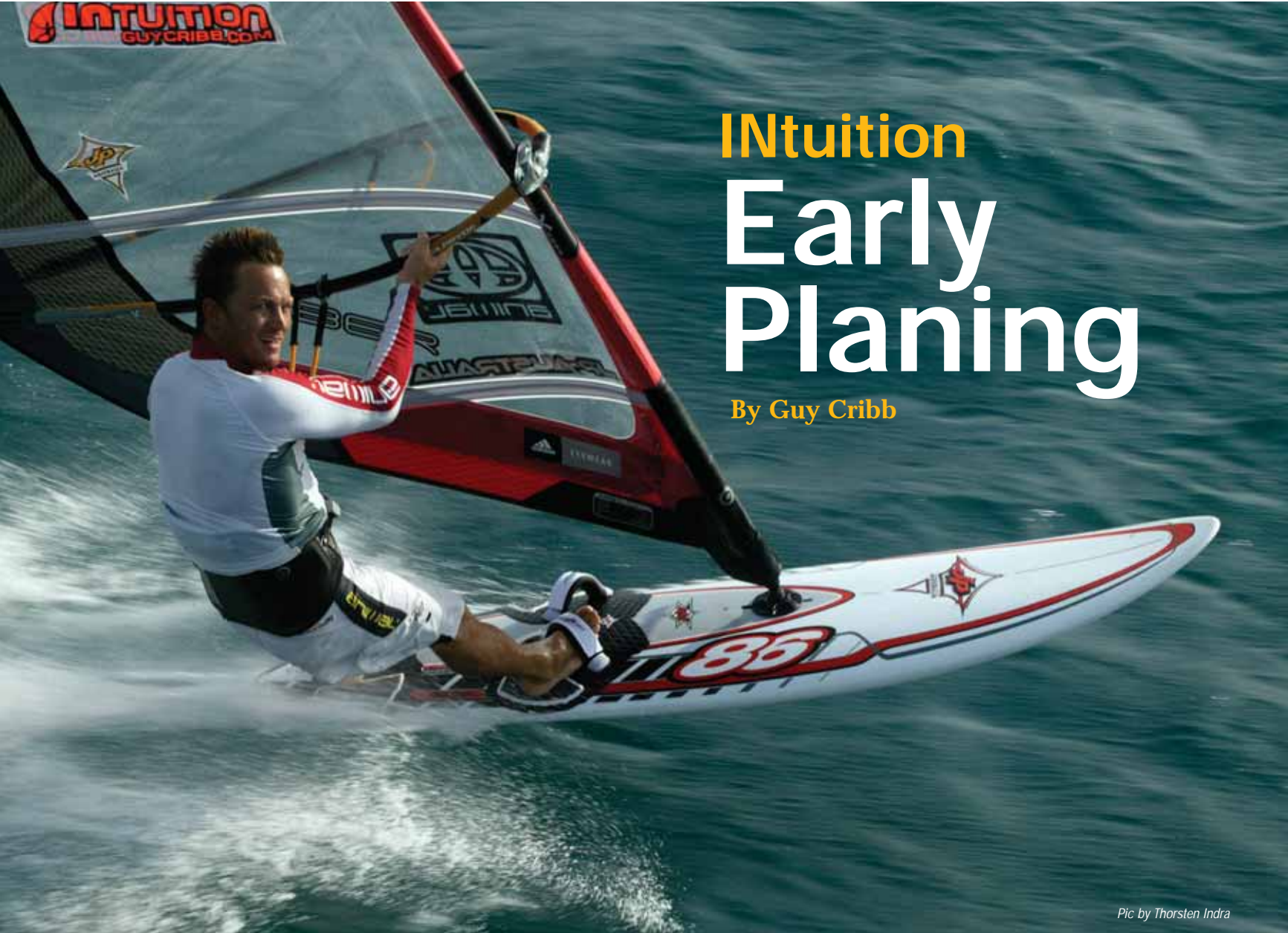


INtuition Early Planing

By Guy Cribb



Pic by Thorsten Indra

THIS MONTH'S INTUITION PRO TECHNIQUE SERIES CONTINUES WITH STANCE, ONCE AGAIN EXPLAINING HOW THE WORLD'S TOP PROFESSIONALS DO IT, CONCENTRATING MAINLY ON EARLIER PLANING AND PUMPING, BUT ALSO WITH A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF YOUR MODERN STANCE.

