

KSURF!

ISSUE 110

APRIL/MAY 25

WELCOME TO IKSURFMAG

We're back with another stacked issue; this one's got it all! Rou Chater kicks things off with a look at how kiteboarding has shaped his life and brought our global community closer, even in uncertain times. We've got Jesse Richman opening up about turning obsession into purpose, Gianmaria Cocoluto balancing freestyle and fatherhood, and Ben Beholz sharing

what it takes to become your favourite vlogger (again!). Join us in the mountains with SpaceX Kitesurfing, dive into the Lords of Tram madness, and get inspired by the women powering Lieuwe. Plus, find out how to win a Ride Engine Air Box, explore our in-depth gear guides, and get your technique dialled in with our latest tips.



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INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

KSURF!

110

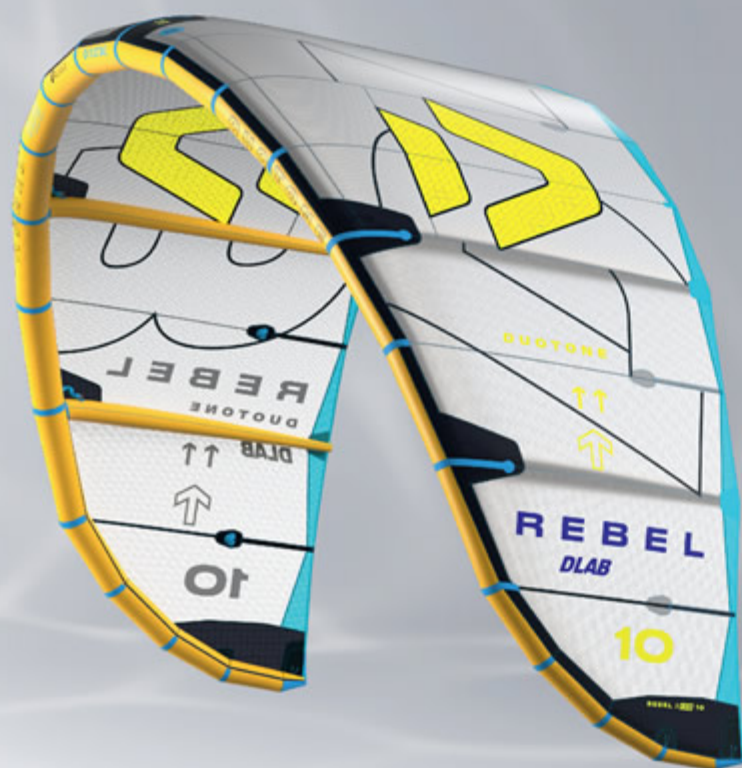
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- A HEALTHY/DEADLY ADDICTION -

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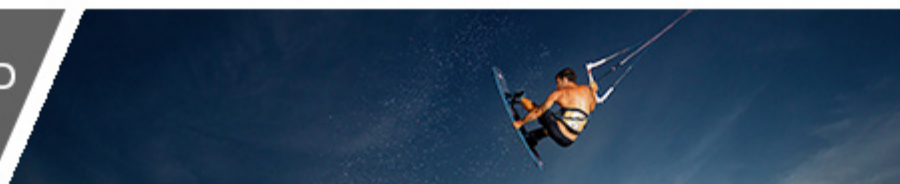
COMPETITION



A HEALTHY/
DEADLY ADDICTION



FREESTYLE, FATHERHOOD
& FINDING BALANCE



THE INTERVIEW -
BEN BEHOLZ



THE OG BIG WAVE
CHARGER



THE CALL OF THE
MOUNTAINS



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LORDS OF TRAM 2025:
THE WILDEST WIND
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MOVIE NIGHT



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When I first started kiteboarding back at the dawn of the sport, I had come from a windsurfing background. That sport took me around the world and gave me friends that I am still blessed to have today. However, nothing really prepared me for how much kiteboarding would change my life, and for the better. Back then, the gear was downright dangerous, and you often went to the beach wondering if you would come back, but that

was all part of the appeal.

The other huge benefit that kiteboarding gave me was this immense sense of community it fostered. We were all pioneers learning at the same time and trying to discover how to go upwind, relaunch a kite and all manner of skills that were not part of the design brief for the gear we were using. Believe it or not, the secret to relaunching a kite was not to crash it; it was as simple as that.

Part of that learning experience was a huge amount of knowledge sharing, discovery, and helping each other out down the beach. After all, self-launching was 50/50 between success and sending yourself flying into the nearest solid object, as depower hadn't been invented. Over the years, I like to believe that sense of community has just continued to grow, even though the learning experience and equipment have changed for the better.

I am sure you have similar stories of making friends on beaches worldwide and of the great benefit to your life that kiteboarding has given you. I never like to get political in this magazine, but in a globalised sport, with a community that stretches around this sacred planet of ours, it's hard not to at times like these.

When things heated back in the day, a common retort on kiteboarding forums was "chill out, let's go kiteboarding". I don't think a phrase has ever been more prescient. Usually, our sport is fairly insulated from the world's politics; we've survived wars, pandemics and global financial meltdowns. Perhaps now is a good time to give the leaders of the world free kiteboarding lessons. Maybe it might shift their perspective on life, just as it has for many of us, and at the very least, it's better than golf.

The current trade war and erratic tariff mongering from the orange cockwomble in the White House are absurd beyond belief. The entire sports industry, and kitesurfing is just a small factor in that, is being impacted. For our American readers, prices are about to get astronomical if you can buy anything at all, and let's be honest, they aren't exactly reasonable at the moment.

The fallout of this will be felt around the world, too. I expect some brands won't feel the US market can shoulder 50% increases, but neither can the brands. They will spread the costs around the world, and prices will likely rise for everyone. Not what we need, that's for sure. Then, on a macro level, there are the shops and distributors in the US who've spent years building businesses, only to find overnight they have to have a 50% tariff on everything they bring into the US. They can either pay this tariff, which they can't afford, or pass it on to their customers, leading to a drop in sales and higher costs for everyone involved.

So why aren't we excited about building kite factories in the US? These tariffs are erratic and unpredictable, arbitrarily imposed by the will of one man. Why would any business decide to invest a huge budget to build and staff a factory in the US when this might all change next week? Businesses need guarantees to make a return on an investment of that scale. So the incentive to build a factory isn't there.

Next, the workforce is an issue. Over the last 100 years, we have offshored all the jobs we don't want to do to the developing world, where wages are cheaper because the cost of living is far lower. The good news is that in our industry, the workers are well paid and well treated, but they are still paid far less than the average US worker would want to get out of bed for. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour; I can't see a kite company managing to keep prices "low" with a wage bill like that.



EDITORIAL



It's also a very skilled role. Brainchild was set up in North Macedonia because, traditionally, it was a huge manufacturer in the fashion industry, so there is a good pool of sewists there to train and utilise in manufacturing kites and wings. Those kinds of skills left the US a long time ago. Oh, and the wages in North Macedonia are far below that of most European countries and the US.

The hard fact is that pretty much every piece of watersports equipment is made in Asia, with the

exception of a few products made by Brainchild, CrazyFly, and a few EU board factories. These tariffs will not result in a glut of factories being built in the US, as the wage costs are just too high. So, the industry has to navigate it as best it can.

It's a rocky time for the watersports industry, and this is just another hurdle for everyone to overcome. One thing I am certain of is that we will overcome it. This sport is filled with passionate people who are into it because of their love of it and the community it fosters.

fosters. That's why, despite the initial shock and panic, I fully expect to see the industry rally and survive this. I just hope it's not a massive cost to you as a customer, as we all know the sports industry is getting more expensive...

One thing we can all thankfully do in the meantime is "chill out and go kitesurfing..."

Rou Chater
Publishing Editor

A HEALTHY/DEADLY ADDICTION

For Jesse Richman, chasing the thrill isn't a choice—it's who he is. Whether it's dropping everything for an adventure or pushing limits just to see what's possible, his addictive nature has always fueled his passion.

That fire turned into a full-blown obsession with riding Jaws—a dream that came with a heavy price. From brutal wipeouts to intense mental crashes, Jesse had to choose: walk away or turn the chaos into something sustainable. Now, what was once a reckless addiction is a refined lifestyle—built on training, planning, and purpose. His story is proof that our flaws can become our fuel—if we learn how to harness them.



“ WHEN FRIENDS CALL, THE WAVES ARE UP, OR THE ADVENTURE IS ON, I WILL DROP EVERYTHING AND FOLLOW THE VIBE. ”

I’ve always been happily lured away from whatever I do at the first sign of a good time. When friends call, the waves are up, or the adventure is on, I will drop everything and follow the vibe. And truthfully, I’ve always had a pretty addictive personality. If one is good, two are better. If diving 100 feet feels magical, let’s try 150. A 40-foot wave is mind-blowing—how does a 60-footer feel? It doesn’t matter what it is—if I love it, I want more.

That kind of mindset has most definitely fueled my kiting addiction. But as I’ve matured, I’ve had to either refine those addictions so they work for me—or drop the activity altogether.

What I mean is, I’ve always had a deep, burning desire to rip at Jaws. I saw it as a kid and dreamed of being one of the surfers charging the big days. That desire turned into a full-blown obsession, and with it came a heavy price. A long day at Jaws is physically, mentally, and emotionally brutal. It’s not just about performance—it’s about survival.



“THE MENTAL BUILD-UP TO THESE SESSIONS CAN BE OVERWHELMING.”

This past winter, I took some heavy wipeouts that left me with stretched eardrums from the violent pressure changes, a torn shoulder muscle, and constant sunburns on

my skin and eyes. But honestly, the physical toll is just part of it. The mental build-up to these sessions can be overwhelming. Dialing in the timing, organising safety support (without blowing the entire budget on a less-than-average day), and juggling all the logistics—it's a lot. And after it all, the post-session crash is wild. I get major mood

swings, my brain feels depleted, and reintegrating with “normal” life and family can feel like trying to land a helicopter on a moving boat.

This chaos, paired with my addictive tendencies, left me with a choice: either drop the addiction—like I've done with plenty of things that no longer served me—or become a total ninja about it and turn it into something sustainable.



**“ MY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL
CONDITIONING IS NO LONGER
JUST A FRANTIC PRE-SWELL
SCRAMBLE—IT’S A
CONTINUOUS PROCESS. ”**

I’ve had to fight my impulsive behaviors and learn to make plans—days, weeks, even years out. Now, my Jaws addiction is healthily baked into my life. I’m not stressed because I’m already planning for next season. My training is integrated into my daily routine. My gear prep is a never-ending mission. And my physical and mental conditioning is no longer just a frantic pre-swell scramble—it’s a continuous process. I also come in from a session well before I feel the need to—never letting myself get totally depleted.

I believe our greatest power lies in taking our flaws—like an obsessive, addictive personality—and turning them into something good that fuels purpose and passion.

Channel that, and you’re unstoppable.

PHOTO FISH BOWL DIARIES





WORDS ANDRE MAGARAO WORDS JEN TYLER & GIANMARIA COCCOLUTO

FREESTYLE, FATHERHOOD & FINDING BALANCE

It's been a minute since we last caught up with freestyle powerhouse Gianmaria Coccoluto—and a lot has changed! With a new chapter unfolding as a first-time dad, we were curious to hear how life, riding, and perspective have shifted for one of kiteboarding's most stylish and technical riders. In this feature, Gianmaria opens up about what it really means to chase your dreams while raising the next generation. Spoiler: he's still going full send!



"I STILL GIVE 100% TO MY CAREER, BUT NOW I THINK MORE LONG-TERM, NOT JUST ABOUT MY OWN GOALS BUT ABOUT BUILDING A FUTURE FOR MY SON."

Hi Gianmaria, it's been a while since we last caught up! Becoming a dad is a life-changing experience. How has it changed your perspective on everything, both personally and professionally?

Hi Jen! Becoming a father has completely changed my way of seeing things. Before, my life revolved entirely around my career, training, and competitions. Now, everything is centered around my son, Noamaria. It has given me a new sense of purpose and responsibility and helped me find a better balance between my professional and personal life. I still give 100% to my career, but now I think more long-term, not just about my own goals but about building a future for my son.

