



INTUITION DIRTY LOW DOWN AND OUT

WITH SWIFTY
By Guy Cribb

AFTER REVEALING THE IDEAL TUNING GUIDE LAST MONTH WITH NIK BAKER, IT'S TIME TO SHOW YOU HOW TO GET USED TO THE KIT WITH ROBBY SWIFT, ANOTHER OF THE WORLD'S BEST WINDSURFERS FROM THE UK.



ROBBY SWIFT
Weight: 80kg
Height: 5'8"

GUY CRIBB
Weight: 86kg
Height: 5'11

Robby Swift is a complete nutter. He goes large at everything he does, and if he's not the best at it he's not happy. I recently challenged him to a wasabi-eating contest. He made the opening move of squirting the excruciatingly sneeze-worthy horseradish Japanese sauce down the length of his finger and then eating it right in front of me, passing me the tube and saying 'your turn' without flinching. I just said 'you win' and left it at that (he wasn't happy).

"Cribby, check this out," he'd say and pull off a perfect Taka on the wave, a move that, at the time, only about three people in the world could do. Or do a Ninja kick so tweaked and inverted I didn't know such anti-gravity moves existed. Or casually win the World Cup in ferocious 4.0m weather in Sotavento whilst partying harder than anyone.

I went tow-in surfing with him in Hawaii earlier this year. I have never in my life seen anyone hit the lip so hard and

carelessly as Robby. The waves were big enough to drown 99.99% of the population of the world, but Robby would go for an aerial 360 off the lip, right in front of me to make sure I was looking.

When zooming in on the jet-ski to pick him up, rather than duck diving these massive waves to keep him from harm, he'd sit on the top of them, laughing and waving as he'd get sucked over the falls for amusement, pounded into the depths and probably bounce off the reef.

He's recently been featured in Carve magazine, one of Britain's surfing rags, as the Brit who's ridden the world's biggest waves. Albeit originating from Maidstone in Kent (which threw the Cornish surfing community into disarray, until they read Robby now lives on Maui).

I saw him standing on the reef at La Peruse in Maui recently as he was taking waves deeper than anyone else. Not because he was better than them (... he ended up on the reef!) but because he couldn't care less about being smashed into sharp lava rocks by one of Maui's heaviest waves!

Not to mention hundreds of other extremes to his behaviour, including many of which even hardened seasoned party goers would never believe, and of course are entirely unprintable in this magazine! Despite his extreme behaviour in everything he does (and often extremely bad behaviour, like stealing his car back from a locked police compound in Gran Canaria, not just once but twice, breaking through the barriers, eventually spending the weekend in a Spanish jail) he's an extremely nice chap, usually incredibly smart and a pleasure to be around.

And for the greater good of windsurfing mankind, he joins me to prove he rigs his kit just the same as Nik Baker, Jason Polakow, me and the rest of the world tour sailors, as described last month in my INTuition Pro Technique article in Windsurf Magazine.

HIGHLY TUNED

Loosely summarising last month's feature – however large, small or experienced you are:

- Boom height should be in the top half of the cut-out (usually 2/3 to 3/4 high)
- Whack on an extra inch or two of downhaul
- Position your back harness line one third of the way back down the sail and your front one a fist in front.
- Use a minimum of 26" lines, ideally 28"

Why? Because all of the world's best sailors sail like this, regardless of their size, kit or gender. (Remember, boom height adjusts up or down for improved early planing or overpowered control respectively.) Cribb Sheets available to set your kit up perfectly; email guy@guycribb.com



Swift's boom undergoing the Cribb Sheets treatment, and yes- the harness lines are right on the spot.

Most people find that with the harness lines in the correct position there's an increased pull in their front arm, especially in lighter winds. This is one of the subjects that will be covered here, as will general stance improvements. Swifty's boom undergoing the Cribb Sheets treatment, confirming the 5'8" professional world tour sailor uses

exactly the same harness line position as myself, Jason Polakow, Nik Baker and the rest of the pro world tour.



INtuition PRO TEC

Giving you the perfect kit set up last month was only half the equation; this month I'll show you how to use it.

There is no one stance that suits all conditions, you've got to become flexible to maximise your kit's wind range and make the most of the changing conditions, rather than just standing there expecting something to happen. This is best noted by how the pro's get planing so early, despite being on smaller kit and handle stronger winds, despite being on bigger kit, regardless of their size.

