

ksurf

ISSUE **114**

SPRING 26

WELCOME TO IKSURFMAG

Rou opens this issue with a bold editorial on why kiteboarding must remain bigger than any single discipline and why embracing every riding style keeps the sport moving forward. We sit down with Lewis Crathern to discuss his move to Harlem and life beyond the podium, and catch up with Gary Siskar as he

reflects on decades that have shaped the sport. Finn Flügel talks big air and progression, while Steven Akkersdijk shares his shift from competitor to coach. We round it out with fresh gear tests, technique insights and the latest films to fuel your stoke. Dive in.

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114 SPRING 2026

THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE KITESURF MAGAZINE

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

ksurf

114
SPRING 26



BEYOND BIG AIR

LEWIS CRATHERN / ANYWHERE ANYTIME / GARY SISKAR
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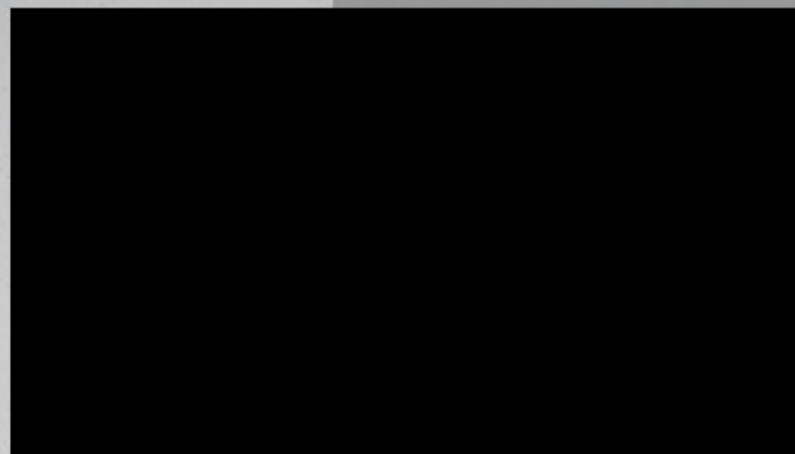
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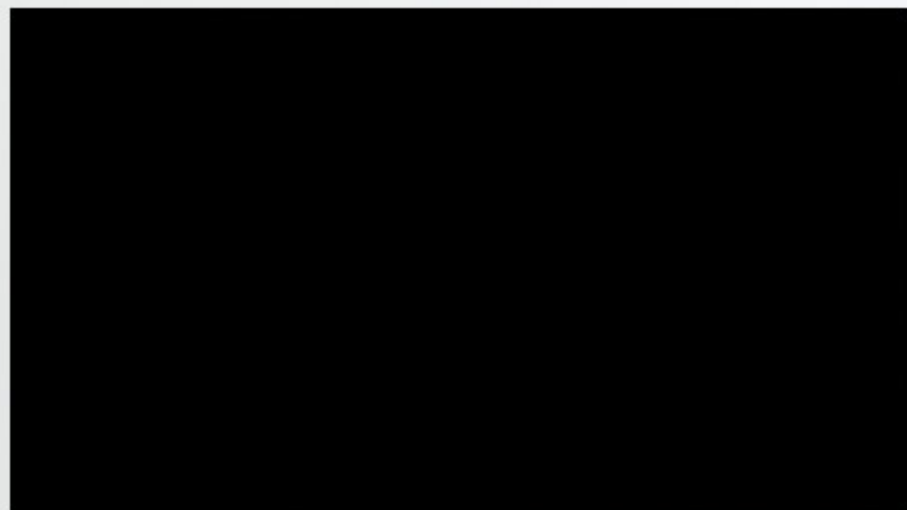
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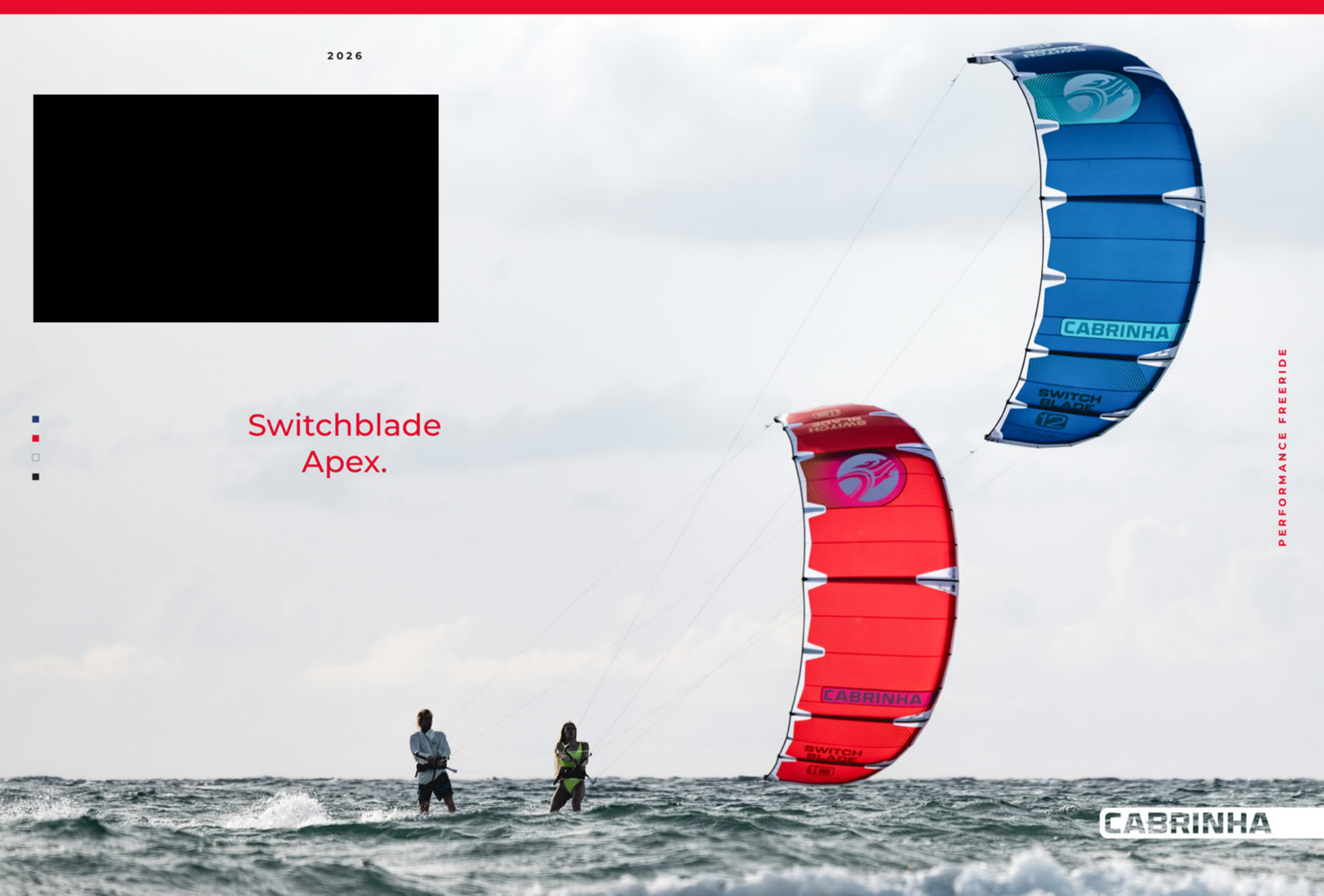


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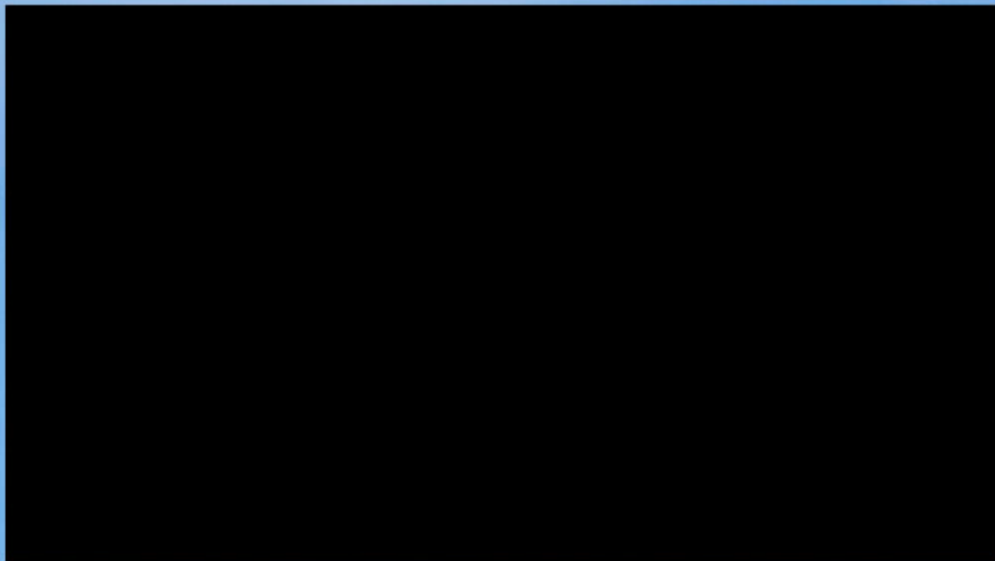
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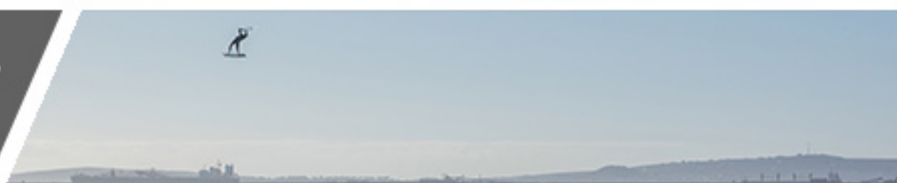
COMPETITION



BEYOND BIG AIR



LEWIS CRATHERN'S NEW
CHAPTER WITH HARLEM



ANYWHERE ANYTIME



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RIDER STELLA GROSCHUPF
PHOTO KYLE CABANO





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When the magic happens...

I have been addicted to this incredible sport for 26 years now. When I look back on some of the more memorable moments, it still blows my mind: the places I have been lucky enough to travel to, the friends I have made along the way, the gear I have ridden, and the waves and jumps that made me smile. I have been living in Pembrokeshire for six years now,

exploring new beaches, working out the best spots, and getting a solid understanding of the place.

It has been a long journey, as there are not many people here, let alone many kites. It is a rare day I see another kite on the water in winter, maybe the odd travelling rider passing through in summer. I love that about this place; it takes a lot of motivation when you have no one to ride with, but it unlocks some of

the best sessions, and there is a rugged and raw feel to the experience here.

If anyone reading this wants to come and visit, hit me up. I am always happy to share the knowledge I have built over the years. It is knowledge I am still building too, and this session from these images is a perfect example. We have had a lot of easterlies here in Wales lately. In the UK, that is not uncommon in winter, but it does feel like we have had a glut of them this year.

The bad news is that it is not the best direction for the spots closest to my house, so I have to make a bit of a pilgrimage. My go-to beach for most sports is Newgale. It is no secret spot; many of you have probably ridden here, and it is one of our most popular beaches. In winter, it is hammered by big swells, so offshore winds are not much good for winging, as it is a struggle to get out on the big days.

We all know offshore winds and kiting are not a great mix, yet some of the best wave spots in the world are offshore, like One Eye in Mauritius or Ponta Preta in Cabo Verde. I checked Newgale the other week in an ESE and decided that, from a safety perspective, it was not worth the risk. There are cliffs getting pounded by waves if anything goes wrong, with only a few small keyhole coves offering a slim chance of escape, and they are a long swim away.

I am always assessing risk every session. I think it is the most important thing you can do as a rider: consider the what-ifs, work out exit plans, and only ride a spot if the reward justifies the risk. So when a friend sent me a webcam picture of Newgale going mental, with long-period swell and strong easterly wind, I thought I would take another look.



I was greeted by a stunning view of huge waves with spindrift billowing off the back. The wind did not look particularly strong, but the cliffs and the large pebble bank always play havoc at the water's edge. Further south from the usual launch spot, the wind looked a little stronger, so I headed down and spent twenty minutes weighing up the consequences.

