

# Wannabe a Wavesailor



Jem in DTL heaven on his twin fin 90 and Panther 5.2

## PART 19:

# BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY

In this month's instalment of his comprehensive series examining every aspect of wavesailing, **Jem Hall** reflects on the insights and pearls of wisdom discovered by some of his clients while DTL wavesailing out in Baja, Mexico. Pix by **Clark Merrit**...

**A**s we now look to the jet stream and low-pressure systems to work their magic, I hope you're working on the questions I posed last month and looking for that sometimes-elusive self-improvement. As I keep stressing, it is what works for you that is so relevant, and this is why I'm handing over this month to my San Carlos squad of wavesailors for their tips. You might think bald Yoda's tips are all well and good, but sometimes the best advice comes from the people who are feeling the move at that time. This is why I use feedback loops while I coach – it allows everyone to say what

was working well for them, and, just as importantly, why they felt it was working.

Last August I embarked on a dream trip out to Baja San Carlos, Mexico, courtesy of SoloSports Adventure Holidays. I will give you more on this awesome venue in a travel article to be featured later, so for now just let it be known that it's consistent, accessible, down-the-line (DTL) joy! I took along a posse with me to assess its viability as a future clinic destination (which got a big thumbs up), and of course so they could enjoy some proper waveriding.

Much to my posse's amusement this was actually my holiday, so I will hand over to Steve Carpenter to describe what I was like as a punter. *"In reality this meant that we only got about two hours of 'feedback' a day rather than the usual 12! Jem re-rigged all of the Ezzy sails in the hire centre, repositioned all the footstraps on the RRD boards, destroyed all harness lines less than 30", and offered 'top tips' to all and sundry. Okay, I'm exaggerating slightly... Very slightly... But you get the picture."* [Oh yes. We get the picture! Ed.]

## ADVANCING & ENHANCING

### John 'Jeri' Cox

John will kick off for us with a more humorous take on wave tips. Although his formative years were spent in Sussex, he now resides in Jeri, Brazil, and has been on a few clinics with me. John has a relaxed style to his sailing – and life in general.

For Baja you need a floatier board to help you in the wind shadows. Choose a small sail to get you out to the bus stop, as on the way in you'll be very powered up on the wave.

Pick your wave, look down the line and shout at the Russians! There were only two there, but they loved dropping in.

- Keep low and drive yourself into the waves.
- Use the board's entire rail and depower the sail by moving your hands.
- Move the back hand well down the boom and rake the sail forwards to turn up the wave.
- Look right up the wave – that's where you want to go. Start the bottom turn while on the wave, probably earlier than you anticipated.
- As you're going up the wave, just before your top turn, bring the back hand towards the harness lines and look towards the beach. Keep low and really throw the upper body around. Use your hips, baby. Get in to the groove and swing it!
- Don't forget to have a quick look back to watch the spray you've just kicked up. Smile and keep on the wave for your bottom turn.

*Note: the bus stop is upwind, so f\*\*king get upwind, depress that upwind rail, and look where you want to go.*

### Clive 'El Toro' Borden

Clive is a 'no messing' sailor and is looping in his late 50s, so he's very focused on moving forward and even came out of photography retirement to take a few pics for this trip. "Having gone over some video footage of my waveriding and discussed it with Jam – sorry, Jem – we could see my bottom turns needed to be way more aggressive. I was sailing out



John 'Jeri' Cox hands together in top turn

*too far onto the flat at the bottom of the wave, which was cutting down my speed to return up the face. Although I was sliding my back hand right down the boom, bending my knees, laying down the sail and leaning into the turn on the balls of my feet, I wasn't extending my front arm forward enough. By doing this and keeping my bodyweight forward I was able to sink more of the inside rail and project the board much faster and tighter up the face. I found this correction also put you in a much better visual position to look and judge where the peak was, giving you a head start, so to speak, to set yourself up for a good top turn. I even ended up smacking a few lips! As Jem says, look where you want to go and that's where you will go. As a further plus I used the extended front arm technique to improve my forwards, making them less end over end and less scary on landing. Thanks Jem."*

### James 'Puzzle' Yule

James has been on quite a few of my trips and is now working in Eastern Europe, so was keen to get some serious ocean re-alignment. This man loves his waveriding! "The biggest improvement I believe I made during the week was to my bottom turn. I'm really getting the rig forward now – too forward at times – which keeps everything balanced and allows me to time the top turn better. I also planned and pulled off a couple of aerials off the lip, although no one saw them, probably because they were so small. A big factor was having the conditions where I could plan and rehearse a move on the beach then go out and try it time and time again. The wave is so long and non-threatening it presents plenty of opportunities to try stuff over and over again. The morning lull in the wind created excellent surfing and SUPing conditions, and I felt my general technique improved here as well. It all adds up to more wave knowledge, which definitely helps." →



Clive 'El Toro' Boden extending front arm with hands wide



James 'Puzzle' Yule getting low in his top turn

# Wannabe a Wavesailor



Nick Coleman in the background and James in excellent stance symmetry

## Nick Coleman

Nick was the rookie of the trip as he had very little wave time, and he definitely progressed from sailing in waves to becoming a wavesailor. He gives us these very insightful tips.