How do you and Mariana share the responsibilities of parenthood, especially with both of you having demanding careers?

Mariana and I have found a great rhythm together. She understands my career as an athlete, and I understand hers, so we both try to support each other as much as possible. It's not always easy, especially with my travels for competitions and training, but we communicate a lot and always make sure Noamaria has everything he needs. When I'm home, I dedicate as much time as possible to them, and when I'm away, we stay connected every day.

What's been the most surprising part of becoming a dad? Something you didn't expect.

I didn't expect how much I could change in such a short time. Before becoming a dad, I thought I already had everything figured out: my routine, goals,

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“WHEN I’M HOME, I SWITCH OFF FROM EVERYTHING ELSE AND DEDICATE MYSELF FULLY TO MY FAMILY. IT’S ABOUT BEING PRESENT IN WHATEVER I’M DOING AT THE MOMENT.”

and priorities. But when Noamaria arrived, everything shifted. The love and responsibility I feel for him are overwhelming in the best way possible. I also didn’t expect how quickly time flies when you have a child; you really have to enjoy every moment.

How do you juggle training, competitions, and family life?

It’s definitely a challenge, but I’ve learned to manage my time better. I have to be very disciplined with my training, ensuring I maximise every session so I don’t take away time from my family. When I’m competing, I focus entirely on the competition, but when I’m home, I switch off from everything else and dedicate myself fully to my family. It’s about being present in whatever I’m doing at the moment.

Have you had to make any sacrifices in your career to make more time for your family?

Yes, of course. There are opportunities I’ve had to turn down because they would take

too much time away from my family. Before, I would say yes to everything—every trip, every event—but now, I carefully choose what matters. It’s a sacrifice, but I make it happily because nothing is more important than being there for my son. Still, I do everything because I take him with me!

What does it take to stay at the top of freestyle while managing a busy personal life?

Discipline, commitment, and a lot of mental strength. Freestyle is one of the most demanding disciplines in kitesurfing, both physically and mentally. You must constantly push your limits, learn new tricks, and stay competitive. But at the same time, you need to find a balance so that your personal life doesn’t suffer.

PHOTO ANDRE MAGARAO



“ WHEN I’M COMPETING, I REMIND MYSELF THAT I’M NOT JUST DOING THIS FOR MYSELF ANYMORE — I’M ALSO DOING IT FOR MY FAMILY. ”

I’ve learned that quality is more important than quantity, but more focused training sessions can be just as effective.

Do you see Noamaria getting into kiteboarding one day, or do you want him to find his own passion?

I would love for him to try kiteboarding one day, but I don’t want to push him into it. I think it’s important for him to discover his own passion, whatever it may be. If he falls in love with kiteboarding, I will be the happiest dad in the world, but if he chooses a different sport, I’ll support him 100%.

How do you handle the mental game of competition while balancing the responsibilities of being a parent?

The mental aspect of competition is tough, and adding the responsibility of being a parent makes it even more complex. But at the same time, being a dad has given me a new sense of motivation and perspective. When I’m competing, I remind myself that I’m not just doing this for myself anymore—I’m also doing it for my family. It helps me stay focused and push even harder.

Are there any new tricks or styles you’re working on now?

Yes, I’m always working on new tricks and trying to evolve my riding. The level of freestyle is constantly rising, and you have to keep innovating to stay at the top. Right now, I’m focusing on refining my technical tricks and adding more style and power to my riding.

PHOTO ANDRE MAGARAO



I also want to explore different conditions and bring new elements into my riding.

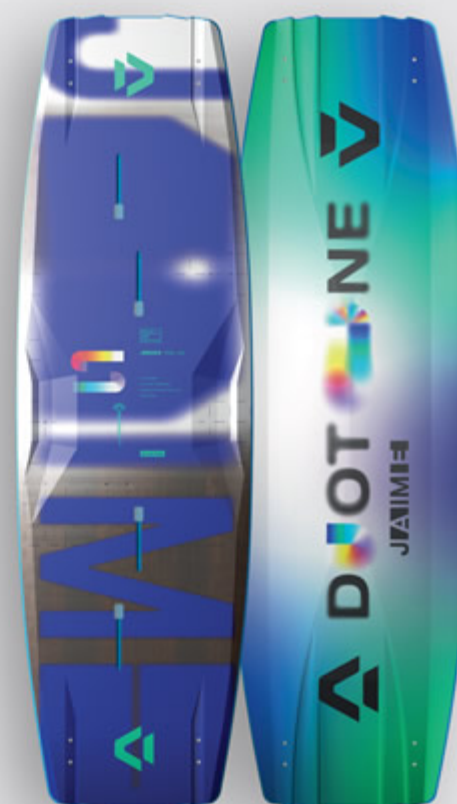
Do you see yourself competing at the same level for years to come, or do you have other ambitions within the sport?

I still feel strong and motivated to compete at the highest level, so I don't see myself stopping anytime soon. However, I also have other ambitions within the sport. I want to help grow freestyle kiting, inspire younger riders, and maybe one day be involved in developing the sport differently.

"I STILL FEEL STRONG AND MOTIVATED TO COMPETE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL"

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"I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCES, AND I WOULD LOVE TO PASS THAT KNOWLEDGE ON TO YOUNGER RIDERS."

Would you ever consider transitioning into coaching or mentoring young riders?

Yes, absolutely. I think coaching and mentoring the next generation is really important. I've learned so much from my own experiences, and I would love to pass that knowledge on to younger riders. Whether it's through personal coaching, clinics, or even working with brands to develop talent, I see that as something I'd love to do in the future.

If you could describe your life right now in just three words, what would they be?

Love, passion, and balance!

Thank you so much for your time, Gianmaria!

Thanks Jen!

PHOTO ANDRE MAGARAO





BEHIND THE LENS WITH BEN BEHOLZ

Fresh off winning Best Vlogger of the Year at the IKSURFMAG Readers Awards (again!), he sat down with Jen Tyler to talk about his vlogging journey. Ben shares what it takes to keep the stoke alive, the challenges of balancing content creation with progression, and why his passion for storytelling keeps him hooked. Get ready to dive into the mind of our reader's favourite vlogger!



PHOTO JAN SCHRODER

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" HE WAS A TALENTED RIDER, CREATIVE WITH HIS VIDEOS, AND YOU COULD GENUINELY FEEL HIS PASSION FOR THE SPORT. "



Ben! It's fantastic to have you here finally, and a huge congratulations on winning Best Vlogger of the Year (again!) at the 2024 IKSURFMAG Readers Awards! We want our readers to get to know you better, so let's start from the very beginning. Where did you grow up, and how did that influence your connection with water sports?

Hey, Jen, I really appreciate your kind words! To be honest, I didn't expect this at all. Seeing so many people enjoy my vlog enough to support me is amazing, and that truly means a lot.

I grew up near Lake Constance, in southern Germany, right by the water. I didn't learn to swim until I was 7, but once I did, I jumped headfirst into all kinds of water sports. When I turned 10, I started windsurfing at our local school, and by the age of 12, I was mesmerised by the kitesurfers I saw at Lake Como in Italy. I was eager to try kitesurfing right away, but my parents weren't on board with it at the time, especially since it didn't have the best reputation back then. So, I had to wait until I turned 18 before I could finally hit the waves with a kite. Looking back, I actually appreciate that wait now!

Who were your biggest inspirations in the sport when you started out? What inspired you to start vlogging about kiteboarding?

Tom Court was definitely my inspiration! At first, I didn't find jumping high to be very exciting; it was the wakestyle that truly inspired me. I managed to land my first unhooked Raleys before I could even perform a basic jump. Tom Court set the benchmark for me at that time. He was a talented rider, creative with his videos, and you could genuinely feel his passion for the sport.



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When I started kitesurfing, there wasn't any short-form content like there is today. The main platforms for kitesurfers to share their videos were Vimeo and YouTube. Since my parents didn't provide much financial support, I had to find a way to get kites and boards on my own. I decided to produce a video in Venezuela and submitted it to Slingshot. They liked it, and as a result, I secured my first small deal with them.

That's how I began earning money as a kite instructor, and since then, I have basically always been on or in the water.

When did you realise it was more than just a hobby, and when did you decide to pursue it as a career? Do you have another job while working as a kiteboarding and foiling vlogger?

CORE made things clear to me from the beginning. After three years with Slingshot, I felt the urge to switch to CORE, so I bought my first set of CORE kites. I continued creating content purely out of joy until CORE took notice of my work and offered me my first real sponsorship deal. This was the first contract I examined, and reading between the lines helped me realise that what I had been doing for fun was quite valuable. The transition was gradual. At that time, I was switching to CORE while studying architecture. Afterwards, I worked as an architect for two years—first full-time, then part-time, and eventually not at all. Now, content creation is my full-time job. While doing something else on the side would be exciting, it simply isn't feasible for me time-wise.

What type of content do you think performs best in the industry: travel vlogs or tutorials?

Tutorials tend to have a longer lifespan and often generate more views, subscribers, and reach over time,

"READING BETWEEN THE LINES HELPED ME REALISE THAT WHAT I HAD BEEN DOING FOR FUN WAS QUITE VALUABLE."



"MY VLOG MOTIVATES ME TO TRY A NEW TRICK UNTIL I FINALLY MASTER IT."



while travel vlogs typically become irrelevant after a few weeks. If you're trying to decide what type of content to produce, the first question should be which format you enjoy more. To succeed in the long run, you need endurance and must maintain your passion for it. Otherwise, the constant pressure to deliver can become overwhelming.

How does it feel to be named Vlogger of the Year?

I have to admit that I'm a bit surprised because my channel has significantly fewer subscribers than Kevin's, for example. I'm not sure why people choose to click on my name instead of another YouTuber's, but the fact that they do means a lot to me. I believe

viewers can sense my great passion for running my vlog. At least, that's how I see it, and I'm truly grateful for their support.

What goes into creating a successful kiteboarding vlog? How much work happens behind the scenes?

It's very different; sometimes videos happen spontaneously, for example, when you're driving past a frozen mountain lake and there's wind. Other times, a video shoot involves a lot of planning and thinking ahead. But that doesn't necessarily mean the video is better or worse. I believe that if I were to calculate the hours I put into the production of my vlogs, it would feel like a full-time job compared to being on vacation!

Do you have a creative process when planning your videos or just go with the flow?

My vlog is often just a reflection of my own personal development as a person and as a water sports enthusiast. Often, it's things I really want to try or accomplish, which I then turn into a video.

I don't think I'm a particularly ambitious athlete, but my vlog motivates me to try a new trick until I finally master it. There are shootings that are completely outside of my comfort zone, and there are, of course, shoots that go smoothly. However, the intention behind them is usually the same: to have an idea and bring it to life. What I don't like, though,

PHOTO JAN SCHRÖDER



is producing content just for the sake of producing content. It has to be something I'm genuinely excited about.

How do you balance the pressure of staying consistent with content while also progressing in the sport?

Yes, that's a really good question. I believe that if you rest, you rust. It's important to keep the machine running. Certain daily rituals help me stay on track. With vlogging, you can really feel that the goal is the journey itself. You just start moving and try to stay in motion, and then new ideas and opportunities continuously open up. In the end, that's exactly what helps you progress as an athlete. That's why I don't believe they hold each other back but rather complement and enrich each other.

**"WITH VLOGGING,
YOU CAN REALLY
FEEL THAT THE
GOAL IS THE
JOURNEY ITSELF."**











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"WHEN EVERYTHING BECOMES TOO MUCH, I FORCE MYSELF TO SLOW DOWN, AND THAT'S WHEN NEW CREATIVITY AND MOTIVATION USUALLY ARISE."



Has vlogging ever gotten in the way of fully enjoying a session?

It definitely shouldn't be disruptive. As is often the case in life, it's about finding the balance between kite sessions with a camera and kite sessions without a camera. But having a cool vlog in the bag feels as good as scoring an awesome session. In the end, it's the reward hormones that need to kick in!

