



INTUITION'S BOURNEMOUTH TO BRIGHTON BLAST 2008

WORDS BY: GUY CRIBB

THIS YEAR'S BOURNEMOUTH TO BRIGHTON BLAST was never going to be as tough as last year's inaugural event, which happened to be on the windiest day of the year, but we still had our fair share of challenges! Not least the most dangerous stretch (through the Solent) which was the busiest day in Solent history, with a record number of entrants on the water competing in the Round The Island Race and all their support boats and spectators getting in our way...

Three windsurfers completed the full challenge in a record breaking time, and opened the door for all sorts of less experienced / less fit windsurfers to potentially do the whole journey in the future: many of the freeriders got a lot further than they thought they would in challenging conditions. Well...here's the story, hot off the press, from the monster freeride challenge, held on June 28th this year.

PREPARATION

T minus 4 days

I'm in Dahab, it's windy here, and goddammit, looks like it's going to be windy for the B2B on the first possible day and I am without decent comms to arrange it! I'd postponed the event until the summer, to encourage more freeriders and find lighter winds, and never thought for a minute that the first potential day could have a strong forecast!

T-1 days.

My board is lost in the post from Germany. It's the first 2009 Syncro RD 124 in the world. With it's single back strap and blistering speed, without it I could not manage a lighter wind B2B.

I postpone the event to Saturday to encourage more freeriders to take part. My board arrives late on Thursday, serial number 0001, nice! I try it with a variety of footstrap positions and settle on central back strap, out board front straps, all very large, and a racey 32cm fin with minimal lift, to minimise back leg fatigue. Very, very happy with the board-ticks all the boxes perfectly but is especially good at smoothing out chop, not nose diving and exiting gybes planing- the very things I will need to allow me to get from Bournemouth to Brighton. Even if it's 40 knots on Saturday, so long as it's a downwind course, I will use this board.

T-12 hours.

After hours on the internet studying forecasts all week, with a real OCD syndrome going on, I made the call for Saturday, to sail bang smack into the middle of the RTIR fleet! We don't have insurance for this event as it is, so what's another one thousand, eight hundred and twenty five possible disasters?!

THE EVENT.

Start minus 2 hours.

I arrived at the beach to see that many of the faces from last year were back for more radicalism! (Since this event is all internet driven, with no entry fees and no fixed date, there is no way of knowing how many people will enter it until the day.) Rather annoyingly I rigged a 7.8m as there was almost no wind, but no sooner had I rigged it, I also rigged a 6.8m, knowing this was the sail I really wanted to use as it had such a wide wind range. The wind was beginning to look more promising, with a few of the lads just getting planing on 7m, but only in the gusts.



We finally held the briefing at 10am, an hour later than our proposed start time. I gave everyone Rob's number (my website man) to phototext him with news and photos whenever

and wherever they finished their sailing. I should have known then how unorganised most sailors were! There I was demonstrating the international distress signal and listing all the contents of my grab bag, whilst many of them stood, arms folded, without even a bottle of water. Jules listened to my list: 'water' and thought to himself 'no,' phone: no, warm clothes: no, warm wetsuit: no, spares: no, food: no, flares: no, lift: no.... But he borrowed a board and went for it, and lived to tell the tale, nutter.

10:30am the Start



We left the beach with hardly any wind at all, however a few of the lads planed away in a freak gust. Matt Wemms and Jamie Hawkins amongst them- Matt said the gust just stayed with them right out to sea, whereas most of us stayed wobbling by the shore. I for one didn't plane until I was at least 500m off shore, and then rarely for the first two hours.

11:48am

I stopped after about an hour, approximately two miles out to sea, no one around, thinking of great white sharks with my legs in the water and texted Matt and Jamie to tell them not to wait for me at Avon Beach as I was so far behind everybody I'd go straight into the Solent in search of wind. (This text proved to be irrelevant as they'd already decided to leave without me!) I texted the boat with the photographer to tell them I'd done my hair and was heading to the Needles for a shoot. From this moment on, I didn't see another B2B participant until I eventually stumbled in to Brighton almost six hours later.

12:00pm

I was south of the Needles when I saw a yacht flapping around, so I approached shouting "Das ist England?" but couldn't keep a straight face so told them I was windsurfing from Bournemouth to Brighton, which they found even stranger.

