

INtuition Use Your Nut!

By Guy Cribb with
Ricardo Campello



INTUITION'S PRO TECHNIQUE SERIES INTRODUCES ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST TALENTED SPORTSMEN, WHO'S ALMOST EQUALLY AT HOME KITESURFING AND SURFING AS HE IS AT WINDSURFING, THE 'KING OF THE CARIBBEAN' AND NOW THREE TIMES WORLD CHAMPION, ALL THE WAY FROM ISLA DE MARGARITA OFF VENEZUELA, RICARDO CAMPELLO.

So far in the history of windsurfing there's only been three main windsurfers who've had that extra God-like talent to really convincingly dominate the world (Robby Naish, Jason Polakow and Bjorn Dunkerbeck). But ask any of the world's best sailors now who's the most talented, and unanimously their response is Ricardo Campello. No one can quite believe just how natural he is, how annoyingly talented and how frustratingly impossible to beat when he's on fire in the heat of competition. Without doubt, he is the fourth living legend in windsurfing.

I was fortunate enough to first meet Ricardo six months after he started windsurfing on my first visit to Margarita in 1998. He was thirteen years old, made of spaghetti, only as tall as an uphaul with sea bleached white hair trying to learn English from us and still small enough to sit on your knee. He'd still be out windsurfing when my eyesight was fading with a skinful of Margaritan cocktails and the sunlight fading over the horizon, but he could already back loop off chop! I have photos ... but won't dig those out until he's old enough to be interviewed.

For now we'll talk windsurfing with the man of the moment, Ricardo 'Monkey' 'Squeak' Campello.

Whether you're a beginner windsurfing, Ricardo freestyling, learning to gybe or waterstart; whether you're driving a bike, a jet plane or pushing a shopping trolley, there's one tip that gets you out of trouble and helps improve your technique incredibly. More than any other tip you'll ever hear in windsurfing, the one that makes the biggest difference is simply ... **look ahead, or look upwind!**



Use Your Nut Freestyling!

Ricardo effortlessly slides his board and rig around 360 degrees in a Grubby. And the first thing he did just before lift off was, look around behind him, starting everything spinning. There's a bit more to it than that though.

I've been trying Grubby's for two years. In that time I have mastered one handed spocks and spock 540's on both tacks; extremely complex moves that involve jumping with

no chop, rig flipping in mid-air, sailing in control back winded at full speed whilst siding your board in reverse (sometimes one-handed), a second complete rig flip, and your board, rig and you spinning 360 degrees all within less than two seconds. There is no other move in windsurfing that crams so much into such a short space of time and as such is extremely difficult, (see photo merge below). But consistency with Ricardo's relatively simple looking

Grubby, where your feet and hands always remain in the same position, has basically eluded me during those two years until very recently. Only when I actually started looking ahead of the turn long before I'd actually even taken off, did the move suddenly twig, and since then I've hardly fallen off. (As Ricardo demonstrates, looking ahead in a Grubby is looking over your back shoulder). For exactly the same reasons, when I'm teaching my





guests to gybe, a very useful tip to improve their entry is to look over their back shoulder at where they've just come from/where they intend to go. This helps keep the sail sheeted in, improving control.

The spock 540 is very much about looking ahead of the turn. In the freestyle world today, this extraordinarily complex move is probably the most basic trick a world tour competitor would bring into their routine. Nowadays, they

actually put their feet in the opposite side of the boards' straps and hold the boom behind them, rather than in front of them, before executing this move. This development of basic freestyle into 'switch stance' and 'clew first' tricks is largely from the talent and creativity of Ricardo, most famous for his invention of the Shaka, which is too hard to explain in words.

However if you want to learn tacks and gybes, that are the very first steps of freestyling, the song remains the same – look ahead of the move.



Use Your Nut!

Whether you're beach or water starting, wave riding or looping, looking where you want to go saves the day.