Have there been moments when you wanted to quit or take a break from content creation?

Yes, that happens often. I'm constantly on the go, and it feels a bit stressful most of the time. Often, when everything becomes too much, I force myself to slow down, and that's when new creativity and motivation usually arise. Then, I usually feel really eager to get started again. But it's an unsettled life you must be prepared for.

How do you see the future of kiteboarding content evolving?

I have no idea. I find the current trend towards shorter and shorter videos a bit unfortunate, as I enjoy producing longer YouTube videos the most. Especially with all the AI stuff that's developing so rapidly, I have no idea what this will mean for us "real" kitesurfers who create content. But it's definitely exciting to see how it all unfolds.

Are there any big projects or trips coming up that you're excited about?

Absolutely, but it's still too early to discuss it. I have a few trips planned that I'm really looking forward to. Additionally, I'm enjoying our current "You Should Surf" project. It's a great opportunity to reinvent myself and try new things.

THE OG BIG WAVE CHARGER

Join us as we catch up with Nuno Figueiredo, a legend in wave kiting, to talk about the sport's evolution, his Guinness World Record wave, and why Portugal is a kiting hotspot. From strapless vs. strapped riding to his go-to gear and plans, Nuno shares his insights and passion for chasing big waves!



“PEOPLE GET STOKED SEEING KITERS FLY AT MASSIVE HEIGHTS RATHER THAN JUST LOW, TECHNICAL MANOEUVRES CLOSE TO THE WATER.”

Hey Nuno, thanks for joining us! You’ve been charging on the wave-riding scene for so long now; what are some of the biggest changes you have seen in the sport recently?

Hi Jen! Thanks for having me! We’re seeing a lot more blending of strapless riding and wave manoeuvres. Watching the Cabo Verde contest, I noticed riders landing front rolls straight into the wave face, which is cool. That kind of progression makes strapless wave riding even more exciting.

To be honest, I never really got into strapless on flat water—it just doesn’t do it for me. But mixing in aerial manoeuvres on waves and barrels? That’s a whole different game, and it looks awesome. I’ve also noticed more riders chasing barrels lately, which I love because that’s what I enjoy most.

Aside from the gear improvements, the biggest shift is how much easier it is now to surf waves with a kite compared to the old C-shaped kites we started with. Everything is more refined, and riders push the sport in new directions.

Big Air is dominating the scene right now, but do you think we’ll see more riders returning to straps, especially in wave riding?

Big Air is massive right now, and for good reason—it’s what spectators love to watch. People get stoked seeing kites fly at massive heights rather than just low, technical manoeuvres close to the water. But I think we’ll see more riders returning to straps, especially in bigger waves.

PHOTO JOAQUIM OLIVEIRA





“IT’S A FUN SPORT, AND WATCHING GUYS RIP IN THE CONTESTS IS IMPRESSIVE, BUT IT HASN’T FULLY HOOKED ME YET.”

Riders like Jesse Richman and Kevin Langereed are increasingly using straps. Even Keahi de Aboitiz, who has been riding strapless for years, was recently filmed tackling barrels while strapped in. If using straps enhances your experience, why not? That’s how I see it.

What’s the scene like in Portugal these days? Have you seen many kites switch to wings? Have you had a go at winging?

Portugal is a small country with a small kiting community, but we have an insane variety of conditions—flat water, big waves, and everything in between. That’s why you see so many pro riders moving here.

As for winging, a few kites have switched, but not many. Most people are doing both. I started winging mainly to teach at my

school because I knew the demand for wing lessons would grow in the future. I only do a few lessons a year and rent gear to tourists. It’s a fun sport, and watching guys rip in the contests is impressive, but it hasn’t fully hooked me yet. I still prefer surfing and kitesurfing, but let’s see what the future holds!

How did getting the Guinness World Record in 2018 change your life? Do you still feel it has an impact on you and your career?

The wave was actually from 2017, and it took a full year of application and verification before it became official.

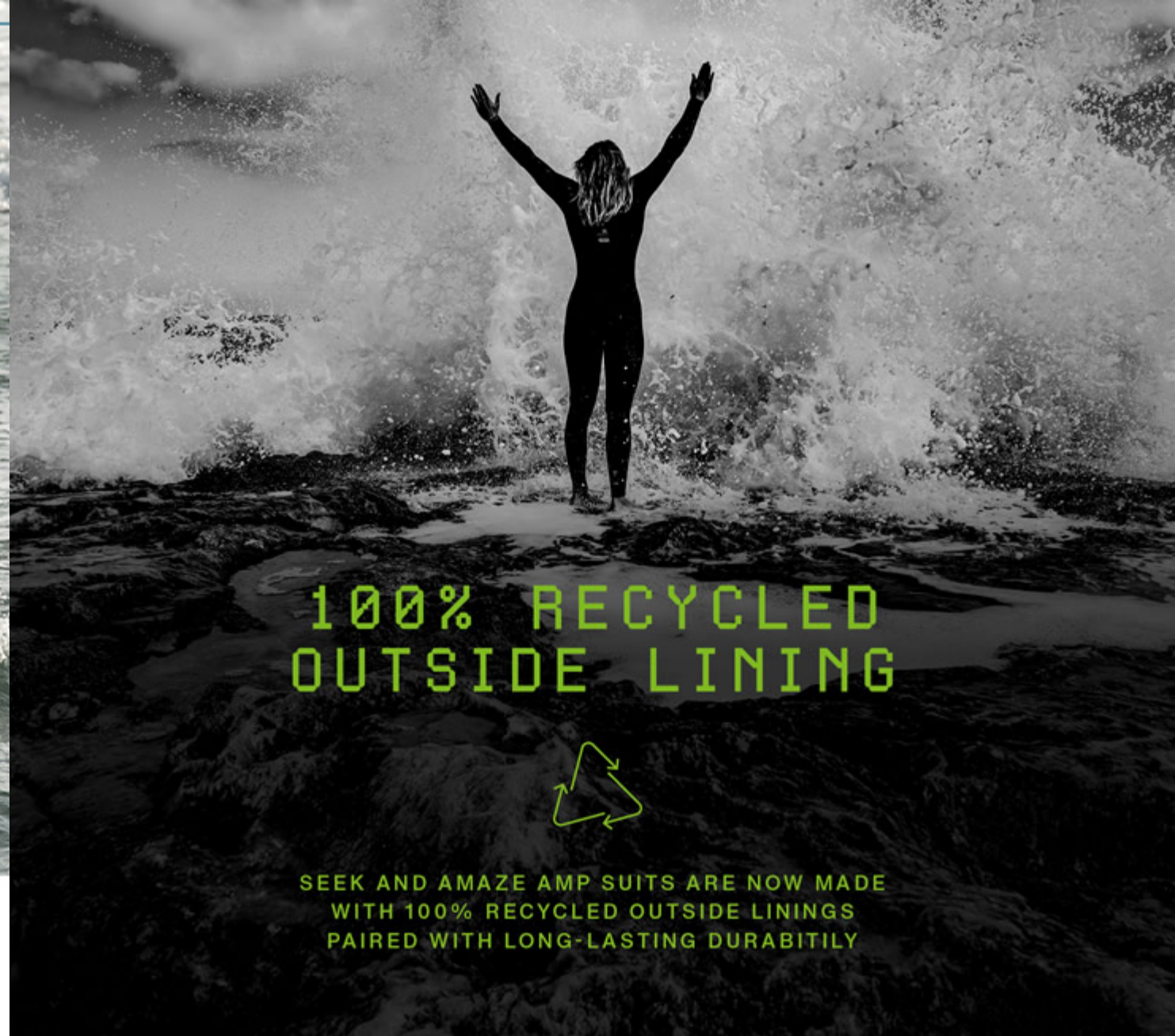
PHOTO ANTONIO HERRERA TRUJILLO



Of course, it had a huge impact—sponsors came on board and brought much attention. But honestly, I didn't do it for the record. In 2016, I had already ridden a 12-meter wave, which was technically the biggest wave ever kited, but I didn't claim it because I knew I could go bigger.

Then, in 2017, I got the 19-meter wave (actually 19.8m, but we officially listed it as 19m) in perfect conditions, and that was the moment I had been waiting for. The world record was just a byproduct of my personal goal—I wanted to kite Nazaré the way I envisioned it back in 2014 when I first saw those massive waves breaking.

**"I WANTED TO KITE
NAZARÉ THE WAY
I ENVISIONED IT
BACK IN 2014"**



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“ I OFTEN SURF IN THE MORNING AND KITESURF IN THE AFTERNOON, SO USING WAX GIVES ME THE SAME FAMILIAR FEEL ON THE BOARD. ”

Times have changed, and the industry has reduced sponsorship budgets, which is normal. But having that record will always be a milestone in my career.

You're originally a surfer, and I notice you are still riding a waxed strapless board. Why is that? What do you prefer about wax over a front pad, especially now that the new pads are so thin?

Having been a surfer for so long, I'm just used to using wax. I have a sponsorship with Hidden—their wax is amazing, super sticky, and works well. I know the new front pads are great, too—I tried one, and it had incredible grip—but I guess I'm just so used to having wax on my board that a pad in the front still feels strange. I think it's more about comfort and consistency; I often surf in the morning and kitesurf in the afternoon, so using wax gives me the same familiar feel on the board. Maybe that's it!

You've been with Eleveight for a long time; what do you like most about the brand?

Yeah, I've been with Eleveight since the beginning. I was initially with Best Kiteboarding, but the shaper behind Eleveight contacted me when they ran into issues. I went to Lisbon, tested the new kites, and liked them. Peter Stiewe is an incredible designer and a great surfer—he knows exactly how to build a kite that works for waves.

Over the years, the gear has just kept improving—better materials, top-quality construction—so I stuck with them, and we've built a great relationship.



“SURFING, SUP, WINGING, OR KITING—I PACK ACCORDINGLY, BUT IF I’M UNSURE, IT’S A NIGHTMARE BECAUSE I BRING EVERYTHING.”

I think they’re happy with my work, too—the marketing team even calls me a “content machine” because I’m constantly producing new stuff! Since day one, Eleveight has felt like the right fit, and I plan to stay with them as long as I have the strength to ride!

What does your quiver look like at the moment? What’s in the back of your van when you head to the beach?

If I know exactly what I’m doing—surfing, SUP, winging, or kiting—I pack accordingly, but if I’m unsure, it’s a nightmare because I bring everything. For a kite session, my setup always includes a surfboard (in case there’s no wind), two kite surfboards, two harnesses, six kites, two bars, two wetsuits, a pump, and extra gear in case something breaks. It’s ridiculous, especially when I go with a

friend who also does all the sports—sometimes, we joke that we could open a shop with all the gear in our van!

You’re famous for charging big waves. When do you switch from strapless to strapped? Is it governed by the size, or do the general conditions also come into play?

It depends on the spot and conditions. At Supertubos, I always go strapless because I don’t want to be caught inside a barrel with straps—that can be dangerous. But straps are necessary for control in big, choppy waves like Nazaré.

"EVERYTHING HAS TO BE PERFECT—THE RIGHT WIND, THE RIGHT SWELL, THE RIGHT TIDE, AND THE RIGHT SUPPORT TEAM."

If it's 4m+ or very bumpy, I go strapped. If it's a perfect, clean wave, I go strapless. And if I'm riding backside, I often prefer straps because they make getting out and jumping over waves easier.

The important thing is to have fun—don't worry about looking "cool" or following trends. If straps make your session better, use them. If not, go strapless!

What's it like to kite Nazaré? How often does it work?

Lining up a kite session at Nazaré is a nightmare. Everything has to be perfect—the right wind, the right swell, the right tide, and the right support team.

There might be one good day per year when it all comes together. If you miss it, that's it—you're not getting another chance. It's frustrating because Nazaré is too windy, messy, small, or dangerous.

I first considered kiting Nazaré in 2014 when I saw the potential. Then, in 2016, I had my first serious big-wave kite session there. After my record wave in 2017, I had another great day in 2020, but I haven't seen perfect conditions since then.

