the similarity between these two bottom turns, the subtle differences are partly what makes Pozza the incredible sailor he is. Jason is generating more Downforce than me, keeping the nose of his board lower than mine and thus engaging more rail into his bottom turn, making the board perform to it's max. He keeps the nose down not just by having his front foot slightly further forwards, but by two main other actions that I am always on about to my guests, whether they're going into a carve gybe or a bottom turn:

1. Jason has a wider grip, and
2. His elbows are pointing down, a sure indication that he's pulling downwards into the boom, increasing Downforce/mast foot pressure.

My front elbow is just lifting a bit, releasing Downforce and allowing the nose to rise and for my sins my arms aren't wide enough apart, meaning I could all too easily lose control of the rig. I can hear hundreds of INTuition guests laughing at me now!

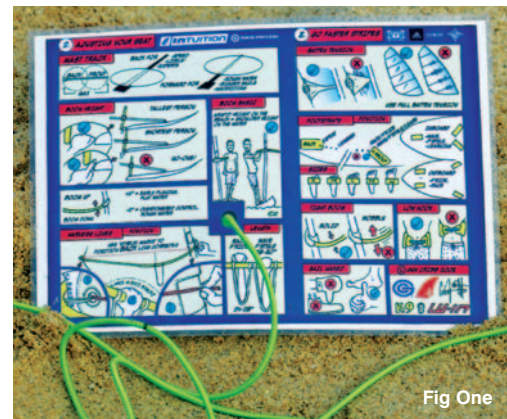


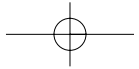
Fig One



Jason's boards have the front strap about 2inches further forwards than a production board' and pic of 'Cribb Sheets, footstraps' with caption 'Use the front hole for your front strap, and make them huge for wave sailing

BOTTOM TURN





[GUY CRIBB INTUITION]

DOWNFORCE

Only if the nose of the board is down, so that the board is level in the water, will you ever have a chance of doing a decent bottom turn, or carve gybe. Just like riding a bicycle, it won't turn if it's doing a wheelie – the front wheel needs to be down. ('Downforce' and 'mast foot pressure' are the same thing.)

Downforce/MFP is achieved in three main ways:

- * Pulling down with the front hand
- * Pulling/sheeting in with the backhand
- * Tipping the rig forwards

BOTTOM TURN TECHNIQUE

Move your backhand right back (as far as you can reach) This gives you better leverage over the boom, enabling you to pull heaps of power into the rig to:

- * Increase mast foot pressure, keeping the board under control
- * Increase speed
- * Increase control

Crouch down bending your knees (as much as you can)

Bent knees enable you to push the board to the outside of the turn, which tightens the turning arc. Getting low naturally pulls more weight down into the boom, increasing:

- * Mast foot pressure and therefore control
- * Spring loading the board to pop it up the wave face
- * (mostly used in side onshore conditions)

Pull down with your front hand (as hard as you can)

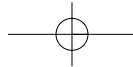
To increase mast foot pressure and therefore control.

Look at the wave

Jason and I are both putting all these key points into practise here, radically low (eye level below the boom – see previous page).

CRIBBY GOUGE





INtuition WAVE RIDING

GO FOR IT

Jason puts every effort into his wave riding, even on the smallest of waves. He is all strength, agility and timing to perfection. I never once saw him do a casual turn. Every one was full power, full effort, total aggression, a brilliant attitude for all of windsurfing, and especially wave riding.

SPEED

Speed is the key to good wave riding. You get speed partly from the power in the sail, but mostly from the power of the wave, surfing your board. The higher up the wave face you are, the faster it will push your board, so get high!

Pumping the sail, to increase power and speed, is a crucial skill for wave sailing.

BASIC WAVE RIDING

The very basics for down-the-line or front side wave riding (front side because you're facing the wave, as opposed to back side, when your back's to it) is press through the toes to bottom turn towards the wave, then press through the heels to cutback. This is basic foot steering.

Move your backhand right back for the bottom turn, then slide it right forwards for the cutback, opening the sail so that the power can come back on quickly to pull you back down the wave face. This is basic power control.

Look at the wave face during the bottom turn, ideally right at the section you're aiming to hit. Then just before you cutback, look back at the beach. This is basic steering, looking where you want to go takes you there.

DIFFERENT CUT BACKS

These two sequences show a basic cut back by me, just turning off the shoulder (unbroken part of the wave.) This is actually more of a 'gouge' because the tail is digging right into the wave and throwing a lot of spray, then Jason doing a smack (or crack) because he's hitting the section (the breaking section of the wave).

The basic difference between these two sequences, and the ones overleaf is all in the timing, as setting up for them is pretty similar.

Whatever style of cutback you're going to do, the most important thing is to hit the steepest part of the wave, which knocks the board back down the face, setting you up for your next turn. If you don't, then the flow of water over the not so steep wave face will just suck you over the back of it.

Knowing that the lip of the wave is going to knock his board back down the face, for a smack, as Jason demonstrates here, he can really throw the board up the face by releasing all the Downforce and extending his arms and legs above him towards the lip.

Sure enough, the lip knocks his board back down the face underneath him, even though a moment before all his kit was literally above him.

In my more basic cutback, because I don't have a breaking section or lip to knock me back, I have to stay more above the board and just carve heavily off my back foot, digging in with my heel for a gouge.

Note how radically open my sail is – this is to ensure the power comes back on for my next turn that I'm already setting up for.

