

Wannabe a Wavesailor



PHOTOS: CAPESESSIONS.COM

If you want this you'd better get tacking!

PART 17:

TACK ATTACK

In this month's instalment of his comprehensive series examining every aspect of wavesailing, **Jem Hall** looks at tacking and its place in the wave environment...

In a nutshell, if you are a wavesailor, you tack. It's as simple as that. You are *always* looking to get upwind – and stay there – as so much of your fun time is spent losing acres of ground downwind. It never ceases to amaze me how many people do not go for or make tacks, but this is about to change as your new wavesailing mindset craves to 'get the money in the upwind bank.'

The tack is a fundamental move in windsurfing, and even assists intermediates in their quest for the carve gybe, giving them that all-important

upwind advantage from where they can bear away and go for gybes. You cannot hide from the fact that, if you tack at both ends in a wave break, you will shorten your reaches by about a third and therefore get more jumps going out and more rides coming in. It's a win-win situation. The more runs you do through the break the more you'll get the chance to improve and – most importantly – enjoy the fantastic feeling of big air and sweet rides. So ease up on the ocean grooving and please get tacking.

After my wave coaching clinics clients will go home and invest in a

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bigger board to nail their tacks, and then look to bring these skills down to the smaller boards. The results year on year are plain to see, and if you see someone nail a good tack in strong winds, bumpy seas and on a small board, well, then you know they are a sound sailor. Let's have a look at the formula for tacking.

Who?

All windsurfers should be having it in their tacks. From intermediates aspiring to carve gybe (and eventually get in the waves) to wave rippers wanting to carve up some waves. Modern boards of all sizes are so much easier to tack, and most sailors will have grasped the reality of sailing in all wind strengths and own at least one board that is suitable to attack the tack.

Where?

This is all based on good old experience. In contrast to the gybe, you will be tacking on the inside just behind a breaking wave to give you max time to get planing and get out before the white water hits. You may also be tacking before you come all the way in if you haven't scored a good set wave. On the way out you will be tacking to get on a set wave that you've seen, or when you're just outside the bus stop (set wave pick-up area). Try to map out these areas in your game plan before going out on the water, and look for a flatter area of sea to make it easier.

When?

This is very much tied to the above section. It's a combination of quick tacking to take advantage of a wave you've spotted to jump or ride, and

tacking in your transition zone for maximum upwind advantage so you can splash the upwind cash thus gained on jumping and riding where the waves are peaking (getting steeper).

Why?

I have already stated many reasons why you should tack, but you should be sticking to your ethos of 'right move, right time, right place and in the right way' to get yourself in the best position to capitalise on opportunities. Nice waves are not always in abundance, so you must make the absolute best of every single one or you'll be missing out. *You* set the standards in your sailing, so set them higher and you will attain them.

What?

This article covers the carve tack, but it's also of huge use to have the heli-tack in your skills armoury. When you're moving at slower speeds, which can and does happen in the waves, you can keep the power in the mastfoot when heli-tacking and thus avoid too much shuffling around with a sinking nose, as in a normal tack. I will use front-to-sail sailing on the way in so I can pause and wait for a good set wave to ride in on. This means I won't have to make two tacks – one to go back out and one to turn round and get on the wave. I just sail back out to sea and have a good clear view of what's coming, and then back the sail off when I see a sweet wave. This backing off was covered in July '07.

How?

We will look at a sequence of this now... →



Tack and wait at the bus stop for your wave

PHOTO: ADAM THULIN

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PHOTOS: GREGG DUNNETT

The Tack

ABOVE This was performed at the cross-on wave beach in Jeri, Brazil, on a 5.2 Ezzy Wave and RRD Cult 85 of 59cms. Using a bigger board gives me speed on the inside to nail some jumps on the peak on the way out, and allows me to keep speed in the tighter turns of cross-on riding. These bigger / wider boards will give us more chance of nailing our tacks.

