



## GETTING VERTICAL, DUDE!

PHOTO: Clark Merritt / SoloSports



# wannabe a Wavesailor

Continuing his fully frontside focus, this month **Jem Hall** gets you twisting and shouting as you attack the lip and go vertical.

**N**ow that you're getting to grips with the top turn you'll be wanting to get more power back from the wave and use its energy to redirect you more forcefully. To do this you'll have to get more vertical to present the maximum amount of board to the wave. To go more vertical you'll need more speed in your bottom turn, and your timing needs to be spot-on to hit the right sections at the right time.

If you need an example of vertical then you'll find it in the shape of a certain Mr J Polakow, who redefined wavesailing in the '90s and inspired many of our modern masters of the art. While we now see the likes of goitas, wave 360s and aerials being pulled off on the waves there's still no better feeling than attacking a lip by going vertical right up into the maw of the beast, smacking it hard on the lip, pausing for breath and making it out the other side. You will work on this part of your wavesailing for a lifetime.

As I've said before your bottom turn will be a measure of how well your riding can progress. Your top turn will gain in prowess and performance, but the work you do in the middle of the turn as you open the sail, carve hard and project back up the lip will have you tuning your kit, changing boards, seeking coaching

and putting in a large amount of work to get vertical. It's an amazing journey, and you'll experience success and failure in equal measure, but from here forwards your mantra will be "attack the lip" or just simply "smack it!"

### BASIC SKILLS

So far I've emphasised the exact placement of your hands on the boom and really moving both head and hands as you ride. I've done this to get you more vertical easier and faster, as you're already doing the basics well.

As you go vert you'll be calling big-time on the ability to open the sail and shift those hips to the inside of the turn, just as in a step gybe. In fact if you can do a gybe and come out switch-stance in both straps while clew-first and keep speed, then you'll really keep your velocity when going vertical and make a breakthrough in your riding. I think I've said before that how you gybe is how you waveride, so please let's keep up the quality in this department.

### LET'S SMACK IT

Getting technique photos is problematic – more so with waves – and while looking for THE Jedi sequence for this article I just couldn't find the shots I needed, so in addition to what you see here I implore you to use my Winner to Wavesailor DVD as your visual reference. Doing this and using the very important skill of visualisation will really help



**SEQUENCE RIGHT:** Get that board back up the wave and accept the energy  
**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Didn't open the sail enough so I suffered some smack-down here  
**PHOTOS:** Clark Merritt / SoloSports

you here. As you read these words I want you to see, hear, feel and **taste** the wave and take the most relevant key points FOR YOU from this article.

Getting vertical will require you to open the sail more and carve harder to turn the board back up the wave, so that back hand had better be way down the boom. You'll need to really twist at the hips and counter-rotate your body. This will direct the board back up the wave as it places more of your bodyweight over your carving back foot. As you're now moving towards the wave while it also moves towards you, there will be more energy going into redirecting your board so you can make more radical turns. The more you point the board back up the wave the more power you get back, as the wave will have more of the board's underside to push against and thus redirect you faster with more energy.

After moving from your bottom turn and going back up the wave you'll need to really **LOOK UP AT THE LIP** and open up the sail with your back hand way down the boom and super-extended. Hang off the boom on the inside of the turn. Hold this position until you're sailing back the way you were originally coming from, but with your body twisted around and the rig now momentarily clew-first.

Often, in the transition from bottom turn to going vertical, your weight will transfer from being more over the front foot to coming more over the back foot (see also the March piece, 'Bottoms Up'). This will get your board turning tighter. Not every wave is like this, but you're always looking to turn off of a flat board and the subtle changes in weight from back to front foot will depend on the wave, your ability, your timing and your style. Check out Skyebob's tips for different wind directions and how to adjust to these.

Okay, let's continue to get you more vert. As you move back up the wave you've come from being over the board to directing the board upwards towards the lip, with the board and your feet further up the wave (as if your feet are moving above your head). You're actually leaning back to get the nose up and pointing at that lip you want to hit. The more open your sail is here the less likely the lip will hit it from the wrong side, and the more wind and power you'll have.

