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I'VE DONE A FEW LONG DISTANCE RACES IN MY TIME, BUT NOTHING WAS AS TOUGH AS LAST YEAR'S INTUITION BOURNEMOUTH TO BRIGHTON BLAST. 107 MILES IN WINDS GUSTING A TERRIFYING 55 KNOTS. I LEARNED HEAPS ABOUT LONG DISTANCE AND DOWNWIND SAILING DURING THOSE GRUELLING NINE HOURS, AND I'M GOING TO SHARE MANY OF THE KEY TIPS WITH YOU IN THIS SERIES.

Tips that will make you sail faster, whatever level you are currently at, and tips that will help you sail further, by having a more comfortable ride.

Plus I'm going to do a specific feature on how to increase your board speed by an extra 5 knots (measured on your GPS), which would be a great challenge for you, and me, but one that I know is possible since I've done it heaps of times with guests on courses, often getting them over 30 knots.

After a few long distance/ downwinder/ sailing overpowered/ speed style features, this series will become a Slalom Racing series, not just for the windsurfer, but for organisers, on how to best

operate local events, even with no staff or facilities (just windsurfers.)

And with speed and slalom sailing back in business, combined with my history of racing and coaching, it should be a good series. So bring on events like Defi Wind in the South of France, where I'll be competing with 800 other racers, INtuition's Bournemouth to Brighton Blast, where hopefully many of you will join me for some or all of the long distance freeriding, or Weymouth Speed Week in the autumn: trying to break your own records. See you there!

# SLIP INTO SOMETHING MORE COMFORTABLE

WE WERE ALREADY KNACKERED, JUST SHELTERING TO LEEWARD OF HURST CASTLE, ONLY ABOUT A FITTH OF THE WAY TO BRIGHTON. CHRIS MADE IT ANOTHER TWENTY MILES OR SO TO HIS HOME AT HILLHEAD BEFORE PULLING OUT OF THE CHALLENGE, PARTLY BECAUSE HIS LUNCH WAS ON THE TABLE AT HOME, AND PARTLY BECAUSE HE WAS USING DOUBLE BACK STRAPS ON HIS FANATIC.



## DOWNWIND!

With two months to go before the Bournemouth to Brighton Blast (B2B) (end of June- the longest day, the longest distance) this feature is going to give you some tuning tips, for your body and your kit, and some technique tips on blasting downwind.

I'm not particularly fit, so I'm in no doubt that I finished the B2B with technique, tuning and determination alone. In this part of the feature I'm going to tell you what bits of my body hurt most, and how I prevented them from ruining my day with careful tuning. It's up to you to then go and train those bits of your body, seeking fitness advice elsewhere in time for this years' downwinders.

## PAIN!

### CALF MUSCLES-

Calf muscles are used to trim the board flat (more efficiently) and are thus a key to sailing fast and smoothly. They go into overtime when accelerating- pushing the board forwards. My calf muscles were the first to die.



## TUNING SOLUTION-

Three major tuning tips will take some pressure off them-

**Bigger board-** exiting gybes, my 106 litre board was sinking/sticking a little and therefore I was having to work hard to push it back onto the plane. A bigger/wider board would have been fine to use even in those winds, since as we were always going with the wind, the wind was never really blowing it out of control. ②



The bigger board would have been easier to accelerate and take some of the pressure off my calf muscles.

**Smaller fin-** I was on a 36 cm fin and it was sometimes lifting too much, making the board climb out of the water and requiring more calf muscle to keep it trimmed flat. I'd probably use a 32cm fin for any straight downwind long distance events in the future, even on quite large boards.

**Single back strap-** the single back strap option allows you to sail with straighter legs. A straighter leg uses much less energy than a bent one. No one with double back straps finished the B2B.

**Outboard front straps-** combined with an inboard/single back strap, helps keep your legs straighter and turns your body to face where you're going-downwind. This is not a great tip for speed, but useful for control on these mega broad reaches.

#### THIGHS-

Sailing on a broad reach in principle requires a bent back leg and a straight front leg. The bent back leg quickly gets tired, as it would do if you sat in the iron chair position for six and a half hours: which is basically what we did.



A bent back leg is going to hurt.

#### TUNING SOLUTION-

A single back strap allows your back leg to be straighter on a broad reach, therefore using far less energy (both on the calf and thigh muscles) This tuning tip is so important, making all the difference between completing a course and not, that if your board doesn't have a single back strap, I'd have one professionally fitted. If your board has two inboard straps, you'll need to make them ridiculously large in order to get your back leg over the centre of the board.

Animal have run an invitational long distance downwinder event from Kimmeridge to Sandbanks during Windfest for a few years. The first year I flew round the course with a single back strap on a freeride board, no problem.

The next year I took a slalom board with double back straps and I had cramp within a few miles. I even resorted to using the back strap on the wrong side of the board to try and relieve the pressure from my calf and thigh muscles! The footstrap position caused cramp, cramp caused wipe outs, and wipe out induced injury, and injury and exhaustion caused an early retirement from the race: the only race I have ever retired from!