People don't realise how hard it is. On Instagram, everything looks easy, but in reality, there are so many moving parts. If your jet ski isn't ready, your safety team isn't available, or you're just not 100% prepared, you're not going out.

When I do go, I go all in—I'm not kiting Nazaré for 8m or 10m waves. It has to be 15m+ clean; otherwise, it's not worth the risk.





“ I DON’T FEEL PRESSURE TO DO ANYTHING CRAZY—I JUST DO WHAT I LOVE, AND I’M LUCKY I CAN. ”

Portugal is a popular spot for pro riders to live; why do you think that is, and what does it offer such an appealing location?

The consistency. We have waves all year round. You get the best conditions in winter, but even in summer, it’s windy in northern Portugal.

The weather is mild, but the water is cold—people think it’s always warm here, but that’s not the case! Even so, the various conditions make Portugal the perfect place to be.

A lot of freestylers and wave riders have moved here—guys like Elena, James, Bruna, and Chris. You also see many riders coming here for events like the WKL in Peniche,

Any big plans for 2025?

It’s the same as always—chase big waves and big barrels and have fun. I don’t feel pressure to do anything crazy—I just do what I love, and I’m lucky I can.

Thanks, Nuno! Any final thoughts?

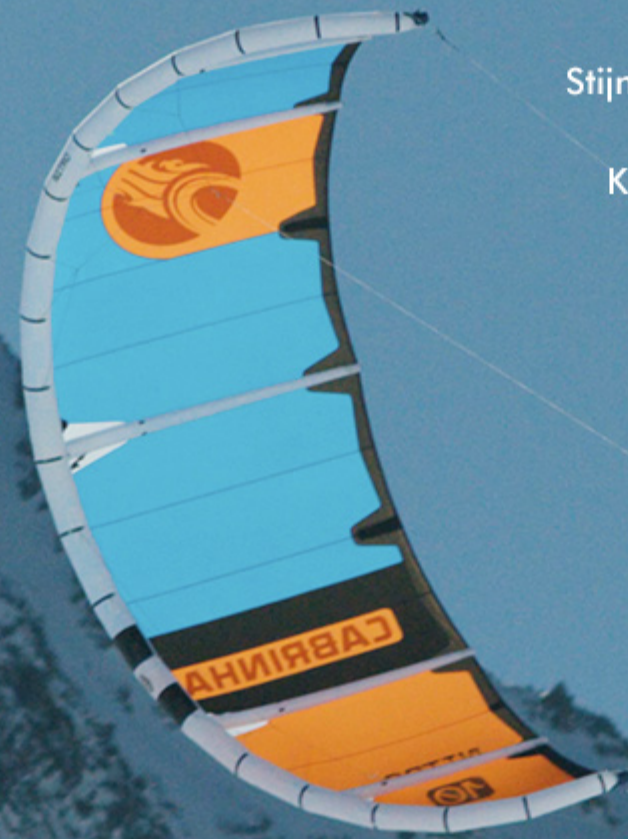
Thanks, Jen. It’s always great to share my 24 years of wave-riding with you. See you on the water!



THE CALL OF THE MOUNTAINS

WORDS JEN TYLER, STIJN MUL & MICHEL SCHIPPER
PHOTOS WOUTER KLOOSTERMAN

Stijn Mul and Michiel Schipper traded their board shorts for snow pants and took their kitesurfing skills to the mountains. Find out about their latest SpaceX Kitesurfing adventure in the Col du Lautaret in the latest issue of IKSURFMAG!





“WHAT IF WE COMBINED OUR LOVE FOR KITING WITH SOMETHING WE ALREADY ENJOY EVERY YEAR”

Hi Stijn! We just watched your latest snowkite video and can't wait to hear all about it! What inspired you and Michiel to take your kitesurfing adventure to the snow this winter?

Hi Jen! One day, Michiel and I were scrolling

through Instagram, looking at the usual content—blue water, beaches, impressive tricks. It all looked amazing but also kind of repetitive. That's when we decided to finally do something different. For years, we'd talked about doing a snowkite trip, and we made it happen this winter. We thought, “What if we combined our love for kiting with something we already enjoy every year—skiing and snowboarding?”

It also made us wonder: Is the kitesurfing community overlooking the world of snowkiting? It was time to find out.

Had you tried snowkiting before this trip?

My first snowkiting experience was back in 2017 at the Wasserkuppe in Germany, during a family trip with Kitefeel from Schellinkhout. We only had one windy day, and the weather was super foggy. Ever since then, I've been itching to give it another proper go.

“OUT OF SEVEN DAYS, WE HAD THREE EPIC SNOWKITE SESSIONS—WITH PERFECT SNOW AND A MIX OF WINDS.”

How did you choose the location for your snowkite adventure, and who joined you on the trip?

After chatting with a few experienced kites, we settled on Col du Lautaret in France—a stunning mountain pass with a wide open plateau and wind from all directions. We made a plan, secured some sponsors, and, through a friend, found a great place to stay in the Alps.

Michiel and I are team riders for SpaceX Kitesurfing, and Wouter came along to ride and film the whole trip. We packed kites from 6 to 15 meters and ensured everything was ready!

What were the conditions like, and how did mountain snowkiting stack up against regular kiting?

This time, we hit the jackpot! Out of seven days, we had three epic snowkite sessions—with perfect snow and a mix of winds. It had just dumped fresh snow before and during our stay, so conditions were insane. It was our first real snowkite trip to the mountains, and we quickly realised how different it is from regular kiting. From the gear setup to how you ride, it's a whole new experience.

How did your setup compare to what the local riders were using?

One big lesson we learned: setting up takes way more effort when you're standing in 40 cm of powder, wearing heavy ski boots and five layers of clothing!





We noticed we were the only ones using inflatable tube kites—everyone else had single-skin FLYSURFERS. Inflatable tube kites are easier to launch and can be left rigged for hours, and our Cabrinha gear worked just fine. We had a blast. We were definitely the newbies on the mountain, so our approach was simple: follow the locals, send it, and enjoy the ride.

**“FOLLOW THE
LOCALS, SEND
IT, AND ENJOY
THE RIDE.”**

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“ WE STARTED CLIMBING HIGHER AND GOING FOR JUMPS. SOME OF THEM WERE MASSIVE—MAYBE 40 METERS HIGH. ”

Why did you switch to skis instead of snowboards for this trip, and how did that change your experience?

Skis just make more sense in the mountains—especially with gusty wind. They help with balance and let you move in light wind more easily.

One day, we used a 10m Cabrinha Nitro at just 10 knots and still managed to ride uphill and race down again. As we gained confidence, we started climbing higher and going for jumps. Some of them were massive—maybe 40 meters high. It was terrifying, but totally exhilarating! Wouter caught one of the biggest jumps on camera, and after that, we decided to tone it down a bit! The white surface made it hard to judge height, and I misjudged a few downloops—but luckily, nothing serious happened.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced during the trip, especially with changing mountain conditions?

Reading the conditions was definitely the toughest part. When it snowed, visibility was terrible, so we went skiing instead. On clear days, the wind could shift direction or disappear in a flash.

On our final day, the forecast said 50 knots up at the pass, so we stayed low in the valley—we still got gusts of 12 to 35 knots! Later, we went back up and rode in just 10 knots. The forecasts were all over the place. It was definitely true mountain weather—unpredictable but amazing when it worked.



What advice would you give someone thinking about trying snowkiting for the first time?

- Make sure you can already ski or snowboard—it's essential for control and safety.
- Wear proper winter gear. You'll sweat during your session but freeze quickly once you stop.
- A seat harness is more comfortable for long sessions on snow.
- Don't go too big with your kite. Our 10m was ideal, even in light wind.
- And if the wind drops? Ski downhill and pull your back lines—you might still get a reverse launch!

**“YOU’LL SWEAT
DURING YOUR
SESSION BUT
FREEZE QUICKLY
ONCE YOU STOP”**

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“ I OFTEN FORGOT TO GRAB MY CAMERA, PREFERRING TO SIMPLY SOAK IN THE MOMENT AND CREATE LASTING MENTAL PICTURES. ”

What surprised you most about the snowkiting experience that you didn't expect going in?

Mountains are undeniably beautiful, but standing alone on a snow-covered peak with a kite flying overhead, surrounded by complete silence, was truly special.

With no ski lifts, crowds, or noise, it was just me and my kite, giving me a fresh perspective. I often forgot to grab my camera, preferring to simply soak in the moment and create lasting mental pictures.

Where's the next snowkite adventure taking you?

Snowkiting under the Northern Lights. That would be next-level!

Do you think snowkiting should become a bigger part of the kitesurfing scene? What could help it grow?

It has huge potential but is also more dangerous than regular kiting. In the mountains, one crash can hit a lot harder than on water.

It'll probably grow slowly—and that's a good thing. Safety is key. We even saw a super-experienced snowkiter crash hard. Unless there's deep powder, there's not much of a cushion

Amazing, thanks Stijn!

Thanks Jen!



BEYOND THE COMPETITION ZONE

From chasing podiums to creating flying works of art, Scott Barendsen is redefining his path. Blending kiting with creativity and marketing, he's turning kites into moving canvases and pushing the sport in an exciting direction - read all about it here!



PHOTO VICTOR LOOIJESTIJN

My journey into kitesurfing began when I was just five years old, during a family holiday in Tarifa, Spain. I remember seeing a kite for the first time and being completely mesmerised. From that moment, I was hooked. By the time I was nine, I knew exactly what I wanted—to become a top-level kitesurfer. The dream of travelling the world and living the life of a pro athlete became my ultimate goal. That vision fueled everything.

I never imagined I could become a top-level kitesurfer. Watching the pros in action, I always thought, “Wow, that must be incredibly difficult.” But everything changed when I met Giel Vlugt and we became close friends. He saw potential in my riding and told me, “If you train with me, I’m sure you’ll be sponsored in a few months!” His belief in me was the motivation I needed. Fueled by his confidence, I dedicated all my time and energy to training—and that’s when everything started to change.

In 2020, I took the leap and entered my first competition. The motivation to train at the best, windiest spots and compete on a global stage became an obsession. I lived that dream for the next four years, pushing myself harder than I ever thought possible.

One of the most memorable moments of my career was my first-ever competition, which took place in my hometown, Tarifa. I was lucky enough to make it onto the podium, and that feeling was unforgettable. Since then, I’ve been fortunate to travel to places like Cape Town, Brazil, Egypt, and Oman, each offering its magic. Every session, every destination, and every person I’ve met along the way has shaped me.



“ THE MOTIVATION TO TRAIN AT THE BEST, WINDIEST SPOTS AND COMPETE ON A GLOBAL STAGE BECAME AN OBSESSION. ”



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BETWEEN
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"THE STRUCTURE OF COMPETITION WAS BECOMING MORE ABOUT EXPECTATIONS AND LESS ABOUT PASSION."

But after about three years of competing, something changed. I started noticing a shift in how I felt about the sport. The pressure to perform well and constantly improve began taking a toll. I realised that I was only truly enjoying about one in every four sessions—the rest left me feeling frustrated, whether

due to the conditions or simply not being at my best. The structure of competition was becoming more about expectations and less about passion.

I started asking myself: Is this all there is? As I stepped back, I realised another side of me had been neglected—creativity. I'd always been passionate about marketing, visual storytelling, and content creation, but my intense training and competition schedule left little room to explore it.

That's when everything aligned. My head sponsor, Harlem Kitesurfing, announced an exciting partnership with Brainchild, a fabric production company in Macedonia. Harlem could now print custom designs on kites, and suddenly, a whole new idea was born—kites as mobile billboards.

I saw an opportunity to merge my high-level kiting and modelling skills into something entirely new. Whenever the wind picked up, I could take my kite into the sky as a performance tool, a moving canvas for brands and companies.



This shift reignited my passion in a way I hadn't felt in years. No longer confined by the rigid competition structure, I found freedom in creating, innovating, and merging my two worlds—kitesurfing and marketing. The joy of riding returned, but this time, with an entirely new purpose.

At first, stepping away from competition felt daunting. I wasn't sure how my sponsors would react. But when I sat down with them and shared my decision, I was met with overwhelming support. They assured me they believed in my vision and were still on board.

