

# ksurf!

ISSUE 112

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 25

## WELCOME TO IKSURFMAG

Issue 112 is here! This issue, Rou Chater kicks things off with an editorial on summer storms in the UK, exploring how big air, storm chasing, and apps are reshaping our sport and why safety should always come first. We hit the road with Ozone's Santi Cisneros, dive into the creative journey of Alby Rondina and Laci Kobulsky, and hear

Beto Gómez's inspiring story from the Wayuu community to the world stage. Fabian Moser discovers Brazil's coastline, while Ralf Grösel spotlights Brainchild's innovations. With new gear tests including Jen Tyler's Stealth Harness review, technique tips, and a stacked Movie Night lineup, this issue has it all!



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INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

# ksurf!

112  
AUG/SEPT 25



## KITES, CAMERA, ACTION!

BRAINCHILD // BETO GOMEZ // WOO RECORDS  
TECH FOCUS // INTERVIEWS // TECHNIQUE & MORE INSIDE!



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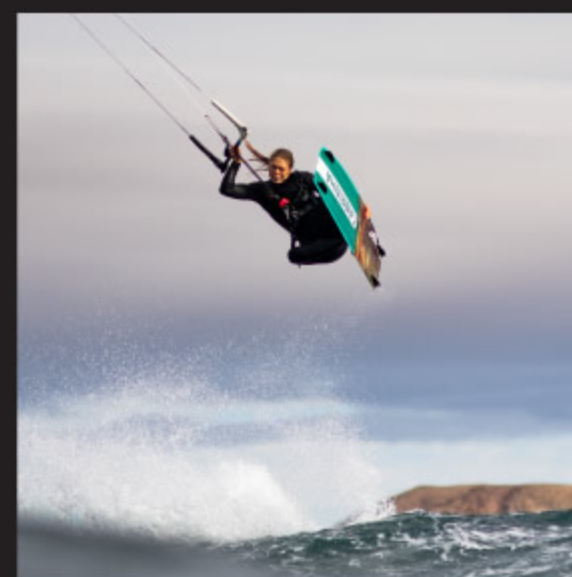
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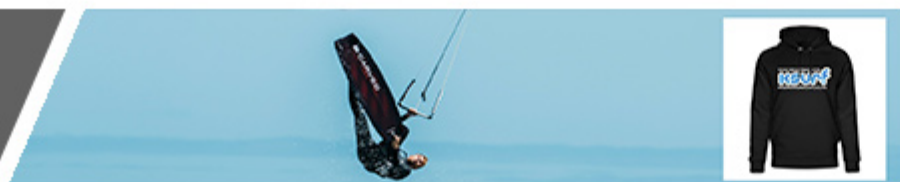
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EDITORIAL



COMPETITION



OZONE ON TOUR



KITES, CAMERA,  
ACTION!



THE INTERVIEW:  
BETO GÓMEZ



ALONG BRAZIL'S  
COASTLINE



BRAINCHILD  
RALF GROSEL



TECH FOCUS: MYSTIC  
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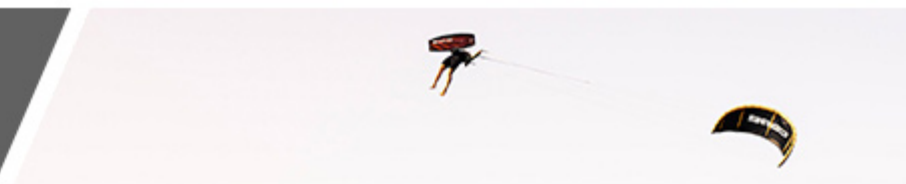
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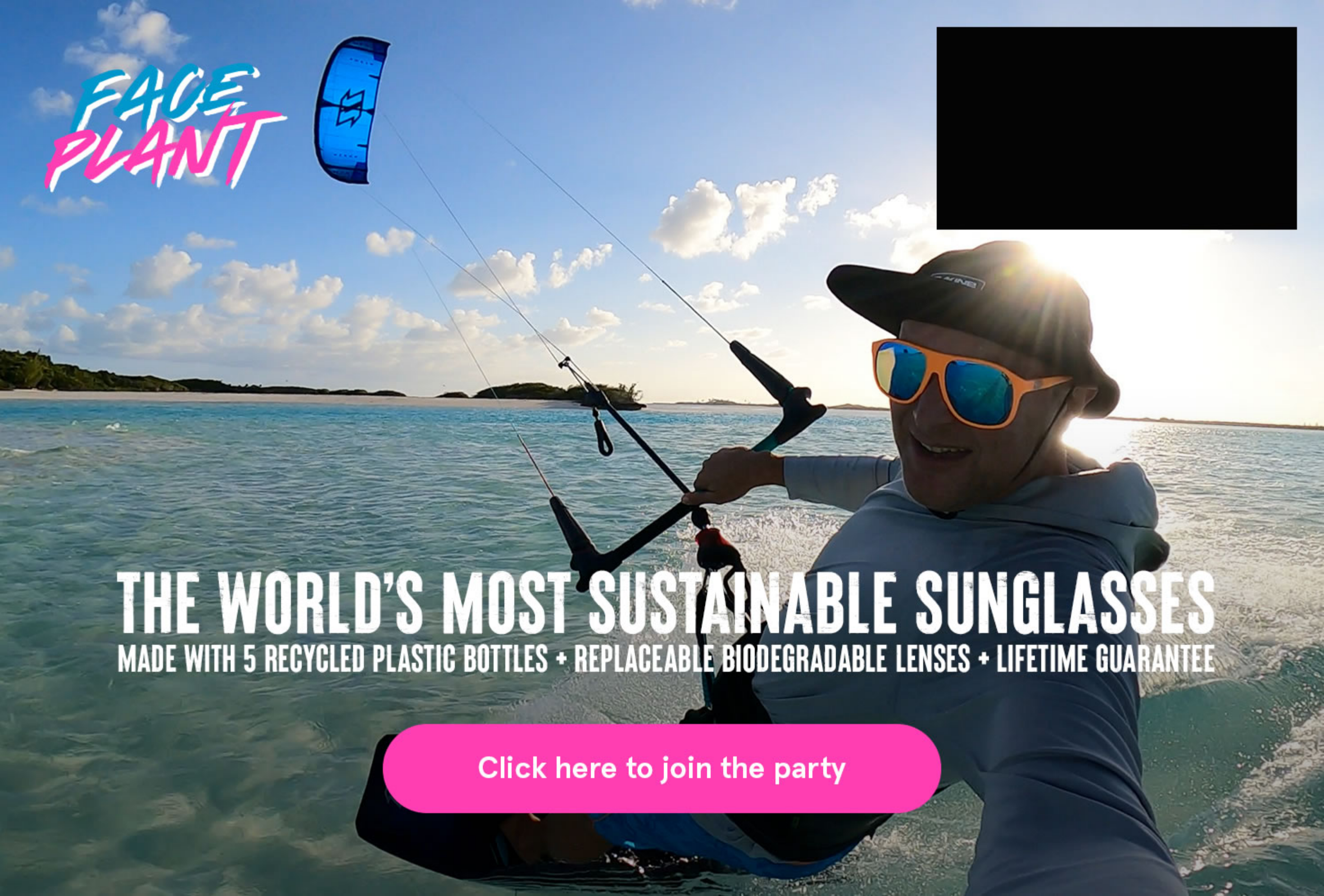
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EDITORIAL

Summer is usually a time for light winds. I've been closely watching forecasts and kite foiling a lot lately in the UK. We've had a bit of wind here and there, but two weeks ago we were blessed with a huge storm that rolled through Scotland and battered the rest of Britain. We're seeing more and more of these fierce storms, increasingly at times when they really shouldn't be here, but that's another topic.

With the huge impact big air has had on our sport, it's shifted the dynamic of the average kiter, no longer satisfied with 20 knots and a good time freeriding, we seem to be hunting out more extreme

conditions. Pro riders are leading this charge from the top down, and needless to say, we are all inspired by it and keen to go bigger and higher.

Of course, the WOO and Surfr. App have their part to play too, gamifying kiteboarding and pitting us against our mates and the wider community. When the storm charts go purple in the middle of the summer, it's hard not to get excited and start thinking about the best spot for the best session to maximise the storm's potential.

While we are all super passionate about this sport we love, remember to prioritise your safety at all times when you are down at the beach. It's easy to get excited

and carried away, especially when it's nuking and we're racing to get on the water. This sport deserves respect; it's usually around the time we get complacent that accidents happen, and I say that from first-hand experience.

Every time we hook in, we're strapping ourselves into something that will happily throw us wherever it feels like giving us half a chance. It's easy to forget that. This storm in the UK stirred up excitement and, unfortunately, saw numerous incidents around the UK on various beaches. As the climate changes were getting wilder weather, I can never recall a time





RIDER WILLOW RIVER TONKIN  
PHOTO THOMAS BURBLIES

when there has been so much energy on the ocean and in the air at our beaches.

Storms are more frequent and powerful, so we need to remember to be even more vigilant when it comes to our safety. It's much more fun to end a session in the pub with your mates, celebrating an incredible day on the water, than it is to be taken off the beach in an ambulance. We've all got loved ones we care about, and we all want to get home safely.

Whenever you go to the beach, always conduct a quick risk assessment of what could go wrong and how you will deal with it should the worst happen. Preparation is key when it comes to safety. If you have a plan for when things go wrong, you are far more likely to be able to execute it than if you just react in real time. While we are talking storms, it's worth mentioning that light wind sessions can go wrong, too. I've had my fair share of "foil swims" over the years.

In those moments between sessions, take some time to go over your gear and replace any worn parts or lines. Think about the spots you ride and your risk assessment for each of them, brush up on your safety release and pack downs, and work on your swimming. We get lots of downtime as kitesurfers when the wind isn't blowing, so we use it to make sure we are ready for when the wind does blow. You'll have a much better session knowing you are prepared.

Lastly, don't be afraid to say no. It's always better to know your limits and ride within them. After all, we all want to come back for more. Over time, as your skills improve, so will your ability to handle different conditions. Summer's almost over, and storm season is just around the corner, kite safe everyone!

*Rou Chater*  
Publishing Editor



RIDER STEVEN AKKERSDIJK  
PHOTO JOSÉ DENIS-ROBICHAUD



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Santi Cisneros shares his journey to discover what it takes to pack a van with gear, chase the forecast, and share the Ozone experience with riders across the globe on the Ozone Demo Tour in this exclusive feature!

# OZONE ON TOUR



THE  
**OZONE**  
DEMO TOUR



In a conversation with the Ozone team, one idea stood out: we don't just sell kites. We sell happiness, comfort, and safety. Over the years, we've learned that nothing beats hands-on experience to truly understand the performance of Ozone products backed by excellent service and a passion for the sport.

That philosophy sparked an idea: why not take the gear, the stoke, and the Ozone crew directly to the people? And so, the Ozone Demo Tour was born. Our aim was to move from continent to continent, providing great sessions and experiences with Ozone products far and wide, beginning in Europe for three months in spring this year.

**"I MET SO MANY AMAZING PEOPLE, FROM DISTRIBUTORS TO Hardcore OZONE FANS AND CURIOUS AMATEURS"**

For three months, I lived out of a van packed to the brim with kites, boards, and wings. The route was flexible, as any kiter knows, you follow the wind, and each stop brought new faces, new spots, and plenty of sessions. I met so many amazing people, from distributors to hardcore Ozone fans and curious amateurs, and we were welcomed everywhere we went.

Among my favourite spots in Europe are Brittany, Tarifa, of course, and the Netherlands. After those three months, we took the demo tour to Brazil, where I'm currently finishing up this leg. Brazil always feels like home to me. I can't believe that in just one year, I'll have been able to do this demo on three different continents! And the adventure isn't over yet: the next demo tour is coming to Australia!





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**“IT’S ALWAYS GREAT TO SEE THAT “I CAN’T BELIEVE IT!” REACTION, WITH WIDE EYES AND A MASSIVE SMILE ON THEIR FACE.”**

#### **THE OZONE EXPERIENCE**

The vibe at the demo sessions is consistently positive and cheerful. And the reactions from people, haha, it’s always great to see that “I can’t believe it!” reaction, with wide

eyes and a massive smile on their face. It’s a one-way street; once you try it, you don’t want to go back.

I have a couple of stories, and there are even some funny videos of people’s reactions trying out the Vortex.

#### **TRY IT, LOVE IT, ORDER IT**

The concept is simple: test the gear, fall in love, and then make it your own. Orders can be placed through trusted Ozone dealers or

directly via the website, where customers can even choose custom colours. Every product is built at Ozone’s exclusive factory and shipped in just a few weeks.

#### **BREAKING BARRIERS**

Many people stick with their gear because of a fear of change. And you don’t often get the chance to go to the beach and find all the models from one brand available to test. At Ozone, we have a kite for every discipline and a kite for every rider, and we do everything we can to make that experience the best possible.





This is where the demo participants themselves play a key role. When someone tries the gear and loves it, their enthusiasm is contagious. We all want to be as happy as possible, so why not give it a try?

I always listen to the person who comes to test the gear, to understand what they like to do and what they like to feel from the kite. That's how I give them a "tour" through the equipment so that they can feel the differences for themselves.

**"WE ALL WANT TO  
BE AS HAPPY AS  
POSSIBLE, SO  
WHY NOT GIVE IT  
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PRODUCT INFO







## FUN MOMENTS AND STRANGE EXPERIENCES

Oh, there were so many funny moments and strange experiences! I did the whole Europe trip with one of my best friends, Joaquin Rodriguez, and it's always better to have good company.

**"THE TOUR HAS BEEN A GREAT EXPERIENCE. WE CHANGED THE PERFECT ROUTE FOR DUNES AND SANDY STREETS, AND THAT'S ALWAYS FUN IN A PICKUP TRUCK."**

One thing that surprised us as Argentinians was arriving in the Netherlands and finding it rained for two days. We were a bit scared inside the van because of the powerful rain, but we looked out the window and realised that people were acting as if the rain wasn't even there. It was everyday life for them. And at the demo in Workum, we had all four seasons and types of weather in just two days, which was incredible for me.

Here in Brazil, too, with my friend Fran Margulies, the tour has been a great experience. We changed the perfect route for dunes and sandy streets, and that's always fun in a pickup truck. We're going to release a video about our experience in Brazil that will capture a lot of what I'm talking about.

Find more info on the Ozone Demo Tour [here](#).

Updates posted on [Ozone Kites](#) and [Ozone Wing](#) Instagram



# KITES, CAMERA, ACTION



WORDS JEN TYLER, ALBY RONDINA AND LACI KOBULSKY PHOTOS LACI KOBULSKY

In this interview, Jen Tyler sat down with Alby Rondina and Laci Kobulsky to talk about how their partnership all started, the projects that defined their journey, funny fails, creative chemistry, and what's next for one of kiteboarding's most dynamic duos!





**“ALBY HAS A THING FOR WORKING WITH PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO ARE GENUINELY PASSIONATE AND WILLING TO PUSH FOR THE SHOT”**

Alby and Laci, thanks for joining us! How did you two first meet, and what was your first project? Did you hit it off immediately, or did it take time to find your creative rhythm?

We first met in Uruau, Brazil, back in 2015 and yeah, it was kind of a “bromance” at first sight, haha. We hit it off straight away and started shooting photos and video right from day one. That first session was kickers in the ocean. Laci was on the beach with a long lens, and Alby asked where to jump. Laci pointed to a specific spot and said it would be cool with the kite low, so Alby stood there reading the waves like a freakin’ librarian and then gave him Moby Dick, kite low, bang on the mark.

That shot ended up on the cover of an American mag, and it was only later that we realised how tricky that kind of timing is for most riders. But with Alby, it just clicked. He gets the angles, the light, the rhythm. That session also landed us a Cabrinha ad and a killer first edit with some good old school freestyle kicker tricks.

We’ve always connected creatively. Alby has a thing for working with photographers who are genuinely passionate and willing to push for the shot, and Laci’s that guy. From the start, it was easy. We just got each other.

**You’ve worked together for years now. What’s the secret to keeping a long-term creative partnership fun and productive?**

We’ve been working together for years, and the secret comes down to passion for the sport, creativity,





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**" WE'VE HAD SO MANY MOMENTS OVER THE YEARS WHERE EVERYTHING JUST LINED UP AND WE GOT KILLER SHOTS. "**

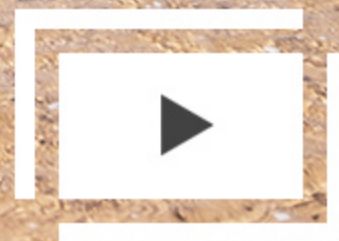
and keeping it all fun. First and foremost, we're friends. We live in the same place, share many of the same interests, and care about showing what's legit in kiteboarding from our point of view.

We're constantly bouncing ideas off each other, new tricks, new angles, new ways to shoot, and that keeps things fresh. Alby draws a lot of inspiration from the surfing world, while Laci's more influenced by skateboarding, snowboarding, and freestyle culture, so there's never a shortage of ideas flying around. We're both open to experimenting and trying out each other's visions, and that balance keeps our partnership not only productive but also super fun.