And I'll reiterate, no one with double back straps (or slalom boards) finished the B2B last year.

**Use a forgiving board-** freeride boards generally have characteristics that make them easier to ride, especially through chop. These very characteristics reduce their top speed, but give you the smoother ride.

Slalom boards are designed to be incredibly fast, but only over short distances, as they are too physical to handle unless you're built like Bjorn Dunkerbeck.

They are so lively that they require far more concentration too.

For any long distance event, **leave the slalom board at home**, unless the water is very flat, or winds very light. In last years B2B even ex-world champs were unable to complete the course on slalom boards.



Single, inboard double and outboard double footstrap set ups

#### BRAIN-

Concentrate on having both legs straight for as much time as possible to save energy. It's no good going for a speed blast with a bent back leg, only to be knackered after a few minutes. Concentrating on pacing yourself is vital, and the main thing is to keep those legs straight and calf muscles relaxed. Standing very upright over the board helps keep the pressure off your calf muscles too.

More downhaul, or the correct downhaul, creates more twist from the sail so when gusts hit, the sail gives, rather than your legs. This helps you sail with straighter legs for longer.



The single back strap helps keep your back leg straight even on a broad reach, whereas the double back strap will force your back leg to be bend



Flying on a slalom board is great for short distances, but too tiring for long distances.



#### BICEPS-

When you're as overpowered as I was, you use your biceps heaps to pull the sail in when bearing off. Then every time the board slows down, by hitting chop or exiting a gybe, the power of the rig surges into your arms.

**Tuning solution- correct harness line position** to trim the sail right in from the harness and not from your arms (get a Cribb Sheet from [guycribb.com](http://guycribb.com) to set them perfectly)

**The correct downhaul setting** allows the sail to absorb the gusts rather than your muscles.

Concentrate on relaxing- not getting too excited about speed by sheeting in a little more, or acceleration by pumping.

#### BACK OF THIGHS-

The backs of my thighs were cramping too- one of the most common muscles to suffer in windsurfing, usually when waterstarting. They're used at the same time as your calf muscles to trim the board by pushing down on your toes, and also used for the Moon Walk (INtution Core Skill- see the DVD)

**Solution-** see tuning tips for calf muscles above, and don't fall off as much to reduce waterstarting!

#### NECK-

Looking in the same direction for too long will stiffen your neck, so look behind you occasionally, or around you to keep it loose.

#### HANDS-

Wemmsy had no skin left by the end of his B2B.

**Tuning solution-** ensure there is no grease on your boom (rapidly collected if the boom has travelled on a roof rack, or is used in polluted water) as this will make the boom slippery and your grip harder. Use the non-sharp side of a hack saw blade and drag it along the boom grip and watch the grease ooze out of it.

Ensure there's no sand on the boom (abrasive), and no sun cream on your hands (slippery- makes you grip harder). The correct harness line position and a narrower diameter boom will help too.

#### FURTHER TUNING

##### MAST TRACK-

I used my mast track quite well forwards. Putting it further forwards helps keep the nose down which increases your control.

It also makes the sail rake back a little more, which reduces power.

