



rule breakers

Simon Bornhoft looks at when technique, form and normal perceptions go against conventional wisdom.

Photos: WindWise / Karen Bornhoft

Rules are made to be broken! Although many of you reading these features have regularly commented on how the key points and guiding principles influence your progress, they can sometimes become dangerously set in stone. Yes, 99% of the time we can trust and enforce many of them, but it's good to recognise that occasionally the rule book can be thrown out of the monofilm window. There are occasions when we intentionally, albeit briefly, destroy or challenge what we 'would normally be doing'. This is why you might hear, see or experience contradictions against commonly held thoughts.

So this month's BodyWise looks at when the 'norm' is changed for a specific reason. This is hopefully quite timely, as rule breaking mostly occurs in extreme conditions or situations. When sailing very small boards in higher winds or surviving in challenging situations, we use less subtle techniques that can break conventional wisdom.

STRAIGHT BACK LEG WARNING!



CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

In most situations we sail with a variably flexed back leg to absorb chop, reduce spin-out and help sink lower to the water in a comfortable '7' sailing position. If we over-straighten or over-weight the back leg we spoil the board's trim, causing nose lift in strong winds or stalling in lighter winds.

BACK LEG RULE BREAKER

You'll also see 'inboard-strapped' wave and freestyle sailors with a more upright stance and a straighter rear leg, despite having tiny fins. But they are being ultra careful not to over push through the back leg. To compensate and help stay upwind they will excessively dig the windward rail down through front foot heel pressure when going upwind. It's not a fast or comfortable sailing position, but it does allow you to sail upwind on boards with tiny fins and inboard straps.





DESTROYING THE OPPOSITION

Q: Are there times when we don't oppose the rig?

A: Yes, but only very briefly!

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

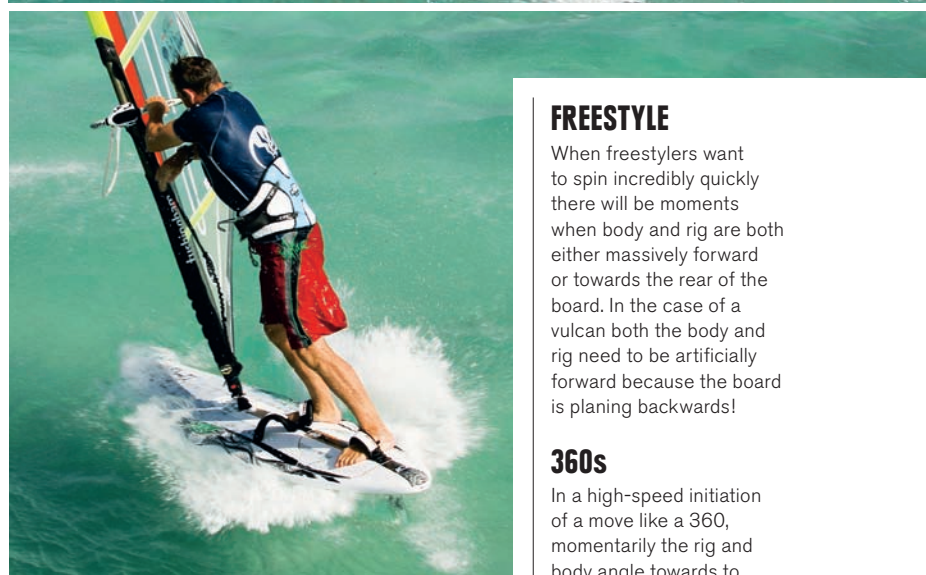
Regular readers will know my passion for basing so much of our success on the beauty and benefit of always opposing the movement and position of the mast / rig with our body. It is, after all, the basis of keeping that all-important counterbalance. Yet there are moments when we intentionally, but briefly, ignore this principle by actively moving in the same direction as the rig!

OPPOSITION RULE BREAKERS

The main occasions we find ourselves moving in the same direction as the rig occur when we want to turn tightly. These moments are incredibly brief, and happen when inertia, centrifugal force or reverse dynamics keep us on the board. Here are a few key examples...

PRE-TACKING

To initiate the tack the body momentarily moves back with the rig to encourage the board to head upwind. But from that moment on we then seek to move in the opposite direction to the rig for the rest of the tack.



FREESTYLE

When freestylers want to spin incredibly quickly there will be moments when body and rig are both either massively forward or towards the rear of the board. In the case of a vulcan both the body and rig need to be artificially forward because the board is planing backwards!

360s

In a high-speed initiation of a move like a 360, momentarily the rig and body angle towards to the tail to crank a super-tight arc. However, just before and after this fully committed moment the body and rig are moving in opposite directions to maintain a counterbalance.



LAZY MAN'S EARLY PLANING

Q: Can I get going from a non-planing situation 'IN' the harness and straps?
A: Yes, if it's very windy or if you're on very inboard straps

EARLY PLANING RULE BREAKER

This early planing 'cheat' is only achievable in marginal winds on freestyle boards with very inboard straps or higher winds on waveboards. If you try this on a freeride board in marginal winds it's very awkward (and usually unsuccessful) because the straps are too far back and outboard.

- 1: Slip the feet FIRMLY into the straps, keeping the mast upright to help reduce weight on the tail.
- 2: Hook in and pull down on the boom. Then massively lean your whole body forward, angling the mast excessively towards the nose and slightly to windward. It feels very precarious as the board bears away!
- 3: Really 'flex' the front leg and 'extend' the back leg as you excessively lean forward, pulling down in the harness / boom to apply mastfoot pressure and unweight the tail.
- 4: As the board starts to plane, sink back in to your normal '7' sailing position.

WHY DOES IT WORK?

Because your back foot is inboard and 'secure' in the strap, you can artificially lean body and rig forward. This applies the key principle of trim as the sail powers up and encourages the board to accelerate.



CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Normal etiquette would be to hook in and then slip the feet into the straps as the board picks up onto the plane. During this process, the rig is forward and the body leans back in that super-7 drop-&-push stance with a straight front leg and flexed rear leg. If you did try to get into the straps and harness off the plane, you'd expect to stall and luff into wind.



FLEXED FRONT ARM WARNING!

Q: I see people sailing or gybing with a very bent front arm? Is that okay?

A: Yes, if you're well powered or doing a laydown!

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

When you go through a step or strap-to-strap gybe, the action of extending the front arm keeps the body clear from the rig, improves your counterbalance mid-turn and assists rotating the rig. Additionally, especially in marginal winds (be it blasting or gybing), if you want more power then extending that front arm keeps the rig more upright / forward and gives your boardspeed an extra boost.

FRONT ARM RULE BREAKER

You will see excessive front arm bend for two key reasons:

- 1: During laydown gybes when the body leans forward and the rig is raked really far back.
- 2: Or if you're in very overpowered situations and you want to pull in and down on the boom more to gain extra control. This could be blasting or gybing.

WHY DOES IT WORK?


Basically, flexing your front arm kills power, but it only works if the rear arm and clew end of the boom is also sheeted in. Pull only on the front arm and sheet out on the back arm and you'll probably lose control of the rig.

summary

So yes, it is perfectly okay to flex the front arm, straighten the back leg and move in the same direction as the rig – but these are infrequent and brief moments that are quickly followed by returning to the conventional wisdom of extending the front arm, flexing the rear leg and 'always' trying to oppose the movement, forces and position of the rig with the body. As ever we'll always let you know when your guiding principles should be kept or broken!



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