**Looking back, what's one project or shoot that stands out as a turning point in your collaboration?**

It's hard to pick just one turning point. We've had so many moments over the years where everything just lined up and we got killer shots. Our very first video in Brazil back in 2015 already felt super smooth, no friction at all, and that set the tone for everything that followed. Since then, we've been shooting almost daily here in Sicily, and each project has had its own vibe and place in our hearts.

Some of our best content has come from sessions right here in the lagoon, especially those insane sunsets. Honestly, some of the best kiteboarding and winging shots we've ever done have been in that golden light. The "Back to Business" edit,







**“ WE’VE GOT PLENTY OF STORIES, PRIMARILY INVOLVING LACI’S KITE GEAR DRAMA! ”**

the countless ProKite projects, and the Cabrinha Italian team trip to Sicily and Sardinia all stand out. That one in particular was such a fun trip and a real highlight of our collaboration.

**You’ve travelled and shot in some incredible places. What’s been your all-time favourite location to film together, and why?**

Without a doubt, our all-time favourite place to shoot together is Lo Stagnone, Sicily, that one’s easy! Brazil was where it all began, and it’s still insane in so many ways, but Sicily is on another level regarding variety and consistency.

That’s actually why we both decided to move here. The diversity of conditions is incredible: flat water, waves, kickers, crazy backdrops, and stunning nature all in one spot. If you’re an early bird like Alby, you can even score some proper waves. Plus, being so far south

in the Mediterranean means the rideable season is super long, we’re comfortably riding from March through November. For filming, it’s just a dream.

**Any funny or unexpected stories from your trips? A moment where everything went wrong or surprisingly right?**

Oh, we’ve got plenty of stories, primarily involving Laci’s kite gear drama! For some reason, he’s always had bad luck when we go on missions to remote spots. One year, his kites were constantly leaking. We were riding back from a small island in the Stagnone lagoon, and his kite barely stayed in the air.





We had to switch kites mid-mission, and somehow Alby managed to keep the half-dead kite flying and got us both back, saving Laci from a 2–3 hour walk through deep mud!

Then there was the **Isola Lungo mission**, with a super rare southwest wind and perfect light. We packed the camera gear into dry bags and kited half an hour across the lagoon. After a full-on shoot, Alby offered to grab a few shots of Laci (some of his best photos, by the way!). But when Laci got to his kite, it was nearly deflated. He tried diving, but there was no chance. Alby took over, worked some magic, and somehow rode the thing back across the lagoon with a half-deflated kite while Laci was looping like mad with all his camera gear strapped to his back, barely making it.

**“ALBY MANAGED TO KEEP THE HALF-DEAD KITE FLYING AND GOT US BOTH BACK”**

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| 8                                   | <b>VAL</b>      | 24.4m |





**“ HE’S GOT A STRONG SENSE OF STYLE AND IS ALWAYS FOCUSED ON MAKING THINGS LOOK LEGIT AND PROPER. ”**

Oh, and during a Cabrinha shoot, a wave took out our drone mid-session. Weeks later, a fisherman found it at the bottom of the sea... and we recovered all the footage. Win!

**Alby, what do you appreciate most about Laci’s filming style? And Laci, what makes Alby such a strong subject to work with?**

What makes our collaboration work so well is that we both really understand each other’s strengths. Alby has always appreciated Laci’s eye; he knows exactly what to do to get the shot, whether it means chasing the best light or going all-in for the perfect angle. He’s got a strong sense of style and is always focused on making things look legit and proper.

On the flip side, Laci loves working with Alby because of his insane understanding of timing and placement. If you ask him to pop in one specific spot for a shot, he’ll do it precisely, and he can repeat it again and again. When you’re trying to nail creative angles or play with backgrounds, that kind of control is a dream. In all Laci’s experience, no one else comes close in that department.

**How do you typically divide the creative vision when planning a new shoot? Who leads on what?**

When it comes to planning a new shoot, it’s all about collaboration and balance. We usually start by bouncing ideas off each other. Laci often brings the general concept for the video or photos, especially from a marketing or social media angle,



**“ SOME OF THE BEST CREATIVE MOMENTS HAPPEN SPONTANEOUSLY RIGHT THERE ON THE SPOT ”**

while Alby adds the business and sponsorship perspective to make sure we're covering everything that needs to be shown or said.

Alby will often also come up with a concrete idea that we build into the overall plan. But honestly, some of the best creative moments happen spontaneously right there on the spot during the session. That's when the real magic happens.

**Not every project goes smoothly. Can you share a moment that tested your partnership, and how you worked through it?**

Honestly, we've never really had any major conflict or friction; working together has always been pretty smooth. Alby's the kind of guy who never gets angry and always sees the glass half full, even when the conditions aren't perfect. Of course, there's the classic photoshoot curse, tight deadlines and no win, but that's usually when the best rider and filmmaker emerge. Somehow, we always manage to make it work.

One moment that maybe tested things a bit was when Laci decided to leave his full-time job at Alby's kite resort in Sicily to focus on his career. But even then, it was all positive; he kept returning every summer to shoot, and eventually moved himself and his business here permanently. So yeah, even the big changes only made the partnership stronger.

**How has your dynamic evolved, from early shoots to where you are now? Has your creative process changed?**

Our dynamic has definitely evolved over the years,







**“ WE’VE GOT SOME EXCITING THINGS COMING UP! 2025 MARKS OUR 10TH SEASON AT PROKITE IN SICILY ”**

both in how we work and how the tools around us have changed. On a technical level, everything’s gotten a lot easier and faster. Drones are super efficient now

(especially in Laci’s hands), cameras shoot in almost no light, batteries last longer, and the gear is more user-friendly. Gone are the days of shooting from helicopters or risking a full DSLR setup in the water without proper housing.

Creatively, we’ve also become more structured. Back then, it was more about grabbing and just going for a camera.

Now there’s way more pre-production and planning involved. We think more about the what, when, and who before even hitting record. The formats have shifted, too. When we started, it was all about long-form Vimeo edits and magazine stills. Then came the YouTube era, and now it’s short vertical reels everywhere. You’ve got to keep up and “surf” the wave of the trends. Lately, Laci’s been getting back into longer vlog-style episodes on YouTube, and people seem to be loving it, so we keep evolving with it.

**What’s next for you two? Are there any new projects, destinations, or ideas in the pipeline we should watch out for?**

We’ve got some exciting things coming up! 2025 marks our 10th season at ProKite in Sicily, so we’re planning something special to celebrate that milestone. Stay tuned for it. We’re also diving more into the wave side of things, and Laci’s been getting some proper ocean training to be ready when the big swells roll in. Hopefully, you’ll see that reflected in some fresh new content soon.

On the creative front, Laci is growing his local media company, AMUNÌ MEDIA, with a few passion projects in the pipeline. One of them is a personal profile on Alby for his unORDINARY YouTube series, plus a brand-new local podcast where Alby will be the first guest of honour, of course!

And as always, come to Sicily if you want to ride with us! The summer season here is epic; we’re riding almost every day in boardshorts from now until October. See you on the water!



# BETO GOMEZ

Beto Gómez's journey from the Wayuu community in Cabo de la Vela to the world stage is nothing short of inspiring. In this interview, Jen Tyler chats with Beto about his roots, his rise in kiteboarding, and what it means to represent his tribe through the sport he loves.



PHOTO JULI CRUZ



" MY CHILDHOOD WAS FULL OF AMAZING MOMENTS, SURROUNDED BY GOOD PEOPLE AND STRONG FAMILY VALUES. "



PHOTO CRAIG KOLESKY

**Beto! It's great to have you here. We've been wanting to interview you for a while! Tell us what your childhood was like growing up in Cabo de la Vela, Colombia.**

Hey guys, thank you so much for the opportunity, for having me on board, and for thinking of me for the interview. I really appreciate it so much.

Growing up in Cabo de la Vela in the Wayuu community was an incredible experience. My childhood was full of amazing moments, surrounded by good people and strong family values. Life there teaches you a way of living that is hard to find elsewhere, and I feel proud to be part of the Wayuu tribe and to represent them.

It was not always easy, but we were happy, truly happy. We had what we needed: food in our stomachs and air to breathe. Of course, there were challenges too. For many years, water was a big problem. Thankfully, it is now easier to get, though you still need to earn the money for it. But the most important thing is that we have water!

**How would you describe your hometown to someone who's never been there?**

Home is warm and arid, with the Caribbean Sea on the left and the Guajira desert on the right. A small village, surrounded by other small villages. Strong wind every day, great food, and amazing vibes around the beach. Music playing, mamas cooking BBQ out on the street—waoooooo! I flew back home just thinking about all of this!

**Were there any cultural or social challenges you faced when starting as a Wayuu kiter?**

In the beginning, when I was a little kid, it was always difficult to get permission from the big boss in the tribe to go compete somewhere in the world.



" BEING ABLE TO REPRESENT A NATION OR A CULTURE IS A HUGE PRIVILEGE, AND I FEEL INCREDIBLY PROUD. "

But that never stopped me. The only permission I needed was from my mom. After that, my family faced some problems within the culture because we broke the rules. But thank God I did a great job and put my tribe on the world map. Now, they see me as a reference for the Wayuu people, and everything is okay. Trying to be part of the other side of the world was also a big challenge. Socially, it was hard being around people who didn't speak Spanish. My English was very basic, and I was travelling alone. But I kept going. Thanks to Craig Cunningham, my first manager, and the Duotone team, I was able to be part of this world, learn a lot of values, gain knowledge, and improve my English.

### **What does it mean to you to represent your Wayuu roots on the global stage?**

Representing the Wayuu tribe means everything to me as a kiteboarder because I am the only one doing it, and that gives me strength. Being able to represent a nation or a culture is a huge privilege, and I feel incredibly proud. I believe I represent more than just my tribe or my family. I represent people around the world. I can do something for those who cannot, and that gives me purpose.

I truly believe God put me on this path to teach something, to show the world that anything you dream of can come true. If you wish for it, if you wake up every day and work hard for it, you can make it happen.

The mind is powerful, and if you use it in the right way, it can take you all the way to the top. I am on my way.

### **What's a typical day like at home in Cabo de la Vela?**

A day at home is everything. You wake up in the morning, and Mama already has the coffee ready to serve. You walk along the Caribbean beach, sipping your coffee while taking in the beauty of life. The wind starts blowing early, but everything feels calm. Fishermen take out their wooden boats to catch food for the day and to sell. There is kiting every day, and seafood like a king or queen. You can visit the local beaches and learn about the tribe, enjoy cultural nights, and taste Mama's barbecue cooking in the streets.



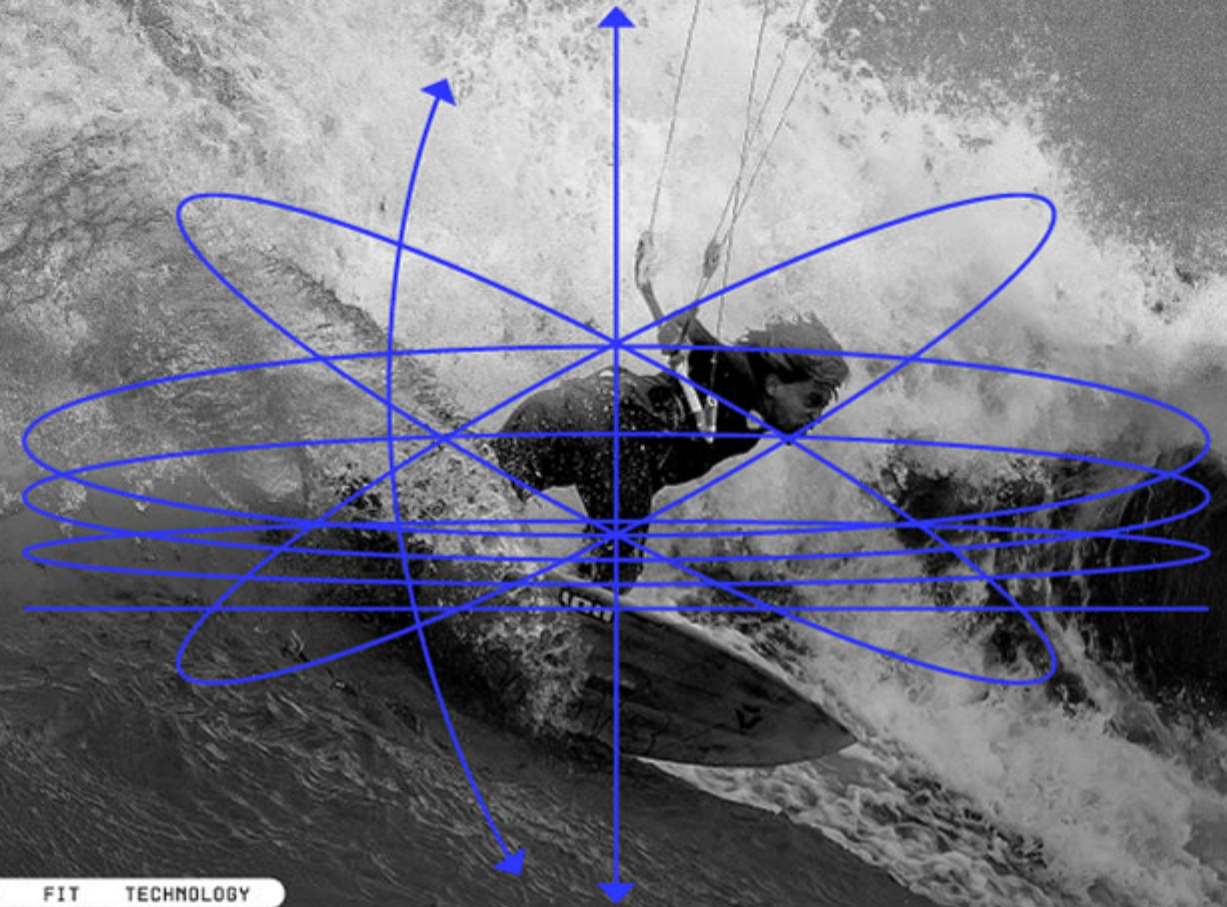


Sleeping in chonchorros, our Wayuu hammocks, is the best part of all.

**Who initially introduced you to kitesurfing? Did it come naturally, or did you struggle at first?**

I first saw a kite when I was seven. Back then, before kitesurfing arrived in our town, the tribe was not allowed to interact much with the outside world. There was a fear of change and a concern about losing our culture. Initially, kitesurfing was not accepted. Three years later, someone returned with a different mindset and fresh ideas for the people in Cabo. His name was Martin Vega. He was the first person to introduce kiting to us. My brother, a friend, and another guy were the first to learn the sport.

**" THERE WAS A FEAR OF CHANGE AND A CONCERN ABOUT LOSING OUR CULTURE "**



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- More water time

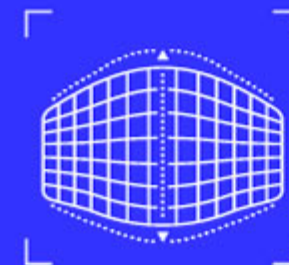


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After that, my brother tried to teach me kite control, but never let your brother teach you anything. It was a crazy experience. Eventually, someone else stepped in to help me, the Rasta man. Still, it took me a long time to get on the board. I was afraid of being dragged out into the ocean and not coming back. But it was all worth it. There were big challenges, but here we are, flying the flag as high as possible.

### Who were your kitesurfing idols growing up?

When I was 10 years old, I had never seen a computer or a TV. Every night after kiting, Martin would put on the computer and show us movies, kite videos, and footage from competitions around the world like PKRA, Red Bull King of the Air, Kitefest Argentina, and many others. Our minds were blown. My friends and I would sit there thinking, one day we'll be there, competing with these guys. We watched Aaron Hadlow, Reno Romeu, Jesse Richman, and Ruben Lenten; those names were the biggest. Ten years later, I made that dream come true. I travelled to Argentina for a competition, Kitefest, the biggest kiteboarding competition in South America. And unexpectedly, I met my heroes. It was my first time riding for Duotone, and everyone was at that event. My heart was beating fast, and emotions were running high. I never thought this could be possible, but I made it. I met my heroes.

### How would you describe your riding style today?

My style over the past few years has always been technical, but now I'm mixing technicality with power to take things to the next level. At the moment, my riding is powerful, explosive, and still very technical. Even after 16 years of kiteboarding, I'm still learning something new every day.



" THERE WERE BIG CHALLENGES, BUT HERE WE ARE, FLYING THE FLAG AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE. "





"THAT'S WHERE MY HEART IS. IT'S JUST ME AND THE ADRENALINE. WE'RE ONE."

Right now, I'm on a mission to reach the highest level I can. My mindset is all about growth, focus, and winning and I'm working hard to get there!

**What is it about Big Air that has you hooked?**

For me, Big Air represents the biggest shift in kiteboarding. Back in the day, it was all about freestyle and racing. When Big Air started gaining attention, I realised I had already been doing it without even knowing what it was. That feeling of being pulled by the wind at 40 kilometres per hour and flying 30 meters high; there's nothing that compares. I love kiteboarding, but Big Air? That's where my heart is. It's just me and the adrenaline. We're one.