"THE JOY OF RIDING RETURNED, BUT THIS TIME, WITH AN ENTIRELY NEW PURPOSE."

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" PAUSE, STEP BACK, AND ASK YOURSELF— DOES THIS TRULY MAKE ME HAPPY? "

Beyond that, unexpected doors opened. Thanks to my years of Big Air experience, I was approached to become a judge for the GKA Big Air events. It was an incredible opportunity I had never seen before, and I absolutely loved it.

Looking ahead, I see huge potential for this concept. Branded kites could evolve into large-scale projects—TV commercials, collaborations with major brands, and even partnerships with car companies. There's so much unexplored territory in kiting, marketing, and visual storytelling, and I'm excited to push the boundaries.

For any rider feeling stuck in their current path, my advice is simple: pause, step back, and ask yourself—does this truly make me happy? If not, it's okay to pivot. Motivation thrives on passion; sometimes, taking a new direction is needed to rediscover that fire.

This is just the beginning of an exciting new chapter—one where kiting, creativity, and innovation unite to redefine what's possible!



A photograph of three people on a rocky coastline. On the left, a man with long blonde hair, shirtless and wearing black pants, holds a large black kiteboard with the 'Lieuwe' logo. In the center, a woman with long blonde hair wears a bright lime-green long-sleeved wetsuit and holds a wooden kiteboard with a red and blue 'Lieuwe' logo. On the right, another woman with long brown hair wears a light blue long-sleeved wetsuit and holds a wooden kiteboard with a teal and orange 'Lieuwe' logo. They are standing on dark, mossy rocks with a dramatic, layered rock formation in the background under a clear sky.

QUESTIONS JEN TYLER PHOTOS GREGORY GERHARDT

INSIGHT

THE WOMEN POWERING LIEUWE

Jen Tyler caught up with the women behind Lieuwe to hear their stories—how they found kiting, what fuels their passion, and how they inspire the next generation. From riders chasing podiums to creatives capturing the essence of the sport, this is a celebration of the women powering Lieuwe!

Kiteboarding is about passion, progression, and pushing boundaries on and off the water. Behind the Lieuwe brand, a group of dedicated, adventurous, and inspiring women are shaping the sport, whether as riders, creators, event organisers, or industry professionals. From athletes chasing podiums to storytellers capturing the essence of the sport, these women are making waves in more ways than one. This is a look inside the Lieuwe family—a community built on adventure, innovation, and an endless love for kiting. Jen Tyler had the chance to catch up with 'The Women Powering Lieuwe' and dive deeper into how they ended up in the Lieuwe family.

Every kitesurfing journey has a defining moment, that first session where everything clicks. For Cassidi Bradshaw, it all started with a Lieuwe photoshoot in Tarifa. From that moment, she was hooked—not just on riding but on the lifestyle, the community, and the energy of the sport. Now, as a Lieuwe ambassador, she's part of the brand's heartbeat, assisting in organising events and team kite sessions and helping drive social media from the beaches of Cape Town.

For Mignon Rijnja, one sentence changed everything: "I don't know what you're doing, but I'm going to start kitesurfing!" That decision led her to third place in the national kite competition, proving that when you follow your passion, there's no limit to what you can achieve. Now, as a Local Hero for Lieuwe, she shares her love for the sport with the community, pushing limits and inspiring others to take the leap.

Then there's Dominique Foss, who left behind a structured career as a high-care nurse in Amsterdam to embrace a life of freedom and adventure. Watching friends fly through the air on kites changed everything—she knew she had to experience that feeling for herself.

" SHE SHARES HER LOVE FOR THE SPORT WITH THE COMMUNITY, PUSHING LIMITS AND INSPIRING OTHERS TO TAKE THE LEAP. "





"KITING IS NOT JUST
HER PASSION BUT
PART OF HER
CREATIVE JOURNEY "

Now, kiting is not just her passion but part of her creative journey, as she blends riding, photography, and content creation into a lifestyle she never wants to give up.

While Lieuwe is known for its high-performance boards, it's also about bringing people together, and few people embody that better than Amy Wilson. As co-owner of High Five Kitesurf School in Cape Town, Amy has built more than just a school—it's a hub for the kiting community, a space where riders of all levels connect, progress, and celebrate the sport.

With High Five as a Lieuwe Test Centre, Amy and her team host demo days, downwinders, and iconic South African braais, creating an atmosphere where kiteboarders feel at home. One of their biggest successes? The BIG WOOP is an epic annual event in partnership with Lieuwe and WOO Sports, where riders of all levels can test gear, compete, and send it as high as possible—all in the name of fun and progression.

Every great brand has a powerhouse team behind it, and for Lieuwe, that includes the Van Haaster sisters.

Lisa van Haaster started managing Lieuwe's social media in 2021, turning her passion for kitesurfing, surfing, and snowboarding into a full-time adventure. Having won the Poederbaas Dutch Freeride Championship three times, she brings the same fearless energy to the Lieuwe brand, connecting riders, organising content, and keeping the stoke alive online and on the water! Her sister, Sanne van Haaster, started as an intern and quickly became essential to Lieuwe's marketing and sales team. Though she later set off on a South American adventure, she never really left the Lieuwe family, still riding, representing, and bringing her high-energy personality into everything she does.

RIDER AMY WILSON
PHOTO ANTONIO HERRERA TRUJILLO



RIDER BASIA MAJCHER
PHOTO ADAM HARRY CHARUK

RIDER CASSIDI BRADSHAW
PHOTO ANTONIO HERRERA TRUJILLO





"IT'S A COMMUNITY THAT FEELS LIKE HOME, A TEAM THAT SHARES HER PASSION AND SUPPORTS HER JOURNEY."

"I crave balance, yet somehow I'm always tipping the scales—bouncing between extremes. One moment, I'm meditating; the next, I'm launching myself off a plane with questionable faith in physics." - Sanne van Haaster

The Lieuwe family stretches across the globe, bringing together riders from all backgrounds, locations, and levels. For Basia Majcher, a former World Cup snowboarder from Poland, kiteboarding became her new obsession. After retiring from competitive snowboarding, she threw herself into the sport,

and now, her whole family is involved. She travels the world alongside her husband and two daughters, exploring kite spots, sharing her journey, and inspiring others through her online platform.

Her connection with Lieuwe is more than just a sponsorship—it's a community that feels like home, a team that shares her passion and supports her journey.

These women prove that being part of the industry doesn't mean just competing—it means building, inspiring, and creating spaces for others to thrive.

Whether they're running kite schools, leading social media, designing events, pushing the limits on the water, or capturing the sport through photography, the women behind Lieuwe are shaping the future of kiteboarding. As they continue to break boundaries, fuel the next generation, and celebrate the joy of riding, one thing is sure—this is just the beginning.

Follow these incredible women, test a Lieuwe board, and get involved in the growing community!

PHOTO KERLI HALLISTE

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FINDING THE PERFECT KITESURFING HARNESS

A GUIDE TO COMFORT AND PERFORMANCE

Kitesurfing should leave you buzzing with adrenaline—not aching from the wrong gear. One of the most overlooked yet essential pieces of kit? Your harness. With countless styles, fits, and stiffness levels on the market, picking the perfect harness can feel like navigating a maze.

But don't worry—Jasmine Cho breaks it down, from waist vs. seat harnesses to the all-important stiffness factor so you can ride longer, stronger, and more comfortably. Let's get into it!



" ONE OF THE KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER IS HARNESS STIFFNESS, WHICH GREATLY IMPACTS COMFORT AND PERFORMANCE. "

Kitesurfing is an exhilarating sport, but the wrong harness can turn an incredible session into a painful experience. Out of all the gear you invest in, your harness is one of the most personal choices—what works for one rider might not work for another. With so many options available, selecting the right one can feel overwhelming. One of the key factors to consider is harness stiffness, which greatly impacts comfort and performance.

WAIST HARNESS VS. SEAT HARNESS

Before diving into harness stiffness, it's essential to understand the difference between waist and seat harnesses.

Waist harnesses sit around your lower back and are the most common choice among big air, freestyle, and wave riders. They allow for a greater range of motion, making it easier to tweak jumps and perform tricks. However, because they sit higher on the body, they can ride up, especially for beginners or riders with shorter torsos.

On the other hand, seat harnesses come with leg straps that keep the harness securely in place, preventing it from riding up. They distribute the pull lower on the body, making them a great option for beginners, long-distance riders, or those who experience back pain with waist harnesses. While seat harnesses offer excellent support, they can restrict movement compared to waist harnesses, which is why they are less popular for the majority of riders.

Consider your riding style and comfort if you're unsure which to choose. Many beginners start with a seat harness for extra stability before transitioning to a waist harness as they progress. Now, let's explore the different levels of stiffness in waist harnesses and why they matter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STIFFNESS IN WAIST HARNESSES

One of the most crucial factors in choosing a harness is stiffness. While harnesses come in various designs and fit, stiffness plays a key role in comfort and performance. To simplify things, let's break down the three categories of stiffness in waist harnesses: hardshell, medium hardshell, and softshell.

HARDSHELL HARNESSES

Hardshell harnesses are the stiffest option available. They maintain their shape under high load, offering excellent back support and even pressure distribution. A good example is the Ride Engine Elite Carbon or Mystic Stealth—its rigid back plate and firm sides provide a locked-in feel. Riders who enjoy aggressive, high-powered riding in strong winds often prefer hardshell harnesses because they don't compress under force. However, for some riders, the lack of flexibility can cause discomfort during crashes.

MEDIUM HARDSHELL HARNESSES

A step down in stiffness, medium hardshell harnesses offer a blend of support and flexibility. The Ride Engine Saber falls into this category. It has a defined structure but allows for some give, making it a great option for riders who want solid support without the rigidity of a full hardshell. I ride the Ride Engine Elite Carbon with webbing, which is marketed as a hardshell but feels slightly softer than their Elite Carbon with the Hyperlock system—an actual hardshell design. Medium hardshell harnesses are an excellent middle ground, offering enough stiffness to maintain support while still providing some comfort and adaptability.



" THEY MAINTAIN THEIR SHAPE UNDER HIGH LOAD, OFFERING EXCELLENT BACK SUPPORT AND EVEN PRESSURE DISTRIBUTION. "



" THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOUR IDEAL HARNESS IS TO TEST DIFFERENT MODELS ON THE WATER. "

SOFTSHELL HARNESSES

On the opposite end of the spectrum, softshell harnesses prioritise flexibility and freedom of movement. The Ride Engine Momentum harness or the CORE Link

harness is a great example of this. Unlike hardshells, softshell harnesses allow for more play in the back and sides, which some riders find more comfortable. They are often preferred by riders who need greater mobility or hardshell harnesses that are too restrictive.

FINDING THE RIGHT HARNESS FOR YOU

Selecting the right harness ultimately depends on personal preference, body shape, and

riding style. Some riders love the stability and support of a hardshell, especially in overpowered conditions. Others find that rigid harnesses dig into their ribs and opt for something with more flexibility.

Going to a shop and trying on a harness is a start, but it won't give you the whole picture. The best way to find your ideal harness is to test different models on the water. Next time you're at the beach, ask to borrow a friend's harness for a session—



but make sure it's the right size for you! Trying on a size M if you are a S would not yield the same results. Wearing the wrong size can completely change how a harness feels. The more harnesses you try, the better you'll understand what works best for your body and riding style.

A good harness should feel like an extension of your body—secure, supportive, and comfortable. So, take the time to experiment and find the perfect fit. Your back (and your riding) will thank you!

"A GOOD HARNESS SHOULD FEEL LIKE AN EXTENSION OF YOUR BODY—SECURE, SUPPORTIVE, AND COMFORTABLE."

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QUESTIONS JEN TYLER
WORDS BRUNA KAJIYA

TECH FOCUS

MYSTIC GEM BK HARNESS 2025

We sat down with Bruna Kajiya to discuss the latest update to her signature Mystic harness. The 2025 Gem BK has a sleek new look, refined women-specific fit, and pro-level tech, blending strength, style, and comfort. Bruna shares what makes it a game changer for riders who push limits.



"WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE RS V9 HERE, BUT OUR DEVELOPERS ARE ALREADY IN FULL SWING TO DEVELOP THE V10 VERSION!"



Hi Bruna, it's great to have you with us! The Gem BK has been a long-standing harness in the Mystic range; what's new for 2025?

I love to talk about my collection with Mystic. Every year, we work on stepping it up and bringing something fresh and high-performance. Gem BK keeps everything that riders love but with some key refinements. The tech aspect has the Roven Composite for lightweight and strength; this is the same high-quality composite used in the Majestic. We shaped this hardshell to hug a sleeker, women-specific silhouette and have an effortless fit. We also have the Fix Foam padding, which is a game changer—it molds to your body, making it super conformable.

What inspired the design and look of the Gem BK, and how involved were you in shaping the visual direction?

I always choose a design that's me, something that feels like an extension of my personality and my current moment in life. Visually, I wanted power and fluidity—key traits of a good riding style. I want it to evoke femininity, confidence, and vibrance, making a statement on the water.

The Bionic Core Frame on this harness hits an 8/10 stiffness and a 7/10 torsion flex. How does that balance of rigidity and flexibility support your riding style, especially when pushing limits in freestyle or big air?

This balance is key for me. The 8/10 stiffness gives me the back support I need when I'm loading up for a big trick or taking hard landings, while the 7/10 torsion flex allows me to move dynamically without feeling locked in. When riding with power,



"WE ADJUSTED THE WAY IT WRAPS AROUND THE BODY TO GIVE BETTER SUPPORT WITHOUT RESTRICTING MOVEMENT."

you need that combination—it keeps you connected but still lets you move naturally.

You've been riding and competing at the highest level for years—what are some "non-negotiable" features a harness must have for you personally?

There are a few non-negotiables for me. Since a harness is so key to being comfortable in the water,

comfort is number one. A harness has to fit perfectly—no pressure points, no pinching. Support is another big one; if a harness is too soft, it doesn't distribute forces properly, and you feel it in your lower back. And I need to be fresh for the next training session. And, of course, durability—it needs to handle the impact and stress of hard crashes and long sessions without wearing out.

Did any of those preferences shape the final design of the Gem BK?

Absolutely! Based on my feedback from years of riding, Mystic and I worked closely to refine the shape and stiffness levels. We adjusted the way it wraps around the body to give better support without restricting movement. The materials and padding were chosen to keep it comfortable even during marathon sessions.

Everything in this harness is designed with performance in mind.

What specifics does a woman need in a harness that are different from men?

The female body has a different shape, so the harness needs to accommodate that—especially in the waist and hip areas. A men's harness often sits too high or puts pressure in the wrong places. The Gem NK is tailored for women, with a shape that better fits our curves and distributes pressure evenly so you get a snug, comfortable fit without discomfort.

What would you say makes the Gem BK stand out most for riders?

It's the perfect mix of strength and freedom. You get solid back support without losing mobility, and it's designed specifically for women. I feel that's a key element. We actually put time and effort into making it as comfortable as possible. Plus, the look is next-level: strong, stylish, and made for pushing boundaries.

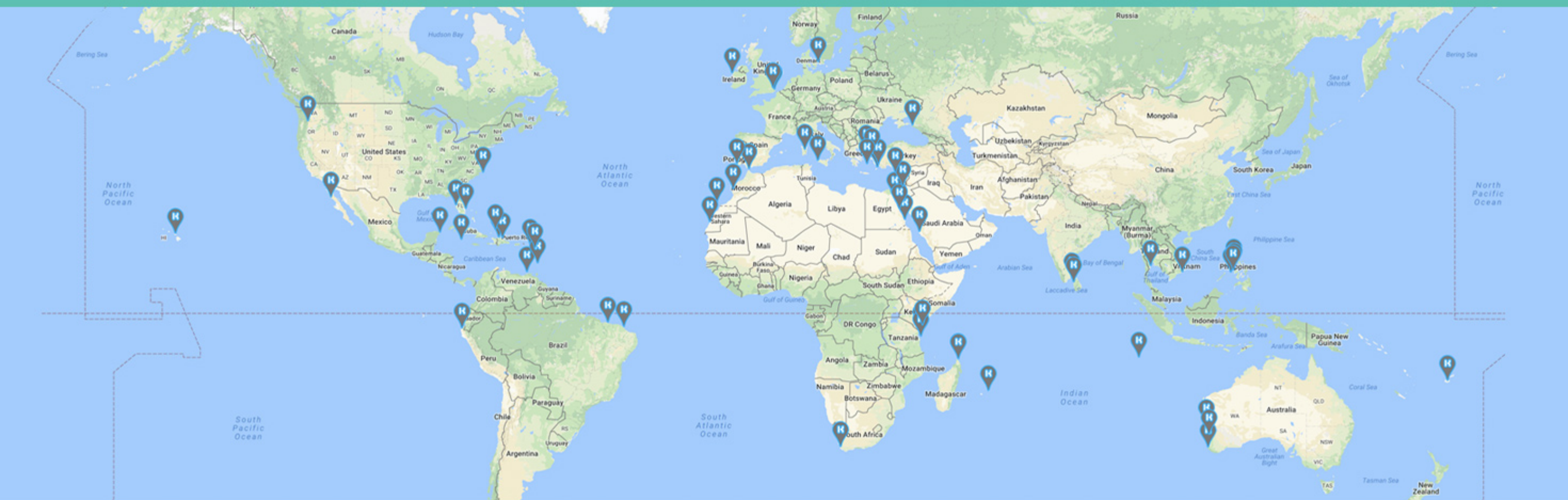
"IT'S THE PERFECT MIX OF STRENGTH AND FREEDOM. YOU GET SOLID BACK SUPPORT WITHOUT LOSING MOBILITY, AND IT'S DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR WOMEN."





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LORDS OF TRAM 2025

THE WILDEST WIND ON THE TOUR!

The Lords of Tram 2025 in Le Barcarès was pure chaos—in the best way. With 60-knot gusts - this was Big Air at its most extreme. Andrea Principi stole the show (and the event title), while Lorenzo Casati locked in his World Champion crown. Mikaili Sol made a legendary comeback on the women's side, claiming the event win and her eighth world title. From wipeouts to world champs, this year's Lords of Tram was one for the books. Read all about it here!



RIDER LORENZO CASATI



"THEY WANTED THE COMPLETE PACKAGE: MASSIVE HEIGHT, TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY, CONTROLLED LANDINGS, AND STYLE."

The Lords of Tram 2025 in Le Barcarès, France, was a battle against nature. With the infamous Tramontana wind howling at over 60 knots, riders weren't just competing against each other—they were taking on some of the most extreme conditions ever seen on the tour.

Twenty-four men and twelve women put everything on the line, chasing the Lords of Tram event title and crucial points for the 2025 GKA Big Air World Championship. The results here and those from Jericoacoara 2024 would determine this year's ultimate champions.

Each competitor had seven trick attempts, with only their top three scores counting toward their final ranking. Judges weren't just looking for high-flying maneuvers—they wanted the complete package: massive height, technical difficulty, controlled landings,

and style. In conditions this wild, every trick attempted was a roll of the dice.

SATURDAY: A BRUTAL TEST OF SKILL AND SURVIVAL

Saturday kicked off with the women's division, but after just one heat, it was clear the wind was ramping up to dangerous levels. With gusts exceeding 60 knots, event officials made the call to put the women's heats on hold. It was a tough break, but safety came first.

With the conditions only getting more intense, it was time for the men to take on the Tramontana beast.

Right out of the gate, riders were going all-in, sending massive loops and pushing their gear—and themselves—to the limit. But the wind didn't just create opportunities; it also claimed some big names. Cohan Van Dijk, Arthur Guillebert, Zac Adams, and Beto Gomez, all seasoned riders, found themselves knocked out earlier than expected, proving that in these conditions, anything could happen.

Liam Whaley, returning to competition after a year-and-a-half off due to injury, looked like he had never left. He threw down in Round 1, but despite his strong performance, he fell short in the quarter-finals. Meanwhile, Lorenzo Casati and Andrea Principi were heating up, both looking like strong contenders for the title.

SUNDAY: HIGH DRAMA ON AND OFF THE WATER

Sunday morning started with a scare. South African rider Josh Gillit took a brutal crash after attempting a low double loop, briefly losing consciousness. The competition was put on hold as medics rushed in. Fortunately, after stabilising, he was taken to the hospital and later reported recovering well.

After the restart, the men's semi-finals were intense. The first heat saw a battle for the 2025 world title, with Lorenzo Casati, Andrea Principi, Edgar Ulrich, and Kimo Verkerk all going head-to-head. Ulrich, who had kept his championship hopes alive through the earlier rounds, couldn't keep up in the semifinals and finished fourth, officially crowning Lorenzo Casati as the 2025 GKA Big Air World Champion.

With that title wrapped up, the focus shifted to the Lords of Tram event crown. The finals were stacked: Principi, the Casati brothers and Stino Mul.

"RIGHT OUT OF THE GATE, RIDERS WERE GOING ALL-IN, SENDING MASSIVE LOOPS AND PUSHING THEIR GEAR"

RIDER ANDREA PRINCIPI



" IN SUCH BRUTAL WIND CONDITIONS, THIS WAS A TEST OF SKILL AND A SERIOUS PHYSICAL CHALLENGE. "

Lorenzo and Leonardo Casati competed side by side for the first time in a major final, a proud moment for the young Italian riders and their father, who supported them on-site. Leonardo, the younger of the two, rode confidently throughout the event far beyond his years, proving he's a rising star.

Andrea Principi came in fired up and delivered an absolute masterclass, landing a jaw-dropping ContraLoop Back Roll that scored a massive 9.33—the highest score of the entire event. The Casati brothers pushed hard, but Principi had an answer for everything, securing the victory. His celebration on the beach said it all: This was a well-earned win.

WOMEN'S DIVISION: A BATTLE AGAINST THE ELEMENTS

The women's competition, postponed from Saturday, resumed on Sunday, and the athletes wasted no time making up for lost rounds. They had to compete in a relentless succession of heats to catch up, with little rest in between. In such brutal wind conditions, this was a test of skill and a serious physical challenge.

The opening heats saw Pippa van Iersel, Francesca Maini, Sarah Sadek, and Mikaili Sol securing direct spots in the semi-finals. Meanwhile, Alice Ruggiu and Svenja Zoe Peters clawed their way back in the repechage round, while Zara Hoogenraad, last year's world champion, was shockingly eliminated early.

Mikaili Sol, back after a year-long break, wasted no time reminding everyone why she's a legend. She breezed through the semis alongside Sarah Sadek while Francesca Maini and Alice Ruggiu advanced from the other heat.

WOMEN'S FINAL: A STATEMENT FROM SOL

The four finalists - Sol, Maini, Sadek, and Ruggiu - stepped onto the water knowing they had one last chance to leave their mark. The conditions were still wild, but that didn't stop them from throwing down.

Mikaili Sol came out firing, opening her heat with a massive, controlled loop that immediately set the bar. Maini wasn't far behind, proving why she's one of the sport's top names, while Sadek showed impressive consistency, holding onto third place. Alice Ruggiu, solid all event, struggled to find her usual flow in the final and had to settle for fourth. But this was Sol's show. She kept stacking high-scoring tricks, building an insurmountable lead. When the final buzzer sounded, she officially claimed her eighth world title at just 20 years old—an achievement that cements her as one of the greatest kitesurfers ever.

Mikaili Sol's victory at Lords of Tram wasn't just about winning the event—it sealed her incredible comeback season by securing the 2025 GKA Big Air Kite World Championship title. With her eighth world title now in the bag, she cemented her legacy as one of the greatest female Big Air riders ever. With another strong performance, Francesca Maini claimed second place in the overall world rankings, proving her consistency at the highest level. Meanwhile, Alice Ruggiu's impressive season earned her third place in the final championship standings, a huge milestone in her career.