12:25pm



What was I doing going to the Needles? They're pretty off course, and their surrounding currents can be lethal, but they look so good from a board! I

glided in under the cliffs there and took a few shots on my telephone and sent them to the web. It had taken me two hours to travel less than twenty miles- average speed of only approx 7-8 knots! And a top speed of only 21 knots! I also took this shot with my waterproof camera.

12:30pm



I think my excessive 10kg rescue pack was something to do with my slow progress, so I started eating and drinking my way through it. Got as far as a wetsuit hat before stopping. No sign of the photo boat, so sent them another text to say I was en route to Hurst Castle.

12:49pm

Usual chaos at Hurst, ridiculous chop all over the shop, a bleeding castle in the way and fishing lines everywhere, so nowhere to come ashore, but some nice flat water to rest in and send more texts in search of the press boat and to inform the shop contacts of my progress, or lack of it.

There was a pretty strong current pulling downwind now, and after sending the texts I looked up to see that the tiny yellow marker buoy that was miles downwind of me was suddenly a large yellow marker buoy steaming towards me! It looked like I was on for a direct hit with it in about 6 knots of current. I rushed to put my phone back in it's waterproof bag, and in a panic nearly dropped it! With my rig heading to one side of the buoy, my board the other, and me potentially washed away with the tide I had to calm myself and neatly put my phone away, and do up the waterproof bag as though there was no imminent danger! My phone was secured for about a split second before I hit the buoy, fortunately on the top of my mast so I quickly washed around it. It's simple errors like this that could have cost me dearly, and a strong reminder that the Solent will take no prisoners...

1:00pm

Up and running again, cruising effortlessly downwind in the sun, remembering this very point last year, when we were fighting in waist high chop and 50 knot gusts, being knifed by cramp, whereas right now I might as well have been drinking Pimms from my camelbak!

1:20pm

I spoke too soon. Yesterday I put an adjustable outhaul system on my boom, and photographed every single step to share with readers for a forthcoming 'how to do it' article. Should've have been a 'how not to do it' as the bleeding new back end has just fallen off!

GUY CRIBB TECHNIQUE



Clearly the way I secured it was incorrect. Fortunately the boom is still totally intact, I'm still upright and although my sail is now like a spinnaker, the boom is just about keeping the rig together enough for me to continue planing in towards the Isle of Wight, albeit heading to what looks like the most desolate rocky shoreline on the whole bleeding island and rather than hanging off the boom I'm having to push it up: feels weird!

1:30pm

No ice creams for sale here, so I tuck into a bunch of bananas and energy bars, grab a knife from the boat, make a few calls to the shops, our beach support, the internet and Wemmsy, and received a very timely call from Nik Baker who was in Germany wanting to know the progress of B2B. The boom repair was straight forward, and although probably strong enough to last me the whole journey, I don't think it would survive a catapult. I drink about a gallon of water and treat this as a lunch break.

1:50pm

Depart the beach and see Cy on the boat holding out a peeled banana for me to grab on the way passed, foolishly I grab it with my mouth and in doing so sail straight under the boat, my back pack comes half off, I sink the camber induced sail and have a 6.5m RIB on my head, still, I have a mouthful of banana to look forward to if I don't drown.

2pm

I have never seen a sight like it- the horizon is jagged with white and grey triangles, the mid-ground has yachts everywhere, following a line along the IOW coast and the foreground is a mess of yachts just finishing the Round The Island Race. This would not be a good time to break the boom again. The camera is rolling and this could hardly be a better way to promote windsurfing to yachties. Time to buzz a few boats!



2:10pm

The finish line to the RTIR is in my sights, it's crammed with yachts, shall I sail straight through it the wrong way? Will I live to tell the tale? Is it too disrespectful to our fellow yachtsmen?

2:11pm

I narrowly miss their finish line, passing a few metres from it at about 30mph going totally the opposite direction to about 1,500 boats and begin weaving in and out of the traffic. There are ridiculous wind shadows not just from the yachts, but also from the island, so I'm always restricted to how much trouble I can get into as I am forced to sail away from the island and the yachts. I narrowly miss a few, as narrowly as I dare, and pass so close behind some with the dangerous assumption that since they are racing they will have no fishing lines off the stern. Not been decapitated yet.

2:15pm

All yachties in the RTIR now either love windsurfers or hate them. Certainly they will have got a close view of the speeds we can potentially reach, although the water was very choppy so I was restricted to about 25 knots (they were doing about 6 knots).