**Can you share with us your scariest or most intense session to date?**

My biggest dream was always to kite in Cape Town. I wanted to face those massive waves and jump as high as possible. On my first day there, I kited in front of the competition spot at Blouberg, but the wind was light. A few days later, I headed to Cape Point with Andrea Principi and the Duotone team, a three-hour drive, and the wind was howling.

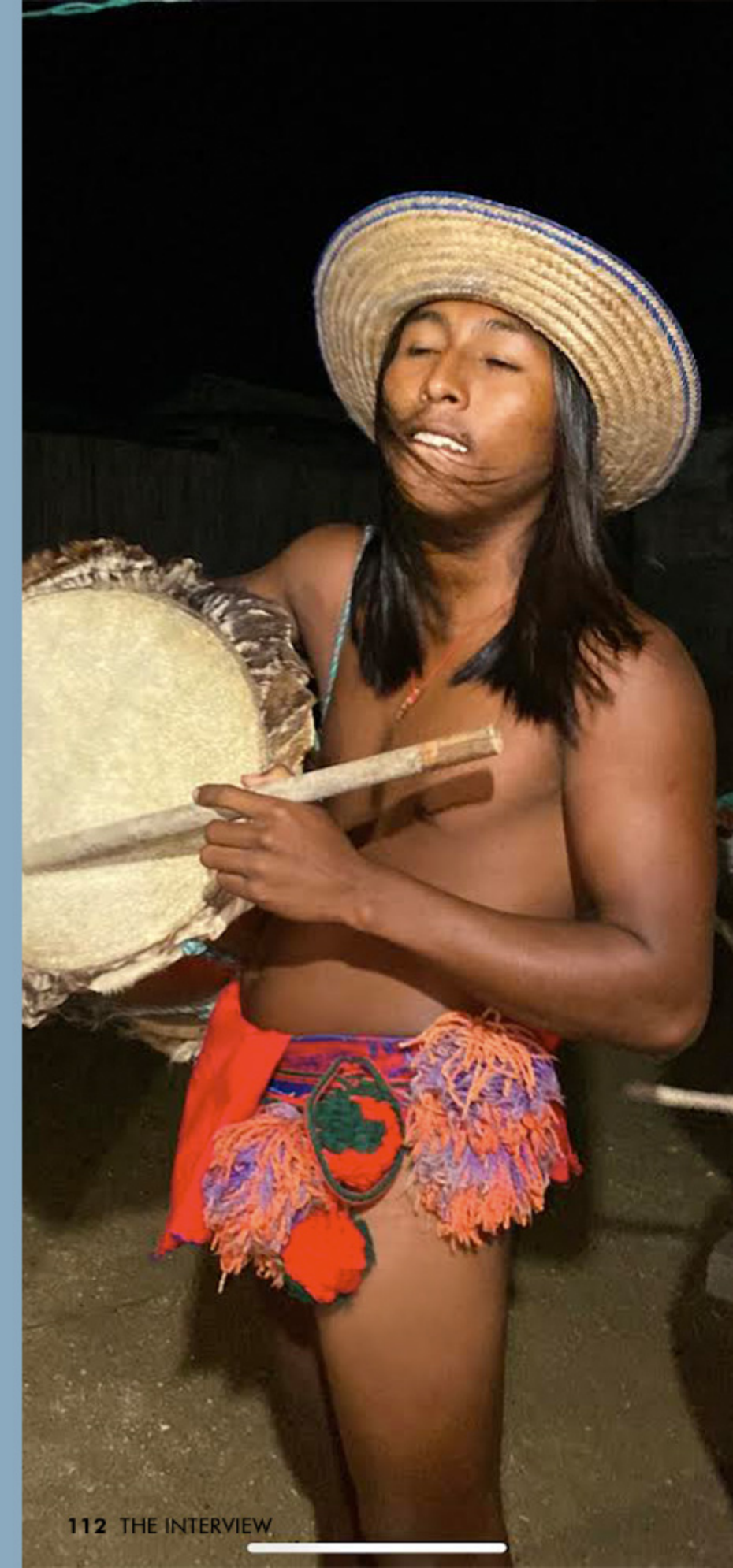
When we arrived, the sand was flying everywhere, and the waves were the biggest I had ever seen. It was actually my first time seeing waves that size, around five meters, and seals surrounded us. One of the first

waves broke right on my head, and I lost my board and had to make my way back to the beach. The guys gave me some tips on how to get past the waves, but honestly, I was scared. I was nervous, too, because I didn't know how the seals would react if I accidentally landed on one. Every jump I went for, I kept praying I wouldn't get caught by a shark or a seal. That was definitely the scariest session of my life!

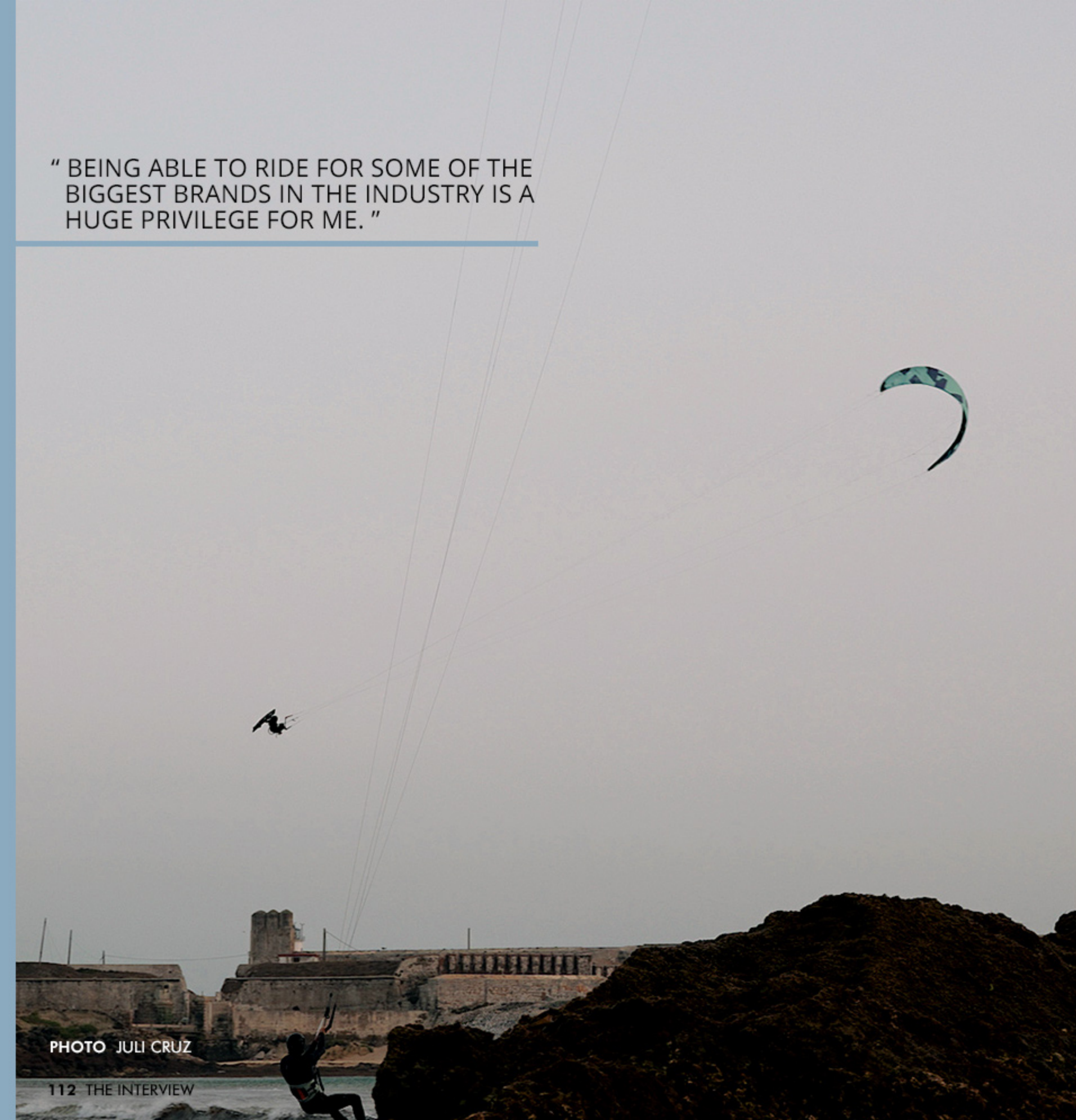
**Tell us about your sponsors. What do you love most about riding with Duotone, and what is your go-to setup?**

What I love most about Duotone is the way they treat you from the moment you join the team.









" BEING ABLE TO RIDE FOR SOME OF THE BIGGEST BRANDS IN THE INDUSTRY IS A HUGE PRIVILEGE FOR ME. "

PHOTO JULI CRUZ

112 THE INTERVIEW

It feels more like a family than just a brand. From preparing you for photo shoots to teaching you how to represent the brand professionally, they really invest in their riders. I learned so much during my time with the Young Blood team in Egypt. It was not just about the riding but also about growing as an athlete and a person. That kind of support and care is something special.

Being part of Duotone also gives you a strong presence in the kiteboarding world. People recognise you. I often hear, "That's Beto Gómez, the rider from Duotone, one of the best," and that recognition means a lot to me.

And of course, the gear is amazing. Every kite I test feels like a top-level machine. My go-to setup is the Evo DLAB paired with the Jaime SLS, but lately I have been riding the Evo Concept Blue SLS. The performance has been incredible. Combining those two materials in one kite really makes a difference on the water, and I love that it supports sustainability too. I even broke my personal record with this kite: 30.1 meters in the first session and 32.4 meters in the second session in Tarifa. I am completely in love with this kite and my Jaime SLS.

**What does being part of the Duotone and ION teams mean to you?**

Being able to ride for some of the biggest brands in the industry is a huge privilege for me. Having access to the best gear in the world, getting to be part of product shoots, and then seeing my images featured globally—in shops, kite schools, or even just walking around Tarifa—feels like living in a dream.

As I mentioned earlier, people already consider me a reference because I'm Beto Gómez, but riding for Duotone and ION elevates my status to another level.

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Being part of such respected brands gives me that extra edge, and it also brings a sense of recognition and status that I'm really proud of.

**What's been the proudest moment of your kiteboarding career so far?**

My biggest achievement in kiteboarding was being able to compete in King of the Air. It's the most prestigious event in the sport, where the 18 best athletes in the world come together with one goal: to fight for the crown. I was so close to getting it. In my first appearance at KOTA, I finished in 4th place. I couldn't have asked for more.

**"IT ALSO BRINGS  
A SENSE OF  
RECOGNITION  
AND STATUS  
THAT I'M REALLY  
PROUD OF."**

# HARLEM PEAK & ASCENT



Reach new heights with the ultimate Big Air combo: the ultralight 5-strut Harlem PEAK and the all-new twintip board, the Harlem ASCENT.

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Rider: Baptiste Bourdoulous  
Photo: Aris Giannoukos





**If you could send one message to the world, what would it be?**

My message to the world is this: "If you have a dream, no matter how many years it takes or how many obstacles you face, never—ever—give up. That dream is what will fuel your heart and make you truly proud of yourself. It's also what will make your family proud. Keep dreaming—for you, for your family, and for the people who believe in you."

**Beto, thank you for sharing your incredible story with us! It's been an absolute pleasure.**

Thank you so much, Jen, for this space and for giving me the opportunity to share my story with the world!

"THAT DREAM IS WHAT WILL FUEL YOUR HEART AND MAKE YOU TRULY PROUD OF YOURSELF."



WORDS FABIAN MOSER PHOTOS THOMAS BURBLIES

# ALONG BRAZIL'S COASTLINE

When Fabian Moser landed in Brazil for the first time, he expected good kiting, but what he got was a full-on adventure! This trip with the CORE team was about more than gear testing. It was a deep dive into the rhythm, colour, and untamed beauty of Brazil's coastline.





Your first time visiting a new country is always a special experience. Last December, I had the opportunity to experience Brazil for the first time, and not just Brazil, but South America as a whole. I landed late at night in Fortaleza, and during the hour-long car ride south to Barra Nova, I could barely make out anything beyond the headlights. So when I woke up, jet-lagged, at 4:30 am the next morning and stepped out of my room, the impact was even stronger. Coming from European winter, I suddenly found myself in a town filled with cashew trees, a warm breeze drifting through, and a friendly pack of dogs strolling the sandy streets to greet me. It was the perfect start to what would become an epic kite adventure.

I joined the CORE team to help document the launch of the new Fusion 7 board and Pace kite, and to explore the coast of Ceará while putting the gear through its paces. While I was still adjusting to the heat and rhythm of life, Thomas Burblies and Julieta Pereyra were already organising all the camera and kite gear for the days ahead. Once Willow River Tonkin and Michelle Roberts arrived, the team was complete, and we began scouting nearby kite spots.

In those first sessions, the new Fusion 7 and Pace kite really impressed me. The setup felt incredibly dialled, the kite felt powerful, yet incredibly agile, while the board is just a real upwind weapon, without sacrificing an inch of performance. What surprised me most was how intuitive the gear felt from the moment I took it out of the bag. It just clicked. That gave us the freedom to fully focus on filming and exploring.



"THE SETUP FELT INCREDIBLY DIALLED, THE KITE FELT POWERFUL, YET INCREDIBLY AGILE"





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"THE WIND WAS JUST STRONG ENOUGH TO STAY LIT,  
AND THERE WASN'T A SINGLE OTHER RIDER IN SIGHT."

Right out of the gate, I realised that English wouldn't get me very far with the locals and that my version of "Spanish," a mix of French fragments from school and broken Italian-Latin hybrids, wasn't much help either. Luckily, Juli, being South American, stepped in and taught me a few of the most essential phrases. At least enough to order açai bowls, which turned out to be our most important source of energy for the weeks ahead. Learning even just a few phrases was helpful. People were even more welcoming, and

although I couldn't hold a proper conversation, there was always a way to connect, usually with gestures, a smile, or by sharing space on the beach. It made the experience feel more grounded and personal. Without knowing the language, you pay closer attention to everything else. The first few days revolved around timing the tides to hit perfect conditions in river mouths and temporary lagoons that formed during high tide. Although Barra Nova isn't a

famous kitesurfing destination, we found steady wind, glassy water, and plenty of open space, a combination that made every session count.

One session that really stood out was in a small river mouth just outside Barra Nova. The tide was pulling out, which created a natural upwind conveyor belt. The water was completely flat, the wind was just strong enough to stay lit, and there wasn't a single other rider in sight. We rode until the sky turned pink and the cameras' batteries ran out. It felt like a hidden gem, apart from the view, which was ours for the evening.





"IT WAS THE BRAZILIAN VIBE I'D  
ALWAYS HEARD ABOUT"

When the GKA World Tour arrived in Jericoacoara, we drove north to Preá, picking up Vrinda Hamal along the way. Our goal was to support the CORE riders competing at the event and document the action from the beach. It also gave me a chance to experience a very different side of Brazil. In Jericoacoara, life spills into every corner: people surfing, playing football on the beach, drinking cocktails in the sand. It was the Brazilian vibe I'd always heard about, something I hadn't really found yet in the smaller fishing and farming villages we'd passed through.

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"THIS PLACE FELT ALIVE AND BUZZING.  
WHAT STOOD OUT TO ME THE MOST WAS HOW  
EVERYTHING SEEMED TO HAPPEN OUTDOORS"



Compared to the quiet rhythm of the smaller towns, this place felt alive and buzzing. What stood out to me the most was how everything seemed to happen outdoors. Something we in Europe are not necessarily used to.

Our teammates, Sahar and Zara, shook up the Big Air categories with strong performances. While it was cool to see what the GKA tour had to offer, standing on a windy beach without kiting wasn't exactly what I came here for. So, I was happy when we packed the gear and got back on the road, continuing our search for new shooting locations.

After the competition, we stayed in Preá and took day trips further along the coast. It was a different kind of exploration. We'd follow the shoreline, driving through mangroves, occasionally getting stuck in dunes, or finding ourselves at river mouths with no bridge. But even those weren't dead ends. Local ferrymen offered passage on small handmade rafts powered by outboard motors. They didn't always look seaworthy, but they worked.

One of the wildest moments was driving along a narrow section of beach as the tide rushed in. With thick mangroves on one side and the ocean waves on the other side, the drive was more nerve-wrecking than I would have liked, and getting stuck could have ended in disaster. When we finally found a small path that guided us off the beach and offered an alternative route through the mangrove jungle, we happily took it. Between digging out stuck cars under the midday sun and blazing heat, that was definitely a moment that stuck with me.

Although I enjoyed the scenery, being thrown around in a 4x4 all day was exhausting. Still, it was worth it every time we left the busy beaches of Preá behind and got beyond the reach of the guided downwind groups.





The landscape opened up: palm plantations, rural houses, and wide, untouched coastlines. Occasionally, we'd get puzzled looks from locals who clearly weren't used to kitesurfers rolling through, but that just added to the experience.