This month we're concentrating on high wind stance and generally improved control, with special attention to getting more comfortable to the new kit set up.

To achieve the correct basic stance your kit must be tuned correctly. (Cribb Sheets – guy@guycribb.com)

With the harness lines in the correct position your rig is naturally sheeted in more and sailed more upright, improving early planing. The sail is also trimmed correctly to relax both arms even in the biggest gusts, giving you much better control. However in light winds you are likely to feel an increased pull in your front hand.

This may be uncomfortable to begin with, and therefore may feel worse. But persevere and your windsurfing will go through the roof.

The increased pull in your front hand feels like the rig wants to catapult you, which of course gets your defences up, usually in the form of gripping too hard and pulling the rig back, both of which actually only make it feel worse and kills your early planing and control.

To alleviate your front hand of this increased pull, when hooked in, firstly sort these stance basics:

- Sail with overhand grip, with your thumbs on top of the boom.
- Put your backhand right by the back harness line, not further back.
- Sink down so that your eye level is beneath the boom by slouching, dropping your chin to your waist (try it now in your chair, if you aren't already!)

As I can't be there to remind you of these three tips on the water, remember the word OVER:

- OVER hand grip.
- Your back thumb OVER the back harness line.
- Your chin OVER your waist.

These stance tips alone should improve your sailing, but to lose some of the pull in your front hand, now apply the following tips-

- Stick your ass out and bend your arms.
- Tip the mast forwards and towards the eye of the wind.

Both of these tips might come as a shock to you, compared with the old school teaching they sound like the wrong way (old school says 'shoulders back in strong winds and arms straight' and 'close the slot/rake the rig back'). New School INtuition says stick your ass out, point your elbows down and tip the rig forwards, all of which improves board control, which in strong winds or rough water is key.

You see, when you get overpowered, it's not the rig that throws you off; it's losing control of the board. Admittedly a sudden loss of control of the rig could chuck you, but 95% of the time it's the unsettling of the board that does it. So, rather than trying to fight the rig with the old school method of leaning out further, take control of the board instead, maximising your weight onto the mast foot to hold it down onto the water.

This is best achieved with an upright rig (not raked back/slot closed) and your body weight sinking right down onto the mast foot, and onto your front foot.

This is basically what I call Downforce, an INtuition Core Skill vital for control going into carve gybes or bottom turns, crucial for control in rough water, vital for early planing and in fact throughout windsurfing.

Because we're stood basically on the tail of the board, in order for windsurfing to work we need to get loads of weight on the mast foot, bang smack in the middle of the board, holding it flatter in the water.

So to increase your Downforce, and to stop the rig from pulling on your front hand as much, follow these instructions-

Tip the mast forwards and towards the eye of the wind by about a whole foot, putting the sail much more upright. Don't change your stance; simply use your arms to tip the rig forwards. A good way to visually check this, is your back hand should now be directly in line with your shoulder rather than behind it (or even almost in line with your neck for earlier planing).

This increases the tension into your harness lines, relieving your front hand of some of the strain.

Stick your ass out and say "ASSI!" (akin to Father Jack in Father Ted) and bend your arms, with your elbows pointing down, just like Swifty and I are doing in this pic (and the other examples on next double page spread).

I've been teaching this style of sailing for decades whilst the old school have been teaching 'put your shoulders back in strong winds'.

There's a simple test worth doing here to understand this stance clearer – please get out of your chair (this is important). Stand up, put your shoulders back old school high wind stance teaching style; tell me – did your hips come forwards? The answer is yes. When your hips come forward the harness lines can fall out of your hook. Even if they don't, there'll be more weight on your arms, both of

This is Mr X. His stance is typical of many intermediate and advanced windsurfers. (For the record this is one of Mr X's first proper full blasting runs and I have caught him at his worst to demonstrate to you a poor stance.)

The two main areas of concern are his backhand position and the fact he's standing so upright, both typical of an improver and possibly of you.

With the backhand that far back you have so much leverage over the boom you could sheet in really hard

and send yourself into a catapult. Best not to use the backhand to do any pulling, once you are fully planing let your bodyweight do all that work through your harness lines. Having it too far back also ruins early planing, twists your body the wrong way and all sorts of issues, so put your backhand right by the back harness line 90% of the time.