2:30pm

I'm saying my goodbyes to my escort boat. They've done a fantastic job and have sacrificed almost a whole days windsurfing looking after and photographing this event (I say almost because I know Cy got out later on a 4.7 for a few hours!) They ultimately rode at pretty much full speed in the RIB in windy Solent chop for nearly four hours, and they were so keen to get out sailing, that on their return journey at full speed into the waves, the waterski a-frame snapped clean off the stern!

But that's no wonder as Cy kept giving me the advice: "sail faster and take risks!" Clearly he practises what he preaches.

Roger managed to keep all his cameras intact, however when the a-frame fell off the back he noticed that in the water at the bottom of the boat his phone was washing around in pieces. It was an incredibly tricky environment for taking pics, but clearly he got some good ones- huge thanks!

2:40pm

I'm on my own, albeit surrounded by warships, hovercrafts, ferries, giant forts in the middle of the sea, 1,825 yachts, speedboats and a few windsurfers off Stokes Bay. I see another windsurfer on a North Sail following me, but amongst the incredible traffic I watch him come off the plane and never saw him again. Who are you?

As I pass Gillkicker Point I think back to last year when we were pinned down by the storm on the beach for an hour whilst the rescue boats tried finding the remains of the fleet. I wondered where Matt and Jamie were now.

Matt had said he was leaving Stokes Bay and Jamie leaving Calshot when I was back on the IOW mending my boom. I figured if they were going to stop at Hayling Island and West Wittering as planned, I would be able to make good time on them if I headed straight for Selsey Bill, and might potentially catch them at Pagham. Furthermore, I was not yet half way and it was already nearly 3pm. So I informed the contacts at Hayling and West Wittering that sadly I would be unable to stop there, I was a free man so to speak, and the back pack full of safety provisions gave me the confidence to make a B-line for Selsey Bill, which would take me on one reach nearly three miles offshore and nearly 20 miles down the coast straight to Pagham, yeehaa!

I later learnt that Jamie too had taken one reach, not just from Gilkicker to Pagham, but from Calshot all the way to Littlehampton! Some 30-35 miles!

On one tack! In a remarkable 1:20 mins! He gybed some miles off Bognor and reached into his home beach at the bottom of his road, walked home and waltzed into his kitchen in his wetsuit for lunch and a cup of tea (and I thought I was organised!) at just after 3pm, then was back afloat by 4pm.

Meanwhile Wemmsy sailed from Stokes Bay on one reach all the way to Pagham, but couldn't recognise where we stopped last year and landed on the wrong beach, surrounded by nobody. Bored, he got back on and headed east, with no idea where Jamie or I were. His father, who was driving his van, was equally lost trying to find Pagham and had given up hope so headed straight for Brighton too.

3pm

I am sailing, all alone, miles out to sea, riding decent swells, clocking speeds of over 30mph in the sunshine. Rod Stewart eat your heart out. I could not be a freer man. I was confident that should anything go drastically wrong this far out to sea, I could paddle in before nightfall, and had enough provisions to keep me warm and fed. There was a cluster of yachts heading east no doubt after finishing the RTIR, so I wasted them with a surprise 30mph attack from out to sea behind them, arriving with a clatter and probably out of sight within moments.

GUY CRIBB TECHNIQUE

I can see loads of windsurfers off Hayling Island, but I know if I go ashore or amongst them I will be on a tighter reach to Selsey Bill, which is more strenuous, so I have to resist the temptation to join them inshore.

3:30pm

Selsey Bill is growing out of the horizon and becoming safer and safer as I get closer and closer. I'm putting my foot down sometimes and have just clocked 29.3 knots on the GPS, however the huge footstraps which help me stay comfortable over the board when I'm surfing down swells mega broad, are not doing me any favours when I'm hanging right out at full speed. My ingrowing toenails are all that's connecting me to the straps and I'm on the edge of control.

3:45pm

There's a few large breaking waves around, at least half mast high and really steep so it must be very shallow in places.

Jamie and Matt both talked later about nearly hitting a sand bar that was literally sucking dry some miles out to sea off Selsey Bill! What they were doing so far out to sea I'll never know, I thought I was taking risks!

4pm

I arrive at Pagham, over an hour quicker than last years trip so far. No sign of the lads, but someone saw 'sail number GBR 3 go passed about half an hour ago.' That'll be Wemmsy. Jamie on the other hand passed before that, but somewhere over the horizon going too fast to focus on. I sadly inform the shops at Ferring and Shoreham I don't intend to stop there either since it's getting late and this sea breeze could quickly get too light, as it did last year, delaying my already slow journey.