Our final stop was Icaraizinho, where we were warmly hosted at Casa Zulu. Their beachside house was the perfect base for us. Kite gear stowed away, cameras charged, and each day, a new direction to explore. This region had the most varied and beautiful conditions of the whole trip. Along the coast, we found small, playful waves and stretches of tidal pools where the sandy beach met crystal blue water. What made Icaraizinho special was how effortlessly everything came together: the wind, the water and the landscapes. There was a session where we had playful waves on one side of a sandbar and flat water on the other. It felt like nature had shaped the perfect playground.

One lagoon in particular stood out. Cows grazed beside the water, palm trees all around, dunes separating the lake from the sea. It felt like a hidden oasis, and it also marked the end of my journey.

Brazil, for me, was a mix of adventure, discovery, and simplicity. We came for the gear, for the shoot, and for the sport, but what stayed with me was everything in between. The early mornings, the slow drives, the unplanned stops, the moments of connection. It's a place I hope to return to, not just for the kiting but for the rhythm it offers.

If someone's never been to Brazil, I'd say: be open. Don't over-plan; the best parts come when you let the road decide. Learn a few Portuguese basics, bring more sunscreen than you think you need, and never skip the açaí.

"BRAZIL, FOR ME, WAS A MIX OF ADVENTURE,  
DISCOVERY, AND SIMPLICITY."





WORDS ROU CHATER AND RALF GRÖSEL

## REDEFINING KITE DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

1,000 m<sup>2</sup> workshop in North Macedonia to one of kite and wing production's most innovative forces in just two years. From stitch-free ProWeld technology to digital printing, they now produce kites for Reedin, F-ONE, Harlem, and Juniqua, and with a new 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> facility coming soon, Ralf Grösel is set to push innovation even further. Find out more here!







## “GRÖSEL’S AIM WAS SIMPLE BUT BOLD: TO SET NEW STANDARDS FOR THE INDUSTRY.”

When Ralf Grösel first opened the doors to Brainchild Manufacturing in North Macedonia, it wasn’t just another kite and wing production facility. It was an ambitious experiment; a “laboratory-first” approach to pushing the technological limits of kitesurfing gear, while embedding sustainability into the very bones of the business.

Two years ago, Grösel was working out of a modest 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> space with just a handful of employees and one or two early prototypes. Today, Brainchild has grown to over 150 staff; soon to be 200; and is on the cusp of moving into a new 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> manufacturing facility. The split between the laboratory and a full-scale production site will, as Grösel puts it, “finally make my original vision possible; a place where we can innovate without the constraints of mass production”.

Once the mass production facility is complete at the start of 2026, Ralf will be free to use the Lab to focus on new materials, techniques and technologies for producing kites and wings. Ralf is looking forward to focusing his time solely on development, and he has a production manager, Svetlana, already in place to take over the production arm of Brainchild and ensure that standards are kept to Ralf’s exacting levels.

### FROM IDEA TO INDUSTRY INFLUENCE

When Brainchild launched, Grösel’s aim was simple but bold: to set new standards for the industry. That’s exactly what he believes has happened.



PHOTO ARIS AGIANOUKOS



"In the beginning, we were just prototyping," he recalls. "Now we're producing for four major brands: Reedin, F-ONE, Harlem, and Juniqua. Our goal has always been to lead the industry in both innovation and execution, and I think we've proven that."

The results are visible on beaches worldwide, particularly in the high-profile big air scene. Although Brainchild never set out to focus solely on that niche, the unique flight characteristics of their kites, light, agile, and incredibly responsive,

"OUR GOAL HAS  
ALWAYS BEEN  
TO LEAD THE  
INDUSTRY"

Demand the absolute best! Just like the pro riders do. Our PREMIUM SK99+ LINES have changed the market forever!

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**“WE FIXED IT, USUALLY WITHIN A DAY. NOW THE PROCESS IS SOLID.”**

have made them a natural fit for riders pushing the limits. In a discipline where margins are so small, from the height of the jumps to the chances of failure during an extreme move, riders need the ultimate equipment to power them to the top of the podium.

The Casati brothers often fight for the top step of that podium, a testament to how Brainchild has proven itself by providing

high-quality production and cutting-edge technologies to brands like Harlem. Who, in turn, combine these to make event-winning products for some of the best riders in the world. Brainchild isn't solely focused on big air, but it seemed a natural place to test their products and showcase them before focusing on other areas of the sport.

**PROWELD: STITCH-FREE STRENGTH**

One of the standout innovations is Brainchild's proprietary ProWeld seam technology. Traditional kites rely on stitched seams for their leading edge and struts. ProWeld bonds the segments of the leading edge without

stitching, producing a stiffer frame that improves performance while significantly reducing weight.

“For a designer, it's a massive step,” Grösel says. “I can create a better frame that is lighter and more cost-effective than something like Aluula, and still have it outperform in stiffness. In fact, our kites are often lighter than the Aluula competition.”

That journey hasn't been without hiccups. Transitioning from making a handful of kites and ramping up to thousands caused a few issues early on. To combat this, Ralf brought in a team from the car industry to raise quality control to new levels. “Murphy's Law applies,” he muses. “Everything that could go wrong, did. But we fixed it, usually within a day.



**“THE TEAM HERE IS REALLY WORKING HARD TO ENSURE THAT EVERY KITE THAT GETS TO THE CUSTOMERS IS PERFECT.”**

Now the process is solid.” We brought in experts from the automotive industry, who are used to working to exceedingly high standards. This influx of talent helped us take what was achievable at a prototype level and replicate it repeatedly during mass production while simultaneously minimising failures.”

These days, the production at Brainchild Laboratory is really polished, and Ralf is looking forward to moving to the new manufacturing facility. The processes and techniques they have developed in the Laboratory will ensure a seamless step to full-sized manufacturing. Every Brainchild product we have seen has impressed us with the build quality and finish. The team here is really working hard to ensure that every kite that gets to the customers is perfect.

#### DIGITAL PRINTING: DESIGN FREEDOM AND WEIGHT SAVINGS

Another signature Brainchild innovation is full digital printing directly onto white canopy cloth. Rather than cutting and stitching panels of pre-coloured fabric, which adds weight and waste, Brainchild prints designs directly onto the material.

“It’s lighter, it saves material, and it lets us create more dynamic graphics without compromising the canopy,” says Grösel. “And because we only buy white material, some of it in its natural, unbleached state, we also reduce the environmental impact at the source.”

PHOTO ISABELLE KAISER







PHOTO ARIS AGIANOUKOS

12 BRAINCHILD MANUFACTURING

## “DIGITAL PRINTING IS BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, BETTER FOR PRODUCTION AND KITE DESIGN”

This digital-first approach is also faster in production, helping keep costs down without cutting corners. It also gives Brainchild its unique look on the beaches. Whether it's a model from Reedin, F-ONE, Juniqua, or Harlem, you can instantly spot it's a Brainchild from a distance. Digital printing allows for much more freedom in terms of visual design. “We're now starting to see other brands copy this technique, which is fine, but it proves our concept even more”, Ralf says, “Digital printing is better for the environment, better for production and kite design, and gives a lighter and visually more exciting product to kitesurfers.”

### CHASING LIGHTNESS WITHOUT THE PRICE TAG

While competitors have leaned heavily on high-cost exotic laminates, Brainchild has taken a different path, achieving comparable weight and performance without inflating retail prices.

“We use the lightest canopy material available, which we developed with our suppliers, plus optimised panel layouts, leading-edge diameters, and bladder materials,” Grösel explains. “It's the sum of all these variables. Every little decision saves weight.”

A lighter kite is a better kite. In our sport, where the kite has to fly, it's important to make it light as it will fly in less wind and be more responsive in the air. This gives the rider a better feeling at the bar and a much more enjoyable and dynamic session on the water. Of course, we still need to make this sport accessible, and this is something Ralf is very passionate about.

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**HIGH** Stretch **LOW** Impact  
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Key pocket 2.0: keyloop with mini buckle  
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**“WE FIXED IT, USUALLY WITHIN A DAY. NOW THE PROCESS IS SOLID.”**

“There is no point in having the lightest gear if no one can afford it. Aluula is a great material, but its high cost at the source means the price tag is really high when it is built into a kite. Here at Brainchild, we reduce the weight of everything we do; the sum of all of this gives you a lighter kite without an exceedingly expensive base material like Aluula.”

That focus has led to kites like the Harlem Force and Reedin Whisper; lightwind

machines that combine ultra-low weight with agile turning and rock-solid stability. The weight savings are noticeable across all of the kites. However, every kite from the Brainchild factory is similar in weight to an Aluula equivalent, with a more affordable price tag.

**DESIGN PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS FOUR BRANDS**

Brainchild’s model isn’t just about manufacturing; it’s about collaborative design. Ralf personally designs or co-designs kites for each of their four partner brands, adapting to each brand’s unique DNA. After spending over 20 years designing some of

the most iconic kites in our industry for Duotone, there isn’t much he doesn’t know about kite design, but each brand has its own unique “style” when it comes to how its kites fly.

“An F-ONE kite flies differently from a Reedin kite, and Harlem has its own feel again,” he says. “The challenge is to improve the product without losing the identity that customers love.”

Recent projects have included the upcoming F-ONE Bandit, where Grösel stepped into the lead designer role for the first time. “I didn’t want to screw up such a legacy product,” he admits. “It took a lot of prototypes, but working closely with Raphael and his team, we found exactly the balance we were aiming for.”



**“BRAINCHILD WAS DESIGNED TO BE AS ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AS POSSIBLE. THE FACTORY RUNS ON SOLAR ENERGY”**

It's a challenge to work with all of these different brands and to be able to design kites that their loyal fans are going to love, but if there is one thing Ralf loves, it's a challenge. He's also learning a lot along the way, and getting input from other designers just makes the finished product even better for the customer. It's a holistic approach to kite design that he firmly believes benefits not only the brands he works with but also the customers who buy the products.

**SUSTAINABILITY BUILT-IN**

From day one, Brainchild was designed to be as environmentally responsible as possible. The factory runs on solar energy, with any surplus fed into the grid. Materials are sourced locally from Europe where possible, reducing transport emissions. Even the packaging is made from recycled material produced nearby.

“It's about making the smartest possible decisions,” Grösel says. “If you have the chance to reduce waste or energy use, you should. It's not utopia, but it's about doing the best you can.” Taking things further, the team also looked at particular machines that used high energy and have started to replace them with more efficient options, all while retaining the high-quality standards Brainchild is known for.

The new manufacturing facility will continue this approach, with an even larger solar array aiming to produce more energy than the factory consumes.

PHOTO ISABELLE KAISER





# BRAINCHILD

## PRODUCTION



PHOTO ARIS AGIANOUKOS

### “INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY, AND SMART DESIGN CAN COEXIST.”

It's not a destination, especially in our sport, where being eco-conscious is tricky, but the journey Brainchild is on in terms of sustainability is one of the most impressive in the industry and hopefully a beacon for the industry to follow.

#### A HEALTHY DOSE OF COMPETITION

When Brainchild first launched, it caused quite a stir in an industry that has always

been fairly closed behind the scenes. To have a new factory offering new technologies at a very eco-conscious level was a dilemma. Would brands carry on production as they always had, or would they adopt some of Ralf's ideas?

For Grösel, competition is a motivator, not a threat. “We set the standard, others copy; and that's fine,” he says. “It proves the idea is good, and it pushes me to set the next standard. That's how the sport grows.”

We're seeing more and more eco-focused offerings in the industry now, from wetsuits

to boards and everything in between. The goal has shifted, which can only be positive if the customers demand a better way for the environment, which the brands and factories must follow. Ralf is happy to lead that charge and see his ideas spread. It's a refreshing attitude that is needed in this world.

#### KITESURFING'S FUTURE

Despite industry challenges in recent years, from COVID highs to post-boom overstock, Grösel is bullish on the sport's future.

“Kitesurfing isn't going anywhere. It's safer, more accessible, and more fun than ever. As long as people leave the beach with a smile on their face, there's life in the market.” It's important to remember this, as a key part of an industry that is struggling, it's easy to get bogged down. Still, we have to remember, as Ralf points out, that kitesurfing is fun, people will always do it, for sure, and other sports will come along, but kitesurfing will always be around, and as long as we can keep it fun, safe and accessible for everyone, it will be here to stay.

From a handful of prototypes to an industry-shaping operation, Brainchild Manufacturing has proven that innovation, sustainability, and smart design can coexist. As the company prepares to move into its next phase, Grösel's mission remains unchanged: to keep pushing limits in the lab, on the water, and for the sport itself.

“I've been chasing performance my whole life,” he says with a grin. “The moment you achieve something, the challenge is to make it even better. That's what keeps me going.”



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RIDER CAPUCINE DELANNOY  
PHOTO VINCENT SCHAAP

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QUESTIONS JEN TYLER  
WORDS TIMON STAAL, LEAD WETSUIT DESIGNER

RIDER CAMILLE DELANNOY  
PHOTO ANTONIO HERRERA TRUJILLO

# TECH FOCUS

## MYSTIC EVOLVE WETSUIT

Meet Mystic's most planet-friendly wetsuit yet! In this Tech Focus feature, Timon Staal, Mystic's Lead Wetsuit Designer, takes us inside the Evolve, an innovative suit crafted with renewable, recycled, and responsibly sourced materials, all while delivering high-performance comfort and flexibility. Discover what makes the Evolve a true step forward. Read more here!





Hi Timon, great to meet you! Take us through the Evolve. What makes it Mystic's most eco-conscious wetsuit yet?

The Evolve is Mystic's most eco-conscious wetsuit to date, thanks to a brand-new laminate made entirely from lower-impact materials. It features a foam with the highest biobased content on the market, 90% in its base ingredient and 79% USDA-certified, and linings made from recycled and dope-dyed polyester yarns. It's a major step forward in combining sustainability with high-end performance.

Can you explain what "biobased materials" means in the context of this suit?

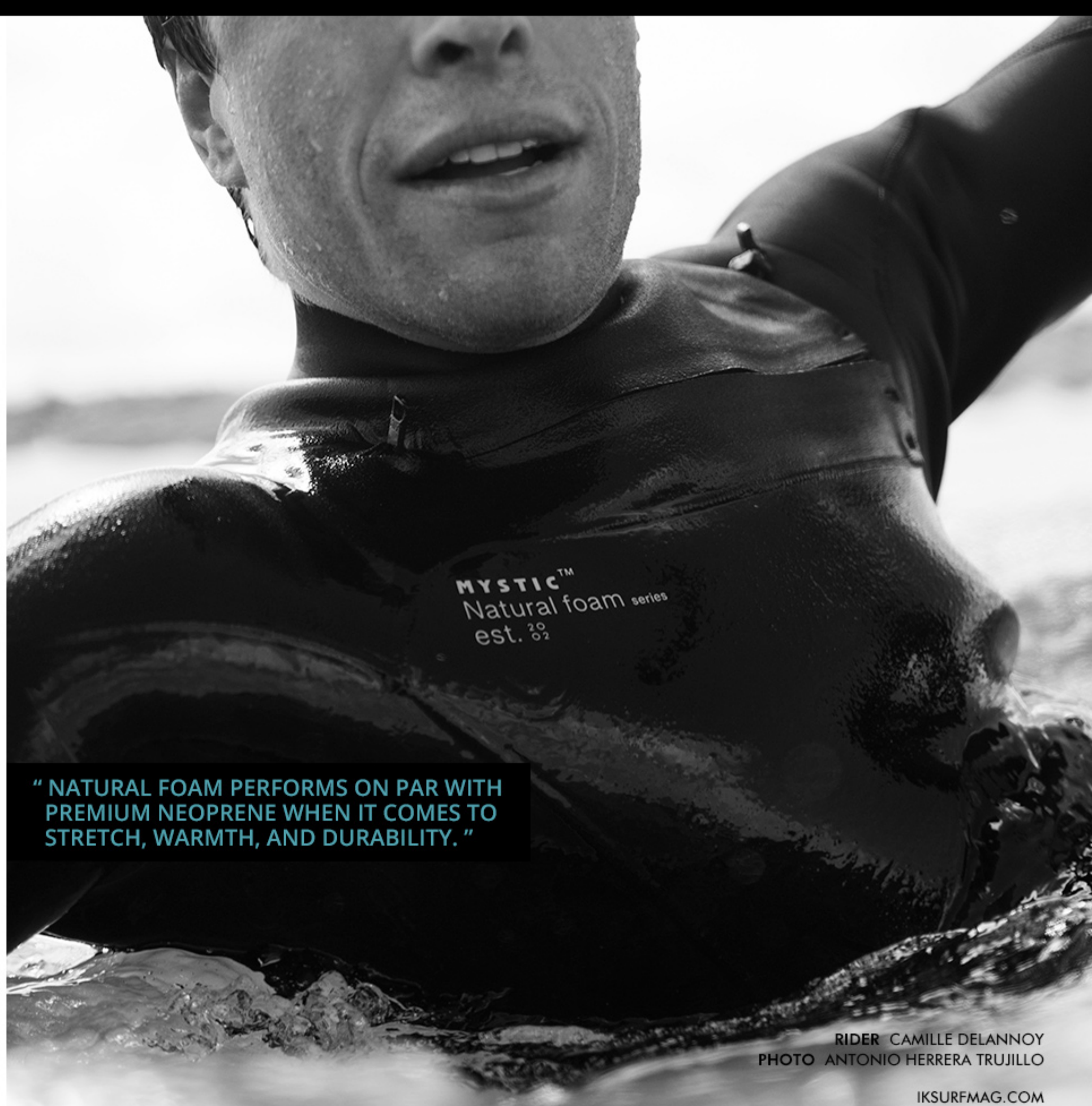
Biobased materials are made from renewable resources, ingredients that come from nature and can regenerate over time, like natural rubber or sugarcane. It's a shift away from conventional foams made from petroleum or limestone, which rely on non-renewable and often polluting extraction methods.

