



TOPPEST OF TURNS

PHOTO: Clark Merritt / SoloSports



wannabe a Wavesailor

Jem Hall forges ahead with his fully frontside series as he gets you attacking the lip with some tantalising top turns.

Let's take your amazing wave selection and full-power bottom turns and put them to good use by throwing some spray in your top turns. As you're starting to get in the bottom turn groove you'll now be in a position to arrive at the top of the wave with more speed and power, allowing you to be much more aggressive in the top turn. However, the initiation of the top turn begins much sooner than you think.

The top turn calls upon some basic skills that we use in all our windsurfing sessions:

- Look where you want to go – in this case turning back upwind.
- Bring your hands together when sailing upwind to power up the rig. In the top turn this follows through to opening up the sail, thereby powering it up.

Before we get all techy let's keep it simple. Wavesailing is all about head and hands. Look downwind with your hands apart for your bottom turn, then look upwind with your hands together for your top turn. If you start really focusing on your head and hands in your blasting, sailing upwind, gybes and tacks, well, then you're evolving as a wavesailor – so get on it!

TUNING

I covered this last month, so no slipping back please. It's worth taking a look at the March issue to remind you of the key areas to look at – especially as your kit may now be poking its head up for the first sessions of the year. By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail.

TIMING

With all your ocean realignment in wind and watersports you'll now be benefiting from better timing, and at this stage of your journey will have fully realised that 'good judgement is based on experience, and experience is the result of poor judgement.' You must enjoy both the pain and pleasure of getting it wrong and right, and reflect on it to move forward. You will go too late up to the lip and get smacked down (over the falls), or fall off the wave (going over the back), as well as getting your timing spot-on and making that connection so that the bottom of the board is exposed to the powerful surge of the wave, redirecting you with speed and energy.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION...

Wavesailing is hugely condition dependent and the good times flow when tide, swell direction and size, wave speed, wind direction and speed all combine to give you some kick-arse action. Cross to cross-off winds give you speed down-the-line, and cross-off especially so, as you have cleaner faces and often longer waves. We benefited from a



great swell and the consistent cross-off winds last year in Punta San Carlos (PSC), Baja, and the longer waves gave my crew more opportunities to get into a flow in their turns. So please seek out these conditions to take your riding forward. Cross-off gives you easier, longer turns with plenty of speed, yet it is harder to get more vert. Cross-shore is bumpier and easier for going more vertical and making aerials. Cross-on, our standard in Europe, will be covered later.

TOP UP

To stay on top of your game I suggest you re-examine the rules of 'Waveriding Club' from the March issue before your all-out assault on the lip (top) of the wave.

Aim to make some easier turns along the wave first and just practice the general flow of your frontside turns, focusing on head and hands and the changes in toe and heelside pressure. As you improve in this you'll be hungry for some lip-smacking goodness and, armed with the mantra 'if you don't go you just won't know', looking to time your hits to meet steeper sections.

Let's examine the top turn technique:

1. You've just finished your front foot bottom turn and moved on to the back foot, and will now begin to look up at the lip at what you want to hit.
2. Start to open your sail, which will be easier with that back hand right down the boom, just like in a gybe. You're three-quarters of the way down the wave, and more back foot carving pressure will begin to tighten your arc and take you back up towards the top, ensuring that you don't come too far out in front and lose speed. Your rig comes more upright here and moves across to the outside of the

turn as your knees and hips oppose by moving on your toeside rail (all just like a good step gybe).

3. This is the transition from rail to rail as your head starts to turn and the back hand slides back up the boom – thinking 'hands apart then hands together' will serve you well here. Do this before you reach the top of the wave! Shift your bodyweight from over your toeside to come back across the board to be more outboard and over your heelside. (Don't worry about the rocks.)
4. Move your back hand right forward, shift your bodyweight more outboard and apply weight to your heels. This will expose the bottom of the board to the wave and begin your redirection. Start to turn your head to look back to the beach (more than here).
5. As you look back down the wave and weight your heels the board will turn, sharpish! Get really outboard and low, which will enable you to push hard through your heelside as your back leg is more bent. Keep away from the rig through extended and close-together arms so you can start to pull the rig forward to balance your back foot heelside driving pressure and get some speed out of your top turn. Come on baldy – look forward more and stop looking for your spray...
6. As you finish your turn aim to bring the rig forward here to open the sail. This will keep it out of the wave, which can catch the clew and result in a good working. Depending on your ability and the wave you have many options at the lip, as Mario points out. Here I'm more concerned about my next turn as I enter the next section of the wave, the Chilli Bowl in PSC, Baja.

CLIENTS' 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.

Martin Batstone

A sarcy Aussie doctor and surfer who loves to smack it and get the rotations in. He's benefited from three clinics.

"Have speed. Pick the steepest section of the wave or the cresting lip for maximum push back to the beach. [Once you're comfy with making easier turns. Jem.] As you turn off the top look back to the beach to get your body turning.

"Move your back hand forward and pull down on it so the sail gives you the resistance to really push out your back leg and throw up some spray. You can get even more leverage against the tail if you're leaning outboard and not standing up straight over the tail! Don't be afraid to charge the fat ones every now and then. You only get better by having a go."

