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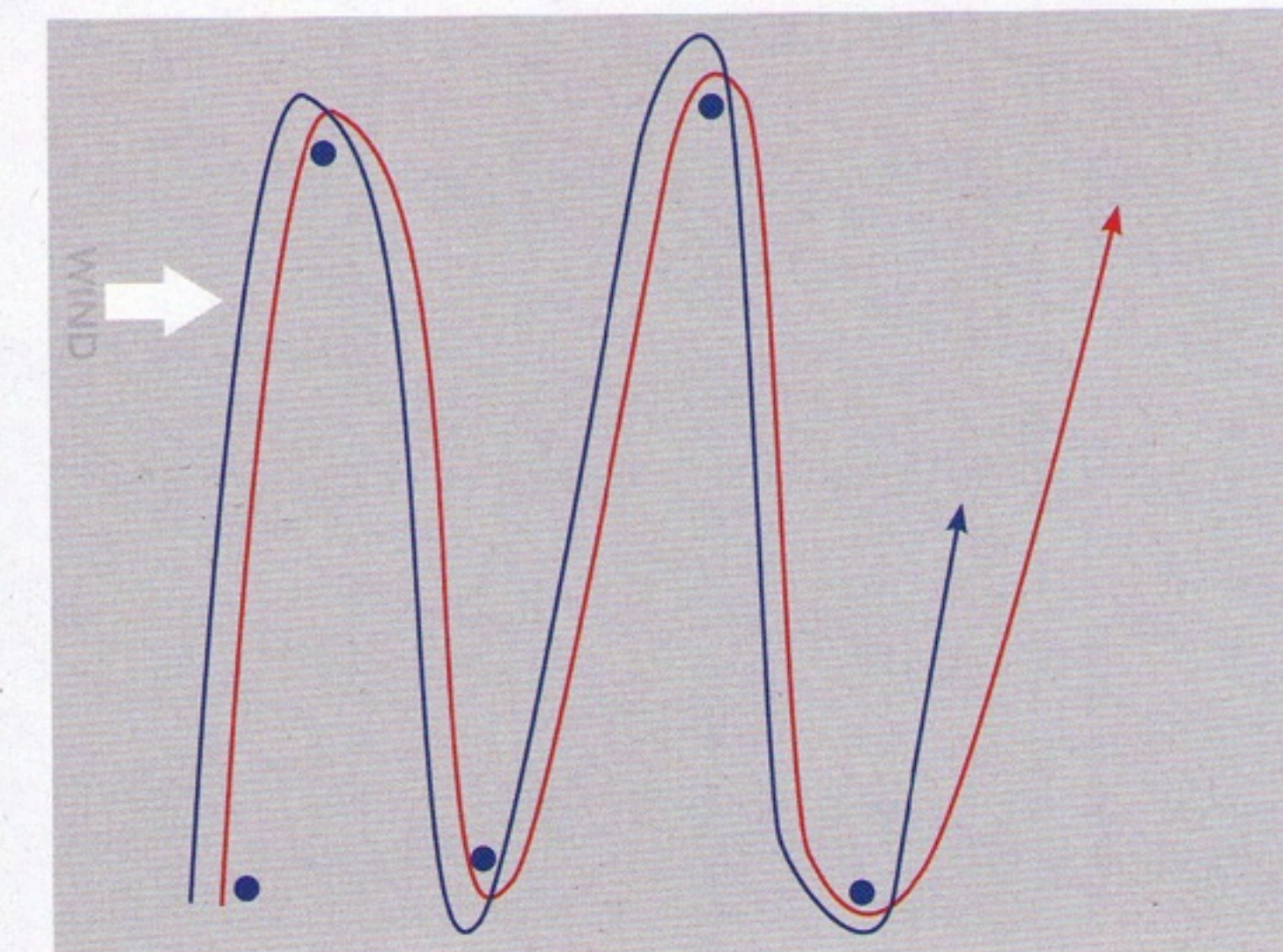
THE RACING LINE

GYBING WHEN YOU HAVE TO, not when you want to, is what turned my gybes from being pretty good, into 100% planing exit successes many years ago. Get into racing at any level and watch your technique and top speeds rapidly improve (see www.ukwindsurfing.com).

This article is about the racing line and overtaking at gybe marks. All forms of high-speed racing are usually won or lost at the corners and slalom racing is no exception. There's always a shortest route around the course that Formula One drivers find naturally, all following the same line despite the available width of the track, so not surprisingly there's a fastest route on all courses for windsurfing too, which is usually the shortest route.