I decided the wind was super light and gusty on the inside, strong on the outside, and perhaps a little too offshore for the kite to work properly. I feared I might struggle to get into the waves and be pulled off the back. However, the sun was out, it was a balmy seven degrees, the skies were blue, and trusting my gear as I do, I decided to give it a go. I am no stranger to offshore kiting; it often provides the best waves, but also the gustiest wind, especially around here.

Heading out was a challenge. The inside was light, the sets were chunky, and the gusts were something else. For the first twenty minutes, I was just trying to get back upwind to where I wanted to ride. There was hardly any wind on the inside where the waves were lining up.

After slogging it out for a while, I managed to tack upwind under the cliffs where the wind funnelled through a little stronger. Once I locked into the first wave, I knew I had scored. I parked the kite and carved my first lines. It was hard to keep power in the lulls, and sometimes I was scratching back down the face after a top turn. But the faces were glassy, and in those offshore conditions, you don't really have to steer the kite; it was a dream.



I have not kited much this winter; it has been cold, wild, and very wet, so scoring near-perfect conditions in the sun and actually feeling warm was unreal. I ditched the gloves at the last minute, and it was the right call. As the wind picked up and my heart rate climbed, I grew warmer and warmer in my ION Seek Select 5.5mm hooded suit.

I was having one of the best sessions of my life, 25 minutes from home, in waves that would not have looked out of place at One Eye, and to top it off, I was the only kitesurfer for miles. This is why I moved here, this is what dreams are made of, this is what kitesurfing is all about.

I have 26 years of experience and feel confident in these offshore conditions. I surf almost daily, and I back myself to swim a couple of miles with my kit. I have done it before. I was wearing my Apple Watch so I could call for help if needed, and I told my partner where I was going and what I was doing. I assessed the risks and managed them. Kit failure would have been grim, but I trust my gear and stay on top of line maintenance.

I will definitely be checking this spot again in this direction, and, if the ocean calls, if the conditions line up, and if the risk is manageable, I will be out there for another epic session.

Here is hoping you score some bangers as well in 2026...

Rou Chater
Publishing Editor





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PHOTO JAMES BOULDING

WORDS ROU CHATER

BEYOND BIG AIR

Kiteboarding has never been just one thing. Yet right now, it feels like we are in danger of forgetting that. In chasing progression, numbers and extremes, the sport has narrowed its focus, even though its greatest strength has always been versatility. This is a reminder of where kiteboarding came from, where it has been, and why its future depends on embracing everything it allows us to do on the water.



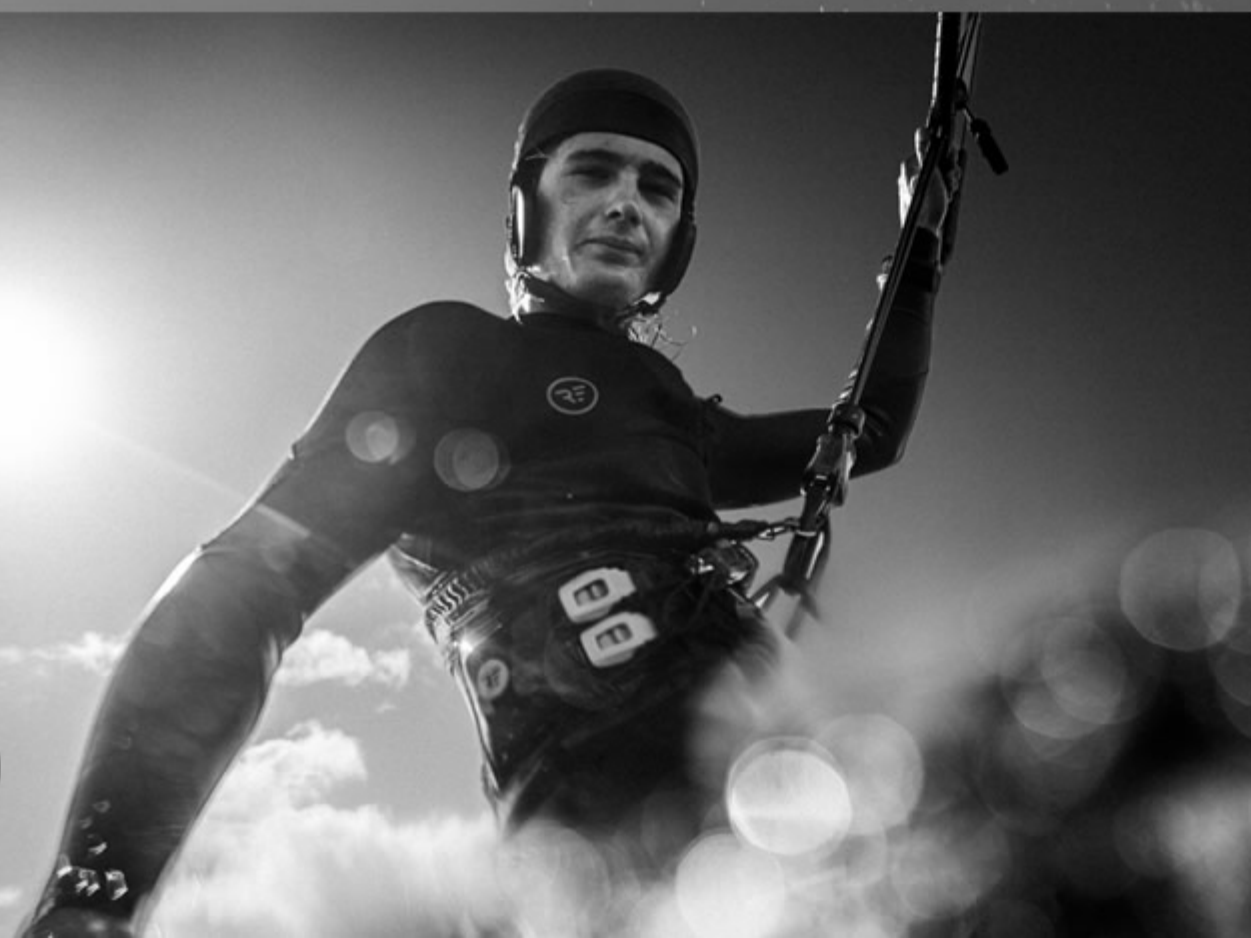
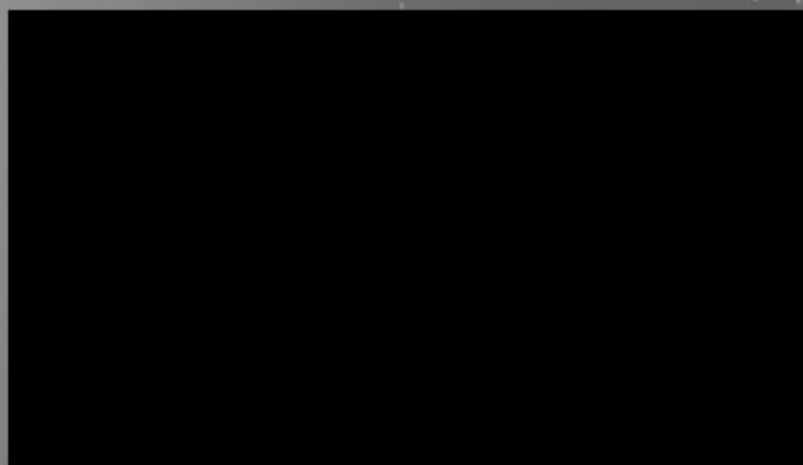
“ KITEBOARDING IS THE ULTIMATE CHAMELEON OF A SPORT, BUT WE KEEP TRYING TO FORCE IT INTO ONE SHAPE. ”

If you are reading this article, you are one of the lucky few who have persevered and found your way into this incredible sport we all love. Kiteboarding is not for the faint-hearted. I am sure you have had your fair share of mishaps and near misses. I certainly have. We are fortunate to have one of the most versatile watersports on the planet at our fingertips. So why is it that we sometimes pigeonhole ourselves into one narrow corner of the sport, often at the expense of the pure enjoyment kiteboarding offers in so many different situations?

Kiteboarding has been around for over a quarter of a century now. Just writing that feels strange to me and probably gives my age away, considering I was there at the start. In that time, the sport has taken on many different forms, yet right now it feels as though most riders are stuck in a single discipline. That focus has naturally filtered through to the brands as well. After all, it makes commercial sense to follow the zeitgeist and go where the sales are, especially after the industry has endured such a turbulent period.

Having spoken to most of the major brands over the last couple of months, it has been genuinely refreshing to hear stories that suggest the sport is coming out of the woods and starting to see growth again. We are not fully there yet, but the green shoots of recovery are visible, and that is encouraging. Another recurring theme in these conversations, which I found particularly heartening, was a shared desire to refocus on kiteboarding as a whole.

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“BIG AIR BROUGHT PEOPLE BACK, BUT PUSHING IT EVER FURTHER RISKS PUSHING RIDERS AWAY AGAIN”

What do I mean by that? You may well recognise this yourself. I know plenty of riders who do. The industry certainly does. Over the last five years, and especially the last two or three, the sport has become laser-focused on big air. It has been all-consuming. While that focus has brought many positives, it has also created some unintended negatives. As it turns out, you really can have too much of a good thing.

The resurgence of big air has had a huge impact on kiteboarding. Sparked in part by the rise of the WOO device and app, and coinciding with the return of the King of the Air, big air suddenly became cool again. For those newer to the sport, it is worth remembering that big air was where kiteboarding began. The first Red Bull KOTA was held in 2001, and the last of that era was held in 2005. I was lucky enough to be in Maui for that one! Jumping was the reason I got into kiting. I had a long history in windsurfing, but blew my knee out doing stalled forwards in 1998. After a lengthy

recovery from surgery, the art of flight with a kite felt more exhilarating and far lower impact than trying to land big forward loops on a windsurfer.

In the early days, kiteboarding was all about going big. Pioneers were flying through the air with varying degrees of control and success, but the objective was clear. Jumping high was the point, and the rush was addictive. It was also relatively easy. Certainly easier than windsurfing. Within weeks rather than years, riders could boost higher than they ever could on a windsurfer, and that accessibility was a huge part of the appeal; landing the jump was another matter.

“ WE HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE. FREESTYLE DID THE SAME THING: BRILLIANCE AT THE TOP AND BARRIERS EVERYWHERE ELSE. ”

As I have said many times before, kiteboarding is the ultimate chameleon of a sport. After a few years of big air dominance, freestyle evolved, adopting a wakestyle approach championed by riders like Lou Wainman, Elliot Leboe, Mauricio Abreu and Andre Philipp. When Aaron Hadlow brought this style into the competition arena in the mid 2000s, he was unstoppable. What had once been fringe suddenly became the new norm.

During this period, freestyle was everything. Sending the kite was almost criminal. In competitions, if the kite moved or was not locked to the water's edge, it simply was not worth scoring. As kilters, we effectively abandoned the very element that had defined the sport and embraced something new. The industry, the riders, and the weekend warriors all bought into it. I know many kilters who spent years, and I mean years, trying to land a raley to blind or a back mobe.

These were basic freestyle tricks by definition, but in reality, they were brutally hard, demanding hundreds of hours of practice. For many riders, this intensity became a barrier. When the sport's narrative revolved almost entirely around these moves, it was easy to feel left behind. Then came the surfboard and the rise of strapless freestyle, championed by riders like Mitu Monteiro and Airtón Cozzolino in those early days. Once again, the industry followed. By the mid 2010s, there was a period where twin tips were outsold by surfboards, something that had once seemed unthinkable.

PHOTO KYLE CABANO



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“A KITE LETS YOU RIDE ALMOST ANYTHING, AND SOMEHOW WE FORGOT THAT.”

Tarifa, one of the great barometers of our sport, suddenly filled with kites riding surfboards and trying to master strapless tricks, despite the lack of decent waves. It was bizarre, but hugely popular. Naturally, the industry leaned in until the foil arrived, shifting the landscape once more.

Does anyone else remember the period around 2018 and 2019, when kite foiling seemed to dominate everything? Everyone was foiling, and the sport was booming. At the same time, big air continued its steady rise. Freestyle was hard. Strapless freestyle was hard. Kite foiling was hard. When the media and industry push a narrative that demands constant water time and high skill levels, it is easy for riders to become disillusioned.

Big air changed that. Sending the kite and boosting were the original buzz of kiteboarding, and crucially, it was accessible. Anyone who can ride back and forth can start jumping. Going truly big is difficult, of course, but getting airtime is within reach for most riders. Add the WOO, the competition with friends, and the gamification of progression, and suddenly, people who had drifted away from the sport were coming back in droves.