So far in this series we've learnt that Jason Polakow, Nik Baker and Robby Swift (amongst other notable pro's) all basically sail and rig their kit up identically, and that you should be setting yours up like theirs too. If you've missed out on the series so far, you need to go to guycribb.com and order yourself a Cribb Sheet to tune your kit right, and check out these previous articles online:

INTuition Pro Technique (whole series) and INTuition Core Skills - Missing Link and Downforce.

Apologies for the lack of superstars this month, but never fear, next month I get up close and personal with the superstylin' three times and current Freestyle World Champion, Ricardo Campello.

Stance

At 40mph across choppy water with a helicopter chasing you (see opening pic) using your body weight to keep everything under control, rather than any strength in your

arms, is vital. This can only be achieved if your kit is set up correctly (see Cribb Sheets). Once your kit's tuned, then you have the potential to handle overpowered conditions and sail faster (just like the pro's) and get planing earlier in the lulls (just like the pro's).

Whatever conditions we're sailing in though, firstly I need to dispel a dreadful myth that haunts windsurfing technique (one of many) - closing the slot, or raking the rig back.

Closing the slot/raking the sail back literally went out of fashion with flares! In the very earliest days of windsurfing when we just cruised along slower than the wind, it was important to stop some of the precious air from escaping underneath the sail by raking it right back. In those days boards were so long, narrow and heavy that raking the sail back didn't have much effect on them. However for the passed fifteen years, despite what you may see, read or hear elsewhere, 'closing the slot' is like pulling a handbrake

on, and completely detrimental to your early planing and general stance, as it kills the power of your sail and can sink the tail of your board.

Check out any shot of a real professional World Tour windsurfer and see if they've 'closed the slot', or if they seem relatively upright. The only times you'll see it 'closed' is with racers whose sails have extra large foot areas (their mast is almost as upright as a wave sailers), or if they're sailing overpowered on a broad reach (which, let's face it, most of the windsurfing public rarely do). Even in this situation, the rig is only raked back because the sailor has sunk so low to control the power, that the rig happens to have raked back.

None of us actually consciously say to ourselves, 'time to close the slot' and rake it back, but I meet plenty of windsurfers who still think that is a standard practise the moment they start moving.



Guy and Anick

As we discovered last month, to get used to the correct kit set up you need to tip the mast further forwards (more upright), which improves absolutely every aspect of your windsurfing.

If your harness lines are too far forwards, they naturally pull the sail back/ close the slot too much. On a recent photo shoot in Hawaii for the JP 2006 brochure, I was sailing with a JP colleague - Anick Violette. On the first session we'd not sailed together before, but with a £500 per hour helicopter following us, it was vital that we kept together like Torvil and Deane. I was on a 6.5m, she was on a 5.0m; both powered up on X-Cite Ride boards. With my bigger engine, it was no surprise I was a bit faster than Anick, but just how much faster proved to be a problem!

Unfortunately in the rush to get out, she'd set her kit up badly. Her boom was way too low, ruining her early planing (and even too low for high wind control) and most drastically, her harness lines were too far forwards. Plus her waist harness was literally as high as her chest, which combined with the low boom height, made her harness lines literally horizontal, pulling her off balance easily, rather than being quite vertical pulling downwards.

This was almost a complete disaster, as the result was when she was sailing as fast as she could go, I was having to sail as slow as I could go to stay alongside her, literally on the very edge of coming off the plane.

As soon as I adopted my usual stance I was gone like a rocket, and when I put a bit of extra effort in I was probably twice as fast. Unfortunately these weren't options though, as the chopper needed us to stick together. On our second photo shoot, I put her boom up and brought her lines back and with no other changes, we could finally cruise along side by side.

And the moral of this story is much of the extra speed and early planing the pro's have is simply in their fine tuning, but some of it is daring to tip the rig forwards.

Fortunately, since this series started we've had a pretty windy summer, so hopefully many of you have sorted out your tuning with Cribb Sheets and have developed your 'Pro style' stance already.

Cribby Stance (see pic above)

Rig upright = more power = more speed and acceleration.
Rig upright = board flatter (less drag) = better acceleration and control.

Harness lines in correct position = sail trimmed correctly/efficiently.

Harness lines in correct position = less weight on arms.

Harness lines in correct position = rig upright.