A 'LORDS OF TRAM' TO REMEMBER

The 2025 edition of Lords of Tram was one for the history books. Between the extreme conditions, surprise eliminations, and amazing performances, it was a true test of skills, mental toughness and endurance.

RIDERS LEFT TO RIGHT SARAH SADEK, FRANCESCA MAINI, MIKAILI SOL & ALICE RUGGIU

" BETWEEN THE EXTREME CONDITIONS, SURPRISE ELIMINATIONS, AND AMAZING PERFORMANCES, IT WAS A TRUE TEST OF SKILLS "





"THEY WANTED THE COMPLETE PACKAGE: MASSIVE HEIGHT, TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY, CONTROLLED LANDINGS, AND STYLE."

It was a moment of triumph for Andrea Principi and Mikaili Sol, one reclaiming dominance, the other securing her legacy.

With the season off to such an explosive start, one thing is certain: 2025 is shaping to be an epic year for Big Air kitesurfing.

INTERVIEW WITH JUDGE SIMONE TIMPANO

First, can you tell us how you became a judge on the tour?

I took my judging certification eight years ago, when freestyle was the main competition discipline—Big Air wasn't part of the tour yet. The training covered everything from how the international kiteboarding competition ecosystem works to how to score tricks accurately. I started by judging several French Freestyle Championships.

Later, I got involved with the Lord of Tram team when they launched the event. Initially, it was a national competition, but the level went up quickly as international riders started showing up. Eventually, the GKA brought the event into the official World Tour. Since then, the GKA and local organisers have collaborated to select the judging panel, and I've been fortunate to stay involved year after year.

How does a judge progress after getting their certification?

After the initial training, new judges start as backups.

"JUDGES SCORE EVERY TRICK INDEPENDENTLY,
WITHOUT SEEING THE OTHER SCORES, TO
AVOID INFLUENCE."



They score heats independently, but their scores aren't factored into the official results. Their job is to compare their judging against the average of the official panel. Once they consistently align with the rest of the team, they can begin judging officially. But even then, like all judges, they remain under the supervision of the head judge, who ensures consistency across the board.

What does a judging team look like at a major Big Air competition like Lord of Tram?

At this event, we were seven judges selected by both the GKA and the local organisers. The team is led by a head judge, who defines the scoring criteria, monitors all the scores, and validates them before making them public.

Five active judges score each heat, plus a sixth backup judge who rotates in as needed to give others short breaks. Judges score every trick independently, without seeing the other scores, to avoid influence. The highest and lowest scores are automatically dropped to ensure fairness.

Before the scores are published, the head judge reviews everything for consistency. If anything seems off, the score is held back, a video replay is reviewed, and the trick may be rescored before release. That's why a short delay can sometimes occur before scores are displayed. Once the score is validated, the green flag goes up for the next rider to start.

Can you explain how scoring criteria are set for a Big Air competition?

The head judge, in collaboration with the event organisers, defines scoring criteria. Because the level of riding is constantly evolving, these criteria can vary slightly from one event to the next and even from year to year. Big Air has progressed a lot since its early days, and judging has to evolve with it.

All scoring criteria are clearly explained to riders during the official rider briefing before the event starts.

At this year's Lord of Tram, the focus was primarily on commitment over pure technicality. The two main scoring pillars were:

- Height: how high the rider went.
- Horizontal commitment: the distance traveled during the trick and the power generated by the kite in that horizontal motion.

So, a long travel with heli-loops might score less than a shorter trip executed with massive kite loops and explosive horizontal power.

As for technicality, judges still look at trick combinations—rotations, board-offs, and landing execution—but these have less weight than height and commitment. That's why some athletes reached the finals with more straightforward tricks, like a board-off and a single rotation, as long as they were thrown with maximum commitment.

Are the scoring criteria different for men and women?

Yes, we adjust the criteria to ensure we use the full range of the scoring scale and properly differentiate between performances.

For men, the highest scores might go to a triple rotation, double kite loop, board-off, and maybe even a blind landing—provided the height and execution are solid. For women, it could be a boogie double loop or a front roll board-off with a kite loop, depending on the overall risk and execution.

RIDERS LEFT TO RIGHT LORENZO CASATI, ANDREA PRINCIPI, LEONARDO CASATI & STIJN MUL



"WE ADJUST THE CRITERIA TO ENSURE WE USE THE FULL RANGE OF THE SCORING SCALE AND PROPERLY DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN PERFORMANCES."

RIDERS LEFT TO RIGHT
ANDREA PRINCIPI, LORENZO CASATI
& EDGAR ULRICH

"RIDERS' TECHNICAL LEVELS INCREASE YEARLY,
FORCING US TO CONSTANTLY REEVALUATE
HOW WE BALANCE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY
AGAINST PURE HEIGHT AND COMMITMENT."



Do you see any trends emerging in Big Air that could influence how events are judged in the future?

Absolutely. Riders' technical levels increase yearly, forcing us to constantly reevaluate how we balance technical difficulty against pure height and commitment. In the future, we'll see more discussion about how we weigh these aspects, which could shape the sport's evolution.

Thanks, Simoné, for sharing your insight and experience with us!

FINAL RESULTS

Lords of Tram - Men's Podium

1. Andrea Principi (ITA)
2. Lorenzo Casati (ESP)
3. Leonardo Casati (ITA)

Lords of Tram - Women's Podium

1. Mikaili Sol (BRA)
2. Francesca Maini (GBR)
3. Sarah Sadek (EGY)

2025 GKA BIG AIR KITE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

OVERALL STANDINGS

Men's Podium

1. Lorenzo Casati (ESP)
2. Andrea Principi (ITA)
3. Edgar Ulrich (FRA)

Women's Podium

1. Mikaili Sol (BRA)
2. Francesca Maini (GBR)
3. Alice Ruggiu (ITA)



CRUISING ON THE FOILS IN THE HEBRIDES!
PHOTO JAMES BOULDING

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TECHNIQUE

WORDS & PHOTOS CHRISTIAN & KARINE

Hello and welcome back to the technique section for yet more challenges. To get things started this issue, we're adding a little something onto your sent-back roll in the form of a toe-side landing. This is the foundation move for something coming soon, and it encourages a solid take-off and slow, controlled rotation. So give the toe side landing the attention it deserves, get practicing, and hone it, and before you know it, we'll meet again to add even more! Moving on to move number two... Up here in Europe, this time of year is synonymous with April showers, so we thought we'd stay with the theme and let you give someone else one of your own. Yup, it's all about throwing buckets, and what better way to fan some H2O, than during a toe-to-toe carve? Show us someone who doesn't enjoy a toe-to-toe with spray, and we'll eat our board bags!

Enjoy, C&K

2025 Clinic Calendar up on:
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KARINE AND CHRISTIAN



1 / HOW TO - TOE TO HEEL SPRAY CARVE



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2 / HOW TO - BACK ROLL TO TOESIDE SENT JUMP



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HOW TO - TOE TO HEEL SPRAY CARVE ▶

There is something profoundly satisfying in kicking buckets of spray, regardless of sports. Whether it be fanning deep powder on a mountain, annihilating the lip of a wave, chucking dirt on a bike or walling a slalom ski around a buoy, the inner kid in all of us can't resist it and the ensuing look back to check, regardless of how mind-blowingly awesome it felt. Pushing against water, generating your prism, bending light, making rainbows, or simply soaking someone on the beach – the fun is ours. Who doesn't get excited at the thought?

Spray turns are a great way to boost your kiting vibe and absolutely rock, whether you're on a twin tip or pushing against foam on a surfboard. The foundation of this move is your toe-to-heel carve, so you need to be comfy with it. If you are, we can polish it, tweak it, and shape it into something that any joy-loving kiter can appreciate.

To crack this, we will look at what the kite will be doing and what you'll do to make this happen. We'll ponder how you get your board to carve and how you can achieve maximum super-soaker status. And we'll focus on timing so that everything lines up and you can exit still moving with the broadest of grins plastered all over your face.

ALL ABOUT TOESIDE PIC A

If you want to throw buckets in this carve, it all starts with your toeside. A solid toeside allows you to enter with speed whilst maintaining control. A good toeside



keeps tension on your lines, so the kite will react, turn, and fly when and how you want it to. And a good toeside position means you're perfectly balanced and primed to carve your board.

Stance. A good toeside stance means getting much of the board's edge in the water. A wide stance, with weight on both feet and a back knee lowered forward, will give you controllable speed and line tension. If you're struggling with this, we've covered toeside in detail in IKSURFMAG issue 90, so have a look.

Direction. You want to be driving upwind. There's no need to pinch as close as possible, but heading upwind will allow you to position your kite at the edge of the window and give you the best possible carve!

Kite position. This does vary depending on wind strength and water state. In a perfect world, you'll have flat water to play on and be pleasantly powered. If true, you can have your kite just above 45 degrees. This will give you a larger window to cut, more time to carve, and more chance to exit at both speed and power.

If you look at Pic A, you can see Christian's toeside. His kite is around 45, his back hand centred on the bar, front hand free and forward to help keep his weight on both feet. He's looking upwind to where he wants to go, the bar is trimmed in slightly so that he can comfortably keep it on the sweet spot, and his weight is committed upwind of the board. His hips are twisted forwards and away from the kite, whilst both knees are bent,



putting weight onto both feet so that he can drive hard against his edge, giving him good speed, glide and resistance. This isn't cruising; this is energetic! From this position, if you get the timing and order of events right, plumes of spray are yours to take!

CUT THE WINDOW PIC B

Now you're set; it all starts with the kite. You're aiming for a reasonably aggressive steer to turn the kite. Once it turns, you'll need to let off so that it can fly straight across the window. This way, it cuts through the window rather than flying up and over. The simplest way to get the kite to turn and face the other way quickly is to have tension on your lines. As it happens, your upwind toeside edge is just the ticket. As long as you keep your edge, your kite will turn quickly. This also means there is no need to pull



the bar past the sweet spot; steer it from it. To get the kite to steer without pulling the bar, you'll have to use your wrist, cranking your thumb up to get maximum leverage. You can see in the photo that nothing has changed with Christian's stance; he's still edging with speed. The only difference is that he's steering the bar aggressively, on the sweet spot, asking the kite to turn from its position at the edge of the window.

TIMING & TRANSITION PIC C

Once you've steered the bar, there will be a lag before the kite turns. The actual time will depend on various factors, but the good news is that you will feel the kite move through your harness. As the kite turns and moves, it will generate more pull, and you'll feel this. In everyday riding, you'd react by letting the bar out. Here, instead, it's your cue to get your carve on.



It's in your interest to get onto your heel edge as quickly as possible so that you're not flat on the board for too long, as this will lose you tension and make your exit less smooth.

This is the transition phase, as you're transitioning from your toe edge, across a flat board onto your heel edge. What makes this process challenging is that as you roll from one edge to the other, you must also adapt your body position from toe side stance to a dynamic carving position. Otherwise, you risk being pulled back and off balance by your kite.

Have a look at the mini sequence. In the first photo, Christian is still toeside. He's steered the kite, and although he's not edging hard, he's still committed upwind and away from the kite, with weight on both feet, hips centred, and back knee low.



To get onto his heelside edge and the curvy tail of his board, Christian has to move his hips back towards his rear foot. The beauty here is that as you move your weight back, your bum will also move to the inside of your intended carve and weight your heels. As you do this, you must break at the waist to keep your body upright and hold your free hand to the outside of the turn to help stabilise. This now puts you in a strong position from which you're ready to bank the board whilst keeping your balance. If you don't break at the waist, you'll fall to the inside of the turn.

SET THE RAIL PIC D

As the board starts to carve, you can lower your weight and flex your back leg even more (you'll need this flex in the next step), digging your heelside edge deeper into the water and banking your board over



further. With more board in the water, the board will push back against you, and you'll feel pressure on your back leg. If you look at Christian, you can see that his bum is lower, his back leg flexed and bar out on the sweet spot. Equally importantly, his body is still upright, his free arm is out, and he's facing forward; he's not looking around to where he'll end up!