Kiteboarding was primed for a boom. The Covid 19 pandemic accelerated this, giving many people time and disposable income, and participation exploded. At the same time, wing foiling emerged, pulling a significant number of intermediate and advanced riders toward a new challenge. Fast forward to today, and we see kite surfboard sales dropping dramatically,



“WHAT WAS ONCE ACCESSIBLE PROGRESSION NOW FEELS OUT OF REACH FOR RIDERS WITH REAL LIVES.”

kite foil sales are also really struggling, while the twin tip reigns supreme once again, and big air sits firmly on the throne.

As wing foiling ate into the kite market, it feels as though the industry doubled down on big air, perhaps a little too hard. Big air evolved rapidly, from big jumps and mega

loops into the highly technical, extreme discipline we see today. It is breathtaking, but also increasingly out of reach for the average rider. What was once an achievable pinnacle now feels distant, even alien, for many of us.

We can all admire the doubles, triples and board off combinations of the likes of the Casati brothers and Andrea Principi. The ultra-low, short line loops of riders such as Jason van der Spuy and Jett Bradshaw are mind-blowing. But for riders with day jobs,

families and limited water time, is that ever going to be our reality? Sending a solid loop, absolutely. Chasing that level of progression, probably not.

There is another issue, too. Big air demands specific conditions, and those conditions become more extreme as progression continues. Chasing higher WOO scores inevitably means more wind, harsher conditions and greater risk. We have seen more fatalities in recent years than ever before, and it is hard to ignore the connection between that and the relentless push to go bigger in stronger winds.

**“EVERY DISCIPLINE HAS HAD ITS MOMENT;
BIG AIR IS JUST THE LATEST CHAPTER, NOT THE
WHOLE BOOK.”**

At some point, we have to ask ourselves whether this is the direction we want the sport to take.

This brings me to the heart of the piece. While wing foiling has created multiple disciplines, most wing foilers will ultimately be limited to that one craft. The difficulty of prone and DW foiling, and the cost of foil-assist and e-foils, place barriers in the way. As kiteboarders, we are not constrained in the same way.

I have always believed that learning to kiteboard unlocks a near-endless range of possibilities on the water. In light winds, we can foil and have fun long before a wing foiler can even consider pumping up. We can cruise on a twin tip, skimboard, wakeskate, ride surfboards, and explore all of it with relatively basic kite skills.

Anyone who can ride upwind and perform small jumps can experiment with strapless boards or a skim and have immediate success. I know this because I was that rider in the early 2000s. We rode planks of wood for fun. A kite lets you ride almost anything. Yet as a sport, we seem to have forgotten that. In our obsession with big air, we have lost sight of the versatility that makes kiteboarding so special.

Ask yourself this: when was the last time you unhooked for some freestyle? If you aren't at that level, do you even have some basic unhooked freestyle tricks you want to learn? When was the last time you went kite foiling, and if you can't kite foil yet, is it on your radar to add it to your repertoire of skills within the sport?

PHOTO JAMES BOULDING





“THE REAL MAGIC OF KITEBOARDING IS NOT HOW HIGH YOU GO, BUT HOW MANY WAYS YOU CAN GO RIDING.”

When did you last go for a cruise in light winds just to be on the water and to feel at one with nature? When did you last ride a surfboard over a twin tip? Kiteboarding is so much more than waiting for storms and boosting big airs.

Of course, when the conditions line up, big air will always deliver the thrill we crave. However, there is so much more on offer. Encouragingly, many of the brands I have spoken to recently share a desire to re-balance the narrative and celebrate kiteboarding in its entirety, rather than defining it through a single discipline.

That can only be a good thing. The versatility of kiteboarding is what will carry it through the next 25 years. The only real danger lies in narrowing our own definition of what the sport is meant to be. Let's help kitesurfing thrive and embrace all of its amazing opportunities.

For me, kiteboarding is everything. It is foiling in eight knots of breeze, carving turns on a surfboard, riding ridiculous contraptions on summer beaches just for laughs, cruising on a twin tip with a big kite, exploring new spots, and when the wind truly switches on, sending it to the moon.

Every time I fly a kite, I am smiling. That is what we should be promoting. It really is the most fun you can have on the water. Let's not forget that.



LEWIS CRATHERN'S NEW CHAPTER WITH HARLEM

WORDS ROU CHATER

Kiteboarding has seen many characters, but few have shaped the sport through as many roles as Lewis Crathern. From body dragging at Whitstable without a board to becoming a national champion, from soaring over Brighton Pier to becoming one of the most recognisable voices in global events, his journey has always been defined by passion and purpose. Now, with a fresh chapter at Harlem Kitesurfing, Lewis brings new energy to his riding, a deeper commitment to young people and a renewed focus on wind-powered education.





"I FELT COMPLETELY AT HOME ON THE HARLEM KITE FROM THE VERY FIRST PULL, THE CONFIDENCE CAME BACK INSTANTLY."

Very few riders in modern kiteboarding have lived as many different lives inside the sport as Lewis Crathern. He arrived on my radar as the kid turning up at Whitstable without a board, determined to go kiting regardless of the fact that he couldn't afford a board, and yes, he used to body drag around in the sea! He grew into a local talent and eventually rose to become a national champion. He became the viral pioneer who jumped Brighton Pier long before viral culture existed. Later, he evolved into the commentator whose voice is recognised at major world events. Alongside all of this, he is also the educator who walks into schools with colourful kites and a message about wind, energy and possibility.

At forty years old, he finds himself standing at the edge of a fresh chapter of his life, which feels both unexpected and completely logical. His move to Harlem Kitesurfing is far more than a change of sponsor; it represents a shift in identity, purpose and connection at a moment where he wants to contribute more widely to the sport and the world around it. He's not only working for the brand and riding for them, he and Aaron Hadlow will also be taking over the sales of the brand in the UK.

A DECADE AT DUOTONE AND A NATURAL MOMENT TO EVOLVE

Lewis speaks warmly about his ten years with Duotone Kiteboarding. Those years were filled with achievement and growth, and he has no interest in pretending otherwise. Early in his time with the brand, he suffered the crash at Red Bull King of the Air that placed him in an induced coma and fundamentally changed the conversation around safety in strong-wind big-air competition. He had only recently signed with the team, and the uncertainty around his future as an athlete was real and intense.



Duotone stayed by his side through his recovery and showed him that they valued more than results, they valued the person behind the kite. From that moment, the relationship deepened.

Over the following decade, Lewis built a strong role within the team. He worked closely with the UK distributor, Emma Beckensale; he helped develop young riders through the Young Bloods programme, and he demonstrated that professional value can come from much more than contest podiums.

"THEY VALUED THE PERSON BEHIND THE KITE. FROM THAT MOMENT, THE RELATIONSHIP DEEPENED"



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"AFTER TEN YEARS WITH DUOTONE, I KNEW IT WAS TIME TO GROW IN A NEW DIRECTION. I WANTED DEEPER INVOLVEMENT AND REAL CONNECTION."

His coaching sessions became part of the fabric of the British scene, and his presence on the beach made him a recognisable mentor for new generations of riders. Yet after ten years, he found himself looking for something different. He felt ready for a shift toward a smaller team, a closer network and a more intimate relationship with the people behind the brand. He wanted to be more involved with the running of a brand and have more influence over it, using his vast knowledge of the sport. That desire lined up with a series of conversations that would eventually lead

him to his new role at Harlem.

THE HARLEM ATMOSPHERE, PEOPLE BEFORE SCALE

Harlem Kitesurfing could not be more different from the industry giants. It is a tight-knit brand made up of a small team of passionate individuals, many of whom juggle multiple roles within product development, marketing, design and rider support. This size and focus appealed to Lewis immediately. He felt he could contribute directly, speak to everyone inside

the organisation and play a meaningful part in shaping the culture of the brand.

A large influence was his close friend and neighbour, Aaron Hadlow. Aaron joined Harlem almost two years ago, and the transformation Lewis saw in him was significant. Harlem involved Aaron in deeper levels of product development, future planning and structured leadership. The brand offered roles that allowed a rider to think beyond simply producing content or performing at events. Seeing Aaron grow inside the brand made Lewis realise that Harlem was a place that encouraged riders to expand their role and knowledge.

When Lewis finally spoke to Harlem's CEO Alex, he expected a traditional conversation about team roles and content creation. Instead, Alex explained that he did not want Lewis solely as a team rider. He wanted him inside the company structure, contributing to storytelling, marketing, youth development, shop relations and the long-term British market. He wanted someone who understood education, sustainability and communication as deeply as he understood big air riding. This direct honesty caught Lewis off guard in the best possible way. He found himself excited by the idea of belonging to a brand not just as a rider but as a contributor with several meaningful responsibilities.

FIRST FLIGHTS AND AN UNEXPECTED REDISCOVERY OF CONFIDENCE

Out of respect for his Duotone contract, Lewis waited until the year turned before touching a Harlem kite. That meant his first session happened on a bitterly cold English day in early January. Wrapped in a thick wetsuit with a hood, he launched the kite with the expectation that something would feel unfamiliar or awkward. Instead, he felt immediately comfortable. The bar connection felt intuitive, and the kite delivered both control and power in a way that surprised him. Rather than being tentative, he found himself grinning at the sensation of being completely at home on a brand new setup.

The real test came in Cape Town a few weeks later. After a windless December and a very traditional British Christmas, he had not been riding much at all. Yet once he hit the Cape Town wind, the kites brought out his riding in a way he had not experienced for a long time. He found himself getting massive jumps with minimal effort. He landed tricks with freedom

"IF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA DISAPPEARED TODAY,
WHAT REMAINS? THAT IS THE QUESTION EVERY
YOUNG RIDER SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES."





and fluidity. He even recorded one of the biggest jumps among the Harlem riders during the GKA Woo Challenge. At forty years old and after a little while off the water, these performances mattered to him. They were confirmation that his instinct to change brands had been right.

One of the unexpected pleasures was the return of colour. After seasons of riding undyed white Concept Blue kites, in line with his values, the vivid design of the Harlem range felt energising. He laughs about how alive his kit feels on the water now and how the graphics brighten even the greyest British days.

"I WANT TO KNOW EVERY RIDER, EVERY SCHOOL AND EVERY SHOP; CONNECTION MATTERS MORE TO ME THAN EVER BEFORE."

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"THE KITES FEEL ALIVE, IT IS LIKE GOING FROM A WORLD OF BLACK AND WHITE INTO A WORLD FILLED WITH COLOUR."

On a personal level, he was also genuinely moved by the wind turbine motifs printed across the bars and boards, which link directly to his parallel work in wind energy education. The symbolism felt almost poetic, a merging of two worlds that have shaped his life.

HELPING YOUNG RIDERS STAY GROUNDED IN A NOISY WORLD

Lewis hasn't always been a natural mentor, but it's a role he has developed over his career and now he relishes it. He enjoys speaking to young riders, listening to their concerns and helping them navigate the mental side of the sport. Yet in recent years, he has become increasingly aware of the pressures created by social media. He has seen talented young riders measured by follower counts, engagement graphs and content frequency rather than by passion, creativity or personal growth. He has seen two clips of the same trick performed at the same level generate wildly different reactions simply because the algorithm chose one and ignored the other. The inconsistency and randomness frustrate him because he sees the effect it has on riders who are still shaping their identity.

He encourages young athletes to build value that exists independently of social platforms. His favourite question to ask is simple. If your social media disappeared today, what remains? He wants young riders to develop skills that last. He teaches them to speak confidently in front of groups, to write updates for sponsors, to build their own small websites, to lead sessions in their local communities and to understand that their real value is found in their character and contribution, not in numbers on a screen.

He worries that the focus on social media alone places young athletes at risk of burnout or insecurity.

"WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE REMINDS ME WHY I
FELL IN LOVE WITH KITEBOARDING; THEIR ENERGY
BRINGS EVERYTHING BACK TO LIFE."

He believes the industry needs to have an honest conversation about the mental health effects of constant comparison and algorithm-driven pressure. While he respects the importance of online platforms, he wants young riders to see them as tools rather than measures of worth.