Standing up causes catapulting because the harness lines pull you sideways, instead of having to lift you off your feet (compare the angle of Swifty's and my lines which are almost pointing straight down, to Mr

X's which are almost horizontal).

This brings us to a point about how high your harness should be, see next double page spread for that INfo.

Further problems here include the board swerving downwind as the weight gets pulled onto his toes; wind getting under the windward rail of the board and blowing it off course; terrifying fear of catapulting; and not being able to sail anywhere near full speed.

HNIQUE – STANCE

which are a disaster in strong winds. Sticking your ass out, on the other hand, increases tension into your lines, by distancing your hook from the boom, relieving your arms of much of the strain, giving you a far more comfortable and controlled ride.

Pointing your elbows down, and bending your arms, brings your shoulders in, over your waist, lowering your centre of gravity, getting more weight on top of the board, (rather than sideways into it) and loads of other good healthy stance advantages.

NOTE: bend your arms by doing a sit up, bringing your shoulders closer to the boom and thus necessitating the bending of elbows. Do not pull hard into the boom with your arms; the pull from the rig should remain 90% in your harness.



Despite the smaller kit and launching downwind in the wind shadow of the group, the two sailors on the left with their back hands by the back harness lines, and their eye level below the boom with their rigs well upright, are already planing in this shot. The other four, with bigger kit, aren't. Could this be the issue of their backhand position, not sinking low enough and not tipping

their rigs forwards enough? Bear in mind all the people in this shot can carve gybe and jump, so are already of high local standard. Could this be what you look like? Photo from recent INTuition UK tour event, in a Shoreham Beach sea breeze.

Cribby & Swifty- anarchy in the UK!



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Swifty is probably the most fun person to go windsurfing with as he's always throwing himself into mad stunts at full speed as close to you as possible. At Hove last year when these shots were taken, within feet of me he launched into a back loop before bailing, giving me the V's and narrowly missing being skewered on the end of my fin. Typical Swifty.

He was on fire that day, with unreal Ninja kicks and massive back loops, topped off by a blinding night out in Brighton!

BOOM HEIGHT

By the way, since last month when I published the feature on correct boom height (which Nik confirmed was basically the same regardless of how tall you were) I've been thinking there must be a formula (just as I discovered with my harness line theory back in 1998, which I've been using on my INTuition courses ever since; apologies for not getting it in the magazine more often).

Anyway, I now have a theory for your boom height. It's not as accurate or well thought out as I'd like; I've basically had half a bottle of wine and a tape measure out and established that on a 6.0m sail (average size) my boom height is about 17% lower than my actual height. Plus or minus a few inches either way depending on the conditions. Taking heights to extremes, a 6'5" bloke using this theory would have his boom only three inches higher than me, and a 5'5" fella would have his three inches lower than me. Not much difference there. Bearing in mind all the world's windsurfing kit is tested by sailors between 5'8" and 6'2" we must assume there is a comfy set up geometrically best suited to those heights (so extremely tall or short people should edge their boom towards this area). This comfy zone brings our average boom height down to an area spanning less than four inches.

Then add the concept that a bigger bloke needs a bigger sail, which will be more out of control for said conditions, thus needing a slightly lower boom to regain control, he'd need basically the same boom height as us. Not to mention different front ends are different sizes, bridging the few millimetres left in question. Anyway, as all the world's best use basically the same boom height, take it from them, you should be too. Or am I being a bit too Heath Robinson what with a tape measure, calculator and bottle of wine out? It must be passed my bedtime! (FYI: I have yet to claim this as a scientific breakthrough ... this is still just an idea!)



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Dahab, flat water, 10knots, 8.5m Neil Pryde V8, JP X-Cite Ride 135

In these placid conditions with huge rigs, if a gust did hit you it takes ages to actually pull you off balance, so sailing with straight arms, legs and body is fine, so long as your backhand is in the right place, rig upright etc.

My boom has moved up about an inch, naturally taking weight off my feet to improve early planing.



UK, rough water, 30knots, 4.1m Neil Pryde Combat Wave, JP Radical Wave 65

In strong winds, rough water or if you're powered up, get low, sinking down, sticking your ass out and pointing your elbows down.