You've swapped fossil fuels for ingredients like oyster shells and sugarcane. How do these materials perform in the water?

Surprisingly well. Natural Foam performs on par with premium neoprene when it comes to stretch, warmth, and durability. It's flexible, soft, and lightweight. Offering a top-tier experience without relying on fossil fuels.

How does natural rubber compare to traditional neoprene in terms of stretch and durability?

Natural rubber foams used to fall short in stretch. That was our biggest concern. But with the Evolve,



**"NATURAL FOAM PERFORMS ON PAR WITH PREMIUM NEOPRENE WHEN IT COMES TO STRETCH, WARMTH, AND DURABILITY."**

RIDER CAMILLE DELANNOY  
PHOTO ANTONIO HERRERA TRUJILLO





**" PERFECT FOR TRAPPING WARMTH WHILE MAINTAINING A SOFT HAND FEEL. "**

we've developed a material that delivers impressive elasticity and bounce-back, matching high-performance neoprene while offering a lower impact on the planet.

**Was there any performance trade-off when going greener?**

Developing the new laminate came with challenges, especially bonding the foam and linings while keeping the stretch intact. High-performance sustainable materials are harder to source and often more expensive. But we're proud of where we landed: a suit that balances performance, sustainability, and accessibility without compromise.

**How does the Fox Fleece compare to other inner linings out there?**

Our Fox Fleece combines recycled polyester with dope-dyed yarns, which require less water and energy during production. After a softening treatment, it becomes incredibly flexible and comfortable, perfect for trapping warmth while maintaining a soft hand feel.

**What kind of zip system does the Evolve use, and why did you choose it?**

We use a front-zip design, which is the industry standard for a reason. It balances performance and comfort, works well across different watersports, and suits the majority of riders out there.

**What's one feature on the Evolve that people often overlook, but you think is a must-have?**

Our new Aquaflush 2.0 system. It's an industry first, a one-way drainage feature that allows water to exit the suit, but prevents any from flowing back in.



"IT MOVES WITH YOU, FEELS LIGHT IN THE WATER,  
AND FINALLY DELIVERS THE PERFORMANCE RIDERS  
EXPECT FROM A TOP-END SUIT."



It's subtle but makes a big difference in how comfortable the suit feels during and after a session.

**Is the suit quick to dry? That's always a big one for riders who get in multiple times a day...**

Yes, the dry time is consistent with our other suits. While the Evolve doesn't use specific quick-dry linings, its low-pile interior fabric absorbs minimal water,

helping it dry faster than you'd expect. No need to worry about getting into a soggy suit for your next session.

**What's your favourite thing about riding in the Evolve?**

For me, it's the stretch. That used to be the main downside of natural-ingredient foams; they just didn't

perform. But this one does. It moves with you, feels light in the water, and finally delivers the performance riders expect from a top-end suit.

**Amazing, thanks so much, Timon!**

Thanks, Jen!



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QUESTIONS JEN TYLER  
WORDS GARY SISKAR  
PHOTOS RIDE ENGINE

# TECH FOCUS

## RIDE ENGINE BOARDBAGS

This issue, we're diving into an unsung hero of every trip: the board bag! We caught up with Gary Siskar from Ride Engine to chat about their range, smart design details, and the travel hacks that keep your gear safe from the garage to the other side of the world.







**" LABELLING IT AS "GOLF GEAR"  
CAN OCCASIONALLY HELP YOU  
AVOID EXTRA BAGGAGE FEES. "**

For this issue, we're shining the spotlight on Ride Engine's board bags range. Gary, thanks for joining us! Which Ride Engine board bag is currently your best seller, and why do you think it stands out?

Thanks so much! I'm always stoked to give you and your readers an inside look at what's happening at Ride Engine. This time, it's all about our range of board bags! It's tough to pick a single "best seller" because we've dialled in the lineup to cover the essential needs of both travel and everyday protection. We offer two distinct ranges: the RE\_Serve Series, our premium wheeled travel bags designed to get your gear to and from your destination safely, and the Solar Shield Series, our go-to day bags that keep your board protected whether it's in the garage, on the way to the beach, or parked on the sand.

**What kind of gear setups do the Seafarer and Golf Coffin work best for?**

Both are excellent options for the travelling kiteboarder, lightweight, durable, and versatile. One advantage of the Seafarer is that it's specifically sized to fit many of the modern blunt-nose surfboard shapes that the strapless crew is charging on these days. As for the Golf Coffin... well, let's just say it still flies under the radar with some airlines. Labelling it as "golf gear" can occasionally help you avoid extra baggage fees. Just cross your fingers they don't unzip it and ask, "What kind of golf club is that?"

**Do you have a personal favourite in the range, and what makes it your go-to board bag for travelling?**

I do! I tend to gravitate toward the RE\_Serve Surf Travel Coffin. Most of the destinations on my hit list are surf-focused, but as we all know, there's always a



"SOMEWHERE IN THAT LONG, PAINFUL TREK, I PROMISED MYSELF WE'D FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE TRAVEL BOARD BAGS LIGHTER."

chance of getting skunked. That's why I like to throw a twin tip in the mix as well. The RE\_Serve Surf Coffin fits it all, my surfboard (sometimes two), a twin, kites, bars, and I always pack my wetsuits around the nose and tail for a bit of added padding and protection.

**How do you decide which features to include in each bag? Are you working off team rider feedback or your own travel nightmares?**

It's a mix of input from all over. Our team riders always have a say in what we're working on, and we pull a lot from our own travel experiences. On top of

that, we get some incredible suggestions from people who've bought the bags and reached out with great ideas, some of which have us wondering, "Why didn't we think of that?" As for travel nightmares, oh man, where do I even start? I've had more than I can count. But one that stands out was a trip to Fortaleza, Brazil. My connection in São Paulo was in a terminal that may as well have been in another zip code. I was hauling four board bags, sweating, swearing, and my hands were hurting, etc. Somewhere in that long, painful trek, I promised myself we'd figure out how to make travel board bags lighter.

**Can you tell us more about the padding systems you use, like the 10mm PE closed-cell foam, and how well it protects the gear?**

Of course, the first job of a board bag is to hold all your gear, but its most important job is to protect it. That protection comes down to a careful balance of padding, outer and inner materials, and, for travel bags, the wheel configuration. And all of it has to be considered with weight in mind. Starting with a lighter bag means less stress in packing all the necessary gear for your trip and potentially avoiding extra fees.



Closed-cell foam padding is nothing new; it's lightweight and does a solid job protecting your gear, which is why it's the backbone of our designs. All of our RE\_Serve wheeled travel bags feature 10mm of closed-cell foam padding around the entire perimeter, which is key when you consider how "gentle" some baggage handlers can be. For our Solar Shield day bags, we use 5mm padding, ideal for milder situations such as daily transport and storage. Additionally, our day bags offer enhanced protection from heat and sun exposure.

**How important is the reflective foil in the Day Strike bag, and how much of a difference does it make temperature-wise?**

A core function of the Solar Shield bags is to protect against UV and direct heat. Prolonged UV exposure can degrade surface materials and cause discolouration, often resulting in that yellowing effect you see over time. More critically, excessive heat from direct sunlight can lead to delamination, especially in boards with composite and vacuum bag construction. The Solar Shield bags are engineered with a light coloured exterior to minimise heat absorption and help regulate internal temperatures, offering both UV and thermal protection in addition to the padding.

**Are there any small but genius features hidden in these bags that are a real game-changer?**

One standout feature of our RE\_Serve Series is the internal load stabilisation straps, which can be adjusted fore and aft. It might sound like a minor detail, but it makes a significant difference when it comes to securing and compressing your gear inside the bag. This added adjustability keeps everything stable during transit, preventing unwanted shifting and helping protect your equipment.



"CLOSED-CELL FOAM PADDING IS NOTHING NEW; IT'S LIGHTWEIGHT AND DOES A SOLID JOB PROTECTING YOUR GEAR"





**"THE FUTURE LOOKS PROMISING, BUT FOR NOW, LET'S PACK OUR BAGS AND HEAD TO THE NEXT DESTINATION "**

It's one of those features that, once you've used it, you'll never want a travel bag without it.

**Why did you opt for marine-grade YKK zippers across the range? Do they really make a difference in salty or humid environments?**

Let's face it, we leave our bags on the beach, stuff them with soggy kites, wet wetsuits, harnesses, and more. Therefore, it makes sense to use corrosion-resistant zippers. That said, speaking as a seasoned traveller, even the best zippers need a little TLC. Salt buildup can cause them to stick, but a quick rinse with fresh water usually does the trick.

**What's your best tip for keeping gear safe during air travel?**

Use your gear, like kites, wetsuits, and harnesses, as extra protection inside your board bag. One trick I always recommend is to remove the harness spreader bar and use the harness to pad the nose or tail of your board(s). With the RE\_Serve series bags starting super light, you've got the weight allowance to throw in an extra wetsuit or two without worry.

**What new materials or design evolutions can we expect from Ride Engine in the next range?**

We're always pushing the next evolution of our

products forward. Material innovation has been part of our DNA since the creation of the first hard-shell carbon harness. We are constantly exploring exciting new materials, such as ultra-strong Dyneema blends and Aluula, a name familiar to kiteboarders, which is now making its way into the outdoor industry with backpacks and expedition gear. The future looks promising, but for now, let's pack our bags and head to the next destination and make the most of it!

**Awesome, Thanks, Gary!**

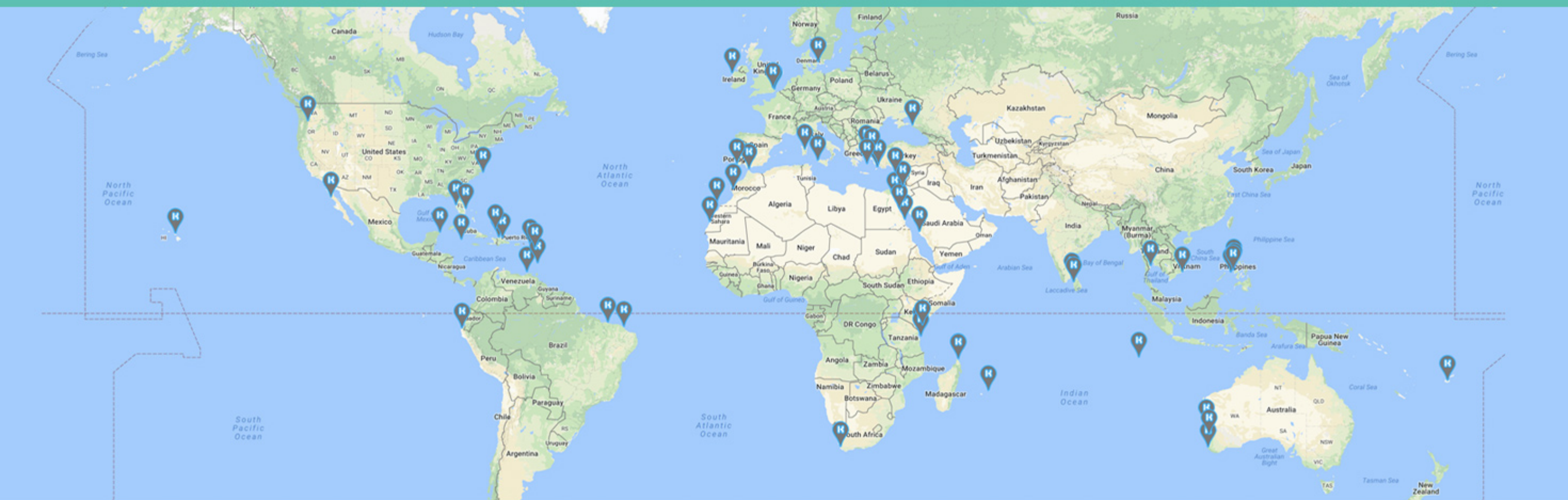
Thanks, Jen!





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QUESTIONS ROU CHATER  
WORDS ELEVEIGHT TEAM

# TECH FOCUS

## ELEVEIGHT RS V9, RS+ V3 AND RS PRO V2

In this Tech Focus, we dive into Eleveight's RS range – the RS V9, RS+ V3 and RS Pro V2. Known for their plug-and-play feel, the RS kites are all about versatility, letting riders freeride, boost, loop or chase waves with confidence. We break down what's new and how each version compares.

RIDER MIKA HACKENBERG  
PHOTO HELEN FISCHER







**"YOU CAN DIAL IT IN TO MAKE IT MORE PUNCHY FOR FREESTYLE, OR FASTER AND LIGHTER FOR WAVE SESSIONS."**

For this Tech Focus, we're diving into the RS V9, RS+ V3 and RS Pro V2. The RS has been a flagship kite for Eleveight for some time now. It's available in three versions, what makes this freeride kite so popular?

Honestly, it's the ease and accessibility. The RS has that plug-and-play feel that just works, no matter your level or the conditions. Most riders only have one kite setup, and they want something that can handle everything, whether it's a mellow freeride session, some freestyle tricks, a few waves, or sending it looping in big air. The RS really nails that balance. It's versatile, easy to handle, and fun to ride. That's why people keep coming back to it.

**The RS V9 is in its ninth iteration. What's changed on that for this year?**

We didn't mess with the fundamentals as it's still a 3-strut kite with a 5-point bridle. However, we did focus on improvements in two areas: materials and shape.

We added new X6 ripstop to the trailing edge and wingtips, which helps with strength, reduces material weight, and makes the load on the kite transfer more efficiently. We also added extra protection with triple closing seams to make the RS even tougher.

On the shape side, we wanted more low-end power. To achieve this, we tweaked the arc slightly to increase the projected area, which helps the kite generate more grunt in lighter wind. We also updated the bridle to improve the bar feel and improved the trim options to make each setup feel more different. That way, you can dial it in to make it more punchy for freestyle, or faster and lighter for wave sessions.

There are new materials for the RS+ V3, namely the new XTC Tex 2.0 material for the frame and the X6 ripstop for the trailing edge and other reinforced areas. Can you tell us a little bit about these materials and the advantages they bring?

Materials make a massive difference. It's not just about saving weight, and should be just as much about how the kite reacts when it's under pressure.

For the RS+ V3, we brought in XTC TEX 2.0, a material we've already used in our wing range with great results. The new version is lighter, has an improved coating, and is seriously strong. It's five times tougher than standard Dacron and super stiff, which lets us slim down the leading edge and struts without losing strength. At the same time, it reduces drag and makes the kite more responsive.



It also doesn't stretch much, which keeps the shape locked in during hard riding. The result is a kite that feels crisp and direct even when you're throwing loops, or in stronger wind.

- 15% overall kite/wing weight reduction
- 25% lighter than traditional Dacron and other normal inflatable material
- 5 times more tear resistance
- 50% less elongation compared to standard material
- 60% better recovery of material and a significant increase in form stability under load

We also added the X6 ripstop from our wings to the RS+'s trailing edge, which has 30 – 40% less elongation. The benefit is that it's strong, lightweight, and has reduced stretch, which all helps to keep the canopy stable. This reduces flutter, which means the canopy stays tense and the kite feels crisp and fresh for longer.

- 30 – 40% less elongation than other traditional ripstop materials
- 6 x 6 ripstop yarn with outstanding quality and durability
- High-temperature resin finish with UV filter
- Less stretch in all directions (0°, 90° & +/- 45°)
- Less elastic fatigue and increased longevity

**The RS Pro was a huge success last year. What's been updated for this new version?**

The RS Pro is our top high-performance kite, and the R&D team have gone to great lengths to optimise performance even further. We have utilised all available technology and pushed performance to its maximum, akin to a Formula One racing car.

**"THE RESULT IS A KITE THAT FEELS CRISP AND DIRECT EVEN WHEN YOU'RE THROWING LOOPS, OR IN STRONGER WIND."**

PHOTO SAMUEL CARDENAS







**"THE PRO RIDERS WANT THAT TIGHT, FAST LOOP FOR DOUBLES AND VARIATIONS, AND WE MADE SURE THEY'VE GOT IT."**

For V2, we made changes where they count. We added more X6 ripstop in high-stress areas like the wingtips and trailing edge, and we adjusted the panel layout to handle the extra tension this kite deals with.

