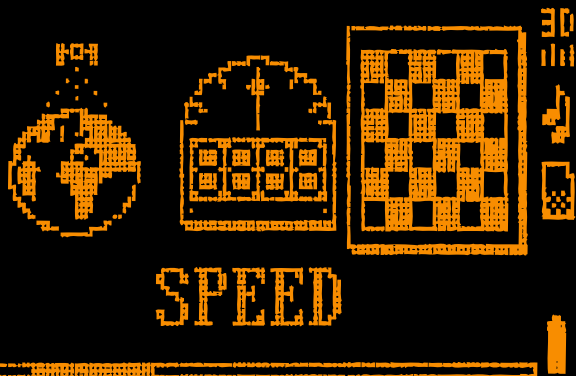


SPEED'S NEVER BEEN EASIER!

With UK speedsailors regularly lighting up the UK's favourite strips and the incredible growth of GPS speedsailing globally, there's never been a better time to find out just how fast you really can go. **Pete Davis**, with maybe a little help from our very own editor, shows you how to get your GPS unit singing...



You lot just don't realise how lucky you are. Back in the day, getting the opportunity to just have a go at speedsailing was a nightmare. Before any would-be world record breakers could begin to thread their needles down a speed strip, they had to justify their place in a competition by entering pre-qualifying events. And if there was no wind or you didn't know the right people, you didn't get in. Period. Even the legendary Whitey had to pre-qualify for Weymouth in 1985, which he had to do on a longboard and with an average speed of 4 knots over 500m just to get a shot in the main event. (He recalls that painfully slow run being recorded for posterity, but cameraman Mark Minter got so bored by the halfway stage that he turned the camera upside-down!)

Combine all that palaver with organising events using an extremely expensive and temperamental video timing setup off the beach, and it's a miracle that speedsailing ever got off the ground.

Thankfully, those days are well behind us, and speedsailing is now accessible to all. Much of this is, of course, down to technology – with modern GPS devices and online rankings it is now so easy to try speedsailing and see just how fast you really can go. It's not all about being the fastest in the world or having dedicated speed kit, either. You can compare yourself against your mates on freeride kit at your local spot just for the bragging rights. Sure beats the hell out of just sailing up and down over the same stretch of water.

The recommended unit to have is the Navi / Genie GT31 with a 2GB SD card, which can store loads of data so nothing gets lost. Setting the unit up can be a bit daunting at first, but once it's sorted you just strap it on your arm and go sailing.

SETTING UP THE GT31

Turn the unit on using the smaller of the two buttons and it will respond with a few beeps to let you know it's working correctly – two beeps for power, one beep to say it has a memory card, and another to confirm that it's started a new file for your session.

The big button is actually a joystick for controlling the menu, and a few presses left or right will take you across a multitude of menus that most of us will never use, so just head for the settings menu and press your joystick to enter or change the settings to match those below. When naming your unit just remember that there's likely to be more than one Pete, Bob or Dave in existence – especially if you're entering events like Weymouth – so a quick tap on the power button will take you out of that menu with an option to save your name.

“With modern GPS devices and online rankings it's now so easy to try speedsailing and see just how fast you really can go”





SETTINGS	
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH
TIME ZONE	GMT
	(unless using outside UK time zone)
UNIT	NM (for knots)
TIME FORMAT	24HR
DATE FORMAT	DD/MM/YY
ARRIVED	NA
MAP DATUM	WGS84
POSITION	DD°MM'SS.S"
USER GRID	NA
POWER MODE	NORMAL
DGPS SOURCE	OFF
INTERFACE	NMEA(38400)
BACKLIGHT	ON
BACKLIGHT TIME	10 SECONDS
CONTRAST	As you like
EXT.POWER MODE	OFF
USERNAME	Sail number or name (example: Z DAVIS 47)
SPEED AVG TIME	10 SEC
SPEEDGENIE	20 KTS
HOLD KEY	KEY LOCK
SERIAL NO	NA
VERSION	V1.3 B1123T
COLD START	NA

If your unit doesn't have the latest software version it can be downloaded with instructions at mtbest.net/setting-up-navi-GT31.htm. You'll also find version V1.4, but as this is not compulsory and involves flicking switches inside the card slot on the unit, many may choose to stick with V1.3.