From here you'll go into your top turn about half to three-quarters of the way back up the wave by turning your head and bringing your hands together. As you then move outboard you'll be able to carve hard through your heel-side. This will open up the sail so you can release its energy as you surf the board, pushing hard through your back leg. Aim to get the sail forwards in front of you to get the rig's power forward. This will get the board moving back down the wave so you can re-establish some grip from the rails and gain speed for your next turn.

Going vertical and making sweet top turns is all about commitment and pushing it. You'll make turns where you go too early and miss out on the energy being redirected into the board, so will lose speed. And you'll also make turns too late, where the lip will come down on the top of the board (or you), and on some turns you'll also go out the back of the wave. This is all part of the fun and the challenge of waveriding – you just don't know until you go. Vertical!

The more experience you have the better your judgements will be, so get involved please.

## TIMING

Wave selection is crucial, and you'll need a wave with good speed and steeper sections / peaks situated along it to give you the necessary speed and power to get vertical. If you're getting your timing wrong and arriving as the lip looks set to crush you, then it's far easier and safer to continue projecting the board up at the lip rather than turning away and bottling it. All that water hitting the top of the board can result in some painful wipe-outs, but hitting the lip and going out the back of the wave or getting smacked backwards is far better. As I've started getting walloped more and feeling the fear and doing it anyway my riding has definitely got better and more vertical, and I'm certainly no wave ninja. Going for moves like gu-screws and wave 360s will also help with your timing and your vertical attack, as you have to point the board up the wave to get round these. (I'll cover the gu-screw in a future article.)

## CONDITIONS, CONDITIONS, CONDITIONS...

As Skyebob mentions overleaf, different wind directions necessitate different techniques. While cross-off gives you speed to turn tight it can be hard to really get the board vert. Onshore winds give you plenty of sections to smack and make you very skilled at opening the sail (so as to avoid getting backwinded), and this in turn will teach you to open the sail more for cross and cross-off winds. It's generally accepted that cross-shore winds give you the best combo to get vertical, so seek out these conditions – preferably with a bit of push and anger in the waves.







## PRO'S PROSE

As we move into some of the more advanced aspects of waveriding I'll be drawing on the knowledge of some top pros. This month sees a return to Wannabe for John Skye, BWA Wave Champion, seasoned PWA competitor and all-round big ripper.

"Getting more vert depends a lot on where you're sailing and the wind direction. When it's cross-offshore it's probably the hardest, so I have everything set up to make the board as loose as possible. Mainly I move the mast-track back. Then, as you'll generally have more speed in cross-off you can afford to really step on the tail of the board, dig it deep into the water and push as hard as you can off the bottom. This will snap the board around and bring you as vert as possible. You also need to start the turn a bit earlier or you'll go flying out the back.

"In onshore it's generally easier to get vertical, but you need a good section to hit. Often the bottom turn will be drawn out more, effectively sailing switch-stance clew-first along the wave until you really see what you want to hit. Then you can really carve hard and point the board straight into the section. The power from the wave and the direction of the wind should see you get punched back to face the right direction. If you try this without something to hit you'll fly out the back, so make sure you hit it late.

"In cross-shore you have to really adapt to the wave. Although cross-shore winds aren't all the same the direction relative to the wave, sometimes the wave actually wraps into the beach, meaning it's effectively more offshore, and sometimes the wave bends away from the beach, meaning it's a bit more onshore. And sometimes it does both – maybe the first turn is a bit onshore and the later more offshore. So really think about what the wave and wind are doing and adjust your style accordingly. In the case above you may need to come out further in front of the wave on the first turn to get vertical, and then on the later (more offshore) turn you can afford to snap harder and faster to get vert."

[Looks like John is stating the good old 'right move, right time, right place and in the right way' here. This is the beauty of wavesailing; it consumes your focus and no two waves are the same. – Jem]

***RRD boards and sails, Animal and MFC sponsor John Skye***

## 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, most probably, 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 benefits from three clinics.