THE CLASSROOM CONNECTION AND THE POWER OF WIND

Some of the most meaningful work Lewis does has nothing to do with contests or content. It happens in school halls, playing fields and

classrooms across the country. His journey into education began when his old secondary school invited him to speak about sport and ambition. He expected to feel uncomfortable returning to that environment, but instead, he discovered that he loved speaking to students. He enjoyed their curiosity, their humour and their openness. He realised that kites are perfect tools for teaching children about wind, weather, movement, confidence and science. He developed his school presentations freely and voluntarily. He never charged; he simply

wanted to give something back to communities that might never encounter kiteboarding otherwise. He crafted sessions that explained how wind energy works and how a kite harnesses invisible forces. He would bring kites onto school fields and allow students to feel the power of the wind through their hands. For many children, this became a moment of wonder and discovery. For Lewis, it became one of the most fulfilling elements of his life.

His educational work eventually caught the attention of the Global Wind Energy Council. They saw in Lewis a rare combination of communication skills, scientific enthusiasm and genuine passion.

They invited him to become an ambassador for wind energy and provided him with the opportunity to represent the industry at conferences, summits and international meetings. He has since visited offshore wind farms, spoken at major events, collaborated on youth initiatives and connected with global leaders who share an interest in renewable energy.

His work with Harlem now strengthens this mission. Harlem's approach to production is clean, thoughtful and environmentally aware. Their use of undyed materials, eco-printing, agile manufacturing, and reduced waste aligns perfectly with Lewis's educational message. He plans to create content, develop school sessions and bring together the worlds of kiteboarding and renewable energy in ways that will introduce young audiences to both science and sport.

A NEW PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE IN THE UK MARKET

One of the most exciting parts of Lewis's move to Harlem is his new role supporting the brand in the UK alongside Aaron Hadlow. Together they will act as agents, guiding shops, organising demos and introducing riders to the equipment. For Lewis, this feels like an authentic extension of who he already is. He loves bringing people onto the water, helping them understand their equipment and celebrating their progress. He sees demo days not as work but as opportunities to create memorable experiences.

Harlem's business model makes this work appealing. The brand avoids forcing shops into large preseason orders. Instead, it operates with flexible production, steady stock rotation and realistic expectations. This reduces waste and reduces stock left over at the end of the season.

"HARLEM DID NOT WANT ME ONLY AS A RIDER; THEY WANTED ME TO HELP SHAPE THE CULTURE OF THE BRAND."



"THE WIND THAT LIFTS A KITE CAN ALSO POWER A CITY, AND THAT MESSAGE BELONGS IN CLASSROOMS."



Lewis believes this will resonate strongly with retailers who have struggled with the traditional surplus-driven system. As an educator and mentor, he wants to support both riders and shops with honesty, clarity and enthusiasm.

STILL THE SAME RIDER WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH WIND

Lewis has always been driven by passion rather than circumstance. He remembers his early days in the sport when he had a kite but couldn't afford a board, and he'd just go body dragging around among the kites. He was just so stoked to be flying a kite and learning what he could from it. That early sense of joy and resourcefulness still lives in him. He has experienced the highs of competition, the challenges of injury, the responsibilities of commentary and the demands of professional coaching. Yet none of these roles has changed the core feeling he gets when he launches a kite into the sky.

His move to Harlem is not about reinventing himself for the sake of reinvention. It is about continuing a life shaped by curiosity, community and commitment. He wants to ride at a high level for as long as he can, he wants to nurture young talent, he wants to support British shops, and he wants to teach children that the same wind that lifts a kite can generate clean energy for entire cities.

Lewis Crathern remains one of the most grounded and generous characters in the sport. Whether he is coaching in Cape Town, speaking on a school field or discussing sustainability with industry leaders, he carries the same enthusiasm that first put him in the water all those years ago.



From winning the Youth Big Air World Championship to taking on the world's best in Brazil and Tarifa, at just 17, Finn Flügel is proving himself as one of the sport's most versatile young riders. Jen Tyler caught up with Finn to talk progression, competition, and carrying both German and Egyptian roots onto the world stage.



ANYWHERE, ANYTIME: THE RISE OF FINN FLÜGEL





**" I'M JUST A KITER
WHO WANTS TO BE
ON THE WATER. "**

Finn, great to have you here! You've been on the podium across freestyle, big air and hydrofoil, all in just the past two years. How do you balance training for so many disciplines at once? Do you think specialising would make you stronger, or do you want to keep that variety?

Hello Jen, it's great to hear from you again. It's been a while since El Gouna! I don't really feel like I train for different disciplines as such. I've been doing it from the start, so it just feels natural. I'd put it more as adapting to the spots I'm at. Currently, with two freestyle competitions approaching, my primary focus is on freestyle.

To be honest, I'm not sure. In freestyle, I'd say I can definitely compete at the top level, but I could never imagine doing only freestyle like some riders do. That would just feel too boring for me, and honestly, there aren't that many great freestyle spots around the world. You have to work with the conditions you get. At the end of the day, I'm just a kiter who wants to be on the water anywhere, anytime. That's why specialising has never really been an option for me.

Looking back at your win at the 2025 GKA Youth Big Air World Championship in St. Peter-Ording, what did that victory mean to you personally, and how did it feel to represent both Germany and Egypt on that stage?

It was, and still is, an absolute dream come true for me. I can speak for all the other riders when I say it was incredibly important to create a Youth Big Air World title.

The challenge is that many young riders do not have the chance to compete in men's events. The fields are always full, and the waiting lists feel endless.

I was in the same situation myself and only got the opportunity in Brazil last winter because I was lucky enough to receive a wildcard. But we don't just want to train; we want to compete against each other. Otherwise, at some point, it stops being fun.

As a German, I will never forget that the event took place in Germany. And of course, in moments like that, I always think back to my home spot in Egypt. That is where I learned all my airstyle tricks, which were so crucial for this event.

You've had standout results in both freestyle and hydrofoil big air. What excites you more: freestyle or going huge in extreme conditions with the foil?

Phew, that's a tough question! Spending four weeks in Greece during the summer, with freestyle conditions almost perfect every day, made it an amazing experience to train and invent new tricks. You just keep pushing yourself to the edge of what's possible.

But when I'm in Tarifa, I naturally focus on big air. Right now, though, I have to say I'm really enjoying hydrofoiling. I think it's because there's still so much untapped potential, and I'm constantly learning new tricks. That's what really drives me.

In Brazil and Sylt, you went up against some of the best in the world, not just youth riders. How different is your mindset when you're competing in senior events compared to youth competitions?

Not really. I've been competing in World Cups since I was 12, and by then you've already developed a certain routine and are no longer afraid of the other riders. They always have to prove themselves first, and nobody likes losing to a youngster.



"HYDROFOILING STILL HAS HUGE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL."

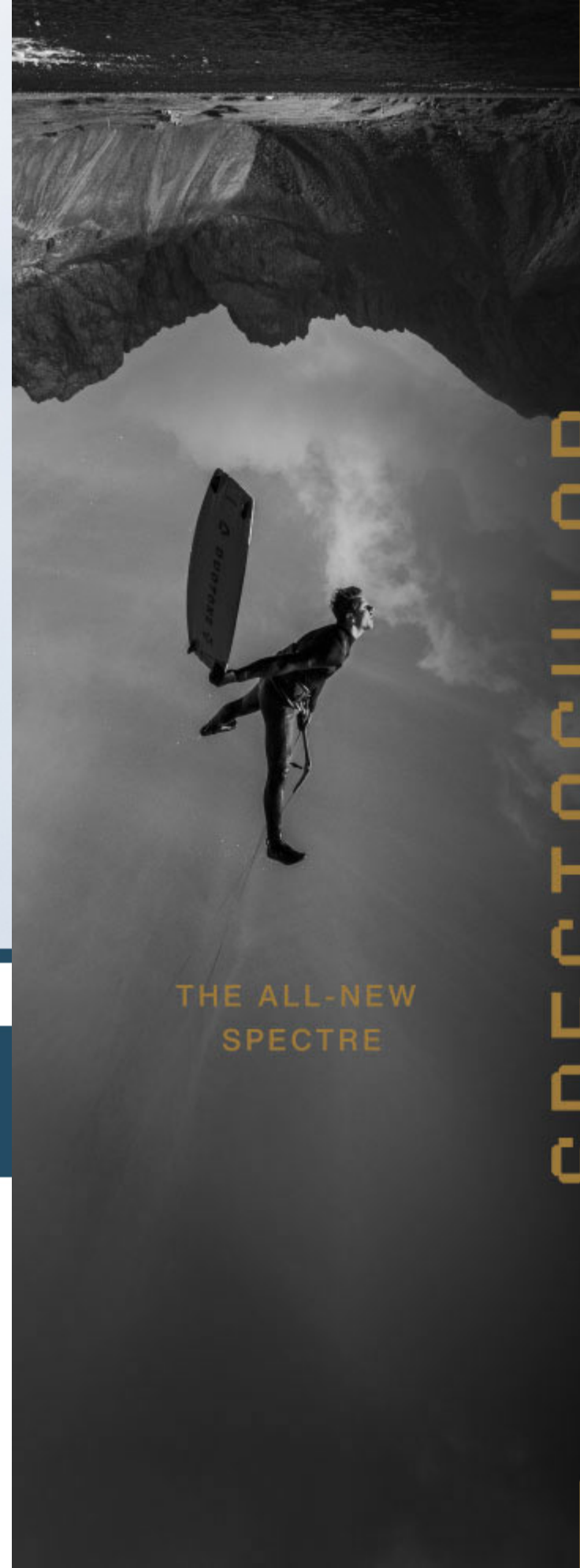


At big air events, it doesn't matter as much anyway, since most of us are still relatively young. Take Leonardo or Shahar, for example — they are also among the top riders.

You've grown up with kiting being such a big part of your daily life in El Gouna. Do you ever feel pressure to perform at such a young age, or does it still feel like playtime on the water?

First of all, I still can't imagine a better playground than having the Red Sea right on my doorstep. Growing up here has been an incredible privilege.

**" GROWING UP
HERE HAS BEEN
AN INCREDIBLE
PRIVILEGE. "**



THE ALL-NEW
SPECTRE

SPECTACULAR



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LIGHT WEIGHT



STIFFNESS

HIGH PERFORMANCE

- DIRECT DRIVE.
- FEATHERWEIGHT.
- ERGONOMIC FIT.





" NEW EQUIPMENT, GOOD WIND, NEW MOVES — IT ALL FEELS LIKE FUN! "

As you know, I have amazing sponsors, including Red Bull, Duotone and F2, who support me in everything I do. I'm really grateful for that and couldn't imagine better partners. Of course, I always want to give

my best and prove that their support is the right decision. Red Bull and Duotone, in particular, boast some absolute legends on their teams, and I still think it's wild that my name is now among them.

At the same time, I always enjoy being on the water because, for me, it still feels a bit like play. New equipment, good wind, new moves — it all feels like fun!

Training in El Gouna vs competing in places like Tarifa, Sylt or St. Peter-Ording must be very different. How do you adapt your riding to totally different conditions?

Of course, you always have to adapt your riding to different spots. As a German, I've known St. Peter-Ording and Sylt since I was a child. I actually learned to kite, alongside El Gouna, on Sylt, and I still go there every year on holiday with my parents.



**" PROGRESSION COMES FROM ADAPTING
TO THE CONDITIONS YOU GET. "**

So I know how the waves break, what to look out for, and how the wind behaves. But in the end, what makes a good rider is the ability to adapt quickly to any conditions.

The sport is progressing really fast. Are there any tricks you see coming in the next couple of years that you're already working on?

That's right! I think it's very important for us, the younger generation, to continue pushing the sport forward. If you look at some of my new freestyle tricks, like the FS10 or the Blind Backside 9, you can see that progression is still happening in freestyle.

In big air and hydrofoiling, it's even more noticeable because those disciplines are evolving at a much faster pace. I find it incredibly exciting to experiment with moves that, at first, you're not even sure are possible. For me, the most rewarding are the really technical tricks, because they show who has put in hundreds of hours on the water. That said, I won't reveal my new tricks just yet!

You've mentioned King of the Air as your dream. When you think about stepping into that event in the future, how do you picture your riding standing out from the rest?

That is my biggest dream! Of course, I'd love to be part of it right away, but I try to stay realistic. It's the ultimate accolade, and I know I have to wait until they believe I'm ready. Deep down, I feel prepared for this challenge, and I genuinely hope to be part of it in the next few years.

As for my style, technique and safety always come first. I come from freestyle and airstyle, and both have shaped me here in Egypt over the past years.



If I'd grown up somewhere else, my riding might look completely different. For me, it's essential to execute every trick as cleanly as possible. Only then am I satisfied. I also love mixing different influences so that, in the end, it becomes my own style — Finn's style!