Hitting the power button again will take you back to the main menu. Toggle across to the memory card symbol and press your joystick to enter and set the following:

MEMORY CARD

LOG SWITCH	ON-FIX
MIN SPEED	5 KTS
NMEA ITEMS	SBN 1SEC
FILE SIZE	CARD SIZE
FORMAT CARD	FAT16 (do once with a new SD-card)
REMOVE CARD	NA

Press the power button to exit, input the following setting into the data logger menu, and you're good to go:

DATA LOGGER

INTERVAL	1SEC
MIN SPEED	5 KTS
SAVE TO CARD	NA
CLEAR	NA

This is a one-time setup procedure, so from now on in it's a simple matter of turning on the unit and then using the joystick to move to the speed menu (chequered flag symbol) and hitting enter. You'll have felt how sensitive the joystick is, so to avoid accidentally deleting your times you can lock and unlock the unit by holding down the joystick for three seconds.

The GT-31 is waterproof under 'normal' use, though I don't think the designers thought hitting the water at 40knots would be normal, so I'd recommend putting it into an Aquapack armband for extra protection and convenience.

Once you've finished your session for the day turn the unit off by unlocking (three seconds, large button), and then hold the small button down until it switches off. This is important as it saves the data to the SD card.



GPS RESULTS SOFTWARE

Looking at your tracks and speeds for the day is very easy too. Most laptops these days have an SD card reader built in, but if not they're cheap to buy and they just plug into your USB port on your computer.

The software I recommend is GPS Results, which can be downloaded from gps-speed.com. It's free for 30 days, then at a one-off cost of €29 it's yours forever. Follow the easy install instructions, and once loaded open a GPS file from within the 'file' menu. Files on the SD card will have been saved in date and time order automatically, making it easy to find your latest runs.

Analysis of your runs couldn't be simpler. All the popular distances and time measurements are catered for by clicking on one or more of the radio buttons, which will list out in the window above all the runs and times that fit your search. Clicking on one of these results will highlight your course on the screen, which is perfect for working out where to concentrate your efforts for maximum speed on your next session, particularly when you export your track to Google Earth, which again is just one click away.

The software makes sharing your speeds with rest of the world just as simple by working directly with gps-speedsurfing.com. Once having registered online, just pop your user-name and password into the program and it will do the rest. Once uploaded pop back to the site to see how you compare to the world, or narrow it down to those at your beach.

PRIZES, GLORY AND BRAGGING RIGHTS

Finally, as if all this wasn't enough reason to have a go at speed, BOARDS have teamed up with GPS Speedsurfing to bring you the BOARDS British Speed Ladder 2011, which will start at the end of Weymouth Speed Week on 22 October and runs until the end of Weymouth Speed Week 2011.

There will be loads of great prizes to be won, based on a lottery draw at the end of the year. Effectively every speed session posted will give you one chance of winning, so the more sessions you post the better your chances of bagging a prize. Plus of course you get to see how fast you are compared to everyone else in the country.

From 22 October just add 'BOARDS British Speed Ladder 2011' to the drop-down event box when registering your tracks online with gps-speedsurfing.com.

So what's stopping you? The total cost of setting yourself up with the latest GPS Navi GT 31 and software, etc, is about £150, and I guarantee it will be one of the best investments in improving not just your speed but your overall windsurfing. ☺

“It's not all about dedicated kit and breaking records – you can compare speeds with your mates at your local spot just for the bragging rights”

THANKS TO GPS-SPEED.COM FOR LENDING US THE UNITS TO TRY AND GPS-SPEEDSURFING.COM FOR THE SOFTWARE

PETE DAVIS IS SPONSORED BY DAKINE, SIMMER, MISTRAL, SPARTAN AND MORLEY DAVIS LTD