

WORDS AND PICTURES BY GUY CRIBB.

ANIMAL WINDFEST MASTERBLASTER

I've got my own view on most things and running windsurfing racing is no exception. The way I see it is we need to do something that is different from sailing and surfing, something only windsurfers can do.



Racers line their gear up on the beach.





Race one- a Le Mans start with all competitors running for their gear. They raced nearly two miles out to sea, gybed around a buoy and blasted back to the beach finishing ashore approximately 300m downwind to ensure they were broad reaching the whole time. Yup, just one gybe, so even if you cant gybe but can sail fast, you were in with a chance!

Many years ago when the Professional World Tour held a wave event in Ireland I watched Goya blast out from the beach and launch into a tremendous back loop, defying gravity and ultimately winning him the world title that year. Stood next to me was a local farmer and I said to him "Did you see that, did you see that!" "Yes" he exclaimed "wasn't it incredible, one minute he was standing here, the next he'd picked up that colourful thing and disappeared into the sea, incredible."

Le Mans style starts are not new to windsurfing and the farmer was not the first member of the public to dream of leaving a beach and sailing off to the horizon. But Le Mans style starts are one thing that can set us apart from any other form of sailing racing. We can do a beach start, boats can't. There's always going to be a long list of issues with making sailing racing popular with the public- accessibility for the media, racing too far out for the public to watch and imaginary start lines amongst other things, but the sailing world is trying to bring the racing closer to the public with their Extreme Sailing Series and succeeding with 10-15 minute races, not more than a few metres from the shore attracting thousands of spectators and massive media attention.

So to me it's a sin that professional windsurfing, even national level racing, still uses the same old fashion rules as sailboat racing with starts out to sea when we could have beach starts and finishes, bringing our show closer to the public than any other form of sailing. Of course there's good arguments both ways, but without going into any of that, when I organise events, we do a beach start and a beach finish- period. It's more visual, it's easier for amateur competitors or first timers to understand, there's no need for rules etc.



A total mix of race, freeride and wave gear hurry onto the race course.



A sprint finish up the beach to the Red Bull tent where I was taking the results saw Olly narrowly beating Dan to take line honours in race one.

Nayra Alonso of PWA fame was there to greet and kiss the competitors (worth racing just for that) and holds Chandler's hand high for his success.



Windfest

Feature

And when we're combining fleets of the experienced or sponsored with newcomers, the racing I run will also have a reverse grid- so who ever wins the first race has to start last in the next race, and whoever loses the first race, gets to start first in the next race- so after race one, all the other races are pursuit races. This totally eliminates the chances of people winning over and over by having the best gear and gives everyone an equal chance. That said, at the end of a series of races, the best windsurfers usually shine through and win overall, but this is usually reflected by their technique.

At Animal's Windfest this year, rather than racing I decided to run the racing instead. Here's a pictorial of what we did. A format so simple you could do it with a handful of your mates at your local beach.

It was a huge success and brought a lot of happiness to everyone involved, not least Gary Willingham (Windfest organiser) who has endured the previous few Windfests with out any wind!

With many thanks to Gary Willingham of FC Watersports/ Windfest, Animal, and especially Pryde Group UK for their very generous prizes for the windsurfing public.

If you're running this style of event, list the names of the finishing order as this becomes the starting order of the next race- in reverse. Read the results out and competitors just need to remember the name called out after their own, as this is who they'll be starting behind in the next race. The last finisher came in 10 minutes after the first, so with a fleet of thirty sailors, if I started them all at 20 second intervals for the next race (with the slowest starting first) in theory they should all finish at approx the same time.



After calculating the combined results from all three races Dan Macaulay of Hailing Island Slalom series won by one point ahead of Fred Willis from Poole Slalom, then Alex Hensher, Jim Crossley and Simon Langley, on gear that ranged from the very latest slalom toys to 1990's leftovers. Pryde Group UK had very kindly supplied a Neil Pryde Tempo sail as first prize, a Neil Pryde X6 boom for second, and loads of Neil Pryde waterwear and accessories for other finishers. Animal also gave most competitors small prizes too so there was loads on offer!



A real mix of freeride gear and race kit return to the beach neck and neck in race two as the pursuit race format works out well!

Olly, Martin and Spinney were so knackered the Red Bull was ideal, giving them wings for the next race! After the second race the results were so close about ten people were separated by only two points.