We also tuned the bridle for better bar feedback and faster turning. The pro riders want that tight, fast loop for doubles and variations, and we made sure they've got it. It's all about making the kite feel quicker and more precise without losing control.

**As a kiter, there is a lot of choice these days. Where do you see these kites positioned in the market?**

Indeed, there are numerous choices, and in some cases, this can be somewhat misleading for the end consumer. However, the developments from recent years have given us the opportunity to fine-tune products for different target markets.

We aim to make it clear that the prime RS kite is designed for all riding levels. It offers the best price-to-performance ratio and is suitable for most riders. It's a true plug-and-play kite!

Our plus range is more targeted to ambitious or experienced riders and includes the RS+. It's punchier and stiffer but still has a great balance. It feels a bit more unleashed and dynamic than the RS, but that gives the rider the extra edge.

The RS Pro V2 is pure high-end. It's built for riders who are chasing serious big air, fast loops, and want the best tech available. Our pro range is all about state-of-the-art design and top performance.

**While all three kites use different constructions, are there major differences between the designs?**



We understand that the materials allow for thinner leading edges, with stiffer frames. Are there other differences in the shapes and profiles between the three?

Yes, quite a few actually. They all share the same DNA, being 3-strut, 5-point bridle kites, but they're built very differently, and we invested in each of the design processes.

Different materials mean we need to change the rest of the kite, starting with different panel cut layouts to ensure each has the best load transition. The Pro, for example, handles much higher loads because of how fast it turns and how aggressively it's ridden, so the whole panel structure needs to be fine-tuned for this purpose to make it tighter and more responsive.

Each version has a unique bridle setup too, to match the kite's behaviour. The different thicknesses of the leading edge change the flying performance, and the arc is slightly different, which means the bridle has to be adjusted.

We don't just change the fabric and call it a day as each RS model is built and tested separately to get the best out of its design.

**Performance-wise, how do they compare? Is there a stark difference between them all, or is it more nuanced?**

They're definitely not subtle differences! The RS V9 and RS Pro V2 feel completely different. The Pro is like a racing car that's super direct, super responsive, and designed to go fast and high. You need the skills to handle it, but if you've got them, it delivers in a big way.

The RS+ V3 is the halfway point. You can feel the extra speed and stiffness compared to the standard RS,

**" EACH VERSION HAS A UNIQUE BRIDLE SETUP TOO, TO MATCH THE KITE'S BEHAVIOUR. "**



RIDER: GIEL VLUGT  
PHOTO: SAMUEL CARDENAS





"IT'S MORE LIVELY, MORE RESPONSIVE, WITH FASTER LOOPS, BUT STILL MORE FORGIVING THAN THE PRO."

especially when you're boosting or wave riding. It's more lively, more responsive, with faster loops, but still more forgiving than the Pro.

**Given the performance and cost differences, what version would you recommend to most riders looking for a freeride kite to boost some air on?**

I'd go for the RS+ V3. It's not a huge step up in price from the standard RS, but you get that stiffer frame and better performance in the air. The hangtime is solid, and the kite feels smooth and reactive, which is perfect for boosting with confidence.

**These kites are billed as the ultimate freeride machines, but do the different versions lend themselves to other disciplines better than the other? For instance, is there a version that is better suited for waves, and another that is better suited for big air?**

While we design all three with versatile freeride performance in mind, each one has its sweet spot.

For sure, the RS Pro V2 is a big air weapon. It's stiff, fast, and thrives in rougher, overpowered conditions. That same stiffness makes it less ideal for waves,

though, as you want a bit more twist and more softness with drift for that.

If waves are your thing, the RS V9 is probably the best option. It's super balanced, handles well, and drifts nicely when you're riding down the line.

**For riders looking to learn to kiteloop, which is the best version?**

No doubt, given the costs and crashes, I would choose a prime RS! It features fast loops that are easy to control, and the power delivery is smooth enough for learning.





**" IT'S THE KITE THAT WILL LET YOU RIDE HARDER, LOOP FASTER, AND JUMP HIGHER. "**

You can even tweak the settings to make it loop more tightly with less pull, which is great when you're first getting the timing right.

And let's be honest, when you're learning loops, crashes are going to happen. The XT material in the RS is very durable with reinforced triple closing seams, so it'll take a beating and stay bulletproof!

**And for riders who are looking for the ultimate in big air and kite loop performance, which should they choose?**

It depends on your budget, of course, but if your goal is pushing big air and loops to the limit and your pockets allow it, then go straight for the RS Pro V2. It's the kite that will let you ride harder, loop faster, and jump higher. You'll need the skills to unlock its full potential, but if you've got them, you'll accelerate your skills to next-level performance.

**Great! Thank you!**

Thanks, Rou.



CRUISING ON THE FOILS IN THE HEBRIDES!  
PHOTO JAMES BOULDING

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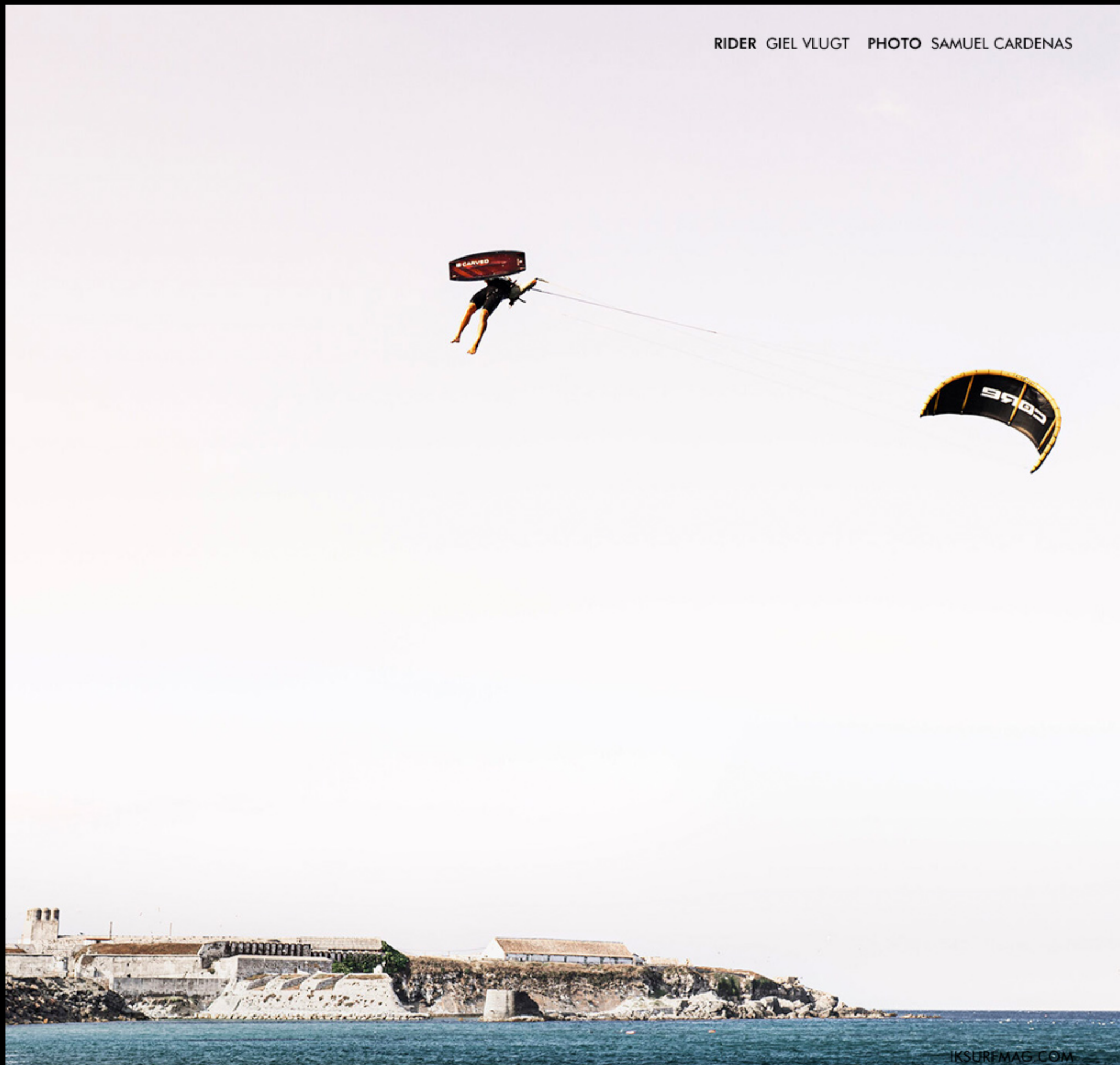
# TECH FOCUS

## CARVED IMPERATOR PRO

CARVED just dropped their latest masterpiece, the Emperor Pro and who better to talk us through it than Giel Vlugt?! We caught up with Giel to find out what makes the new design such a game-changer, how it stacks up against its predecessors, and why it's his weapon of choice when going full send.



RIDER GIEL VLUGT PHOTO SAMUEL CARDENAS



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**"THE CARVED EMPEROR HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE QUICKEST BOARD, ALLOWING FOR MASSIVE SPEEDS BEFORE POPPING."**

Hi Giel, great to have you here, and we can't wait to find out more about the CARVED Emperor Pro. What was your first impression when you stepped on board?

Hi Jen! I loved the board right off the bat! I loved the CARVED characteristics, but I was missing some grip and control. Thanks to new channels and plenty of new tricks, this board is an absolute big air weapon.

**You're known for pushing the limits! How does this board help you do that?**

The board allows you to have an incredibly aggressive pop while travelling at very high speeds.

To create the best take-off possible, you need the board to be fast but also aggressive. So to have the best of both worlds is every big air rider's dream!

**What's changed in this new design? It looks like there is a little more going on with the shape this year...**

I mean, this year, a lot has changed. From 3d printing, to reinforcing the tips, to adding channels, changing the film on the bottom of the board. It's CARVED in a brand new jacket. It holds on to everything you love about an emperor and just adds what you might be missing.

**How does the Emperor Pro compare to other boards you've used in the CARVED lineup? And what's the biggest difference you've noticed between them?**

The CARVED Emperor has always been the quickest board, allowing for massive speeds before popping. But some might have experienced the board as too fast and difficult to take off. Now that we add more grip and control, we are still looking to have a board that absolutely flies through the water. And you can trust me when I say they knocked it out of the park on this one.



**"THIS GIVES YOU SO MUCH MORE CONTROL WHILE THE BOARD SITS A LITTLE DEEPER IN THE WATER."**

The board is handcrafted with Cartan 2. Can you feel a difference in stiffness or responsiveness compared to other carbon boards?

Honestly, this year the board has changed in so many aspects that it's hard to link your feel directly to one specific change. Apart from the characteristics that we love the board for, everything else really changed. This gives you so much more control while the board sits a little deeper in the water. So, is it the Cartan 2, the completely renewed design, or the new 3D construction? I can't tell you. But I can tell you it rocks!

**What's your take on the stiffer profile compared to the Imperator 7?**

Because the board has that much more control, I really like the stiffness of the board. It's mainly the tip area where the stiffness has increased, allowing a more aggressive pop. And that gives you the extra rebound to make for the vertical and powerful take-offs.

**How well does the board track and hold an edge in choppy or gusty conditions?**

Because it sits deeper in the water and has more control while riding, you will see massive improvements here too. You'll feel comfortable on the board after just 2 minutes of riding.



Is this your go-to board for getting the biggest airs?

Easy answer, YES!

Who do you think this board is best suited for?

For any rider who wants to maximise every take-off and crush their jumping records!

If you had to describe this board in 3 words, what would those be?

Control, power, speed

Awesome, thanks Giel!

Thanks Jen



**" ANY RIDER WHO WANTS TO  
MAXIMISE EVERY TAKE-OFF AND  
CRUSH THEIR JUMPING RECORDS! "**



RIDER GIEL VLUGT  
PHOTO SAMUEL CARDENAS





QUESTIONS JEN TYLER

# INSIGHT

## JOHANNA MÜLLER

AND THE COAST SHE CALLS HOME

---

Johanna Müller grew up running barefoot through wadis, sailing with her dad, and soaking up the wild beauty of Oman's coastline. These days, she's riding the Khareef winds, running her own kite school, and inspiring others to follow their passion. We caught up with Jo to hear all about life in Oman, how she got into kiteboarding, and what it's like building a business by the beach in the Middle East!



Jo! Great to chat with you, and we can't wait to hear your exciting story! Can you tell us a bit about where you grew up and what life in Oman was like for you as a kid? What first brought your family to the Middle East?

Growing up in Oman in the '90s and early 2000s was a true adventure. My dad was posted to Oman in 1996. Although I was born a year later in Austria, my mum flew me back to Oman just two weeks after I was born, where we lived with my dad and two older brothers.

Oman was an incredible place to grow up; safe, relaxed, and full of natural beauty. It was such a wild and wonderful childhood. Our neighbourhood was just five minutes from the beach and surrounded by mountains and wadis (canyons), with trees and boulders to climb; the perfect natural playground for kids. We spent most of our childhood outdoors, barefoot, running or skateboarding through the neighbourhoods for hours.

It was also a true cultural melting pot. Every neighbour was from a different country, and we grew up surrounded by both locals and expats. Watching Muscat grow over the years was fascinating. Back then, there was just one shopping mall about an hour away, and a desert stretch that felt endless to get there. Things have changed immensely!

Birthday parties were held in wadis, on hidden beaches, or among the dunes. Our lives revolved around the outdoors. My dad, an avid Hobie Cat sailor who competes internationally, introduced me to sailing at a very young age. My parents also taught me to ski when I was three on our visits back to Austria.

"OMAN WAS AN INCREDIBLE PLACE TO GROW UP; SAFE, RELAXED, AND FULL OF NATURAL BEAUTY."



PHOTO AZZAN AL SINANI



" ITS STEADY WIND, BUTTER FLAT TURQUOISE WATER AND STUNNING WHITE SAND "

I looked up to my brothers immensely and wanted to do everything they did, from motocross to skateboarding. So, I quickly switched from skis to snowboards, skateboards, and wakeboards; basically, all the board sports. The next one to come along for all of us was kitesurfing.

**When and how did you first get introduced to kiteboarding?**

I was about 15 or 16 when my dad first suggested we try kiteboarding, after years of sailing and other sports. At the time, the sport was almost unheard of in Oman. However, we gave it a shot with barely any wind; we would fly 15 to 19 meter kites without much luck.

It wasn't until I was 20 and back in Oman visiting my parents that we gave it another go. My Dad and I

went on a camping trip, and that's when I met Paris, who was out kiteboarding and jumping 10 meters high. That was the first time I truly saw what kitesurfing could be; I was instantly convinced. I had to learn this sport. The rest is history; kiting became my whole focus from then onwards. I played football for 12 years, and then kitesurfing took over completely.

**What's the kiteboarding season like in Oman? When would you recommend us to visit?**

While we run the kitesurfing school all year round, the high season is from May to September in the mid-to-southern regions of the country- about five hours south of Muscat. The strongest months are June, July and August, during the Khareef (monsoon) season, when southeast trade winds travel up the coast of Oman,

offering excellent conditions between 25-35 knots. It's the best time to visit Oman for kitesurfing.

If you enjoy hiking and exploring, Oman's mountain ranges, such as Jebel Shams and Jebel Akhdar, or the lush green landscapes of Salalah, are also spectacular during this time of year.

**Can you share your top 3 favourite kite spots in the country?**

My top 3 favourite kite spots in the country would be Bar Al Hikman lagoon for its steady wind, butter flat turquoise water and stunning white sand, Monkey Bay on Masirah Island for the magic gust that allows fun lofty jumps (both summer spots) and Quriyat, a winter spot with kickers and 20-35 knots about an hour south of Muscat.



**" YOU CAN EXPECT TO BE WELCOMED INTO THEIR HOMES FOR A MEAL, COFFEE AND DATES AT ANY GIVEN TIME. "**

### **What kind of conditions can riders expect during the Khareef season?**

The summer kitesurfing season runs from May to September. Wind tends to be lighter (15–25 knots) early and late in the season, peaking at 25–35 knots or even up to 40–45 knots mid season. The wind is consistent and steady, though less dense than in colder regions; however, it can get chilly in the middle of the season. A wetsuit and warm clothing are recommended due to the wind chill.

Bar Al Hikman and Masirah Island's west coast offer ideal, butter-flat conditions, the perfect take-offs for jumping. If you prefer wave riding, the east coast of Masirah offers phenomenal waves, reaching up to 4 meters. If you drive the coastal road of Oman, around three hours south of Muscat, you can stop for a kite session in Asyiah, another hotspot for wave riding.

**How would you describe the local culture to someone who's never visited? Are there any local foods, traditions, or experiences you think every visitor should try or avoid?!**

The people of Oman are incredibly friendly, hospitable and kind. You can expect to be welcomed into their homes for a meal, coffee and dates at any given time. If you get stuck in the desert or your car breaks down, the locals will immediately stop to help you, often with a flask of karak chai for all.