Harness lines in correct position = enables body to face forwards, reducing risks of catapulting or spin out.

Boom correct height = extra weight on mast foot instead of on feet = acceleration.

Anick Badly Rigged Kit (see pic above)

Rig raked back = nose lifting = less control at speed and poor acceleration.

Harness lines too far forwards = too much weight on the backhand causing body to face rig instead of facing forwards = catapults, spin out and fatigue.

Harness lines too far forwards = rig raked back.

Boom too low = too much weight on front foot, digging in windward rail, causing drag.



Pic by Thorsten Indra



Here's Nik and I blasting again. Nik's on a broader reach, probably about to crash into me from upwind. I'm accelerating trying to escape him by tipping my rig slightly forwards, partly by leaning further forwards. Note the same boom heights, harness line lengths, general foil shape and especially rig trim. Literally identical!

Boom too low = too much weight on both feet, sinking tail, causing drag.
Generally reduced speed, control and acceleration.

Early Planing

Next time you're not planing when you think you could be, try these tips:

Let your outhaul off making your sail 'fuller' (more like a spinnaker), increasing its power. See your Cribb Sheet for INfo (guycribb.com/shop for Cribb Sheets)

Put your boom up: this takes weight off your feet and puts it onto the mast foot instead, bang smack in the middle of the board, ensuring it's flatter in every dimension to accelerate better. Putting your boom up at the clew end has a similar, but much less apparent, effect too.

Tip rig further forwards by moving front hand back, flattening the board off by increasing Downforce (mast foot pressure) and increasing the power of the rig. (Moving your front hand right back alongside your front harness line naturally sheets the sail in more and tips the mast forwards.)

Press down on your front toes. Floor it, just like driving a car! (This moves your weight forwards and levels the board; best achieved with massive footstraps.)

Look upwind - arguably the most important tip in all of windsurfing. Look upwind as that's where all your INfo is (the gusts on the water/what happens next). Sailing upwind when you're not planing will also get you to the gust sooner and give you a bit of room to turn downwind and accelerate.

Pump! (See later)

See guycribb.com/technique/Pulling Power for INtuition Core Skill 'The Missing Link' (the missing link between not planing and planing) for more INfo on early planing when not in the harness.

Urban Myth For Early Planing

Letting your downhaul off
Although at the extreme highest levels of the sport, some sailors let their downhaul off a tiny tiny fraction to help early planing, put into context, they had so much more downhaul

on in the first place (compared with the average or even experienced windsurfer) you should never let your downhaul off! A pro would never let theirs off until they'd done all the above early planing tips, and then would rather change up a sail size than have to sail a rig with not enough downhaul on.

Letting the downhaul off literally just stops the sail from twisting off properly, thus increasing pull into your backhand, pulling you directly sideways instead of 'propelling' you forwards with the correct sail twist. If you have a disproportionately large fin, the sideways pull of the badly rigged sail can result in okay forward motion. But then you have to have a disproportionately large fin!

Letting the downhaul off is so far down the list of useful things to do to get earlier planing, it's relative rewards are dwarfed by the afore mentioned early planing tips and thus not worth considering.

Are You Sitting Comfortably?

These three pics show the subtle differences between an 'early planing/accelerating' stance (top), a 'normal/neutral cruising' stance (middle) and an 'overpowered absolutely fanging it' stance (below). Although the pics are from slightly different angles, the INFO is all there.

Offer It! (Accelerating)

Hands:

Front hand back
Backhand tipping rig forwards
Overhand grip, hooked on with fingertips

Body:

Stand upright over front foot tipping your hips further forwards by arching your back. Because your harness lines are basically connected to your hips, if your hips come forwards, so too will the rig, increasing its power and weight onto the mast foot. Relax your arms by tensing your stomach muscles, so you're doing a 'sit up' rather than pulling yourself up with the boom.

Feet:

Press down onto your front toes as hard as possible, and lift your back heel off the board. This ensures your weight is moving forwards, levelling the board off flatter. Imagine there's an accelerator pedal under your front toes and floor it!

(For the record this shot doesn't show me taking it to an extreme - I could be way more upright, standing over my front foot, which would tip the rig even further forwards.)



Neutral Stance (Cruising)

Extend the legs and arms to almost straight if you're cruising across the wind.

Slouch down into your harness by pushing your ass out.