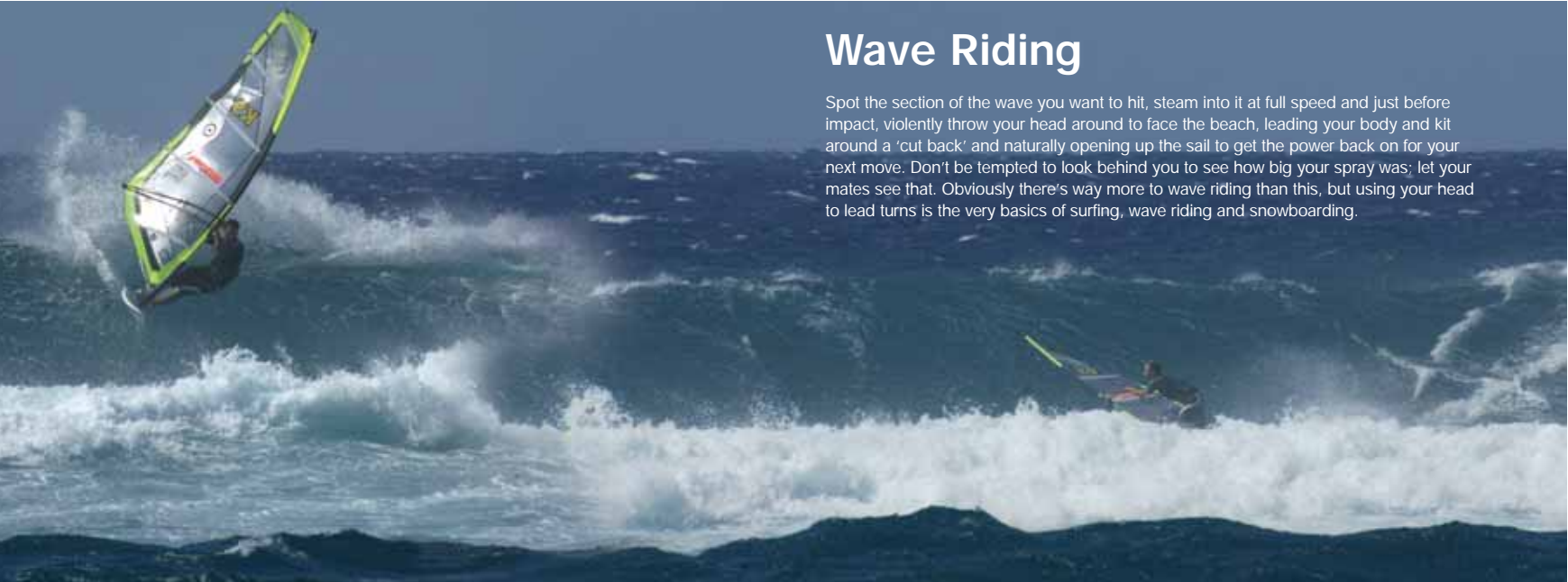
Waterstarting

The amount of times I've rescued guests being catapulted time and again learning to waterstart by simply telling them to 'look upwind' is amazing. It's the magic cure because it prevents the tip of the mast from going through the eye of the wind, which over powers you. Without going into any further detail at this stage, believe me, if you're having trouble with too much power in your rig waterstarting, or once you've just got on board you're being pulled straight off, looking upwind rather than staring at your board saves the day.



Wave Riding

Spot the section of the wave you want to hit, steam into it at full speed and just before impact, violently throw your head around to face the beach, leading your body and kit around a 'cut back' and naturally opening up the sail to get the power back on for your next move. Don't be tempted to look behind you to see how big your spray was; let your mates see that. Obviously there's way more to wave riding than this, but using your head to lead turns is the very basics of surfing, wave riding and snowboarding.



Looping

Danny Seales going large as usual with a back loop, looking over his shoulder to help the rotation and to spot his landing, if he ever comes back down to earth...



Use Your Nut Freeriding!