In terms of local cuisine, their mishkak (meat kebabs) would be my go-to. They often have roadside food stalls serving fresh mishkak off the grill: lamb, beef, chicken, squid, or a favourite camel mishkak. Shuwa is a lovely traditional dish, slow-cooked lamb, wrapped in banana leaves and left underground for at least 24 hours.





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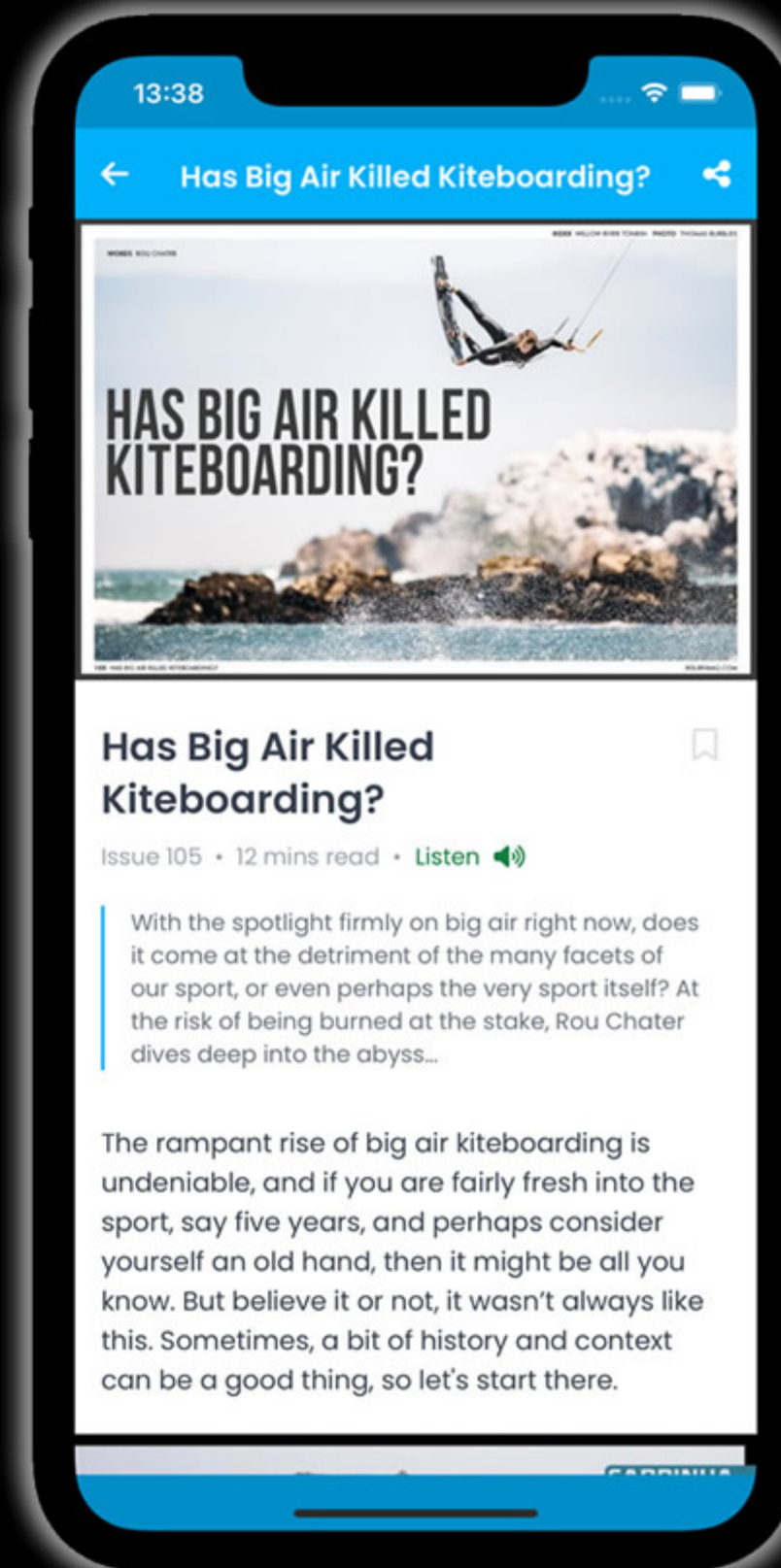
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# WOO RECORDS IN MADAGASCAR

WORDS JASON VAN DER SPUY PHOTOS ALEX MCGEE







" THIS TIME I LANDED SOMEWHERE SO SPECIAL I HAD TO SIT DOWN AND WRITE A MAGAZINE ARTICLE ABOUT IT. "



Madagascar is an island off Africa with beautiful beaches and blue water, basically the perfect place for holidaymakers. But what you probably do not think of is that Madagascar gets nonstop wind for 10 months of the year, with some days reaching up to 45 knots. It has an incredible variety of water conditions too: waves, flat spots, lagoons, reef breaks, and even the bluest water you will ever see in the Emerald Sea.

I am Jason. You might have seen me do some silly things on short lines with my kite, or maybe not. Either way, I spend most of my time travelling the world searching for the best kite spots, and this time I landed somewhere so special I had to sit down and write a magazine article about it. I made the journey with my girlfriend Alessa, my dad, and one of his close friends, which made the whole trip even more meaningful. If you have ever been curious about Madagascar and what it holds for kites, then spare five minutes of your time; you will not regret it.

#### GETTING THERE: EASIER THAN YOU THINK

The thought of travelling to Madagascar might seem daunting, but it is surprisingly simple. Three major airlines fly there, Emirates, Ethiopian Airlines, and Air France, so getting in is fairly straightforward. Once you land at the main airport, it is a short one-hour internal flight to Diego Suarez in Northern Madagascar. From there, it is just a 30-minute drive to Sakalava Bay, the kiting mecca of the region.





"THE BAY ITSELF IS MASSIVE, WITH WARM, CRYSTAL-BLUE WATER AND ENDLESS WHITECAPS ON THE HORIZON."



#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

We arrived at Sakalava Lodge in the evening and were immediately in awe of what was in front of us. Keep in mind, the road from the airport passes through the bustling city of Diego before turning into a gnarly dirt track, so we did not know what to expect. But when we arrived, it felt like a fairytale.

Our bungalows were tucked among beautiful pine trees, just steps from the beach. The sand stretched about 30 meters to the water's edge, where the kite spot began. The bay itself is massive, with warm, crystal-blue water and endless whitecaps on the horizon. It was paradise.

#### KITE, EAT, SLEEP, REPEAT

For the first few days, we did what any kiter would do: spent as much time on the water as humanly

possible. One of the absolute highlights of Sakalava Lodge is how easy and accessible it makes kiting. The bungalows are so close to the water that it is practically effortless. The staff take care of everything, setting up your gear and packing it away afterwards, so all you have to do is launch and ride. You are 10 meters from the water.

The lodge is all-inclusive, which adds even more to the experience. You wake up, have breakfast, go for a session, grab lunch, go for another session, riding both high tide and low tide spots, from waves to flatwater. Then it is dinner, and by 8 p.m., you are so blissfully exhausted you just crash, wake up, and do it all over again.

#### THE EMERALD SEA DOWNWINDER

Midway through the trip, we decided to explore a bit

further and made our way to the Emerald Sea. It is a downwinder from Sakalava Bay that takes about 45 minutes, and it was absolutely worth it.

We kited through the ocean with the clearest, bluest water I have ever seen; it was surreal. While we were flying through the turquoise sea, our support crew was out spearfishing. When we landed our kites, they took us to a nearby island where they cooked up a fresh fish barbecue. We had an epic lunch and then sailed back to the lodge in the evening. It was one of those perfect days that you wish you could relive over and over again.

#### BIG AIR, BIG RECORDS, AND BIGGER VIBES

The wind never let up. Every day, we were out there riding, jumping, and chasing personal bests. One day it blew at 45 knots, and I managed to



break the Madagascar WOO record with a 29+ meter jump, definitely a standout session.

But the best part was getting the local community hooked on WOO.

About halfway through the trip, we decided to organise a WOO competition with six of the most talented local Malagasy riders. As soon as we announced it, the stoke levels skyrocketed. There was so much interest from kitesurfers all around the bay; everyone wanted to take part, but for this first event, we had to limit it to just six competitors.

We set a time and got down to the spot. The energy was electric. A massive crowd gathered to watch, and when the riders hit the water, it was game on. They had a timed window to compete head-to-head, with all six of them out there at once, trying to post the highest jump.

And honestly, the talent in Madagascar blew us away. Not only were they going big with WOO heights, but they were also throwing down technical tricks like massive kite loop board-offs. The level of riding, combined with the raw passion for the sport, was genuinely next level.

When we announced the winners, the vibe was unreal - so much hype and stoke. The top three riders stood on the podium, each receiving cash prizes and WOO devices. But it did not end there. After the prize giving, everyone got back on the water for an impromptu expression session. The two most stylish riders from that round were also rewarded with more WOO devices.

**"THE WIND NEVER LET UP.  
EVERY DAY, WE WERE OUT  
THERE RIDING, JUMPING, AND  
CHASING PERSONAL BESTS."**





" IT IS RELAXED AND LAID-BACK, WITH EVERYTHING TAKEN CARE OF, SO YOU CAN FOCUS ON THE WIND, WATER, AND THE RIDE. "



In the end, nearly every rider who competed walked away with something because they were all absolutely sending it. It turned into one of the most memorable days of the entire trip, and we are already planning to come back next year for a bigger and better version, opening it up to even more of the local shredders.

#### SPECIAL MENTIONS

This trip would not have been half as memorable without the incredible people behind the scenes at Sakalava Lodge. Massive thanks to Greg, whose hospitality, energy, and love for the sport helped make everything run seamlessly, and to Alex, who went above and beyond every day to make sure we were having the best time possible, both on and off the water.

And of course, a huge shoutout to the entire team and crew at Sakalava Lodge. From the staff helping with gear setup, to the kitchen team serving up amazing meals, to the locals cheering on the beach, every single person played a part in creating an unforgettable experience. You made us feel right at home.

#### THE SPIRIT OF SAKALAVA

What really makes Madagascar magical, beyond the wind, water, and landscapes, is the people. Sakalava Bay is for kiteboarding. It is the heartbeat of the whole place. You feel deeply connected to the sport and the community. It is relaxed and laid-back, with everything taken care of, so you can focus on the wind, water, and the ride.

For anyone dreaming of a kite trip that is off the beaten path, with steady wind, world-class conditions, and a vibe like no other, Madagascar is waiting.



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# TECHNIQUE

WORDS & PHOTOS CHRISTIAN & KARINE

Whether you're enjoying a windy summer or a stormy winter, focus on the positive. We sincerely hope you're ready for some more homework. We're going to jump straight in with an absolute bomb of a fundamental that once mastered will open the door to an endless list of moves: the Jump Transition. You can't keep going straight forever, so it makes perfect logical sense to put some time and effort into this delightful little number. Then it's time to revisit the spice cupboard and get sprinkling on that front roll. If you're feeling confident, it's high time to take control during your rotation and grab the tail to add some style points and a steezy feel!

Enjoy:)

C&K

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KARINE AND CHRISTIAN



## 1 / HOW TO JUMP TRANSITION



CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE

## 2 / HOW TO FRONT ROLL TAIL GRAB



CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



## HOW TO JUMP TRANSITION ►

### - Cabrinha Switchblade 8m - Cabrinha XO 136

There are a lot of moves in kiting, but the jump transition, or air gybe as it used to be known, stands out as both an absolute fundamental and a genuine pleasure to perform and observe. Those of you who frequent these pages will know that we love a transition. As kilters, we change direction a lot, so why not make the most of it? This is the first building block to a lorry load of stylish ways to turn around. It also feels so good and looks utterly awesome. If you fancy getting the Dr Smooth tag, not much beats just freezing mid-flight, maybe throwing in a cheeky grab, whilst hanging in the wind before casually changing direction and powering off back out to sea. Once fully mastered, even the biggest air can be a sublime means of turning, and any obstacle a potential plant. The possibilities are endless.

What are the prerequisites for a jump transition? You guessed it, a jump and a slide turn. If you're happy changing direction and can already get daylight under your board, you're ready.

We'll also add that, as you'll be changing direction and in any transition or jump, it is vital to look around and check that you have room, and don't risk diving your kite into anyone else!

There are a few points to contemplate and understand about changing direction in the air before we get into the nuts and bolts of the jump transition.



#### 1. Momentum

To change direction, you need to slow down to eliminate some of your forward momentum. Otherwise, you'll pendulum under the kite and find it very hard to get any power to go back the other way. This doesn't mean grinding to a halt, as you still need to be able to get off the water, so it's a measured fine line. So how should you slow down? The answer is to head more upwind. This will only be possible with a combination of a good edge and easing the bar out. As much as we don't like to say what not to do, we will here. You don't drift the kite up to slow down. If you do you can't edge, you can't go upwind and you can't jump!

#### 2. Kite Position

To float, hang, and generate power to pull yourself out of your transition, you need to maintain line tension,

tension, which is relative to your kite position. If you can keep your kite near 12 o'clock throughout the move, you'll find it so much easier. This is the trickiest part of the jump transition, and as such, we'll focus on various points from the approach to the final dive as we go through it. Hopefully this will make it simpler to have your kite where you want it every time.

OK then, without further ado, let's get into it...

#### APPROACH PIC A

You need line tension to get airborne, and nothing beats a good solid edge heading upwind. This way, you can find your sweet spot, get comfortable, and get ready. Ideally, you should be comfortably powered, as this will make your upcoming take-off easier. It can help to have your hands about midway in on each side of the bar. This way, you'll still have plenty of leverage for the final dive.





B

Check that the coast is clear in all directions and park your kite at either 1 or 11 o'clock. Look upwind and ease the bar out slightly to kill a bit of speed. It's crucial not to raise it any higher, as this will make it difficult to achieve lift without sending the kite behind 12. You can see that Karine is on a good edge upwind, weight centred so that lots of her edge is in the water, her bum is low, and her legs are resisting.

#### SEND PIC B

You need to jump, so your kite still needs to move enough to generate power and lift. Hence, it has to start at 11 or 1. You want your kite to stop around 12 o'clock. It doesn't matter if it goes slightly behind, but once it's on its way to 1, you'll have a tough time getting a smooth landing. The duration and intensity of your sending will depend on your power. The more



C

you have, the gentler you can be. Here, Karine is just powered, but you can see that her send is not too aggressive, but still enough to get the kite moving. As she sends, she keeps looking forward, and she will feather the bar out a little to stay strong against her edge.

#### KICK OFF PIC C

Your take-off is a crucial moment in the jump transition. As alluded to, you don't want your kite to go too far past 12. This means two things. Firstly, you need to level the bar as soon as you think the kite is above you, to stop it moving any further. Secondly, you need to anticipate this moment so that you can stamp yourself up off the water as soon as the kite is above you. If you wait for the pull to lift you, it'll be a tad too late and the kite will move too far. The kick is



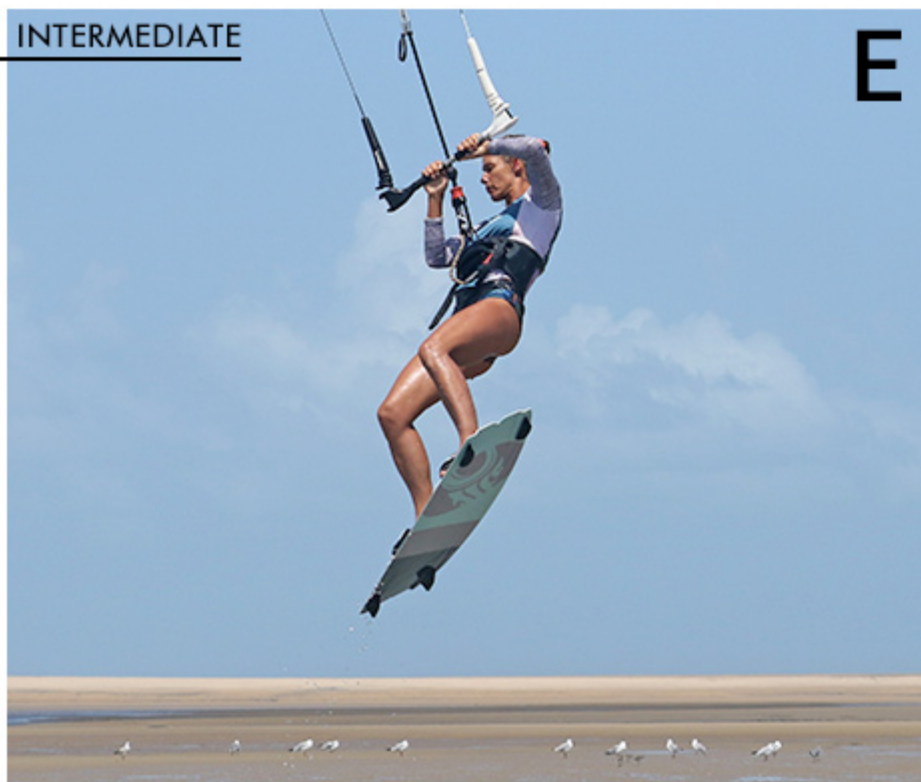
D

all about extending your legs against your edge, and this is only possible if you don't pull the bar in. Once you've extended, then you can pull for some extra lift. Your order of play is - level, stamp, pull. The kick also acts as a break, by suddenly edging even harder, it'll knock a bit more momentum off. In the picture, you can see that Karine has levelled her bar to stop the kite at 12, and she's kicking herself up by extending her legs against her edge. She hasn't yet pulled her bar in. If she pulls, first her take-off will be less vertical, and she might well pendulum under the kite.