Twist your body slightly to face forwards (thus slightly bending your back leg and arm)



ASS! (Over powered control)

(See August issue of Windsurf or guycribb.com/technique)

Bend your arms with your elbows pointing down, bringing your head and upper body closer to the boom, whilst sticking your ass down and out as far as possible.

Hands:

As you get so close to the boom and so hunched up, you might want to try under hand grip with your front hand. (Remember to relax your arms, even though they are bent, taking all the weight through your harness by sticking your ass out.)



Pics by Thorsten Indra



Pumping

Pumping is an overlooked art, but a major necessity of windsurfing whether beginner or expert. Beginners quickly learn more about their engine and the wind; intermediates get into the footstraps easier; advanced sailors come out of gybes planing; and experts get over breaking waves faster. These are amongst a zillion other plus points and there's only one minus point - it's energetic. Although it doesn't need to be vigorous to be helpful, a powerful approach makes it much more effective.



Pumping is however, very much a fine art and not one of simple brute force. When I'm teaching my guests to pump, most initial attempts look like 'humping' not 'pumping'. The objective of a pump is to increase the power of the sail, not to shag it, which is what even many accomplished windsurfers look like they're doing.

There's two main aspects to a pump:

1. Radically sheet in/yank on backhand to increase power.
2. Tip the rig forwards to increase mast foot pressure (keeping board flat to accelerate smoother)

The biggest mistake people make when pumping is they use both arms equally to pull against the rig, thus not changing the sheeting angle of the sail, but merely pulling it towards them. This doesn't increase the power much and it rakes the rig back, sinking the tail, often slowing them down, despite feeling as lively as a night in with Pamela Anderson.

The correct method of pumping is shown in this sequence, of me exiting a duck gybe in marginal winds.

Before your first pump, follow this preparation:

- Use overhand grip
- Move your front hand right back to your front harness lines (to help tip the rig further forwards)
- Point your front foot forwards and face forwards
- Get low, hanging below the boom
- Tip rig as far forwards as possible, until all your weight is on your front foot and you are nearly being catapulted

This stance is basically the INTuition Core Skill, the Missing



Link, which even without pumping is likely to get you planing.

If there's enough wind to get going, get in the footstraps no later than the first or second pump then get back into the Missing Link (from the footstraps) before pumping again. (If you can get into your footstraps before your first pump this is even better.)

Pumping Technique

The basic direction of a pump is pulling the back of the sail

in, and tipping the rig forwards at the same time, by moving your backhand towards your front shoulder, (left hand to right shoulder in this sequence ... check it out).

Try this slowly at first, or even in non-planing winds, to get the timing and movements sussed. With my guests, once they've got this technique right, the next mistake they run into is being too vigorous too soon. Better to start your pumps quite slowly, concentrating much more on technique and rig position than on power or speed.

I could go on talking about un-weighting the board, pushing through your calves, staying super low, dislocating your shoulders and all sorts of other stuff, but the main tips are very clear:

Set up with the Missing Link, then yank your backhand towards your front shoulder as hard as you physically can (once you're experienced). If you're not planing after 2-5 pumps, there's something wrong. Give up, catch your breath, wait for a gust and start again, this time moving the rig more slowly, concentrating on positioning rather than power.

[GUY CRIBB INTUITION]

Summary

Use Cribb Sheets to tune your kit, tip the rig forwards and pump!

Next month we hang out with world champion Ricardo Campello who'll help us get freestyling and generally improving all our moves, including gybing.

Further reading:

guycribb.com/technique/magazine articles:

- * Missing Link
- * Pulling Power
- * Pro Technique Series

Cribb Sheets (guycribb.com/shop)

*Pics by Thorsten Indra/JP International and Anna Edwards
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Check out Ricardo in this shot - having just landed a freestyle trick, he goes straight into stretching the rig forwards pumping, pressing down on his front toes to quickly accelerate. (Also note his boom height, harness line length, elbows pointing down, body low etc ... all INTuition Pro Technique tips in action.)



Thorsten Indra

Right and wrong, the subtle differences for the intermediate sailor are blindingly obvious for the expert - rig it right and the sail will be trimmed beautifully, helping acceleration and control by keeping the mast more upright and the sail more sheeted in.



And this shot of Tyson Poor, another JP International Team Rider also tipping the rig forwards whilst hooked in, trying to stay planing by hanging all his weight off the harness lines, offering !!! (Oh, and of course the correct boom height and line length and position...)

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