Red line= shortest route around the course, using the gybe mark as the apex of your turn.

Blue line= defensive route- often the best line in sailing/ windsurfing.



Although the red line is clearly the shortest, fastest line, it leaves you open to attack from behind, so if you're in any doubt about other competitors being faster than you, you will need to take the more defensive blue line, exiting gybes close to the mark so that you leave no gap upwind for them to overtake you on next straight.

Note the gybes are curved, since to stay planing throughout them you cannot slam around on the spot.

KNOW THE COURSE

All courses are different and will change if the wind shifts. It's vital you sail the course prior to the first race to find how broad each reach is. The racing line changes depending on these reaching angles, for example:

* If the next reach is a tight reach, you must exit the gybe tight to the mark.

* If the next reach is a broad reach, you can afford to exit the mark leaving a broader gap.

This knowledge is also crucial to plan your overtaking moves.

OVERTAKING

You can plan your overtaking move before the gybe mark if you know your prey is likely to make a mistake, and if you're sailing inches from their tail, they probably will!

Or you can pounce if you see an opportunity- but this requires an unbelievably high level of board control, so I'm only going to focus on the two most common overtaking moves at a gybe, which you can plan before the mark.

Prior to overtaking, it's crucial you know how broad or tight the next reach is.

1) Overtaking on the inside: the sanest overtaking move.

If you are neck and neck, or slightly behind your rival on the approach, try to get more ground upwind to prepare for a wide entry and tight exit, giving you the overtaking opportunity at the gybe mark, or at least setting you up nicely for an attacking upwind line on the next reach.

Gybing on the inside is your only option if the next reach is tight. If the next reach is very broad, you have the option of gybing around the outside of someone too.

2) Round the outside

If you can't completely overtake your rival before the gybe, but have pulled right up alongside with better board speed (as I am in picture 1), trying to overtake around the outside at the gybe could be your best option. A wider gybe is often the best way for a planing exit anyway and although this overtaking move carries a high risk, if you're neck and neck on the approach, you have little other options as trying to cut inside them will be very tough and almost certainly leave you in their wake instead.

For a planing exit in most conditions you will need to exit going down a wave face- this should be spotted shortly after you enter the gybe, whilst your rig is still laid down into the turn and the path ahead visually clear. In swell or wave conditions, better to use the whole face as a banked corner entering and exiting on the same wave face.

Overtaking around the outside is only suitable if the next reach is broad or very broad. All being well you exit the gybe with the inside line for the next mark, which is fantastic if you can hold off your attacker down the reach.

If the next reach requires any sailing upwind rule out gybing around the outside altogether!

Also if there is any chance of you not completing your gybe with perfection, leaving a gap between you and the gybe mark is a very risky business, since it allows the opportunity for sailors behind you to position themselves upwind of you for an attacking line down the next reach.

GENERAL TIPS

However or wherever you gybe, the most important factor is to exit planing, or get planing as soon as possible after the mark through aggressive efficient pumping (to be covered in future article.) For every moment you are stalled, people travelling at speed are leaving you for dirt, and no matter how fast your top end speed, there's little chance of catching up. So put THE most amount of physical effort into exiting gybes when there's chop, traffic and churned up wind all around, since this is where the race will be won or lost.

RULES

International professional windsurfing has 'no rules' racing - meaning anything goes with the exception of deliberate fouls or dangerous sailing. This has proved to be a huge success in competitions, eliminating hours of protests and creating fewer collisions. Any collision on a windsurfer is going to slow you down or probably knock you off, which is bad news for everyone involved.

Local racing circuits often have a few basic rules in place to minimise the chance of collisions, and the main one at a gybe is that the sailor in the lead has the right of way/ overtaking board must keep clear.

More from the top next month. Thanks to Matt Pearch for letting me set up these sequence photos to make it look like I'm actually faster than him!

INTUITION SLALOM RACING

TECHNIQUE SERIES

1



On the approach I realise I don't have enough time to overtake Matt before the next gybe, but of course I don't want to slow down. So I turn upwind a little to prepare for my overtaking move