Many young riders look up to you now. What's one piece of advice you'd give to other kids who dream of following in your footsteps?

If possible, always strive to be a role model for others. Just as some people look up to me, there will be others who look up to you. That's why it's so important to be helpful and friendly to one another. I don't have much respect for people who think they are better than others because they're good at kitesurfing.

**"CLEAN
EXECUTION
ALWAYS
COMES FIRST."**

CHANGE
THE TIDE



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The benchmark in Big Air performance.
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champion. World Twintip record breaker.

Designed by Aaron Hadlow & Ralf Groesel.
Built for the podium. Built for your personal best.

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Always get out on the water, regardless of whether the conditions are perfect or not. Always believe in yourself, even when things aren't going well. Once you've made some progress, start looking for sponsors — I learned a great deal by going through that process myself. Gain as much specialist knowledge as you can and test as much different equipment as possible. Above all, I wish everyone continued enjoyment of kitesurfing.

What exciting plans do you have this winter?

The next few weeks are going to be pretty wild. I've just arrived back in El Gouna from Tarifa for two weeks, and next week I'm flying to Brazil for another two weeks to prepare for the first freestyle competition in Abu Dhabi. We'll also have the hydrofoil final there, which I'm training for at the moment.

After that, it's straight back to Brazil for the freestyle event, and then I'll be gearing up for Cape Town. Hopefully, everything goes to plan. After that whirlwind, I'm really looking forward to a winter and spring with a little less travelling in El Gouna and, of course, plenty of time on the water with my friends.

Amazing, thanks Finn! See you soon in El Gouna!

Yes! See you soon, Jen!

" GAIN AS MUCH SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE AS YOU CAN AND TEST AS MUCH DIFFERENT EQUIPMENT AS POSSIBLE. "



PHOTO VINCENT BERGERON

GARY SISKAR

THE QUIET ARCHITECT WHO HELPED SHAPE MODERN KITEBOARDING

Some people shape a sport from the spotlight; others do it quietly, through ideas, innovation and a deep love for the wind. Gary Siskar is the latter. In this episode, we trace his journey from SoCal surf grom to Ride Engine brand leader and explore how his work helped push kiteboarding into the future.



WORDS ROU CHATER



“ PLACE I COULD HAPPILY SPEND A MONTH OR TWO IN THE SUMMER, BUT THE SHEER AMOUNT OF TIME I SPENT ON THE WATER KITING LEFT ME EXHAUSTED. ”

If you've been around kiteboarding long enough, you've almost certainly felt the influence of Gary Siskar, even if you've never heard his name. He isn't a rider chasing podiums or someone pushing tricks for the camera. Instead, his impact has flowed through the industry in quieter, deeper ways: through brand building,

through nurturing new sports before they reached the mainstream, through opening new locations for riders, and through helping launch products that genuinely shifted what was possible on the water.

Backed by a long career across surfing, skateboarding, snowboarding and eyewear, Gary has spent decades inside the beating heart of action sports. But it was his move to Peru, his eventual transition into kiteboarding, and his influence on foil development that cemented his place in the modern story of our sport. His journey is unusual, full of

unexpected turns, but every chapter seems to have pushed kiteboarding forward in some way.

FROM SOCAL SURF GROM TO ACTION-SPORTS PROFESSIONAL

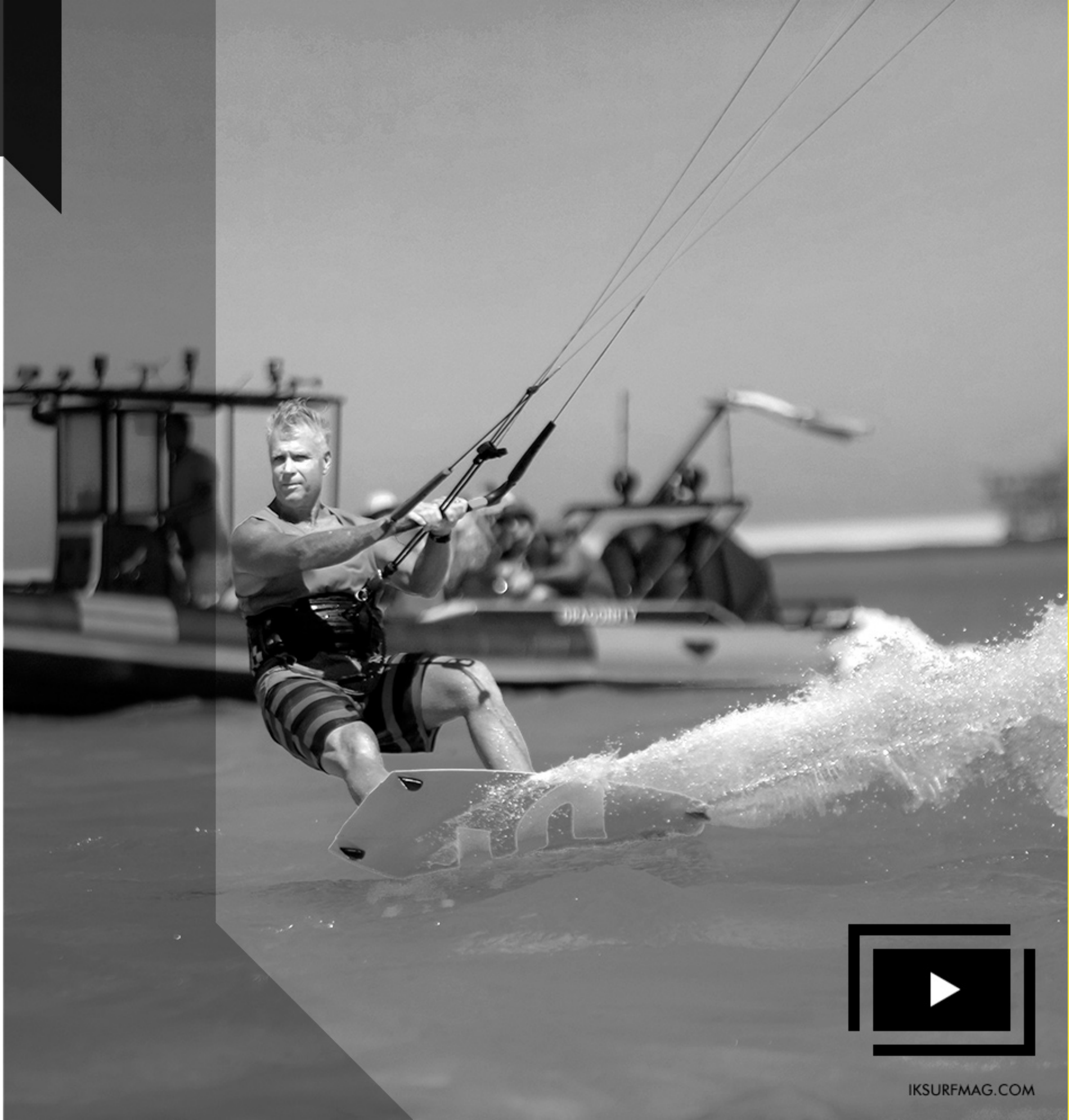
Gary grew up in Southern California at exactly the right moment. The surf and skate scene of the 1980s was exploding, with brands like Quiksilver, Gotcha and Billabong transforming beach culture into a global industry. While his parents may have hoped for organised sports, Gary was already drifting toward a different kind of life, beach mornings with friends, skating in the afternoons, and working at surf shops as soon as he was old enough to have a job.

“THESE SPORTS HELPED HIM DEVELOP A SENSE FOR LONG-TERM CULTURAL TRENDS RATHER THAN SHORT-TERM MARKETING FADS.”

The surf shop environment played the same role it has for generations: a frontline apprenticeship in product, culture, customer behaviour and crew dynamics. That grounding helped set him up for the opportunity that changed his career path. One afternoon, after a surf with his best friend's father, Greg Arnette, founder of Arnette sunglasses and former Oakley eyewear lead, Gary was asked what he planned to do with his life. He didn't really know. So Greg made it simple: come work for me.

That moment launched Gary into the world of global action sports business. At Arnette he worked his way from customer service to sales, then all the way up to global marketing director. He lived through two major corporate buyouts, first by Bausch & Lomb and later by Luxottica, the eyewear giant behind Ray-Ban and countless other global brands. Those transitions exposed him to the inner mechanics of scaling, selling, restructuring and repositioning brands, lessons that would prove invaluable later.

From there, he moved into skate and snow, working with Etnies, 32 Snowboard Boots and other footwear brands under the Sole Technology umbrella. It fit perfectly with his passions: he was a devoted skater, surfer and snowboarder, and the crossover between these sports helped him develop a sense for long-term cultural trends rather than short-term marketing fads. That wider perspective proved crucial when he eventually discovered kiteboarding.





BRAINCHILD
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"IT WAS A BOLD DECISION, FUELLED PARTLY BY ROMANTIC IDEALISM AND PARTLY BY THEIR SHARED LOVE OF SURFING."

PERU: THE UNEXPECTED BIRTHPLACE OF HIS KITEBOARDING CHAPTER

The biggest plot twist in Gary's life came when he and his wife decided to step away from their established careers and start again somewhere entirely different. They moved to northern Peru, bought land in Máncora, and built a small yoga-and-wellness beachfront retreat. It was a bold decision, fuelled partly by romantic idealism and partly by their shared love of surfing.

But northern Peru had another surprise waiting: wind. A lot of it. Around 250 days a year in some spots.

His local friends were already kiteboarding when he arrived, and the shift happened quickly. Like most surfers, Gary had spent most of his life wishing for no wind. But in Peru, surrounded by friends who were equally passionate about both surfing and kiting, something flipped. They began to want wind more than perfect glass. They discovered that riding those long left-hand points with a kite opened new lines and new sensations that surfing alone couldn't offer.

What happened next may be one of Gary's more underrated yet significant contributions to kiteboarding. He and his wife began inviting riders, photographers, and brands to stay at their retreat and explore the coastline. They knew how special the region was, and how untouched many of its breaks remained. Slowly, word began to spread.



“ GARY HELPED SHIFT NORTHERN PERU FROM AN UNDERGROUND SURF ZONE INTO AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED KITE-SURFING DESTINATION. ”

One of the first visitors was UK rider Jo Wilson, whose early magazine coverage helped put Peru on the kiteboarding map. Shortly afterwards, André Phillip, Elliot Leboe and Pete Cabrinha came to film sections for Catalyst, showcasing flawless lefts under perfect cross-shore wind. Those images became iconic. For many kites,

that was the first time they'd ever seen Peru through a wind-sport lens.

At the time, places like Lobitos were still virtually untouched. You could have six-to-eight-foot, ruler-edge lefts with 25 knots of wind and not a single other person out. By hosting riders and filmers at exactly the right moment, Gary helped shift northern Peru from an underground surf zone into an internationally recognised kite-surfing destination. Today, the area is far more developed, but at the time, it was wild, raw and perfect.

THE FOIL FISH AND THE OPENING OF A NEW ERA

If there's one chapter of Gary's career that had a tangible, measurable impact on the sport and massively on me, too, it's his involvement in the development of the Liquid Force Foil Fish, the first truly accessible, mass-market hydrofoil for kiteboarders.

Before 2014, kite foiling existed, but it was really fringe side of the sport, favoured by the course racers and a few outliers. The only foils available were expensive, full-carbon race foils with tiny wings and extreme speeds. They were difficult to ride, often terrifying, and made by only a handful of boutique manufacturers. Prices were high, waitlists were long,

“ IF HYDROFOILING WAS GOING TO GROW, SOMEONE NEEDED TO CREATE A FOIL THAT NORMAL RIDERS COULD BUY, LEARN ON AND TRUST. ”

and unless you were a racer or an industry insider, getting your hands on one was almost impossible.

The breakthrough came on a Liquid Force trip to Maui. Brandon Scheid had managed to get hold of an early Lift race foil, bolted it to a wakeskate, a brutally difficult setup, and somehow made it work. The rest of the crew, including Gary, Jason Slezak, Julian Fillion and Greg Gnecco, began experimenting with borrowed foils, taking beatings, learning just enough to feel the magic, and realising they were looking at the future.

Back on the mainland, the team tried to acquire more hydrofoils, only to run into a wall: long wait times, high prices, unreliable communication, and limited availability. For a sport that already struggled with accessibility, it was obvious something had to change.