Note how my boom height has lowered in these conditions to improve my control. This helps me get lower down, and naturally increases the weight onto my front foot, which digs the windward rail in so the board slices through the chop better and prevents wind from getting under the board (which in these conditions could blow it out the water!)



Nik and I were always shuffling our harnesses lower



Optimum waist harness position'

HARNES POSITION

I've not got room here to elaborate or clarify anything except to say push your waist harness down lower. As you know, the bleeding thing is always riding up. Every time I gybe, I take a deep breath to help it fall lower. Every time I waterstart I push it down. Every time I'm ashore I push it down, and very very often, when I'm blasting I push it down too. As does every other PWA World Tour sailor I know. Some of them even wear there's really baggy, so it always falls as low as possible.

The lower harness helps to get your harness lines lifting upwards (taking the weight off your feet), rather than pulling you off balance sideways (see previous double page spread for harness line angles between expert and improver).

So why don't they just get a seat harness? Apart from being unflattering, the leg straps restrict your leg movement and the hook is actually too low for ease of hooking in and out without disturbing your stance too much. If you do have a seat harness, try wearing the hook a little higher. If you have a waist harness, put it on your pelvis, not around your girth. Ideally you'll have a beer gut just above it to help it stop riding up too much.

Your harness hook shook should be a couple of inches lower than your belly button on the beach (expect it to rise a little when hooked in).

INtuition

GET DOWN!



When you're not planing but hooked in, point the elbows down and pull down into the boom. Even if you're not hooked in, pointing the elbows downwards, whether your arms are straight or not is good technique to take the weight off your feet. Swifty and I in Maui, trying to keep control of our sinking boards by increasing the pressure onto the mast foot.

Whatever you're doing whilst windsurfing, if you need to bend your arms, bend them with your elbows pointing down, rather than out (or up!) This is a sure sign you're pulling down into your boom, increasing the Downforce



Freestyle sailing with all its rig flips and pops needs loads of Downforce, here's Swifty and me before and after spocks, both with elbows down in Hawaii.



One of the most important tips for jumping is to bend your elbows downwards and pull down into the boom with all your might. Swifty and I are not so much jumping here but gliding through mid air, nevertheless pulling down for in-flight control at Hove.



Going at mach ten into a bottom turn in the UK needs massive control of the board to handle the chop. At this kind of speed I can afford to rake the sail back for a moment to give me a clear view of the lip I'm aiming for, but only by pulling down with my elbows pointing down to keep loads of Downforce on. Pic by JC on the Isle of Wight

← Even when I'm just cruising around, here on my freestyle board with a 5.7m Expression in a Shoreham sea breeze, I've got my elbows, and bodyweight all pulling down.

[GUY CRIBB INTUITION]

SUMMARY

Get a Cribb Sheet (guy@guycribb.com)

Remember OVER:

- OVER hand grip.
- Back thumb OVER back harness line.
- Chin OVER waist.

Back hand in line with back shoulder.

Say 'ASS!'

Info

Most of this series was completely unplanned. Anna just reeled off loads of pictures of me sailing with Jason, Nik, Swifty and co and I've just sorted through them to see what articles I could create. This shot of me and Nik sailing sums up the pro's kit set up though – check out how we're holding the boom. Because we're sailing one-handed posing for the camera, letting go with our front hands, in order to control the rig, we've both had to move our back hands' in front of the front harness line, as there's so much pull from the front of the sail.

It might look cool that we're sailing one handed, but if you can let go with your front hand and sail normally for any distance, without having to move your back hand forward, it's a sure sign your kit is set up badly. Not so badly you can't still pose at your local beach, but badly enough to ensure you won't be on par with the real windsurfing pros.

On the other hand, if you can let go with your backhand and sail for miles with no worries, through gusts and lulls, that's a good sign that your kit is set up correctly and you're holding the mast upright enough.

If you thought the perfect harness line set up would allow you to let go with both hands and sail for miles, that's not true. Letting go with both hands for more than a few seconds is tricky enough, but extremely tricky when your lines are far enough back.



Use your INTuition, and let go with your back hand.



GUY CRIBB INTUITION

Guy Cribb 12 x British Champion and Britain's leading windsurfing coach.

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