#### THE BIG CHILL PIC D

Once you're on the way up, you can pull the bar in, making sure to keep it level. This way, it will encourage the kite to stay above you. The most crucial point here is to keep looking forward, as if you were jumping.





This means resisting every cell in your body, which will be crying out for you to turn and look the other way, how you intend to land. Ignore the noise, just level and look. You won't have stopped moving that way anyway, so it'll also help you keep balanced. Bring your knees up and enjoy the moment. You can see that Karine has her bar level, and she is still very much looking forward.

#### DROP AND TURN PIC E

Your cue to turn your head is when you start to descend. However, before proceeding, we should consider where you will look. You want to be looking downwind, as that's where you want to go. You aim to land downwind and then carve back up onto your edge. Once again, resist the temptation to turn your head and look back the other way. You should move your head a few degrees from looking forward to spotting your landing. In the photo, Karine has started



to drop, and she's now focused on where she'll land; she hasn't turned to look back in the other direction. This means the kite stays above her rather than drift across to the "new" side of the window (in this case towards and past 1).

#### DIVE CAPTAIN PIC F

Now you know where you'll land, you can give it the beans on the bar. You want to dive your kite hard, as you'll still have some momentum taking you the wrong way. With your kite high, you can dive it downwind, towards the water to pull you in that direction. If you're gentle, the kite will drift down the side of the window and you'll get diddly squat! To dive, concentrate on a decent pull and push, using both hands. Looking downwind should keep your shoulders level and make a decent dive possible. If you look back the other way, you'll drop your new front shoulder and end up steering the bus,



twisting the bar without actually asking the kite to do anything.

#### TWIST OFF PIC G

The final piece of the jigsaw puzzle, landing with the board pointing slightly off the wind. If you do this, you'll keep moving even if the kite isn't quite right. If you don't, you'll land on an edge which will put the brakes on and stop you dead in your tracks. Drop your legs underneath you and twist your hips, pushing your front foot downwind. This way, you can land tail first, over the board and follow the pull of the kite. Once you do, you can then carve back up onto your edge, pull the kite up from its dive and ride off into the sunset with a big smirk on your boat race:) Karine has given her bar a hefty dive, and she's still looking downwind. She's dropped her legs and is twisting the board off the wind: the result was a smooth and flowing touchdown.





## TOP TIPS

Visualise the jump transition as a jump that you then decide to land as a transition at the last minute. Avoid approaching it as an aerial slide turn. You need to edge all the way to take off; you don't want to be carving up and sliding your back foot out.

Start small. This will give you a sense of how much or how little speed you need. If you can at least get a vertical little jump and land on your derriere, you can then work on the landing.

Take a look at the sequence and the video to see how they all come together for a smooth transition.

## COMMON PROBLEMS

If you're pendulum-ing out from under the kite, you're going too fast; slow down. Don't forget the stamp acts like a break, too.

If you're diving hard for landing but you don't get any power, the kite has crept behind you.

If the kite creeps across to the other side of the window, there's a big chance that you're turning too early and turning too far.

If you land on an edge, you've turned to look the other way. You should only turn to look downwind.

## KEYSTONES

1. Edge and ease bar to knock off some speed
2. Send kite from 1 or 11 to just past 12
3. Level, Stamp, Pull
4. Big Chill -  
Look Forward
5. Turn to look Downwind,  
Dive Hard





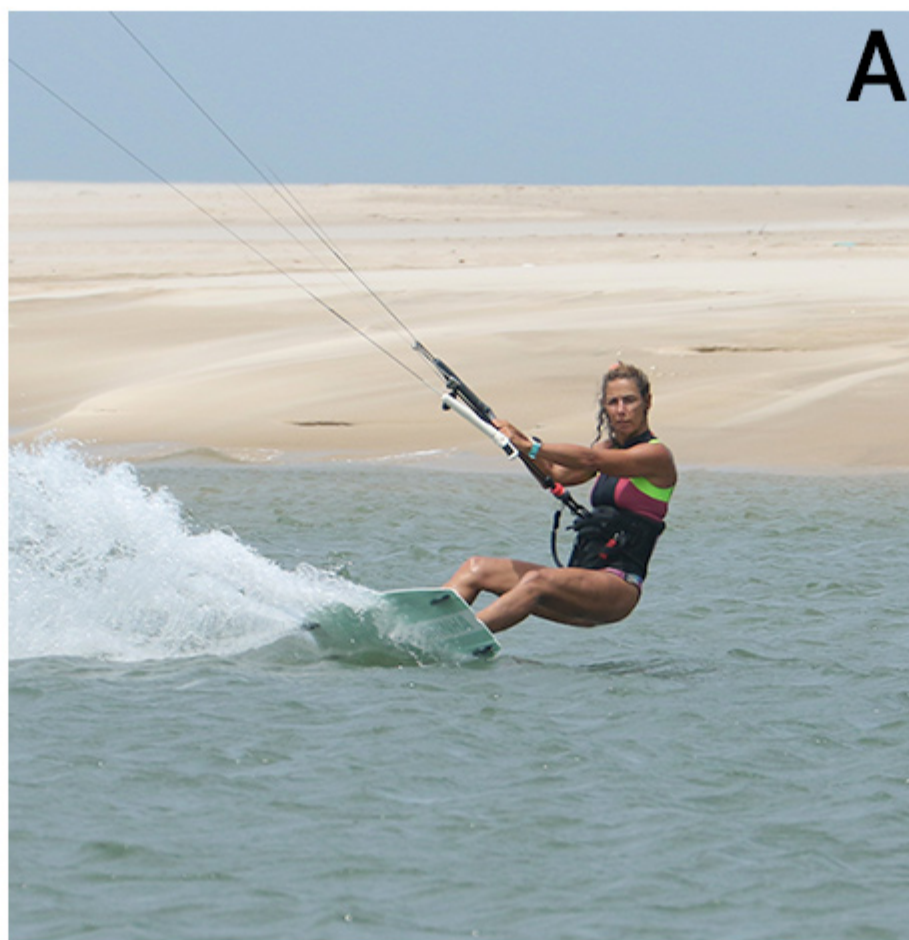
## HOW TO FRONT ROLL TAIL GRAB ►

- Cabrinha Moto X 8m - Cabrinha XO 133

Continuing the “you can’t have one without the other” theme, which we introduced along with the front roll on the hallowed pages of IKSURFMAG issue 107. You can’t have a grabbed back without at the very least being tempted by the grabbed front now, can you? We always like to start with a bit of good news, and today, the positive is that a tail grab during a front roll is surprisingly intuitive. The very action of rotating brings the board up naturally towards you. This means that if you can bully yourself, read feel comfortable enough, to let go with your rear hand while throwing a front roll, the resulting grab, and please excuse the pun, should be well within your reach!

Realistically speaking, if you can bang out a few front rolls pretty consistently, then you’re ready to give this a go, regardless of whether the grabbed back is actually in the bag or not. That said, we’d strongly suggest that this is not your first grab, as if you can already fashion a straight jump with a tail grab, you’ll have some muscle memory working in your favour. To be crystal clear, you’re aiming to grab around the fin area, on the heel side edge of your board with your rear hand! Final thought. To give yourself time and float, you’ll be aiming to fly the kite gently forward from take off in preference to leaving it behind you until you start to descend.

Right, let’s dive into the details...



### APPROACH PIC A

Approach just like you would for a standard front roll. Good upwind edge, a bit of speed so that the board is lively, kite at either 11 or 1 o’clock, hands centred on the bar, sweet spot trimmed to centre of throw so that you’re comfortable, bum low, legs resisting, weight centred, back leg flexed but solid, deep water and lots of space. Looking at Karine, she’s edging strongly upwind, kite at 11, bum low and hands centred. She’s comfortable and ready.

### SEND PIC B

You still need to give the bar the same amount of input as you would for a regular front. If you change what you’re doing, it’ll confuse what follows.



However, you don’t want to be going for your biggest ever! Steer the bar back to move your kite to about 12:30 and feather it out as the kite pulls so that you can keep your upwind line. This should help with a more vertical take-off. Karine has steered the kite up, feathering the bar out to follow the sweet spot so that she can hold her edge. She keeps her back leg flexed but solid and drops her bum as her kite rises.

### TAKE OFF PIC C

We’ve said it in all our rotations, your first job, just before take-off, is to level the bar and stop the kite going any further back. Remember that levelling the bar and pulling the bar are two different steps. Once you’ve levelled the bar, you can initiate your front roll-take off.





C

Kick off with your back leg against your edge, and then give yourself a hand by pulling the bar in. You can see that Karine's bar is level and she's ready to kick off with her back foot, tucking her chin in to initiate her rotation. So far, so good!

#### TURN & RELEASE PIC D

OK, this is where we're mixing the old with the new. As you kick off, you turn your head and shoulders to help with the rotation. However, now that you're frothing to add a grab, you need to prepare for it. Release your back hand as you start to rotate.



D

It's also a good idea to give the kite a little steer forward. By the very nature of a front roll, the kite can fly back further than intended, and by tweaking it forward, you'll be guaranteed some hang time for your grab as the kite comes back up. You can see that as soon as she leaves the water, Karine has already let go of the bar in preparation, and she's steering her kite forward to bring it back up towards 12 for support.

#### KNEE UP PIC E

As your hand drops off the bar, bring your rear knee up. This movement does go very well with the rotation



E

as long as you don't rush. Your front rotation will start quickly, but end slowly, so you have time. The important thing here is to keep your head perpendicular to your shoulders so that you don't turn away from your board. You can see that Karine's head, shoulders, hips and board are all aligned, and this is what will make the grab less challenging. It's also worth noting that Karine is steering her kite forward. This is relative to how hard and how far the kite went back. However, if you keep your bar on the sweet spot, the kite should start to drift up to 12 slowly.





F

## GRAB IT PIC F

Eyes on the prize. We always say it, focusing on where you want to grab will make it considerably easier. As with any grab, the effort should be in bringing the board up towards you by lifting your knees, rather than reaching down for it. If you look at Karine's board, it's in front of her, not kicked up behind her. Looking towards the rear fin, Karine lifts her knees and grabs the board, whilst keeping her bar on the sweet spot. At this stage, you'll likely be facing upwind, and you should feel support from your kite as it moves slowly forwards.



G

## HOLD AND RELAX PIC G

Once you've got the grab, you can hold it for as long as you feel comfortable. Turn your head to look around in the direction in which you're travelling to give you an idea of where and when you'll land. Now, if you steered your kite forward to guarantee support, as Karine did, you can relax the tension on the lines by letting your front hand out a touch. This will slow the kite's movement. Karine holds her grab as she comes around and starts to drop. She's let the bar out a bit to slow the kite down



H

and has turned her attention to where she'll touch down.

## RELEASE &amp; DIVE PIC H

Once you start to drop, you'll want power to help you land into the wind. Release your grab, pull the bar into the sweet spot and dive your kite while keeping your eyes on the landing strip. You can replace your rear hand onto the bar before diving. Karine releases her grab, pulls her bar back down to the sweet spot and dives her kite.





## TOUCH DOWN PIC 1

With both hands back on the bar and the kite diving, you can twist your hips and aim your board downwind for a smooth tail-first landing. Here Karine lands slightly tail first, over her board and running downwind. Once you're balanced and comfy, you can carve back up onto your edge, regain tension, claim it and eventually untwist your lines:)

## TOP TIPS

The best drill for this move is to keep both hands on the bar and concentrate on bringing your rear knee up as you rotate. This will get you well acquainted with the movement and put the board in a position where it's just gagging to be grabbed.

At first, don't feel like you have to get a firm grip on your grab; a cheeky tickle is a good starting point. OK, have a look at the sequence for a step-by-step



guide and check out the video for a real-time run-through.

## COMMON PROBLEMS

If you're struggling to reach the grab, it's generally because you haven't lifted your board enough. This can be a flexibility issue, but there is a solution. Concentrate on bringing your back knee up more and keeping the front leg less flexed. This will tilt the tail up closer to you.

If you feel unsupported and are struggling to hold on. This is the result of the kite being too far behind you. If you don't level before take-off, this will happen. If you pull before kicking, this can happen. And surprisingly, if you kick your heels up to get the grab and lead too much with your head, it'll also happen. Don't rush the grab, and steer your kite forward as you take off.

If, however, you have the uncomfortable feeling of accelerating as you rotate and the kite pulling you forward, this is because the kite is too far in front of you. You have two choices: send it a bit further back before take-off, or ease off your front hand as you rotate.

## KEYSTONES

1. Send Level Kick Pull
2. Rotate, tweak kite forward and drop rear hand
3. Lift the rear knee and look for grab
4. Turn the head and ease the bar out
5. Look downwind and dive out





# TRIED & TESTED

This summer, IKSURFMAG's Jen Tyler put the Women's Mystic Stealth Harness to the test. Known for its lightweight design, sleek fit, and women's-specific shaping, the latest Stealth has had a serious upgrade. Curious to know how it held up on and off the water? Find out here!

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STIFFNESS

CARBON  
COMPOSITE

STEALTH WOMEN

MYSTIC

HARDSHELL BCF SERIES

WORDS & PHOTOS  
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BRAND MYSTIC

MODEL STEALTH WOMEN'S HARNESS

YEAR 2025

"IT MOVES WITH YOU, NOT AGAINST YOU, WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT YOU WANT IN A HARNESS."



#### AT A GLANCE

The Mystic Stealth Women's Harness made a big impression the second I opened the box. It looks sleek, feels incredibly lightweight, and you can tell straight away that Mystic has been refining and improving every detail. At just 1018 g (2.24 lbs), this is the lightest Stealth yet, and the 3D-shaped padding gives it a smooth, minimal grip that feels comfortable right away. What stood out to me is the reduced side height; it's such a small change, but it makes a big difference in terms of freedom of movement. The slimmer Battlebelt also feels less bulky, which I noticed even before hitting the water.

It comes in three colourways: Sand, Teal, and Black. I went for the Black in size S (I usually wear an XS, but the S also fit perfectly). I paired it with the Stealth Kite Gen 3 spreader bar, Mystic's thinnest and most advanced bar so far. It locks in easily, feels solid, and the design takes the pressure off in all the right spots.

#### ON THE WATER

Once I got on the water, the comfort was honestly next level. The harness stayed exactly where it should, thanks to the non-water-absorbing Flexagon Drytech;

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The IKSURFMAG website is crammed with the latest news and best videos from the kitesurfing industry. With so much to see, where do you even start?!

These are the 4 most popular videos that have been viewed on the site as voted for by you with your thumbs up likes over the last 2 months! Check out the full list [HERE](#), and if you see a video you like on the site, give it the thumbs up. It might just help to push it onto this page!

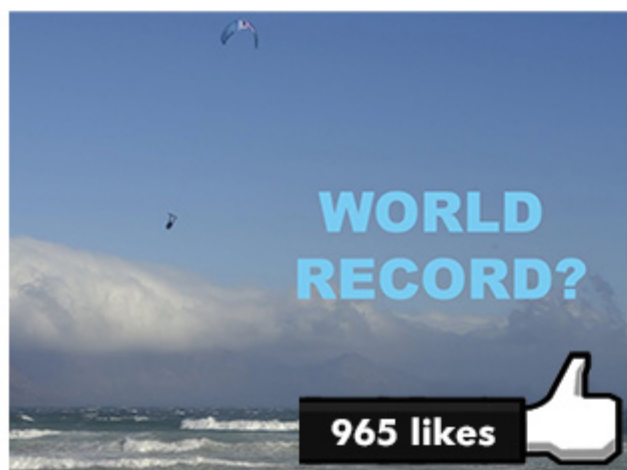
Put the popcorn on, it's Movie Night!

# MOVIE NIGHT

#1

## GOING FOR THE HEIGHT WORLD RECORD

Aaron Hadlow heads to Macassar Beach chasing the world height record! Armed with Harlem's new PEAK and a monster forecast, he's going all in for a shot at history. Will he break it?



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2

## I RODE A WAKEBOARD AT JAWS (SERIOUSLY)

Kai Lenny ditches the norm and takes a wakeboard to Jaws! What starts as a wild idea turns into a jaw-dropping session at one of the world's gnarliest waves. You've never seen this before.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#3

## IS YOUR HARNESS SAFE?

Get High with Mike gets technical and a little fired up. Are harnesses really safe enough? He exposes the gear failures and calls for stronger standards. Riders, you'll want to watch this one!



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#4

## I LOOPED A 15M KITE: THE AIR REDEFINES LIMITS

Ben Beholz sends it hard with CORE's brand-new Air: looping a 15m kite like it's nothing! This session pushes boundaries and shows just how far gear (and guts) have come.



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