"Keep your speed in the bottom turn – you need it to get back up the face. Pick the right wave and more importantly the right section, so you're going up a steep one and will then get a good push back down. Twist the hips and open the clew up – massively in onshore winds, less so in cross to cross-off."

**Mario Gozzetti** – Very keen wavesailor who loves going for it and enjoys the beatings when necessary. Blossoming after his third clinic and loves his bottom turns. Will learn to loop with me this year.

"You have to be able to sail confidently clew-first switch stance. Once you have bottom turned you'll be going towards the lip, and I find it useful to have the back hand at the very end of the boom while using the mast hand to power / depower. Stay very low with the back leg bent and straight front leg."

[So, when I harp on in my articles and DVDs about owning clew-first sailing and being a step gybe master, now you know why. Get fully fundamental for focused performance! Jem.]

**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.

"Getting vertical is about how good your timing is with the bottom turn. If it's sweet then a lovely vertical turn can be had, so use those hand and head movements for success."

**Rob Willings** – Rob loves PSC, Baja. He was with me on the first trip and returns again, for his third time this year. He's lived and sailed on the exposed west coast of Scotland and is now looking to hit Oman from his Dubai work base.

"My top tip to getting vertical is: when you think you're vertical, you're not! So keep carving and attack that lip!"







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**“All you have to do to diminish your fear is to develop more trust in your ability to handle whatever comes your way”**

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

**OPPOSITE TOP:** Check out Skyeboy's sweet track on the curl — PHOTO: RRD / Bachschuster

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Stephen Hay — hands together and attacking the right lip in the right way — PHOTO: Gary Lawton

**RIGHT:** Tail up, toes down, rig back and chocs away — PHOTO: Dave White

## DIFFERENT STROKES

As you progress, your desire to get more vertical and really use the wave will see you tune and change kit. You'll also rack your brain and really get into some strong discussions to discover the best board for your weight, style and locations.

You'll find that some boards are harder to get vertical on. While a good FSW will ensure easy planing and get you out the back, their straighter rockers and harder rails just won't turn as tight off the back foot. This is also the case for board size. In cross and cross-off wave conditions it's often gusty, so you may take a bigger board to make getting out easier. However, again this will not turn as tight. Yet again it's down to the basics, so get more proficient at planing earlier, wobbling out, staying out, catching waves and keeping speed on smaller boards to facilitate easier, tighter turns and get you smacking like a seasoned pro.

As we look to get more vertical and turn tighter, this performance demand has been met by board designers, who've thoughtfully equipped today's boards with narrower tails and bigger noses. The narrower tail can turn tighter off the back foot, and it also grips, while the bigger nose gives the wave more surface area to hit and therefore redirect at the top of the wave.

On my wave clinic last year in Baja my crew were waveriding with everything from FSWs to single-fins to twin-fins. While the FSWs got them out there and cruising about they just couldn't get them vertical (and neither could I), but they did of course offer a very good compromise for a range of conditions. The single-fins gave them grip and security, but on the twin-fins where they looked and pushed was where they went. A progressing wavesailor is more tentative in applying carving pressure, and more subtle than a big bald Yoda, so with less pressure the boards responded to get them more vertical. Also, the less threatening lips in Baja gave the twins' big noses plenty of redirection or even airtime as they went for off-the-lips and their first aerals.

It certainly is horses for courses and different strokes for different folks, but you'll now need the right hardware to get the job done. As a generously sized chap I can now ride bigger volume twin-fins that will turn as tight as some of my older singles with 15L less volume. At 90kg my most used twin is my 90, while a couple of years back it was my 80 or 85 Wave Cult. Quads will most probably give us the opportunity to choose a different style of board as opposed to a direct replacement for a twin, and as has been suggested before they sit between the grippier single-fin and looser, more aspirational twin-fin. (Check out our sister title's recent waveboard test for more on this at [boardseeker.com](http://boardseeker.com)).

## next month...

**We will take a break from all this superhuman waveriding and look at the beautifully weightless basic jump.**



## HALL'S HOMEWORK

Get out there and eat it. Send it back out there, attack the lip and without a doubt SMACK IT.

**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'**

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