



CATCHING A WAVE

wannabe a Wavesailor

In this month's instalment of his comprehensive series examining every aspect of wavesailing, Jem Hall continues his fully frontside series as he gets you carving sweetly through your bottom turns...

So, you're now gaining knowledge of the art of positioning. You know where to be in the wave arena, and you're able to get speed down-the-line. Now it's time to use that knowledge.

Frontside riding, which has you facing towards the wave and is also called 'down-the-line (DTL)', is the name of this month's game. Cross-shore and cross-off winds are the easiest for frontside, so this is what we'll look at as we examine the basics of frontside waveriding with the gateway to it all, the bottom turn. This is a turn initiated at the bottom of the wave in which the wave's energy and your speed are used to get you back up the wave so you can kiss the lip with a tasty top turn. This is where you should be salivating about all the spray you're going to be throwing around.

Many waveriders can have a good top turn, but you're most respected for your prowess, technique and style at the bottom. As maestro Levi Siver says, "You may spend your whole life improving this". If you have speed and style in the bottom turn then you can get back up the wave faster and steeper to accept all the energy from the wave in your top turn. You can then smack the wave as opposed to it smacking you.

As some of you may know I go on and on about carve 'step' gybes, the reason being that there are many similarities between it and your bottom turn technique. Most importantly the straight front arm and back hand down the boom. Make the back of the boom your new best mate and your gybes, bottom turns and forwards (amongst many moves) will flourish.

TUNING

By failing to prepare you're preparing to fail, so you'd best get fully tuned up and ready for some fast turns. Your footstraps should be big so you can get over your toeside rail and carve hard. It's damn near impossible to carve hard if your straps are tight, so if your straps are like tourniquets then you're better off getting into S&M instead. The mastfoot should be moved around to find its sweet spot – a good starting point is 135cm from tail. Moving it back loosens the board, forward controls the board. Position your lines relatively far back so you can get your rig forward. Yep, that's right – lines back will get your hands back, which in turn gets the rig forward (and across you in the middle of the bottom turn and the forward). When you use long lines it's for easier unhooking; you can get low to improve wind range and you can sail with your front hand back to reap huge rewards.

You can loosen up your FSW by putting in a smaller (22-25cm fin). Overhand is the grip of choice so you can create downforce, just like in front crawl or surfing.

CHECKLIST

Your wave selection is based on experience and judgement, so you must keep reflecting on this throughout. By preparing your equipment you're ahead of the game, but to be even more ready for performing in the waves we strongly suggest you embrace becoming a waterperson by surfing / SUPing. This allows you to catch waves and practice turning through different body positions, foot-weighting and moving your head and hands – exactly like wavesailing.

Just as we have a Loop Club (check the boards.co.uk forums) we also have a Waveriding Club, and these are the rules:

1. There is no Waveriding Club.
2. Get out the back efficiently, consider your route and technique.
3. Turn around and wait or catch a wave at the bus stop. Right time, right place and all that jazz.

OPPOSITE MAIN: Frontside means turning on the front foot
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Big FSWs require different carving
TOP: Rig forward, front arm extended, back hand down the boom and on the front foot
ABOVE: Open the sail and go onto the back foot to increase the carve
PHOTOS: Clark Merritt / SoloSports

4. Get speed along the wave.
5. Drop down the wave and make shallow bottom and top turns, focusing on head and hand movements.
6. Go more vertical as you bottom turn faster and harder and then turn back up the wave steeper and more aggressively.
7. Smack it, aerial it – just do what you can to send it back out there.
8. Enjoy both your successes and failures.
9. Always smile while swimming back to your kit.

At first you will be making turns along the easier / less steep / greener sections of the wave to groove into the general flow of your frontside turns. As you progress you can position yourself upwind / upwave of a peak (a steeper section) so you can time your bottom turn to meet the lip in your top turn. Yet again, this is all about our very dear friends: judgement and experience.

The absolute key to frontside is that you have to follow its namesake and turn off the front foot like a surfer and push the whole downwind / toeside rail into the water. This will require you to lean forward, pull down on the boom, bend your ankles and extend your front arm. Let's examine the basic bottom turn technique...

1. Get high up on the wave to get your speed and aim to make your turn on the wave – and definitely be initiating your carve at least 3/4 of the way down the wave-face. It's like you're gybing, only with both feet in the straps. After dropping down the wave, ROLL your bodyweight across and over your toeside as your front hand stretches the rig forward while you look forwards and move your back hand way down the boom. Start to carve progressively off your front foot and begin to sheet in with the back arm to 'show the sail' (to the inside of your turn) and feel the rail.
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 give it max carving. You're just out in front of the wave and will now transfer more pressure onto the back foot, which is balanced by the rig being forward. This will begin to tighten your arc and take you back up towards the wave, so ensure you don't come too far out in front and lose speed. At this point look back up at the lip you want to smack.



CLIENT'S CORNER

Carrying on with the toppest of tips from my very own bunch of weekend warriors, these are the insights they gained from joining me on my PSC, Baja wave clinic in 2009 – and often other coaching weeks as well. I didn't prompt them in any way, so there may be some repetition as they say it how they see it, although I had to edit some of their ruder comments.

Gary Lawton

A keen wavesailor who hails from London and is often scoping out the best venue for the weekend sojourn to a windy-wavy coastline. Gary has worked with me from budding carve gyber to progressing wavesailor.

- How you gybe is how you bottom turn.
- From your 3/4 up the wave position, drop down, gain speed and get your back hand well down the boom.
- Give yourself some space from the wave (to give you time to set up for the top turn – more on that next month).
- Look where you're going – i.e. back up the wave, not at the beach.