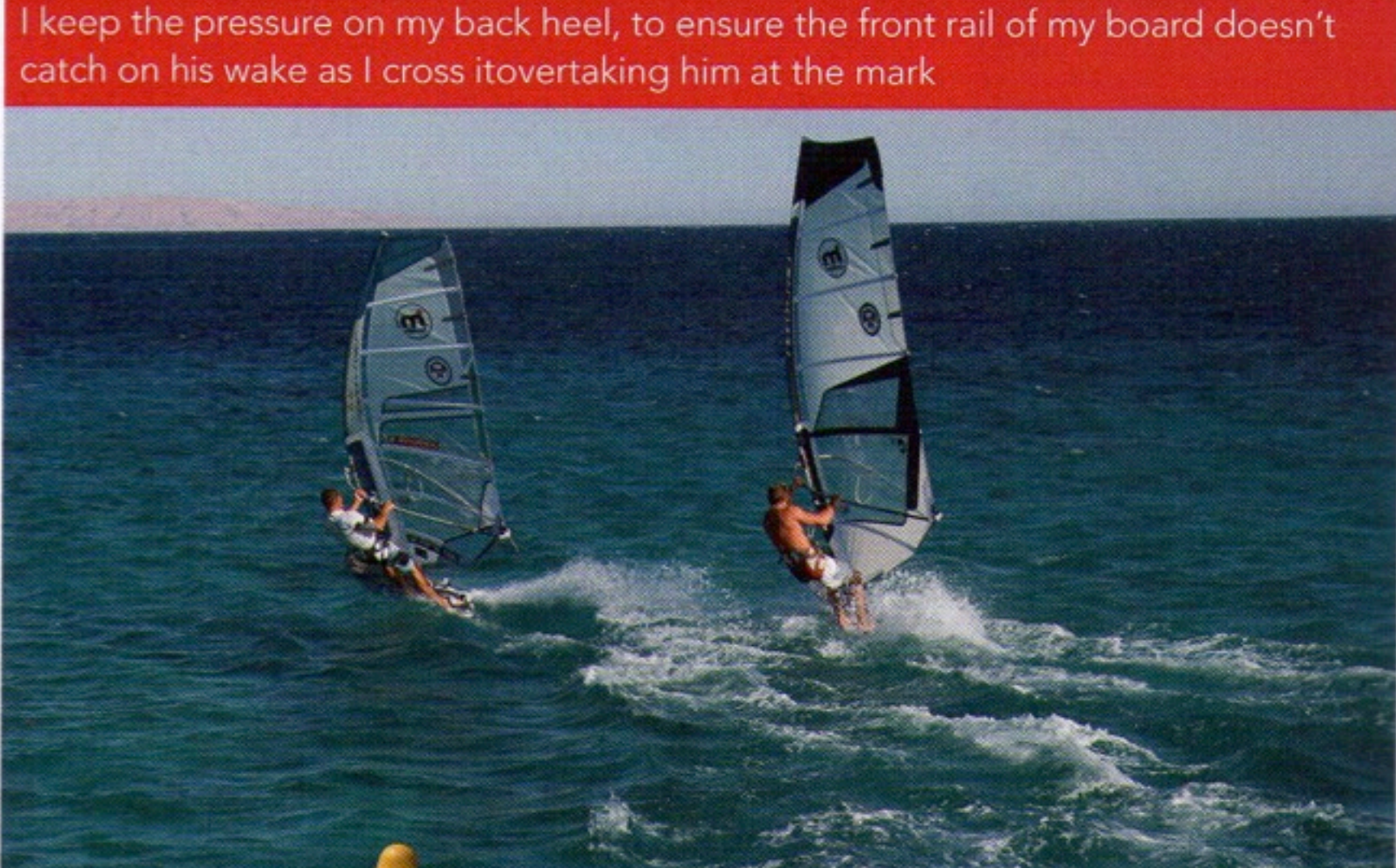
With a good distance upwind of Matt, I know I can exit upwind of him too, hopefully overtaking him at the mark



I keep the pressure on my back heel, to ensure the front rail of my board doesn't catch on his wake as I cross it overtaking him at the mark



Whether I overtake now or not, I am in an excellent attacking position for the next reach overtaking him at the mark



Matt stalls and I make the kill! Yee ha! Eat my dirty wind Peachy!

2



With greater board speed on the approach, but no time to complete an overtaking move on the reach, and too close to cut inside Matt, my option is to risk gybing around the outside overtaking move



The pressure and slower entry is enough to ruin Matt's gybe, whilst mine goes smoothly



I'm only inches ahead now, but I have the inside line for the next mark

Guy Cribb INTuition: Britain's Professional Windsurfing Coach.

Former national racing coach and multi British Champion shares his racing skills with this INTuition Slalom Technique Series.

To improve your top end speed and plane out of every gybe, join Cribby for his speed / slalom clinics held in Poole on windy forecasts throughout the year- please email guy@guycribb.com.

For coaching clinics: learning to waterstart, using footstraps, carve gybes, improving your stance and sailing in waves, join Guy for his personal coaching in the UK or overseas.

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