

Wannabe a Wavesailor



PHOTOS: ADAM THULIN

Rig drops to the inside as you turn off the front foot – good riding from great gybing

PART 16:

In this month's instalment of his comprehensive series examining every aspect of wavesailing, **Jem Hall** looks at gybing, the positioning thereof, and the crossover benefits towards competent riding...



PHOTO: GREGG DUNNETT

Hands down the boom, rig away and look at the lip – good riding from great gybing

Throughout this series I have been offering simple tips and drills for you to take on and practise. I have also empowered you to be the master of your own improvement, so if you have done these drills and heeded my words then you'll be jumping higher and definitely riding sweeter. Now we're moving into off-peak wave season it's time to get our gybing sorted so we're ready to improve our riding when conditions and, of course, time permit.

Potential clients often approach me and ask what's the best way for them to become better waveriders and wavesailors. They are expecting me

to say "Come on a wave clinic mate", which I do to some of them – but only after I've assessed their basic fundamentals. My main recommendation is always to get the basics done well. Yep, good old early planing and stance. And to get really proficient at step gybing and tacking. Through my coaching and observation of ALL sailors I've seen that the better gybers make the better riders. Simply put, how you gybe is how you ride. If you hug the rig like your bedclothes on a cold night and stand up like a tin soldier when you gybe, well then, here's a free tip: your waveriding will suck big-time! Riders who gybe smoothly and

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with speed are more likely to get more committed in the bottom turn and arrive at the lip with more speed. They will also have the ability to get more vertical (dude).

This never struck me so much as during a spring clinic in Ireland in May '07. We had some mellow down-the-line days that were interspersed with bump-and-jump sessions due to the wind being there but the waves having a rest. The whole group's riding transformed as their gybing improved, both through their hard work and an inevitable amount of my deconstruction and reconstruction.

Building wavesailors is my job, and with this in mind I do steering drills with all levels from beginners to winners (good phrase, that). These drills free up the hands and get the head and hips moving, nay, even dancing. Simon Bornhoft has written oodles of great articles on how to get your gybing better, so please do check those out in combination with an overview of the game plan for gybing right here.

Okay, using the formula let's examine what to do with our gybing, and, by consequence, our riding in order to attain those 'wavesailor wings.'

Who?

Gybing better is accessible for those who are carrying speed into their gybes and are getting their consistency higher. They will now be looking to boost their gybes through starting to turn more off the front foot by dropping over into the turn more with an extended front arm.

Where?

Look for windy and flatter spots where you have space. In a wave environment this can be between swell out the back or even gybing onto a wave. Coming in, you're aiming to give yourself the maximum distance to gybe in, so initiate the gybe near the wave behind you to avoid overtaking the wave in front during your arc. (This will be covered in depth in another issue.)

When?

You have to be ready to gybe at any time, so ensure your preparation is excellent and automatic. If you see a nice swell or wave forming on the way out then get involved and have it. If you're coming in, then head upwind and keep speed, wait for a space and go for it. A planing gybe here will either get you out the back without a working, or will see you scoring better jumps as you have that all important speed on the inside.

Why?

Gybing more competently through extended arms, excellent vision out of the turn and better counterbalancing through the hips will mean you replicate all of these during a frontside waveride. If you don't, well, you won't.

What?

We are talking step gybes here. This gybe is good for all boards and all winds. You can also vary your arc and are more likely to come out with speed. During the exit you can keep clew-first to get over white water or to catch the wave you're gybing onto. The better people are at step gybes the better they are at riding with speed, style and fluency.

How?

We will look at step gybing in the waves later in this piece. For more general tips on gybing check out SB's series or my movie *Beginner to Winner* (available from the BOARDS online shop).

PHOTO: ADAM THULIN



Front foot gybing and hands down the boom leads to better riding

PHOTO: ADAM THULIN



Dynamic and low in gybing leads to better top turns

PHOTO: ADAM THULIN



Inside gybe in space – hands down the boom, rig away and look out of the turn

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SEQUENCE This was performed at the cross-on wave beach at Jeri, Brazil, on a 4.7 Ezzy Wave and RRD Cult 85 of 59cm width. Using a bigger board gives me speed on the inside to nail some jumps on the peak going out, and allows me to keep speed in the tighter turns of cross-on riding.

- 1 I have headed upwind to give me some space to gybe and room to bear away on my run out after the gybe. In close proximity to the wave behind me, I have put my back hand down the boom and got ready to set up for the gybe. The waves are close together, so it's a quick bear away and then come over the front foot with the rig away from me. As the space is low I am on the front foot and then will shift back to tighten the arc and open the sail.
- 2 Keeping the rig forward will keep my speed and allow me to apply more back foot toeside pressure as I start to open the sail. These are the same coaching points as for a waveride. With my back hand down the boom I can open the sail to tighten the gybe, and if I was

riding could go back up the wave. Similar position – the only difference is my back foot is out of the strap to gybe. Then I will be looking out of the turn and getting the rig across and out as I shift my hips in, down and back.

- 3 A quick pause at clew-first after opening the sail quickly to get the rig rotated – and fast. That wave is getting closer and I need to 'get down, James Brown' in readiness for it. The more I get my hips outboard and low the quicker I can tighten the arc and rotate the rig so as to hit the encroaching wave head-on and perpendicular.
- 4 As I am rotating the rig I am keeping low and looking forward. The rig rotation is boom-to-boom to make it quick so that I don't arrive at the wave with my front hand mincing about on the mast. Always go boom-to-boom and come out overhand on the front hand so you can get the rig forward and upright.

- 5 Coming into the exit and my passage out the back now. I am still low, with my hands shoulder-width and down the boom to give me max power to get over the white water and then get planing ready for a stunt.

- 6 It's now time to use my white water popover skills. My low and dynamic gybe exit has put me in a great position to ollie the board over the white water with the bent back leg. The more speed I carry out of the gybe at the exit the more likely I am to get some jumps in on the way out and not wallow around getting worked on the inside. The better you are at early planing, the more jumps you get on the way out and the more likely you are to get out the back. Quick tight gybe, over the white water, get fully planing – now where is that stunt ramp? Here we go – *whoosh!*

Hall's Homework

Now I really hope I've sold this step gybing lark to you, so please get into it. Every session on the water is **your** opportunity to improve, so *carpe diem* and all that and work those gybes. Light winds means clew-first beachstarts and sailing, plus the good old non-planing carve gybe, which has the same footwork as the step gybe. Funny that. If it's windy let's raise the standard, consistency and speed of those carve gybes please.

You will have to get and keep upwind, so you'd better be doing some of that tacking as well while you're at it. If you don't tack you won't tack. Wavesailors tack!

Next Month

Looking deeper into the transitions theme Jem will highlight the benefits of the formula for tacking and discuss its merits in relation to gybing.

"If you develop the absolute sense of certainty that powerful beliefs provide, then you can get yourself to accomplish virtually anything, including those things that other people are certain are impossible."

Tony Robbins ☺

Jem Hall is sponsored by RRD boards, Ezzy Sails, NEW SPONSORS: Flying Objects, Prosport Sunblock, and Grasshopper Porridge... His website www.jemhall.com is sponsored by Oceansource.net

Jem's new technique movie *Beginner to Winner* is out now. If you seriously want to improve and have a fantastic holiday then book one of the last places on his sell out '08 coaching clinic tour – now!