Stephen Hay

First clinic and a grizzled wave traveller now landlocked in Switzerland for his sins, who really stepped it up throughout his fortnight in PSC.

- Front hand back.
- Front arm straight, push down through the mastfoot.
- Back hand back.
- Chuck the rig forward.
- "Bend ze kneez", you bender!

Lou Mason

Well known on the South Coast and has been, it seems, everywhere, including two clinics with me a while back. Very keen and determined.

"For bottom turns, the important tips are sailing the correct line down the wave to enable you to turn on the right part of the wave, and not to sail straight out in front. Learn to do front foot laydown gybes and depower the rig, especially when it's windy or in big waves, and remember those hand and head movements. Get front foot / toe pressure to enable the rail to grip and not be too back-footed and upright in the turn, which is easier said than done."

Mario Gozzetti

Very keen Italian wavesailor who loves going for it and enjoys the beatings when it's necessary to take them. Blossoming after his third clinic and loves his bottom turns.

"As with every windsurfing move, preparation's the key. You need to have your board set up correctly for the conditions and to be in the right part of the wave. I find it useful to try the general set-up and adjust it 1cm further back or forward. In general in cross/cross-off I prefer to have the mast a bit more forward and the fin a bit more toward the tail, while in onshore the mast and the fin are a bit closer.

"You have to be a bit upwind of the peak of the wave and about two-thirds of the way up the wave-face and wait there with the nose pointing downwind. The front arm is close to the harness lines and both feet are in the straps. When you see that the wave peak is about to form (I usually use as a reference the wave itself. If I'm high I can see downwind as to how the wave is shaping up). This is the moment to release the brakes and accelerate at maximum speed. You have to put your weight on the front of the board, pushing on your front foot by bending your front leg (ankle and knee) and accelerate. The board has to go on the wave-face surf-style, 45 degrees with the wave and downwind – not perpendicular down the wave. It really helps to be forward with your head, shoulders and hips. Your ankles and knees should really bend (large footstraps!) and you have to be low. The ankles are very important. While you're bending, the back hand goes to the back of the boom, and this happens by bringing the rig forward with your front straight arm and NOT by moving the back hand back.

"Now you're at maximum speed and almost parallel to the wave, the back hand moves a bit further back and your front arm is always straight. The whole bottom turn is driven by the head, the shoulders, the torso and the hips, which progressively move first of all forward and then towards the wave-face by keeping your ankles and knees really bent. I use my arms to drive the shoulders, the torso and the hips as if I am skiing. Now you're going toward the wave, your shoulder and hips are facing the wave-face and your legs are straighter, your back hand is well down the boom and you're going slightly clew-first, getting ready to hit that lip..."



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OPPOSITE TOP: Weight comes back and back hand down the boom OPENS the sail, just like a gybe – PHOTO: Clark Merritt / SoloSports

OPPOSITE MID: Stephen Hay, weight back and not committing on a big one – PHOTO: Gary Lawton

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Much better – rig and body forward – PHOTO: Gary Lawton

BELOW: Gary Lawton top turning away – PHOTO: Clark Merritt / SoloSports

4. Now open your sail – which will be easier with that back hand right down the boom, just like in a gybe. The board will start to flatten off ready to change rails and for you to go into your **top turn**, where you look forward, bring your hands together (back hand forward), and get your weight outboard on your heels to change direction and use the wave's energy to take you back down the face. Whoosh! What a feeling...

GOALS

When you're bottom turning keep your targets simple and perhaps work on one at a time?

- Extend your front arm in the bottom turn.
- Get your back hand further back in the bottom turn.
- Lean further forward.
- Aim to get more rail in the water.
- Look forwards and then out of your bottom turn towards the lip.

DIFFERENT STROKES

Different boards have different rockerlines, tail widths, max widths and fin configurations, so will require slightly different techniques to get the best out of. The amount and timing of your carving foot pressure, and also your body position, need to adapt to suit a board's characteristics. For example, a bigger board will require you to carve more gradually at first and then go really hard in the middle of the turn. This might be when you're on a FSW as you look to get into wavesailing. Bigger-tailed boards would be the same, so as you look to improve you must experiment to find the sweet spot for the conditions, the board you're using, and your own individual style.

next month...

We will look at the top turn...

HALL'S HOMEWORK

After a damn cold winter, spring is upon us, the days are getting longer and warmer, and along with this the payback of a winter fitness regime sees some caged wavesailors ready for action. So you need to be ready for your ocean duel and that means thick wetsuits, rigging coats, hoods and mitts at the ready, and all toys in working order. How are your lines and straps looking? Like relics from the last century?

With your kit in order and fitness super-charged you can now, when conditions allow, catch the right wave at the right time and then bottom turn in the right place and in the right way. If waves are not a-plenty then really get your hands back in those gybes and work on your front foot carving in gybes, ducks, and 360s. If you have light wind and a windsurfable SUP then you can work on your positioning and wave awareness. This can also be done while surfing or paddling on your SUP too.

JEM'S BRAND NEW WAVE TECHNIQUE MOVIE 'WINNER TO WAVESAILOR' IS READY TO PURCHASE NOW, AND FOR ALL YOUR FUNDAMENTALS THERE'S 'BEGINNER TO WINNER'.

RRD boards, Ezzy Sails, Big Salty Weather, Flying Objects, USPmedia.TV, Prosport Sunblock and Grasshopper Porridge sponsor Jem Hall. Check out www.jemhall.com for more details.

If you seriously want to improve and have a fantastic holiday book on a 2010 coaching clinic NOW, as they are about to sell out! Including Moulay, Rhodes, PSC / Baja, Ireland, Mauritius and Jeri, Brazil.