Tacking and gybing are very complex moves, both involving you going from one side of the board and rig to the other, sometimes at full speed in all sorts of wind and sea states. To learn either in rough conditions is a massive hurdle in windsurfing. But, you guessed it, using your nut is going to help tremendously.

Gybing

When my guests are learning to gybe, there's three basic stages for them to get through. The first is the entry, the second the foot change and the third the rig flip. They quickly get the entry and the foot change sussed, but before they should even bother with the rig flip, they've got to come out of a gybe looking where they want to go. Only then is it worth practising the rig flip. You could sail for a decade without looking at the exit of a gybe and never get

a decent rig flip in; or, you could look at the exit before trying flips and quickly suss them smoothly in a few hours.

You see, if you're body isn't facing where you want to go, not only will you not head in the right direction, but your body isn't in the right posture to deal with the swing weight of a flipping rig. The rig will simply pull you off balance time and again. Facing forwards lets your whole body deal with the swing weight, rather like a boxer putting his whole body behind a punch, rather than just his arms.

With spray in your face and chaos all around in a carve gybe, the rig flipping stage is actually best learned in very light winds on a big floaty board and light small rig. Only in this environment can non-gybers really master looking at the exit. Advanced sailors should just try to look at the exit as soon as they can to improve their existing gybes in light or strong winds.

Tacking

As you're turning into the wind look directly upwind. This improves your orientation allowing you to see when the nose of the board goes through the eye of the wind, which is your cue to step around.

To step around, lead with your head, actually turning to look upwind over your back shoulder to help spin your body around.

This back shoulder quickly becomes your front shoulder, see sequence, and stay looking upwind to help tip the rig forwards for a smoother exit

Use Your Nut!

There's two aspects to looking ahead:

- **Looking upwind.**
- **Looking ahead of a turn.**

Looking upwind lets you see all the information you ever need to know in windsurfing – the gusts of wind on the water to help anticipate what's coming next. Whether beginner or expert, tacking, gybing, waterstarting, blasting, improving early planing and preventing catapulting, looking upwind is vital. Even if you don't know how to spot a gust on the water yet, looking upwind is the only way you're going to learn, so start looking.

Not only does looking upwind let you see what's coming next, it also gets your body facing forwards more, which in turn de-powers the rig (sheets out) allowing you to control the power easier. Facing forwards is also much better for your stance and balance.

Also, by looking upwind, you tend to head in that direction, which is better than drifting downwind.

Looking ahead of a turn helps manoeuvres. Just like dancers or gymnasts spinning or flipping, the head leads the body. So begin your moves by turning your head to face the direction of where you want to go, and your body and kit will follow you round.

Very often in windsurfing, looking upwind is looking ahead of a turn and as such, looking upwind is often the only tip you need to concentrate on. For instance, exiting a gybe or waterstarting where you need to control surges of power, looking upwind often saves the day.

This all sounds simple enough, but you can be sure many windsurfers don't look in the right direction at all. In fact they look at their hands when they're flipping the rig tacking or gybing, their feet when going into the footstraps, their board when waterstarting and their harness lines when learning to hook in, and it's no coincidence these are the main situations when people wipe out.

Just like driving a car, your hands and feet should be independently doing things whilst you are looking where you're going (or you wouldn't have got this far in life). This, of course, is what we must strive for windsurfing.

Admittedly, driving a car is a cinch compared with windsurfing – the pedals and the gear stick are always in the same place and you are always sitting comfortably. Trying to find the footstraps when they're almost out of sight behind you, without unbalancing the board during an arm wrestle with the rig, is, by comparison, extremely difficult. As is trying to grab the new side of the boom when it's flipping with the swing weight of a diplodocus.

Nevertheless, the tip that makes these moves remarkably easier is – looking where you want to go, rather than at your hands or feet. Not just to give you better awareness of your surroundings, but to increase the strength of your posture and balance.