Call me dumb, but going DTL means just that. Just riding the wave at 90 degrees isn't wavesailing; you have to ride along the wave to stay in the steepest section and give you speed in the bottom turns.

- You have to lean forward in the bottom turn to get the full length of the board into the water.
- You have to move your back hand down the boom a lot for the bottom turn, but bring both hands together again for the top turn.
- Going DTL means you're going downwind, so it is essential that you can tack efficiently to get back upwind on the outside to line up for the next ride.
- Learning to surf really helps you work out where to position yourself to allow you to take off along the right wave.
- Smart wavesailors time their runs so that they are in the right place for the sets as they peel in periodically. We had days when there were 20 minutes between sets. Blasting around at 25 knots between sets without thought meant you were often on the inside when the set came through, leaving you with a wall of white water to climb.

- Board selection. Choose your board volume carefully. I often took a board with 5-10 litres more than my (limited) wavesailing experience suggested, as it helped so much with catching the wave.
- Sail selection. When you set off on a wave, you get an extra five knots of wind over the deck, so choose a sail that is large enough to power you on to the wave, but small enough to allow you to be comfortable when on the wave with the extra wind.
- Long harness lines make you faster, more fluid and float an inch off the water.

## Rob Willings

Rob has already had some big improvements in his wavesailing and fundamentals while out on my Ireland wave boost. He likes to catch a lot of waves, so much so that he spent most of the time dropping in on me and bottom turning around me. *"I had some big insights out in Baja. Mainly that proper bottom turning needs an exaggerated action and sets you up for proper wavesailing. Almost everybody bangs on about 'front foot turns', but I am not sure how much they practise what they preach, and I had never really figured it out. Having a chance to experiment with many turns on easy waves and being bullied into getting the rig (what felt like) way to far over the front of the*

*board, I had an insight on about day 4 and started to get this to work. It's a completely different feeling in the bottom turns, particularly at speed, and I initially felt vulnerable (as when first getting forward in a carve gybe). But actually the turns were locking in properly, and as a consequence the board was more stable than normal and I was getting round faster and tighter. With all this mojo working, all of a sudden I was set up to try to sort out and add more dynamism in my top turns."*



Rob Willings catches some air

## ADVANCING & ENHANCING



Steve 'Snooze' Carpenter enjoying another Baja beauty

### Steve 'Snooze' Carpenter

It's all in the name, but for this trip Steve worked really hard and even relieved me of some rigging duties while I enjoyed a few cold ones. *"The most valuable tip I learnt in Baja was to be far more active with my hands and head when waveriding. Getting my back hand as far back down the boom as possible when bottom turning and both hands close together on the top turn, combined with exaggerated turning of the head to look back down the wave and redirect the board on the top turn, really made a big difference. The other top tip is to try to lean as far forward as possible (i.e. exaggerated movement) and get your weight onto the front foot and down through the front arm into the mast foot to drive the length of the rail into the bottom turn."*

It was great to see all the crew really going at it and enjoying their waveriding, and I have learnt a lot from their feedback both here and out in Baja. I also had the opportunity to gain some valuable insights on my own sailing, which I will present at a later date. Being around other 'less fundamentally coached' sailors who were also out at San Carlos on holiday, I really noticed the damage that short harness lines do.

- They keep you close to the rig so your wind range is shit.
- You cannot get your hands together so your wind range is shit.

- Your hands have to be wide and the biggest problem here is the front hand almost being on the mast.
- Front hand forward while hooked means you will not slide it back when you unhook, and so you cannot get the rig forward in the bottom turn.
- Poor hand position from short lines means poor riding.

There is a solution – lengthen the lines to extend your wind range and rip it up in your riding. Trust me on this – it is my job to get people to improve, so PLEASE understand that in order for things to change you must change, but you can't make the change on short lines! Check out the symmetry pic of Nick and James. They have both been Jemetically modified – Nick in February of this year, and James over the last few years. Their hard work, some good coaching and the right length lines sees them reaping huge rewards.

### Next Month

I will be reflecting on some of the tips I gained and giving you the low-down on my twin-fin. Believe the hype, they are loose and allow some of the sweetest turns you will ever make, and in a variety of conditions, too. ☺

## Hall's Homework

Let's not forget 7/11. By 7 November those of you who WANT to loop will be! This is your D-day, so put it in your diaries, get popping, get those wymaroos, get videoed, find some like-minded people – but for f\*\*\*'s sake just pull the trigger and let's get it done. Those of you already doing it should set the targets of higher, cleaner and faster – or just good old sailing away from them happily. I'm calling this 7 / 11 not just because of the date, but because these are the hours in a day you can be working on it, from gym time, to visualisation, to a splash and dash after work, to practising the move in your back garden. Let's get into it.

As I learnt at uni you should be doing a bit of S.W.O.T. analysis on yourself by now. Write down what your 'strengths, weaknesses, opportunities to improve and threats to this improvement are. More on this later, but it is all about you!

**Jem Hall is sponsored by RRD boards, Ezzy Sails, Flying Objects, Prosport Sunblock and Grasshopper Porridge, and his site [www.jemhall.com](http://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 book one of his '09 coaching clinics now – or consider Ireland on 4-11 October!