



Simon Bornhoff looks at a very common counterintuitive moment that affects us every time we rotate our rigs at the end of a transition.

# sb windwise LET IT BE...

In the early days of space travel it was assumed that elongated streamlined shapes would offer the best possible chance of re-entering Earth's atmosphere safely. Counterintuitively, however, the opposite would appear to be true. NASA's testing, thankfully, discovered that 'wider blunt shaped capsules' provided more effective heat shields when returning back to Earth. NASA's counterintuitive discovery definitely saved lives, whereas these WindWise suggestions will simply help you avoid doing completely the wrong actions on the water.

Us humans aren't great at dealing with counterintuitive sporting moments. When learning to ski students don't initially take to the idea of leaning forward when speeding down a steep slope – they 'instinctively' lean (incorrectly) back. It's a sore backside that encourages them to overcome this counterintuitive action. With windsurfing, much of what we do on a board is fairly clear to see, but there are definitely irregular counterintuitive moments that can be so frustrating and challenging. It's often during these moments that 'bad habits', plateaus, or our dismounts occur.

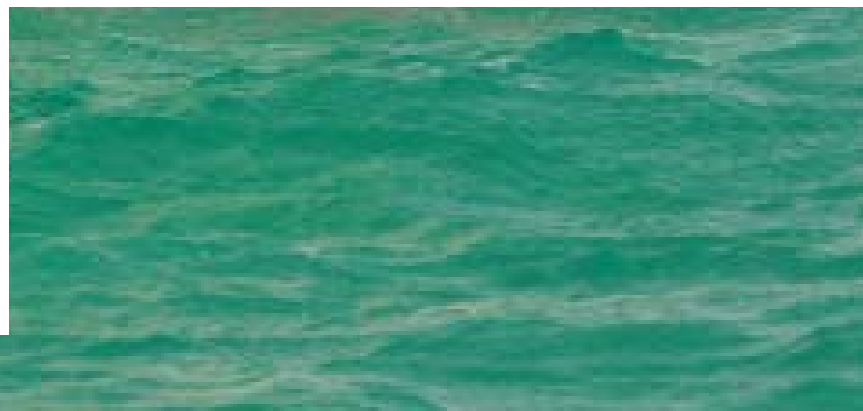
As your humble coach I'm going to highlight one regular counterintuitive moment that relates to all levels of gybes, helicopter tacks, and any time a rig is rotated. It also involves two of our key windsurfing principles: vision and opposition.



## ASSUMPTION: 'REACH FOR THE BOOM'

You've made it round your transition, the rig is released and in a moment of joy there's the natural reaction to reach for boom with the new back hand and sheet in.

Yet this is the moment that often leads to stumbling towards to the rig or pulling it over to windward – all of which reduces stability and your chances of planing out of gybes. Here's why...





## NON-PLANING CARVE GYBE

If you reach for the boom with your back hand too soon you tend to lean downwind.

This often unsettles the whole body, straightens the legs, breaks the waist, destroys counterbalance and usually means the rig, boom and chances of sheeting in fall away from you.

Equally, if you pull the mast towards you to grab the boom the rig tends to sheet out, and it's all too common to grab not far enough down the boom, making it impossible to control or sheet the rig in smoothly.

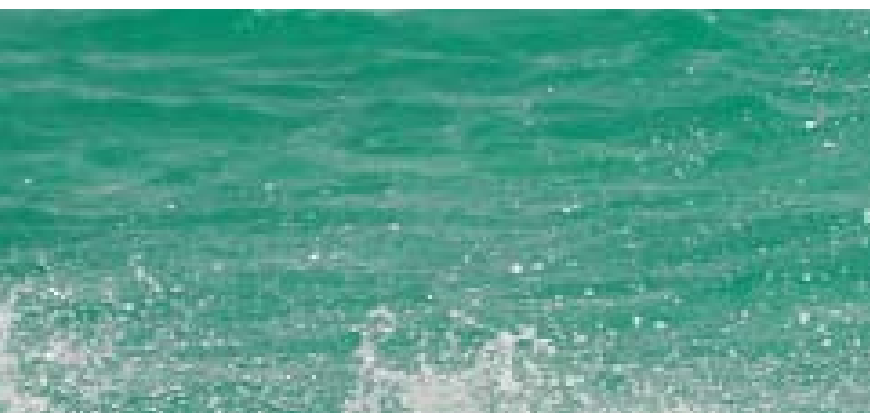


## PLANING GYBE

**Q: Why does this happen?**

**A: This has a lot to do with vision and opposition**

If we look at where the back hand is going to end up on the boom we tend to go that way ourselves.





## COUNTERINTUITIVE MOMENT: 'MOVE AWAY FROM THE RIG'

Booms actually 'sheet themselves in' if you ignore reaching for them and work instead on moving the mast in a scooping, circular action. It comes down to trust and belief in the 'rig rotator' technique.

Resist the temptation to stand up and reach for that boom. Instead, sink back, low and away from the rig in a super-7 'drop-&-push' position. It really goes against what you want to do, but it's so much more important at this time to create a stronger body position to keep the mast downwind of the centreline. This then enables you to scoop the rig back (with the old front hand) and then draw it forward (with the new front hand). It might be a 'large scoop' (if the rig is released early) or a 'mini scoop' (if the rig's released late), but it's this scooping action and waiting for the boom to come to you, rather than reaching for it, that actually brings the clew end of the boom in towards your hands.

### HELPING HANDS

If you don't believe me, get a rig on the shore and whip the mast back and then forward. Combined with these hand movements you'll see how the boom swings inboard and into your hands.

### RIG ROTATOR

- Before releasing the back hand, slide the front hand right up to the mast to control the rotation.
- The new front hand crosses under and grabs well down the boom on the new side.
- Use under or over grip, whichever ergonomically suits you and encourages you to drop low.
- Note how if you look, wait and scoop the mast, the boom swings right round into the hands.

**Q: When I rotate the rig, why do I spin into wind?**

**A: You're rotating the rig too late in the turn**

So if you're step-gybing, change those feet around the dead downwind stage of the gybe and then, if you still have speed, immediately rotate that rig. If you come off the plane mid-gybe, stay clew-first and rotate the rig on a broad reach – **not** beam reach!



## HELICOPTER

A defining 'breakthrough moment' with heli-tacks is when you develop the sense to look forward and ignore reaching for the boom with the new back hand. Keeping the head up and shoulders back reduces the chances of breaking at the waist and following the rig round. It also gives you time to scoop the rig round to bring the boom to you.

## SIMON SAYS...

As ever, vision and opposition play a strong role in our counterintuitive moments. So, head up, look forward and oppose the movement of the rig. And going back to aerospace testing where this piece opened, board designers have had parallel findings to aviators. Remember high volume 'narrow streamlined' boards? Then along came the counterintuitive discovery that 'wider blunt shapes' had greater early planing advantages.

Next month's topic challenges our logic, but does wonders for general rig handling, helicopter tacks, upwind 360s and the granddaddy of counterintuitive moments – forward looping!

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