Gary and the team framed the problem clearly: if hydrofoiling was going to grow, someone needed to create a foil that normal riders could buy, learn on and trust. It needed to be built in affordable materials like aluminium, use forgiving low-aspect wings, and come in at a price that didn't demand a second mortgage.

Julian began shaping prototypes. The team searched for manufacturing partners. Some doors slammed shut; others opened. Eventually, they found a vendor willing to experiment. They tested relentlessly, crashing, tweaking, and re-testing until the Foil Fish design was ready.





“ HOOD RIVER IS ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE PLACES ON EARTH FOR PROGRESSION IN WIND SPORTS. ”

When the product launched in 2015, it became a turning point. The Foil Fish didn't just introduce riders to hydrofoiling; it changed the trajectory of the sport. Riders who had reached a plateau with their twin tips or had perhaps drifted away from kiteboarding entirely suddenly had a reason to come back. The Foil Fish unlocked marginal-wind sessions and brought the magic of the glide to a mainstream audience.

Other brands took notice. Slingshot built the Hover Glide platform, which remains one of the most popular foil ecosystems in the world. Soon, foiling spread not just through kiteboarding but into SUP, surf and eventually the discipline that reshaped the entire industry: wing foiling.

That widespread adoption began with the simple idea that foiling shouldn't be limited to the elite. Making it accessible was the spark.

HOOD RIVER AND THE EVOLUTION OF A MULTI-SPORT MINDSET

After leaving Peru, Gary was offered a job at Anon under the Burton umbrella. He returned to Southern California, but when Burton consolidated operations in Vermont, he made another key decision: he didn't want to relocate. Around the same time, Tony Finn from Liquid Force called, inviting him to grow the wind division. Gary accepted and eventually relocated to Hood River.

Hood River is one of the most unique places on earth for progression in wind sports. Community is tight. Innovation is constant. If something new is coming, park riding, foiling, winging, downwind, Hood River is usually one of the first places where it takes off.





“ HE KITE FOILED, WINGED, SURF FOILED, AND MOUNTAIN-BIKED WHEN THE WIND DIDN'T BLOW. ”

Living in that environment helped Gary stay connected to the real-world evolution of the sport rather than viewing it through spreadsheets and presentations. He kite

foiled, winged, surf foiled, and mountain-biked when the wind didn't blow. His awareness of how different sports fed into each other kept him ahead of trends and helped him steer brands toward what riders actually wanted. Living and breathing the sports right on the shores of the Columbia River Gorge was the key to success.

CARRYING THE SPIRIT OF RIDE ENGINE FORWARD

Today, Gary is the global brand manager for Ride Engine, the accessories brand born from Coleman Buckley's homemade carbon hardshell harnesses. Ride Engine helped redefine what a harness could be: rigid, supportive, locked-in and built around the rider's anatomy. It changed the industry so thoroughly that almost every major brand now has a hardshell line inspired by Coleman's original idea.

YOUR LIFETIME IS IRREPLACEABLE
YOUR LIFETIME IS IRREPLACEABLE
YOUR LIFETIME IS IRREPLACEABLE
YOUR LIFETIME IS IRREPLACEABLE



Gary's role wasn't to invent the hardshell; that accolade belongs to Buckley, but to grow the brand without diluting the philosophy behind it. That's a harder task than it sounds. Many brands lose their soul when scaling. Gary's job has been to honour that origin story, translate it into broader product ranges and ensure Ride Engine remains a rider-first brand with a clear identity.

When you look at the product line, you can see that his vision is clear, the Ride Engine products all serve an exacting purpose, there is nothing superfluous there, just useful, engaging equipment to help make our sessions better.

**"THERE IS NOTHING
SUPERFLUOUS
THERE, JUST
USEFUL, ENGAGING
EQUIPMENT"**



Dare greatly. Live wild.
Your lifetime is irreplaceable.
Call the crew and ride!



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“ HIS INFLUENCE IS WOVEN THROUGH THE MODERN HISTORY OF KITEBOARDING, THROUGH FOILS, HARNESSES, COASTLINES AND COMMUNITIES. ”

A LASTING INFLUENCE ON A SPORT STILL IN MOTION

It's difficult to pinpoint one single contribution that defines Gary's influence on kiteboarding. Instead, his impact is spread across moments, decisions and connections that shaped the sport over the years.

He helped showcase northern Peru to the world at a pivotal moment. He was part of the team that made kite foiling accessible to everyday riders. He helped push Ride Engine from a garage-born idea into a global force in harness design. He embraced winging early and understood how new disciplines could revitalise the sport. And throughout it all, he remained passionate, curious and deeply connected to the riding experience.

Some people shape a sport by landing the biggest tricks. Others do it quietly, behind the scenes, by opening new doors and nudging the culture forward. Gary Siskar belongs firmly to the second group. His influence is woven through the modern history of kiteboarding, through foils, harnesses, coastlines and communities.

If you've ever glided above the water on a foil, carved a side-off wave with a kite, or tightened a hardshell harness around your waist, there's a good chance that somewhere, indirectly, you've felt the effects of the work he's done.



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RIDER AARON HADLOW
PHOTO CRAIG KOLESKY



Steven Akkersdijk has spent more than a decade riding at the sharp end of big air, pushing limits in Cape Town and standing on the podium at the world's most extreme events. These days his focus has shifted from chasing results to shaping riders, blending experience, style and precision through coaching and camps around the world. We caught up with Steven to talk progression, fear, modern kiteboarding and why slowing down might be the fastest way to ride better.



PHOTO THOMAS BURBLIES



STEVEN AKKERSDIJK

— FULL CIRCLE —

“HELI LOOPS ARE NORMAL IN CAPE TOWN. THAT TELLS YOU EVERYTHING ABOUT THE LEVEL.”

For years, if you typed “big air kite loop” into a search bar, you ended up watching Steven Akkersdijk. The Dutch rider has been part of the core of the big air era, a regular at Red Bull King of the Air, and one of the first people to make huge loops with proper style look almost casual.

Today, he is still riding at an incredibly high level, still creating some of the smoothest, most technical content on the water, but his focus has shifted. Steven is spending more time on the beach with a radio on his hat, coaching riders who want to unlock their next level, and running camps in some of the best spots on the planet.

This is the story of that shift, why coaching matters more than ever, and what you can expect if you join one of his trips.

FROM SANDY INTERN TO ELITE TEAM RIDER

Long before the podiums and the viral clips, Steven started exactly where many kitesurfers dream of starting, at the local kite school. As a teenager in the Netherlands, he took an internship at a kite centre and spent multiple seasons teaching full-time.

That early teaching background did two things. It paid for his first trips, and it gave him a deep understanding of how people actually learn. While many future pros were only thinking about their own tricks, Steven was already breaking movements down, explaining them on the beach and in the water.

PHOTO FABIAN MOSER





“WHEN CAPE TOWN IS ON, THERE IS NOWHERE ELSE LIKE IT.”

From there, the riding took over. His aggressive style on the water saw him gravitate toward fast, powerful designs like the old CORE GTS, and he became known as one of the riders who would simply “send it” no matter the conditions, before sending it even became a thing. That attitude took him to King of the Air, where he was always a threat. On his debut event, he came third,

and then had three top-four finishes, with the most recent being in 2020. He came second in the Megaloop Challenge in 2017, and these results, as well as his style on the water, established him as one of the most respected big air riders in the world.

Alongside that, his long relationship with CORE Kiteboarding grew. Steven has been part of the brand family for more than a decade. These days, you will most often see him on the Pace or Pace Pro, a fast,

playful freeride and big air-oriented shape that suits his flowing style. It might not be the highest boosting kite in the range, but the way it loops, drifts and allows him to add extra rotations, slides and blind landings is exactly what he is about on the water right now.

He still joins CORE shoots when a product fits his riding style, like the Pace content created in Brazil, and he remains on the official team list for both kite and wing, although his role has evolved from a pure competition rider to a broader mix of content creator, coach, and ambassador.

MAJESTIC MAJESTIC MAJESTIC

5:4MM

4:3MM

3:2MM



- 900 Black
- 802 Dark Grey
- 698 Dark Teal

The Majestic was born from an ongoing pursuit of performance, balancing warmth, stretch, and durability in one iconic suit. This season, we've reengineered it from the inside out with next-gen materials that transform how it feels and moves in the water, built for serious flexibility to keep you riding through the cold and beyond.

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“ I AM MORE CAUTIOUS NOW, NOT BECAUSE I CANNOT DO IT, BUT BECAUSE I UNDERSTAND THE RISK. ”

DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF FEAR

If you watch Steven ride today in Cape Town you will still see huge height, clean lines and powerful loops, but you will also see something else, discretion.

He is very honest about it. The knees are fine, he says, the real shift has happened in his head.

When you are twenty and fresh on tour, risk barely exists as a concept. You look at a forty-knot forecast and feel excitement, not calculation. Once you have been in the sport for years, once you have built a life around it, the picture changes. There are responsibilities, there is an awareness that a serious injury is not an abstract possibility; it is always just around the corner if you keep knocking at the door.

That does not mean he has stopped sending it, far from it, but it does mean he is more selective. He now often prefers the lighter Cape Town days, when he can play with different tricks, timing and style, instead of fighting survival conditions with crowded airspace at Big Bay.

Interestingly, that mindset moves very naturally into coaching. A good coach is not only someone who can do the trick, but they are also someone who knows when a rider is actually ready to try it, and when holding them back for a few more sessions might save them a painful lesson.

BACK TO HIS ROOTS, STEVEN THE COACH

In many ways, Steven's "return" to coaching is simply a loop closing. He started as an instructor, moved into full-time pro riding and competition, then circled back to teaching, this time at a much higher level.

“WHAT USED TO WIN COMPETITIONS IS NOW JUST THE ENTRY LEVEL.”

Over the past four or five years, he has steadily built up his coaching work again, running one-to-one sessions, advanced clinics and fully organised camps. The response has been strong enough that he now sees this as one of his main focuses for the coming years, alongside his content and flying.

The impact is clear. Riders write to him months after a session to say that their whole experience of the sport has changed, not because they suddenly learned a triple handle pass, but because a few targeted changes made everything feel easy again. In some cases, he has helped people who were close to quitting, because they always felt out of control, rediscover their love for kitesurfing.

WHY COACHING MATTERS FOR EVERY KITESURFER

It is easy to look at someone like Steven and think coaching is only for people chasing double loops and podiums. The reality is very different.

One of the main messages he repeats is simple: take your time. Most riders want to rush to the next thing. Beginners are desperate to put a board on before they can really fly the kite. Intermediates want to loop when their basic jump is still fifty percent guesswork.

His rule of thumb is that you should be able to perform about sixty to eighty percent of your jumps or movements in the same way before you move on. That level of consistency means the foundation is in your muscle memory, so your brain has spare bandwidth to focus on the new element, the late rotation, the grab, the loop.



PHOTO HENDRIK VAN DE EEMS



PHOTO FABIAN MOSER

“CONSISTENCY COMES BEFORE PROGRESSION, EVERY TIME.”

Without that, you are gambling. If your take-off is different every time, adding a kite loop simply stacks chaos on chaos. That is where the heavy crashes come from.

This is where good coaching makes a huge difference. An experienced eye can see where your problem really is. Often, it is not the trick you are trying to learn; it is two steps earlier.

Your edge is inconsistent, your kite timing is off, or maybe your stance is collapsing when you take off. Fix those pieces, and suddenly the trick that felt impossible arrives almost naturally.

It is also about mindset. Steven encourages riders to enjoy the process and to stop treating progression like a race. Kitesurfing is not something you need to complete in a season. If you slow down and master each stage, you will progress further and stay safe along the way.

TECHNIQUE IS KEY FROM BODY DRAG TO BOARD OFF

Because he teaches everyone from strong intermediates to advanced riders, Steven sees the whole spectrum. That perspective has shaped the way he explains technique.

For beginners struggling to ride, his advice often goes right back to the kite. Spend more time flying, body dragging, steering the kite backwards and forwards, making it playful. The more automatic your kite skills become, the easier the board will be, because you only have one new thing to think about.



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“EIGHTY PERCENT IN MUSCLE MEMORY, THEN YOU ADD SOMETHING NEW.”

At the other end of the scale, when someone arrives wanting to learn kite loops or complex big air combinations, he often pulls them back to consistent take-offs and clean, controlled boosts without rotations. Get that right, then layer in complexity in small, manageable steps.