Mario Gozzetti

Very keen 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.

"You're just about to finish a clean bottom turn and have no time to rest – the top turn is waiting for you. The top turn is all about aiming to get vertical, and to me this means meeting the wave at 90° with the nose, clew-first and in switch-stance position – pretty challenging. As it's not an easy position to hold for long at full speed I aim to maintain it for the shortest possible time. How? By being very fast and doing a very quick and narrow arc after a relatively long arc in the bottom turn. My inspiration and idea for this is from surfing and watching surfers' top turns. I don't think there is just one top turn, but different types:

"Aggressive: As the bottom of the board is about to kiss the lip, if you're not fast you'll end with a nice underwater diving back-loop (nice new move!). Once the lip has touched the bottom of the board you use the strength of the wave to redirect by driving the board with your front foot to turn back, using your back foot as an ideal pivot for the redirection.

"Wide arc: This has more or less the same timing and arc of the bottom turn – a sort of dance / waterskiing on the wave, where you throw a nice long spray off the top.

"Smack the lip: This is an aggressive top turn that's a bit delayed. You have to wait till the board is out of the wave at the point of your front foot, and once there your front foot is the pivot of the rotation and your back foot aggressively pushes the tail out.

"Cutback: Similar to the wide arc, but once on the top of the wave you redirect aggressively upwind, exaggerating your head movement." [This takes you BACK to the 'curl', the steeper part of the wave, so you can restock on energy from the wave, and is more of an overturn. Jem.]

Stephen Hay

First clinic for this grizzled wave traveller now landlocked in Switzerland for his sins, who really stepped it up throughout his two weeks in PSC.

"Ride loads of waves, as it's all timing. Be prepared to get it wrong! Weight back to hit the lip, expose the bottom of the board to the lip. Slide your hands together and chuck the rig at the beach while looking at the beach over your beachside shoulder. Get forward on the board as you go down the wave-face to accelerate ready for the next bottom turn. Alternatively, leave it slightly too late and allow the wave to break both your ankles and force-feed you your kit." [That which does not kill you, makes you stronger, we hear Jem cry. Ed.]

Gary Lawton

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

"Bottom turn like a donkey and you'll top turn like an ass."

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.

"Open the sail out and move hands close together while looking over your front shoulder – vision. At the top of the wave apply heel pressure to snap or slide the board round and to surf the white water as you hang low with your weight forward. Get a twin to enjoy more of this fun."





wannabe a Wavesailor

“The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out and do it”

Susan Jeffers, from her book *Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway*

This is so true, as I have taken this forward into smacking bigger lips (though not huge ones), enjoying both the failure and the success, and also – finally – relearning how to push-loop. That skydiving incident was really a blessing in disguise! – Jem Hall

OPPOSITE TOP: Get outboard to drive the rail down and redirect – PHOTO: Dave White

OPPOSITE MID: Not good – rig pulled in, oversheeted, and gear-gazing – PHOTO: Clark Merritt / SoloSports

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Big FSWs need you to change the rails earlier and really push hard! – PHOTO: Dave White

BELOW: Get out there and throw some spray – PHOTO: Clark Merritt / SoloSports

When you start to put some sweet top turns together, keep your targets simple and perhaps work on one at a time...

- Really look out of your top turn
- Bring your hands together in the top turn and exaggerate it even more
- Get lower in your top turn
- Position the rig further forward in your finish of the top turn

DIFFERENT STROKES

The different feelings and actions you're already reflecting on from last time come into play here too. The rails need to change earlier on bigger boards and you need to be more forceful through your foot pressure.

Now that we have a myriad of options for fins on waveboards it's worth talking about how they feel. Single-fins are inherently stiffer and require earlier and more forceful changes in direction; their bigger tails

are one of the reasons for this. Twins are looser and can be turned tighter with less pressure, so you can turn easier, and if you lip-slide (controlled spin-out) you can often recover more easily. Tri-fins seem to offer a compromise between a twin and a single, while quads give you the looseness of a twin with a bit more grip through the turns.

Every board has its time, and it's just finding the board that suits you and the conditions. I've received this feedback from differing levels of riders and testers and on different brands, but it's just a rough guide with no hard and fast rules, so just take it as food for thought.

next month...

We will look at getting more vertical and really attacking the lip...

HALL'S HOMEWORK

How has your waterperson time been? After a pretty gruelling experience in Cape Town I've now added more swimming workouts to my schedule, and some underwater breath-holding on the bottom of the pool / sea bed just so I gain more confidence that I can last underwater and get to my kit should I lose it. I urge you to do the same. You might also consider adding some more extracurricular risk-taking activities to get you more friendly with fear and move outside of your comfort zone. Mountain biking, climbing, overpowered broad reach freeride / slalom sailing... Just get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

From a sailing point of view it's important that you really look upwind when sailing in that direction and bring your hands together to power up the sail, as this is what you do in the top turn – innit. Ordinary things done consistently well will produce extraordinary results. Your internal and external self-dialogue is now 'attack the lip'.

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! Moulay, PSC / Baja, and Jeri, Brazil are all sold out. Rhodes, Ireland and Mauritius have a few places available.