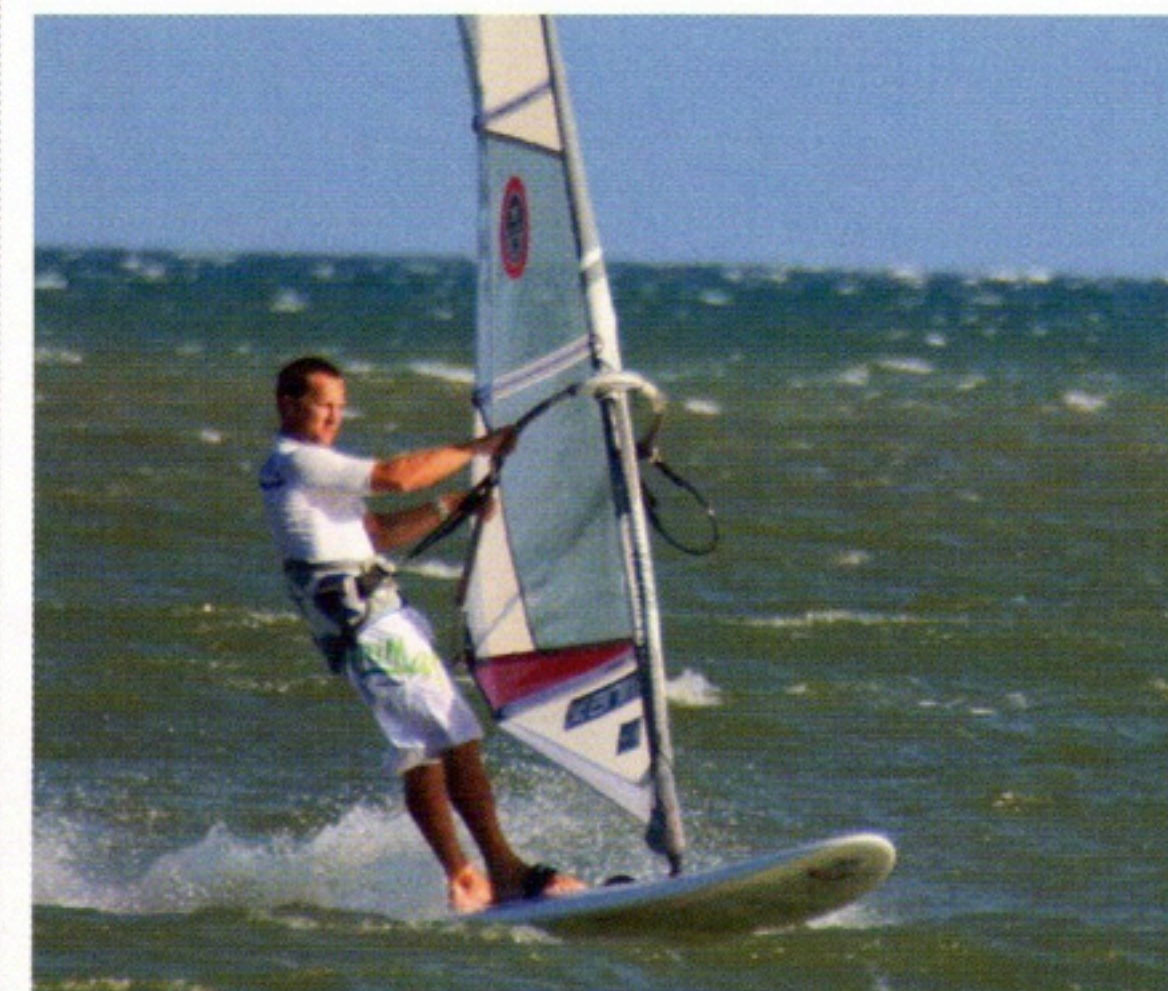
I was powered up enough to be able to lighten the mast foot pressure so the nose would lift over the waves in front easily, even though the track was well forwards. This is achieved by just sheeting out a little.



Mast track

#### BOOM HEIGHT-

Normally I would lower my boom quite a lot for overpowered conditions, as it helps you get lower, and naturally increases weight onto your front leg, which gives you more board control. However, on these long distance events you don't want too much weight on your legs, as they'll tire, so I kept my boom nearly at my normal height, to spread the weight more onto the mast foot and my feet evenly: pulling me more upright over the board.



Boom height

#### FOOTSTRAP POSITIONS-

The wider your stance, the more bent one leg will have to be when sailing up or downwind (when sailing a reach both legs are basically straight). To prepare your board for the downwinders, bring your footstrap position closer together to help keep your legs straight. I brought my front straps one hole further back and back straps a hole further forwards.



Waist harness

#### HARNESS-

Seat harnesses are generally better for bigger boards and rigs, as they require more mast foot pressure to sail them efficiently and you need to lighten your weight off your feet to accelerate faster. This all comes from the harness lines pointing down towards your hook a little more than a waist harness, where your lines are angled more outwards, and the ensuing pull is more outwards.

When you're sailing this broad, and stood very upright over the board, often altering your mast foot pressure to lift the nose over the wave in front, wearing a waist harness will make life easier, not least because it is a less committed/ full on style of sailing.

**Conclusion-** at one stage in the B2B both thigh muscles, both biceps, the back of my thigh and one calf muscle were all cramped up at the same time exiting a gybe. It was bloody agonising, and if I had fallen off then, just off Portsmouth and only half way there, I would never have been able to waterstart and carry on as the back of both thighs would have gone and I'd have probably drowned instead.

I clung on with stump like hands through the acceleration and just managed to get the board going straight downwind which took the pressure off the muscles. That and a stomach full of every sports fluid/rehydration/energy bar/turbo banana/jaffa cakes I could wedge in there.

Enjoy the gym - concentrating on training the muscles we've talked about above, and I'll see you on the water soon.

#### SUMMARY

- Tuning check list for long downwinders-
- Front straps outboard, one hole from front.
- Back straps- single/inboard, front hole.
- Large freeride board, 30-35cm fin
- Normal boom height - approx 2/3 up cut-out or neck height.
- Mast track forwards of middle.
- Waist harness.

I will be attempting to windsurf from Bournemouth to Brighton on the first windy day after June 24 this year. Keep an eye on [guycribb.com](http://guycribb.com) for more info!

#### TECHNIQUE-

Next month there will be a full feature on how to turn downwind and sail fast in control, over powered and over waves.

For now, once you're sailing downwind at good speed, probably faster than the wind speed, the rig will begin to go lighter. Anticipate this and let the rig pull you upright over the board. Standing above the board takes loads of pressure off your calf and thigh muscles, but still keeps the board flat. ●

For more information and details of INtution clinics, please email [guy@guycribb.com](mailto:guy@guycribb.com) or see [www.guycribb.com](http://www.guycribb.com).



Stand above board