You're now turning aggressively, which will soon replace the tension on your lines. As such, you can stop steering on the bar so your kite will fly straight-ish across the window. Keep the bar on the sweet spot. If you pull it in, the kite will stall, and you'll stop. If you let it out, the kite will fly out of the window, and you'll stop. Let your board do the work.

SUPER SOAKER PIC E

Now that you've set your rail, you have a platform for



some real plumage! Use your back leg to drive against the board, pushing it against the water! With the board fully engaged and your weight over the tail, it won't slide out, but rather send nature's finest cloak up into all its shape-shifting, shifting, glittering glory. The harder you push, the more you'll get. You can see from Christian's face that some effort is involved. Take note that he's not leaning back, and he's not pulling the bar in. Whilst you do this, your kite should be travelling across the window.

FINISH WITH STYLE PIC F

As tempting as it sounds, disappointingly, don't look back to check the spray! If you do, you'll move too much weight back, tighten your turn, slow down and potentially kill the power as you'll have to support yourself on the bar. Instead, lead yourself out by now



looking where you'll go, straighten up, aim upwind, level your bar, shift weight into your usual heelside stance, and fly your kite if needed. Christian shifts into his usual stance, edges for tension and keeps the bar on the sweet spot to exit with speed. Job done!

TOP TIPS

Build up to this as you would with any other move. Concentrate on the steps in the order above.

A decent toe-side edge into a good chopping off of the window, making sure you don't look over your shoulder too early, and getting a nice flowing carve by breaking at the waist and keeping your upper body facing forward.

by breaking at the waist and keeping your upper body facing forward.

Feel free to start with the kite a little higher and aim to chop from 11 to 1 or vice versa; it's better to have too little power than too much.

Remember to trim your kite so that you can reach the bar easily with two hands when you're edging the toe side to set it up.

Steer your kite through the turn using your wrist; don't just yank the back hand in and upset the kite.

AND if you're doing this for a photo, make sure you're not up spray of the camera!

OK, look at the sequence well and check out the video while pondering the points above.

COMMON MISTAKES

Suppose the kite turns slowly even though you're giving it plenty of welly. This signals you're flattening the board off, releasing your edge before turning the kite.

If you're getting yanked backwards by the kite as you steer it back. As with so many things, the timing is everything. Although the order of play is edge, steer the kite and then carve, the time between steering and carving can be the blink of an eye. If you wait too long, it's more akin to jumping from the toe side!

Suppose you're falling to the inside of the turn. This is a sign that you're turning your head to look the other way and leaning your shoulders back. Keep an open carving stance, looking where you're going, not where you want to go, and break at the waist.

KEYSTONES

1. That's a good toe-side edge
2. Kite first
3. Drop hips back, transition board and carve
4. Push back against the board through the back foot
5. Look out of turn



HOW TO - BACK ROLL TO TOESIDE SENT JUMP ▶

The sent back roll to toeside is not a move you'll see often. You'll frequently see its namesake popped and many hybrid variations, too. However, we're going to look at this jumped variant, using the kite for height, as it will serve you very well for one of our next learning to loop releases in the not-too-distant future. Spoiler alert! If you have your mind set on nailing a back roll down loop transition, you need this one stuffed firmly into your bag of tricks! OK, so the carrot has been officially dangled. We're sure you won't be surprised to hear that having a sent back roll is the pre-requisite for this toe-side landing. However, you'll be pleased to hear that this one doesn't differ much; it is a matter of adding a toeside landing onto your sent back roll!

Right, enough of the jibber jabber. Let's have a little run-through of the back roll and see how we're going to stomp it to the toeside.

APPROACH AND SEND PIC A

Your aim is for a floaty back roll; we're not looking for huge, but instead controlled with a slow rotation. Approach as you usually would, and have a good check to ensure the coast is clear with your kite at the edgeable 11 or 1 o'clock and a comfortable speed on an upwind edge. Position your hands centrally on the bar. Send your kite, keep edging, and feather the bar out to follow the sweet spot before leveling the bar to stop your kite going much past 12. You can see that



Karine has come in for her back roll, as usual. She must feather her bar out to turn the board further upwind before take-off. She's not leaning back and keeping her back leg stiff even though it's flexed.

TAKE OFF PIC B

A lot happens here at the takeoff. You've got to get up off the water, initiate your rotation and control your kite. Extend your back leg hard to initiate take-off, and kick yourself up and off the water. Use your entire body from foot to head to extend up.



At the same time, turn your shoulders and twist your trunk to follow on from the carve and rotate upwind. Once you're extending, you can pull the bar in for lift. Looking at Karine, you can see that she's kicked herself up, extending full. She's twisting her trunk to initiate her rotation, and her shoulders are still pretty parallel with the water, so she hasn't leant back! As she rises, she pulls the bar in for some extra oomph and keeps it level to stop the kite from travelling further back. Karine is looking forward; she hasn't thrown her head into the rotation, she can see her hands, and she'll keep it nice and slow.



C

GET YOUR BEARINGS PIC C

Once you are up and rotating, get your knees up to keep yourself balanced. It's still a sent back roll, so all the same rules apply. Concentrate on keeping the kite just behind 12 o'clock, and once you pass upwind, turn your head and look over your shoulder to see where you are. You'll know where and when you'll land by leading with your eyes. Keep your knees up and the kite slightly back if you're still high. Here Karine is balanced and floating. She's turned her head and looks downwind, waiting to float down.



D

COMING DOWN PIC D

Let's preface this by repeating what we said at the beginning. A back roll to the toeside is a back roll with a toeside landing added. We can expand this by adding it at the very last second. Your aim is to come down as you would if you were planning to land heelside, pointing downwind and over your board. With this in mind, look at Karine as she starts to descend. She's got her bar on the sweet spot and has started to steer her kite gently forward, to get past 12. She focuses on where she thinks she'll land as she does this. It's like her back roll; nothing new to see here... yet!



E

DIVE AND DROP PIC E

Once you know you'll soon be landing, it's time to dive the kite for some downwind pull and drop your undercarriage so you can land over the board. Now is the time for change. Bring your back leg through as you dive your kite and drop your legs. If you turn your shoulders a touch first, you can twist your hips, lift your back knee underneath you, and point the board downwind. Keep your bar on the sweet spot. If you let it out and give away the tension, you'll potentially turn too far. Here Karine dives her kite, turns her head, shoulders, and waist,



and then brings her rear foot through, focusing on where she'll land.

STOMP IT PIC F

With the kite pulling, you should find yourself following it. The more you dive, the simpler it'll be to land downwind. Turning your body and bringing the rear leg forward has the benefit of lifting your new front foot, making for an achievable tail-first landing over the board. You can release your front hand to stay balanced as you touch down. You can see that Karine is pointing downwind, following the kite's pull.



She's released her front hand and lands neatly, tail first over a flat board.

EDGE PIC G

Once you're balanced and happy, turn upwind and get onto your toeside edge. As soon as you're edging, you can control the kite and stop it flying down from your initial dive. Karine turns upwind onto her toes!

TOP TIPS

Without wanting to oversimplify this move, it is a single back roll with a toeside landing. This means you must approach it as such, even as far as the landing

goes. Start your dive as if you're landing typically, and as the pull comes, bring the rear leg through. The problems start when you try to rotate to toe side.

With this in mind, perhaps the toeside is also slightly misleading. As you can see from the photos, Karine is actually landing downwind and on a flat board. There's no toeside edge, and this is why you don't need any extra beans on the back roll.

As long as you rotate slowly and try this so you'll land on your preferred toeside, you need only focus on the landing.



Excellent. Look at the sequence and watch the video to see it play out in real time.

COMMON PROBLEMS

If you're landing and catching your heels, it's a sign of two problems. Firstly, you're over-rotating. This can be giving too much in the take-off phase or not diving the kite. Without the pull, there's nothing to guide you. Don't throw your head when you take off, and be positive on the bar for your dive.

Suppose you're landing pointing downwind with all your weight on your heels, making it hard to turn back

upwind onto your toeside edge. This often happens if you're dropping hard into your landing. This can result from letting the bar out or diving too early while still high. Be patient and keep some tension.

KEYSTONES

1. Take off for a slow rotation
2. Knees up and wait
3. Spot landing and dive kite
4. Drop the board and bring back the leg through
5. Land downwind overboard before carving up





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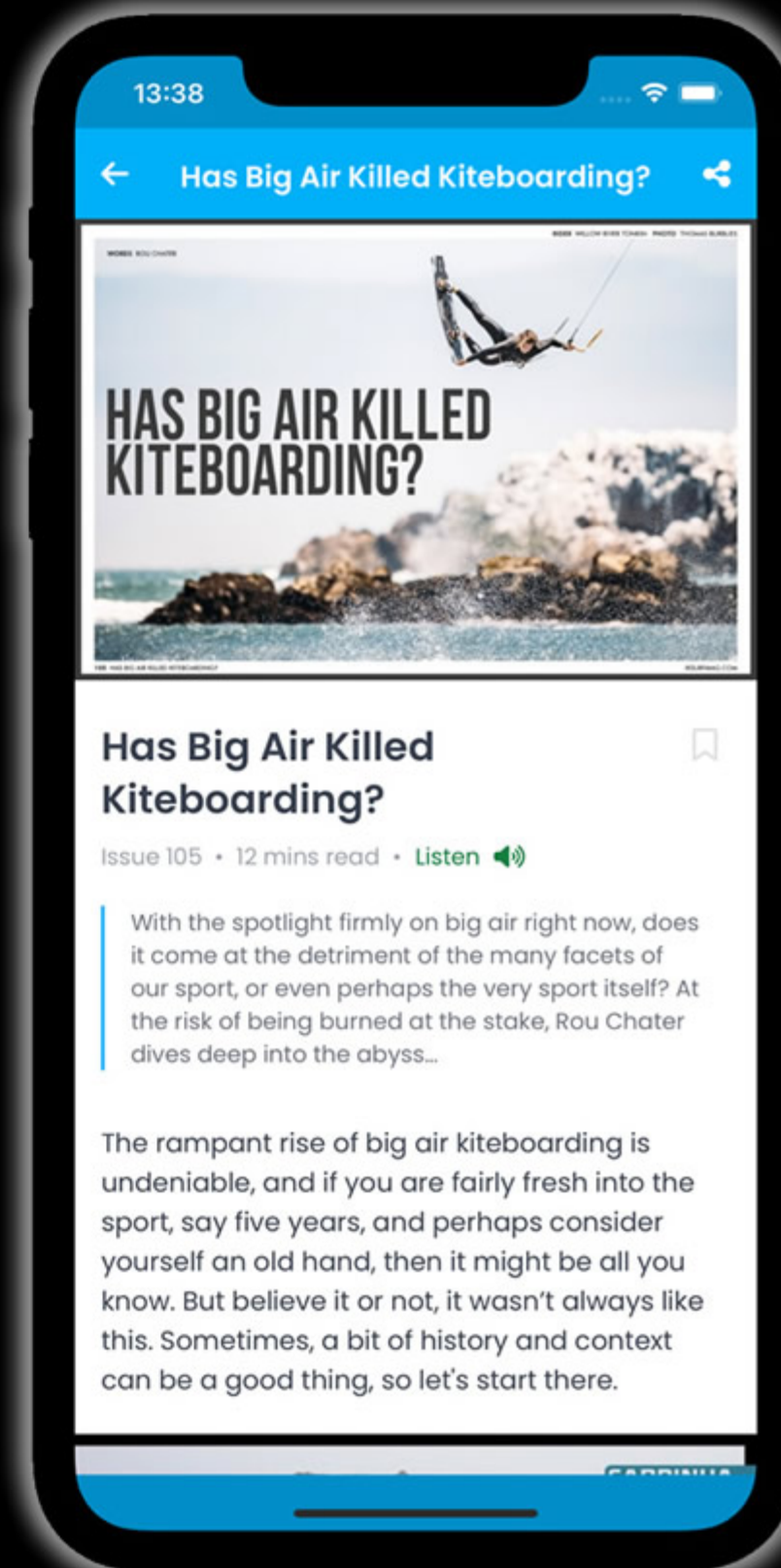
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