That same building block approach is exactly how he progresses his own riding. Many of the stylish, ballet-like moves you see in his clips are not completely new concepts; they are combinations of tricks he already knows, merged and tweaked until something fresh appears.

On his YouTube channel, he is increasingly showing the journey, including the crashes and outtakes, rather than just the final landed version. It is a more honest portrayal of progression and a useful reminder that even the best riders do not get everything the first time.

CAMPS AND TRIPS, CHASING PROGRESSION AROUND THE WORLD

The natural extension of Steven's coaching is his camp programme. Throughout the year, he moves with the wind, running trips in some of the best kite locations in the world.

Cape Town is still high on his list. This current winter marks his eleventh season there, which says everything about how much he values the place. On its day, the combination of strong winds, waves and an international community of riders creates a unique environment for both riding and learning.

“COACHING IS ABOUT MAKING KITEBOARDING FUN AGAIN.”

Once the South African season winds down, he heads back to Canada, where he now lives with his wife. There, he splits his time between summer kiting, snow kiting in the colder months and paragliding in the right conditions. Spots like the Magdalen Islands and the lakes around Quebec offer surprisingly good kiting and foiling, with plenty of space and a strong sense of adventure.

Spring sees him travelling again, for example, to Egypt for flat water camps. There, he often partners with fellow pro riders, this year he is running a camp with Giel Vlugt, giving guests access to two very different but complementary coaching styles in reliable wind and easy conditions.

Later in the year, he is usually back in Brazil, following the trade winds up the coast, finding lagoons and wave spots that are perfect for structured progression. Brazil has become busy, as he admits, but it is busy for a reason; the wind probability is extremely high, and the variety of spots means you can tailor conditions to the group.

All of his camps share a few common traits. Numbers are kept manageable, so everyone gets real attention. The focus is on building a solid foundation, then nudging riders just outside their comfort zone, not throwing them into situations they are not ready for. The idea is to leave every camp not just with a few new tricks, but with better habits and a clearer understanding of how to keep progressing once you are home.





"PERSONALITY LASTS LONGER THAN PERFORMANCE."

If you are interested, check out his website and book yourself on a camp. Steven is one of the nicest guys in kiteboarding, and you will have a blast and learn a lot. You can find information about his advanced coaching and camps on his website and Instagram, and he encourages people just to send a message if they are unsure which trip might suit them best.

MORE THAN TRICKS

What stands out when you talk to Steven is that for him, coaching is not about creating copycat versions of his own riding. It is about helping people enjoy their time on the water more. Sometimes that means a cleaner back roll or a first loop, sometimes it means finally feeling in control after years of fighting the kite.

In a sport where equipment has made huge jumps in safety and performance, where the average level has risen to the point that heli loops feel normal in Cape Town, the role of good coaching is becoming more important. It is the bridge between what modern gear can do and what individual riders feel confident trying.

Steven Akkersdijk has spent more than a decade at the sharp end of progression. Now he is using that experience and his original roots as an instructor to lift everyone around him. Whether you are chasing your first upwind tacks or adding a rotation to your board off loops, there is a good chance he has been exactly where you are and knows the next step to take.

For coaching information visit
www.stevenakkersdijk.com

RIDER GIANMARIA COCCOLUTO
PHOTO KILIAN BLOT

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WORDS IAN MACKINNON PHOTOS WOO/ARLIN LADUE

The second edition of the GKA Kite World Tour Big Air Challenge in collaboration with WOO Sports delivered huge airtime and a stack of personal bests along the windy beaches of South Africa's Western Cape from January 17 to 24, 2026. The event set a series of new records and highlighted the explosive growth of team-based big air competition in our sport.



GKA X WOO SPORTS

BIG AIR CHALLENGE IN CAPE TOWN GOES XXXL



This year's challenge saw a record turnout, with 257 participants logging a total of 753 sessions—both new highs for the event. Riders used WOO sensors to record jump heights and upload their results during the competition window, adding a layer of objective data that showcased just how high kiteboarders are flying in peak conditions.

Team Duotone retained the Big Air Challenge trophy for a second year running after their top five riders combined for a total height of 149.6 metres. Standout performers included Luke Dixon and Edgar Ulrich, posting heights of over 31 metres each, helping Duotone maintain a commanding presence throughout the event.

While Duotone took the win, the highest single jump went to Julian Zens from Flysurfer, who posted an incredible 36.6 metres at Dolphin Beach. That leap stands as the highest recorded jump on a twin-tip in South Africa's history, making waves and turning heads across the globe. Zens' performance helped team Flysurfer secure second place overall with 134.5 metres.

Third place went to Team Core with a combined total of 129.9 metres for their top five athletes. The competition conditions were truly epic, with 10 brands' teams averaging more than 20 metres in jump height during the week-long contest.

Almost a third of all riders achieved personal records during the challenge, with 80 athletes setting new best heights across 114 sessions. Big air is not just about winning anymore, it is about progression, personal milestones and pushing the boundaries of what is possible on a kiteboard.

"THAT LEAP STANDS AS THE HIGHEST RECORDED JUMP ON A TWIN-TIP IN SOUTH AFRICA'S HISTORY, MAKING WAVES AND TURNING HEADS ACROSS THE GLOBE."







“ WITH THE BAR ALREADY RAISED HIGH IN 2026, IT WILL BE THRILLING TO SEE WHERE RIDERS TAKE IT NEXT SEASON ”

Among kite models earning their own accolades, Slingshot's Code NXT topped the lists with 12 personal records, followed closely by the Lacuna Alpha and Harlem Peak, each posting double-figure PR tallies across the event.

The collaboration between the GKA and

WOO Sports continues to elevate big air competition by making participation more accessible and performance metrics more transparent. Riders of all levels can compete under the same scoring system and upload sessions to contribute to their team's success, fostering a global celebration of big air kiting that transcends traditional event formats.

With the bar already raised high in 2026, it will be thrilling to see where riders take it next season, and which teams emerge as the new challengers for big heights across the world.



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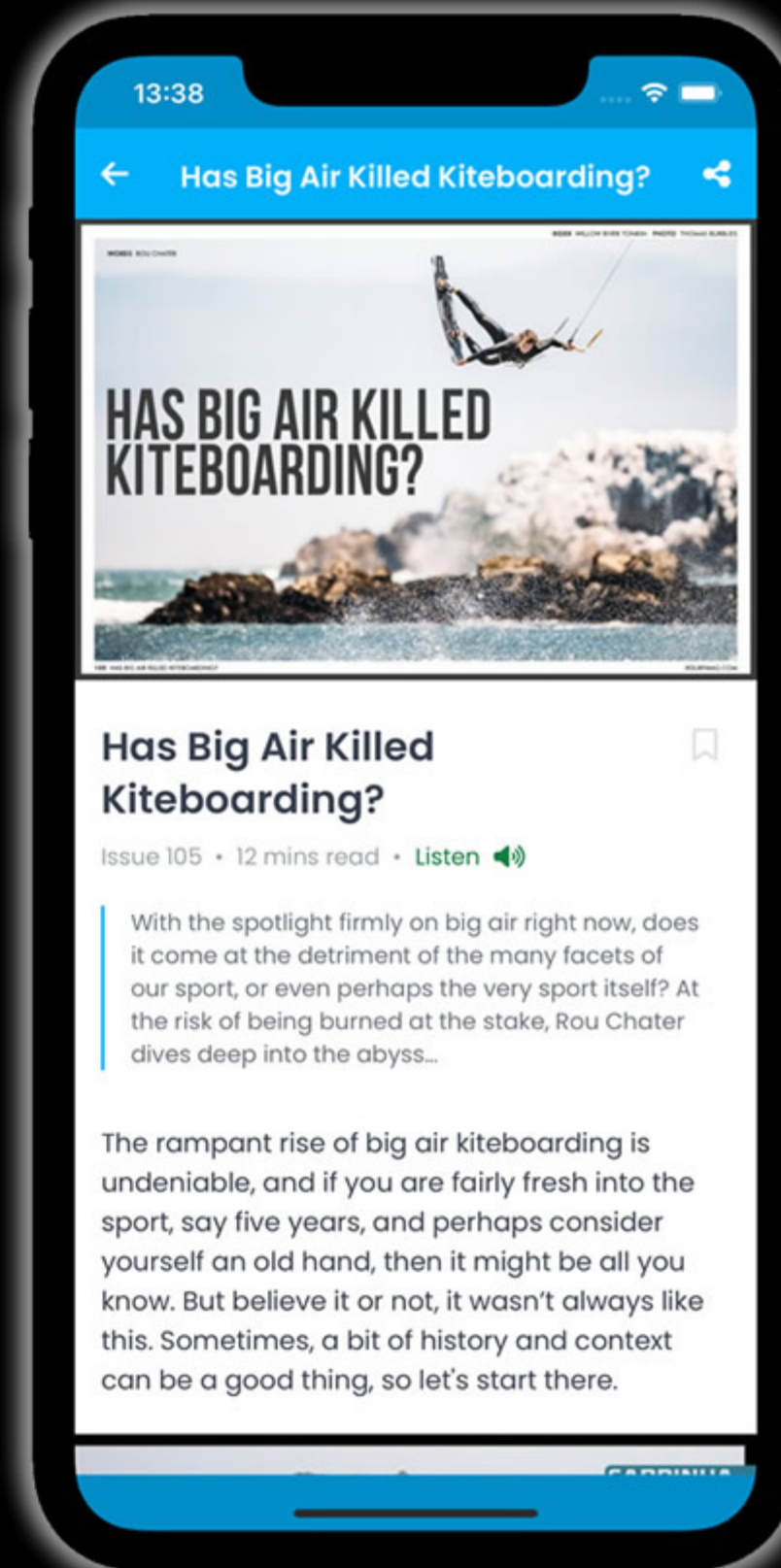
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RIDER JAMIE OVERBEEK PHOTOS ANDY TROY

In a market dominated by global production lines and polished marketing campaigns, ROODE Boards feels refreshingly grounded. Born from curiosity in the Netherlands and shaped through hands-on craftsmanship, the brand has been in development for the last four years, building and experimenting until they were 100% happy with the finished product. They are now available to you, and they are boards that Jamie Overbeek chooses to ride. ROODE is a brand that will never try to shout the loudest; instead, it builds boards with intent.

ROODE BOARDS

PERFORMANCE WITH PURPOSE



" MISTAKES WERE NOT HIDDEN; THEY WERE STUDIED. EACH ITERATION IMPROVED RESPONSE, WEIGHT BALANCE AND DURABILITY. "



ROODE is driven by a simple belief that performance and responsibility can coexist. Every decision, from shaping and lay-up to packaging and shipping, reflects that mindset. This is not a brand chasing trends. It is a brand refining a process, session by session, board by board.

FROM CURIOSITY TO CRAFT

ROODE began with a straightforward question: What if we built our own kiteboard? That question led to a workshop in Eindhoven, experimentation with materials, and countless hours refining shapes and construction methods.

In the beginning, there was no grand commercial strategy. The focus was purely on feel. How should a board respond when you load the edge hard for take-off? How should it track in the messy North Sea chop? How can it remain playful underfoot while still delivering serious lift and control?

The team quickly realised that building the boards they envisioned required more than ordering parts and assembling them. Machines had to be developed in-house. Moulds were refined repeatedly. Flex patterns were adjusted by millimetres. Mistakes were not hidden; they were studied. Each iteration improved response, weight balance and durability.

That process built more than boards; it built knowledge. Today, the same hands that shape and finish the boards are deeply involved in their design. Feedback comes from endless real-world sessions, in the cold and rough conditions of the North Sea. The result is a tight feedback loop between idea, execution and performance on the water.

BUILT IN-HOUSE, BUILT WITH INTENT

At a time when much of the industry relies on large overseas factories, ROODE builds every board in-house in the Netherlands. This decision is not romantic; it is practical. Controlling production allows for precision, consistency and constant refinement.

Advanced CNC milling ensures accuracy in shaping. Hand lay-ups ensure feel and flex are tuned carefully. The finishing process remains hands-on, because subtle details matter when you are edging hard at speed or loading for a big send.

Boards are produced to order, not in vast seasonal batches. That approach eliminates unnecessary overproduction and keeps quality control tight. There are no warehouses full of excess stock. Each board has a rider waiting for it.

The benefit of this approach is tangible. Every curve, channel and rocker line has been shaped with intention. You feel that coherence when you ride it.

PERFORMANCE FIRST

For all the emphasis on craftsmanship and responsibility, performance remains the core of ROODE's identity. These boards are built to be pushed.