Here's a little test for you. Have a look at this paragraph. Now turn to look at something behind you on the wall and without looking, put your finger on this paragraph. You see, the human body is actually pretty clever, and is especially good at grabbing things like booms that are ergonomically designed to be totally symmetrical and quite tactile. If you didn't have balance or power to worry about, you could accurately flip a rig a thousand times without looking.

As for your feet, well, step out of your shoes, take a pace forward and step back into them without looking. Pretty easy! Now try to step back into your shoes, whilst looking upwind and pointing to this paragraph and it all gets a bit trickier, but the point is: looking at where you want to put your hands or feet will become intuitive with practice and isn't improved by staring at them! (Yes ... this is multi-tasking!)



Gybing ✓ Looking at the exit during the rig flip helps get the rig going forwards for a smoother flip, and in this case a planing exit.



Gybing ✗ Looking at your hands during the rig flip literally positions your body 180 degrees from where it should be facing, and as such ruins any chance of a planing exit or controlled rig flip.



Tacking ✓ Looking upwind helps tip the rig forwards for a faster controlled exit and gives you instant orientation to help your balance.

INtuition's INsight

Experts have an INtuitive awareness of where the wind is, but improvers should take a reference point upwind. Obviously your reference point might change as you travel, but it doesn't need to be totally accurate. Better to find a tall building that's easy to spot, than one that's exactly into the wind as it's just a mental reminder to look that way. Whilst looking that way, try to spot the gusts of wind on the water.

When I'm coaching I often give my guests reference points to look at to get them to move their head more, especially in gybing. These are sometimes directly ahead of a reach, so when you're exiting a gybe you have something accurate to focus on rather than the distraction of your hands or feet.

Summary

Looking ahead of the turns helps to twist your body to face the exits. It is the combination of this better stance (facing where you want to go) and improved awareness by looking upwind that gives you a better balance and control, whether you're a complete beginner or the world's best windsurfer, Ricardo Campello.

I could happily waffle on more in depth about this subject, but at the end of the day, the point is: start looking upwind, and many of the moves you're currently failing will be significantly improved.

What's Next?

Next month INtuition Pro Technique continues with Ricardo and how he tunes his kit, which will come as no surprise is exactly the same way as I tune mine, Jason Polakow tunes his, Nik Baker tunes his and every other Pro World Tour sailor basically tunes theirs.

Follow our tuning style and make your windsurfing easier, or carry on experimenting with all sorts of different ways in the vain hope you might stumble upon a style that suits you, despite none of the Pro World Tour sailors using it.

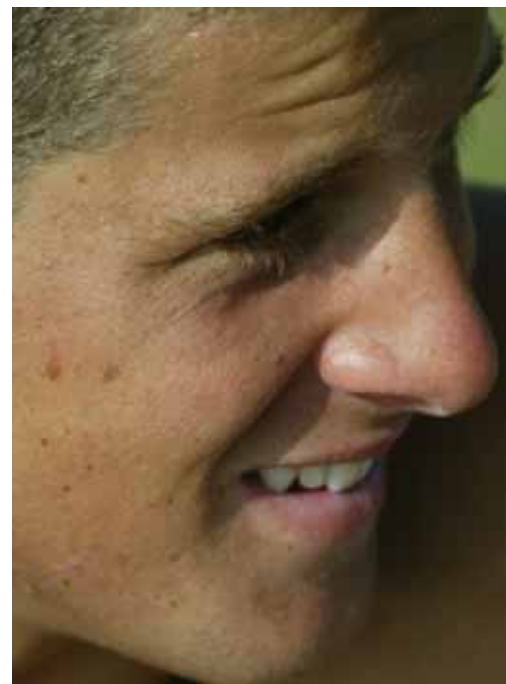
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Cribby about to flip the rig during a carve gybe, clearly looking where he's going, not looking at his hands.



Ricardo casually twisting around his trademark move, the Shaka.



Ricardo Campello, 3x World Champion and still not old enough to buy a drink in America.

Use your nut, use your INtuition

Guy Cribb

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15 years of coaching from beginners to British teams
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