The tack has three key stages, and, like a good book, there is a clear beginning, middle and end. Focus on improving each of these areas and most of the winning is done in sound preparation. Keep your focus simple, look where you want to go, keep low, and get the rig away. As in all moves the head is the key. (Now, I know you're waiting for a blatant plug here, so yes, it is well covered in my very complete instructional movie, *Beginner to Winner*.)

1 Choose your spot ahead just behind the wave in front of you and get a bit of speed for some stability. Slide your front hand along the boom and then down the mast, or just up to the very front of the boom. I do both, but I find the mast gets me lower. Ensure you are

low and then unhook. Come out of the back strap and start to carve the board upwind on your heels. Keep low to maintain a flat board. The front foot then comes out as you carve more. Then get both feet forward with the front foot wrapped right round the mastfoot. Really look upwind and get your front arm straight to keep the rig away.

2 As the rig moves back the hips move forwards and in, and getting the rig way back gives you space and time to facilitate an easier foot change. Looking forward will establish when to move, which is at head to wind. This is the point where you change your vision to look back to where you will be placing your new front hand. The hips forward stance gets the back foot light and keeps that lower volume wave tail afloat.

3 Here we go. Think 'release, reach and pivot'. Release your back hand and reach for the new side of the boom with the old back hand. This will lead your old back foot coming forward and assist the foot pivot. Keep the rig back and get all groovy by being on the balls of your feet. No time for concrete boots here.

4 The head now LOOKS FORWARD. This is very important and will make the move! Get your new back foot well down the board to assist in the scissoring exit. Looking forward will assist your front arm in drawing the sail forward, which keeps the rig away and readies you for bearing away. The rig is now moving forward and across you as the body begins to move back and down the board.

5 Get down James Brown here with the rig forward and body back. Your feet need to be wide to scissor the board quickly and effectively before the white water starts to work you. Getting the rig forwards and upright on extended arms gets the power back on in this often gusty and light area of the break. Being this low means you can withstand lulls and gusts while pushing through the heels of the front foot and pulling through the toes of the back foot. The steering needs to be done quickly so the board can tackle the white water nose / perpendicular to the wave and get over it.

6 With the feet wide and your body low you're in the perfect position to pop over the white water by pushing down on the back leg, and

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Hall's Homework

As I have said before you may *need* to do a move, but until you *want* to do it all it will be just talk and procrastination. There is no better time than now to get into tacking on any board that floats, including big beginner boards. The water is warm and you should be looking to make the most of any opportunity to improve your sailing. As a good old mate of mine, Windy John, once said: "You must sail like every hour is the last hour of your life". So focus on the tack, believe you can, think 'shall and will tack' and enjoy the learning challenge it presents.

Get it better and better on bigger boards and look to move down in volume and up in wind strength as your competency and consistency improves. Ah, yes – and while you're at it, learn to sail front to sail and work on your heli-tacks. Front to sail and heli-tacks give you a choice of tack, assist you in nailing the end of 360s (which I have implored you to learn, please) and will also improve your gybes.

We can't have you sitting around on these light or moderate wind days, can we? So get into it! Wind and waves are around the corner and you want to be upwind to have them.

the extended arms ensure max power to push you over or through the white water and give you the opportunity get planing ASAP. There are waves approaching and you want speed as quickly as possible to attack those stunt ramps, or even just to make it out the back.

7 Your upwind advantage means you can bear away now to your heart's content in the gap between the waves to get planing in both straps. It is strongly suggested that you don't disturb the board too much and risk a catapult when well powered, so hook in after you get to full speed. Hooking in means bending the arms, and this means a brief loss in power and control, so being lazy and hooking in here can mean you don't get planing or even just stack it. Looks like I'm a bit lazy here, and you can already see it has brought me upright – so stay low, stay dry, and then you will get speed and jump high

Next Month

As we get geared up for autumn Jem looks to boost your frontside action with some great bottom and top turn tips. ☺



Front to sail and wait at the bus stop for your wave

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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!

PHOTO: GREGG DUNNETT