With Lee at Pagham, the only time I set foot on dry land the whole journey (as my boom repair on IOW was hardly dry land!)



4:20pm

With increased downhaul tension and tighter footstraps, I'm ready for some more action heading east. Mental note to avoid the lobster pots and fishing lines scattered like a mine field from Pagham to Bognor. Avoiding these at the last minute use a lot of energy and caused Wemmsy some serious catapults last year. And they're not easy to spot when you're covering about thirty metres every couple of seconds, since they are the slimmest of flags and the smallest buoys on the water with about ten metres of fin snagging rope lying on the surface! I know that the next time I come ashore will be at Brighton, all being well.

4:30pm

I'm scanning the horizon for signs of Brighton, but the buildings I can see emerging from the haze are Worthing. The buttocks of Butlins brush past, and I'm wisely heading out to sea away from them, on another mission a long way off shore. There's a

tower off Littlehampton, some three miles out and I pass way south of it, which gives me the spooks so I gybe and get closer to the shore, finally sailing on port tack resting all my well used starboard tack muscles.

4:40 pm

Jamie arrives at Shoreham and is informed that Wemmsy went through shortly before, heart broken Jamie quickly excuses himself with 'I think the wind's dropping I've got to go' and makes chase on Wemmsy.

"I sailed so flat stick to Brighton chasing after Wemmsy it wasn't funny. I nearly killed myself a couple of times at full speed stacked on my 6.7 RS Slalom. I was laughing at myself for being sooo competitive, even though the B2B isn't a race, I was determined to catch him!" JH

Gawd knows how fast Jamie went, but you can be sure it was probably the fastest any windsurfer sailed in all of Britain that day on the hunt for a glory finish after his disaster last year.

4:45pm

There's loads of windsurfers out at Shoreham and I am tempted to sail amongst them so crank into a gybe some hundred metres upwind, but find myself cranking into the water instead. This is the one and only time I fall during the trip other than when I crashed into the support boat. My wetsuit, so far only filled with my water, gets an important flushing. Funnily enough, the only gybe Jamie fell off was also at Shoreham!

I blast through a line of windsurfers at Shoreham, they're out on wave a freestyle kit and I manage to say hi to a few before I disappear way downwind.

4:50pm

Wemmsy lands in Brighton in style- "I was flying into the beach at Mach 10, just about to jump off when I hit a small concealed pipe that ripped my fin box out and sent me flying over the front into the shore break! I got worked by a couple of waves and ended up in a heap on Brighton beach with two ladies saying, "that's one way to get in."

Not long after that I saw Jamie coming in, my first sighting of him since before Calshot and then Guy coming in, my first sighting of him since Bournemouth." MW

5pm

Jamie blasts into the beach at Brighton and meets his family who took longer to get there driving than he did sailing.



5:15pm

Brighton is well and truly in my sights, as are a few windsurfers out at Hove. I get close to the shore and try to take some pics but my waterproof camera has been bashed around too much today and is no longer working, so I sheet in and head for the finish, hoping the lads are still around to offer me a lift home!



5:30pm

On dry land after windsurfing for a total of about six hours during a seven hour mission, loving life!

SUMMARY

The Bournemouth to Brighton challenge is a serious test. I believe it's the longest long distance windsurfing race in the world (held on one day- there's plenty of long distance races that are spread out over a weeks) covering around 100 miles and passing directly through one of the busiest waters in the world.

That said, this year's event proved it is easy enough for less experienced and less fit windsurfers to potentially complete the whole distance, or at least much of it.

To quote one of the participants "the sense of being so alone was actually quite liberating." Take this as you like- the meek might squirm, but the brave will be there at the startline next year. Watch this space for the 2009 event.

THANKS-

Without the support of friends in windsurfing there would have been no photos to share with you and possibly no event, so to Cy Grisley for giving your time and boat, Roger Turner for taking the pics on board, Steve Doidge for taking all the Brighton pics and Will Law for taking the Bournemouth shots, you've done your sport proud- thanks for sacrificing a perfect day on the water to bring this event into the mags.

And a massive big up to all the participants and a huge congratulations for taking up the challenge.

Bournemouth to Calshot finishers-

Adrian Cushing, Mike Sprague 2.30 Trevor Annels arrived at Lepe at 2.15pm.

Bournemouth to Hayling Island

Ed Britnell and Robin Penna arrived Hayling 3.15pm and Jonathon Pooley arrived Hayling 4.15pm.

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