JASON SMACK



[4]

[3]

[GUY CRIBB INTUITION]



AERIALS

The basics to doing an aerial is to hit the breaking section of the wave, right where it's peaking, ideally with the wave peeling towards you as it is in both these sequences. This is not just a good ramp, but it's also moving towards you, ensuring the most power to throw the board skywards.

Just like jumping, the faster you're going and the bigger and steeper the wave, the higher you'll fly.

When you're learning aerials, you tend to just fly out the back of the wave, but your objective is to land back on the face. This is achieved by combining a good cutback, with a basic jump, and impeccable timing. Looking back towards the beach just before take off helps twist your body and thus turns the board back towards the beach.

Both these aerials show the dedication needed, throwing the board up the face right into the edge of the breaking section, and if compared to the previous page 'smack' sequence, you can see the technique is virtually the same, the difference purely being what part of the wave was hit.

However Jason's tweaked aerial, a trademark move of his (usually performed off a mast high wave and one-handed), takes decades of practise. He's basically set himself up for this just before take off, knowing his timing was perfect he's able to push the tail right away from him by extending his back leg, before yanking on his back hand to power up the sail and pull the board back underneath him. This is easier to achieve when the conditions are slightly more onshore.

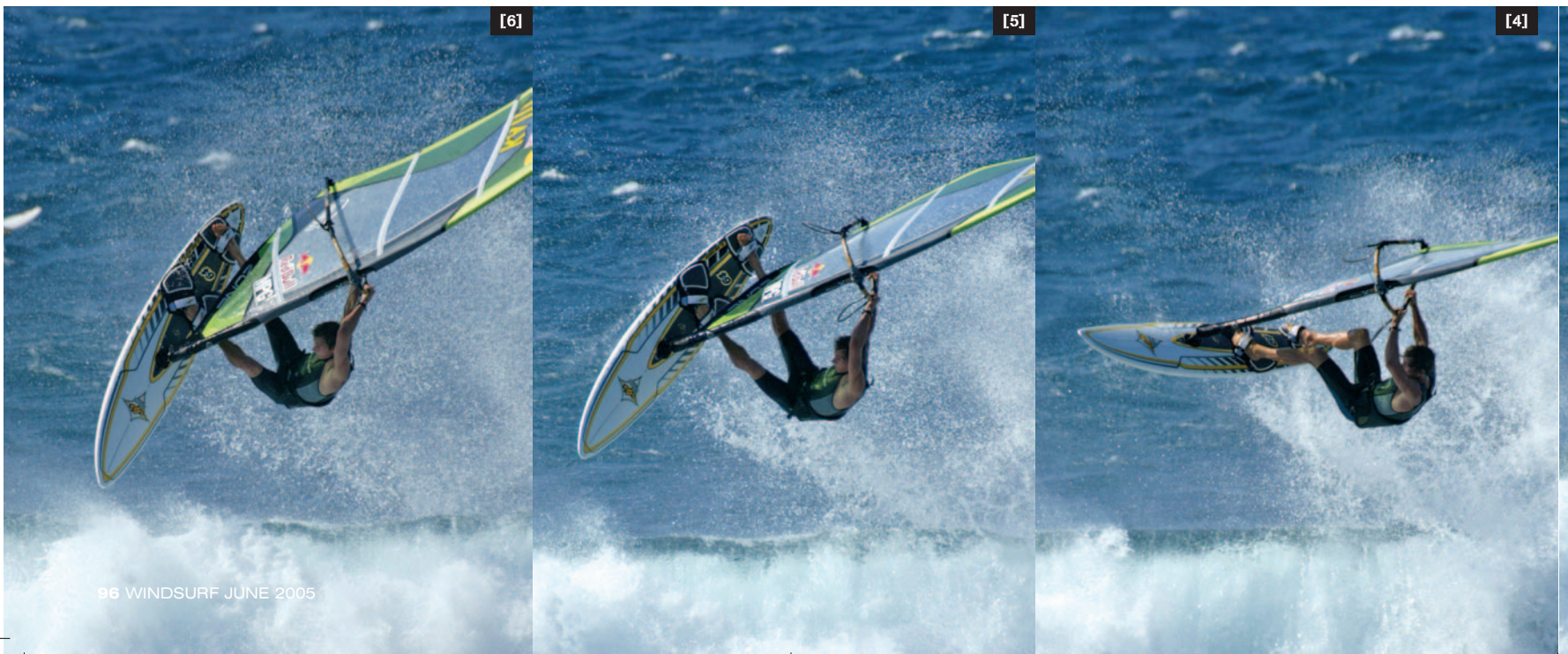
SUMMARY

For all the aspirations I had to write this feature, it was finally determined by what photos I had to use, the space I was restricted to and the time I had to write it. These boundaries created this feature, which as you can see has become a very basic guide to how to wave ride, my favourite area of windsurfing, and certainly Jason's, who is widely respected as the greatest wave rider windsurfing has ever seen.

[6]

[5]

[4]



[2]

[1]



CRIBBY AERIAL

GUY CRIBB

- * Twelve times British Windsurfing Champion
- * Windsurf Magazine technique guru
- * INTuition Godfather
- * Britain's Most Wanted windsurfing coach, running 24/7 INTuition windsurfing holidays all year round, all over the world with a 100% wind and surf record so far in 2005!

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Cribby's INTuition sailing with Jason Polakow is to be continued



JASON TWEAKED AERIAL

[3]

[2]

[1]