On the water, the sensation is immediate. They track cleanly upwind and hold a confident edge even when conditions become demanding. Through chop, the ride feels composed rather than nervous. Load the edge aggressively, and the board responds with energy, storing power before releasing it cleanly into lift.

"LOAD THE EDGE AGGRESSIVELY, AND
THE BOARD RESPONDS WITH ENERGY"





" HE CONNECTED WITH THE WAY THE BOARDS LOAD UP AGGRESSIVELY FOR TAKE-OFF "

Pop feels direct and predictable. There is no delay between rider input and board response. At the same time, the flex profile absorbs harsh landings without feeling lifeless. That balance between stiffness and

forgiveness is where many boards struggle, yet it is where ROODE feels most dialled.

Perhaps most importantly, they feel intuitive. You do not spend sessions fighting your equipment. Instead, you spend them progressing.

That performance focus has attracted attention at the highest level of the sport. Dutch big-air rider Jamie Overbeek chose to

ride ROODE boards because of how they performed under his feet. For a rider known for sending it in serious wind and pushing technical combinations at height, equipment is non-negotiable.

Jamie's decision was not based on branding or hype. It came down to feel. He connected with the way the boards load up aggressively for take-off, the way they hold an edge at speed and the way they release cleanly off the water. When you are chasing height while maintaining control, those characteristics are critical.

" PERFORMANCE EITHER DELIVERS OR IT DOES NOT.
IN THIS CASE, IT CLEARLY DOES. "



Having a rider of Jamie's calibre choose the boards speaks volumes. At that level, there is no room for compromise. Performance either delivers or it does not. In this case, it clearly does.

SUSTAINABILITY IS KEY

Sustainability in watersports can often become a headline rather than a reality. ROODE treats it as an ongoing process.

No composite kiteboard is impact-free. The brand is open about that. Instead of claiming perfection, it focuses on improvement.

Because boards are made to order, overproduction is eliminated. Materials are sourced predominantly within Europe wherever possible, reducing transport distances compared to global supply chains. While some specialised components must travel further, the intention is always to shorten that chain without sacrificing quality.

Packaging is completely plastic-free. Boxes are produced in-house from recyclable materials and secured with cardboard strapping rather than synthetic tape. Even protective bags are biodegradable where required. It is a detail many riders might overlook, yet it reflects a broader philosophy. Responsibility does not stop at the board itself.

Material choices also reflect that mindset. ROODE incorporates bio-based epoxy resins and carefully selected components designed to lower environmental impact. Paulownia wood cores, sourced from fast-growing trees known for high carbon absorption and lightweight strength, form the heart of each board.

The brand is also investing time into exploring recycling solutions for old kiteboards. Composite products are notoriously difficult to repurpose, yet ROODE is experimenting with shredding and reprocessing techniques to extend material lifecycles. It is not a solved problem, but it is being addressed rather than ignored.

Beyond manufacturing, the company commits one percent of its annual revenue to environmental initiatives, supporting projects such as coral restoration and seagrass meadow planting. For a brand built around wind and water, giving back to marine ecosystems is a natural extension of its values.

COMMUNITY OVER NOISE

ROODE's growth has been steady rather than explosive. Instead of flooding the market, the brand encourages riders to experience the boards for themselves. Demo opportunities and direct engagement allow feedback to shape future refinements.

This openness builds trust. Riders are not treated as consumers at the end of a supply chain, but as participants in a process. Real-world testing informs design adjustments. Conversations at the beach influence subtle tweaks in flex and outline.

There is a sense of long-term thinking in this approach. Rather than chasing seasonal trends, ROODE is building a foundation based on craftsmanship and rider connection.

LOOKING FORWARD

What began as a workshop experiment has developed into a brand with clear direction. ROODE Boards sits at the intersection of local production, considered materials and high-level performance.

" INSTEAD OF FLOODING THE MARKET, THE BRAND ENCOURAGES RIDERS TO EXPERIENCE THE BOARDS FOR THEMSELVES. "

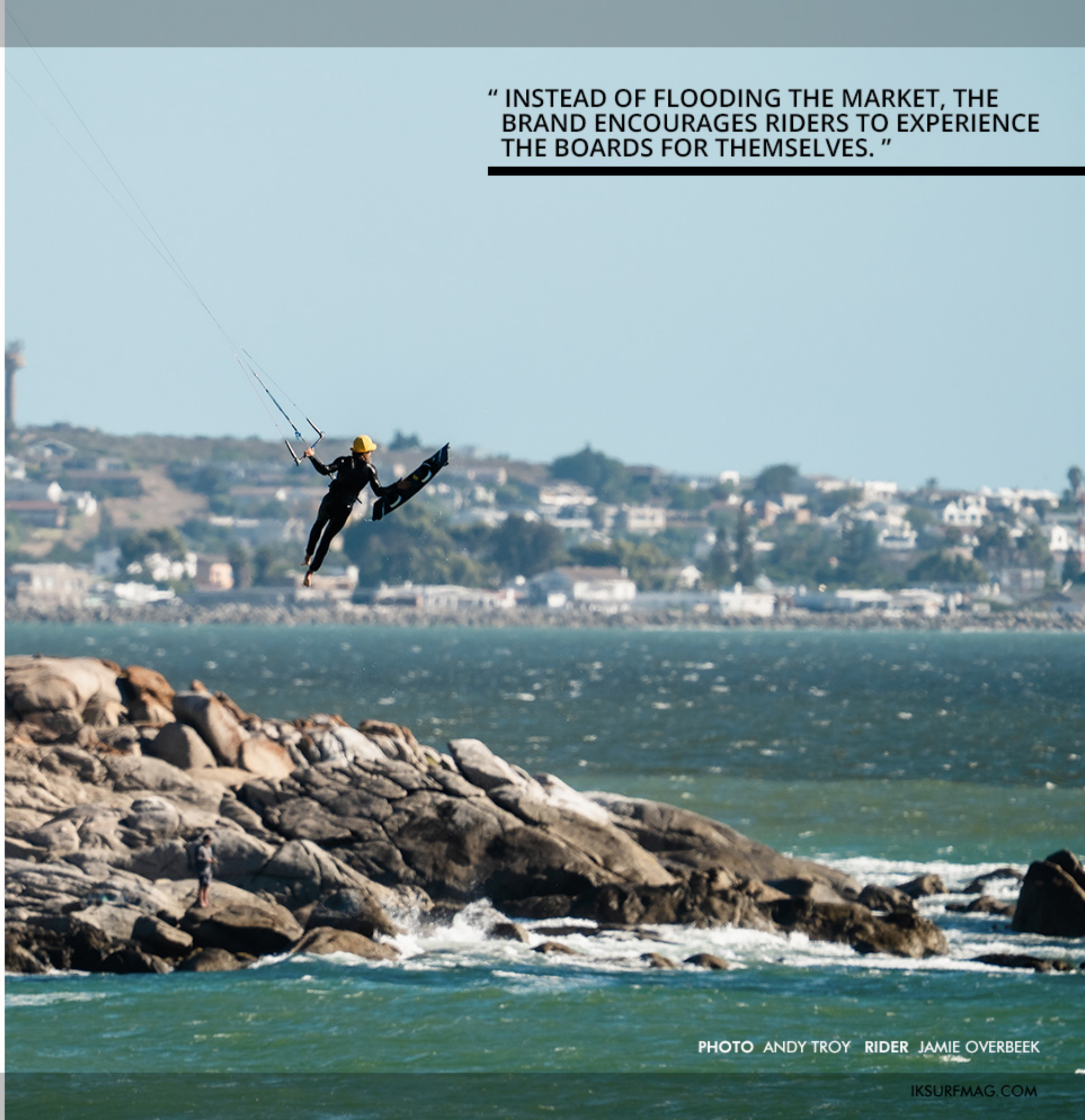


PHOTO ANDY TROY RIDER JAMIE OVERBEEK



**"IT FEELS FITTING THAT SOME BRANDS
ARE RETURNING TO FUNDAMENTALS."**

The industry is evolving. Riders are asking tougher questions about where their equipment is made and how it impacts the environment. At the same time, expectations for performance continue to rise, especially in disciplines like big air, where margins for error are slim.

ROODE's response is not to compromise one for the other. It is to refine both.

Produce locally. Build intentionally. Push performance. Improve materials. Stay transparent about challenges.

The presence of Jamie Overbeek on ROODE boards reinforces that this is not a niche project. These boards are being pushed in strong winds, loaded hard and sent high. They are proving themselves where it matters most, on the water.

In a sport defined by freedom, speed and connection to the elements, it feels fitting that some brands are returning to fundamentals. Make great boards.

Respect the environment that makes the sport possible. Stay close to the community.

ROODE Boards may still be young compared to industry giants, but their foundations are solid. Thoughtful design, in-house craftsmanship and genuine performance are not marketing angles; they are operating principles.

For riders seeking equipment that delivers when it counts and aligns with a more conscious way of building, ROODE offers a compelling option. Not noise, not exaggeration, just boards shaped with intent and tested in real wind.

And in the end, that clarity might be its greatest strength.

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WINTER 2025



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TECHNIQUE

WORDS & PHOTOS CHRISTIAN & KARINE

Sometimes it's the little things in life that give the most pleasure! With this in mind we're keeping it low this issue with a couple of moves which require absolutely no sending. First off, the rather fun and delicate Blind Downloop Transition to Toeside. Don't let the rather substantial name put you off. If you're the proud owner of a decent blind, can slide a turn and downloop, then this could be low hanging fruit in your kiting orchard. Secondly, a trip down memory lane with a move that every self-respecting kiter should have in their bag of tricks, the Popped Nose Grab, hooked in. It's a feel good move, which requires a solid pop and has the potential for your most stylish holiday snap.

Enjoy:)

C&K

2025 Clinic Calendar up on:
<http://www.ckperformanceclinics.co.uk>

KARINE AND CHRISTIAN



1 / HOW TO BLIND SLIDE DOWNLOOP TRANSITION TO TOESIDE



CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE

2 / HOW TO POP NOSE GRAB HOOKED-IN



CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



HOW TO BLIND SLIDE DOWNLOOP TRANSITION TO TOESIDE ▶

Kite - FX2 7m

Board - Ace 135

Here's a perfect transition for those of you who have a fondness of kiting in reverse! Riding blind opens the door to a whole new world of tricks and this one is a fun way to change direction without leaving the water, whilst quite possibly leaving your peers in a state of confusion. Your aim is to reverse in blind, down-loop and ride out toe-side! This works well as blind is for many the mirror opposite of your toeside. If this tickles your fancy, read on...

Having a good grasp of blind is imperative, as is having some experience with down-loops or under-turns. Being able to ride blind with both hands on the bar is a massive advantage. As such it's a good plan to trim your sweet spot a bit closer so that you can reach the bar. You'll need tension in your lines and control of both board and kit to come out of this smelling of roses. Let's start with a quick pop to blind refresher with the aim of keeping tension.

POP TO BLIND SEQUENCE 1

Position your kite no higher than 1 or 11 o'clock. You need tension, so come in on an edge, but don't push too hard upwind. Your aim is a low pop and a quick turn. However, it's still very much two movements,

the pop up and then the turn to blind. You don't want much height, as this can slow you down on landing.

Relax your edge just a smidgen, so that you can drop and pop without moving the kite. Looking at Karine you can see how she's first popped by stamping up, off her edge with both hands on the bar. Only once she's up does she release her rear hand, push the bar out, before turning her body and board. She brings her knees up to give herself room without too much height and lands upright over the board with a bit of edge. Try not to land too nose first, as this will pivot you off the wind. Once Karine lands, she drops her shoulders and commits her weight upwind and onto the balls of her feet before sheeting the bar in back to the sweet spot.



TWO HANDS PIC A

Keeping your hips and lower body still to keep your edge, you can now twist your upper body, turn your head, and get your free hand back on the bar. Karine has her head up so that her body and leg are in line, which drives the board forwards. She twists her head and shoulders to look where she's going and can now control the kite with both hands. You should be able to ride in this position, if not you won't be sufficiently in control for the move. If you can it's time for the transition...

First job, check that the coast is clear. We'd suggest you do this before popping to blind as you'll get a



better view:)

KITE UP PIC B

Just as in any form of down-loop it's always prudent to position your kite a bit higher to give yourself room and lessen the pull. You don't want to move it all the way to 12, but rather a tad too high than regrettably too low. Steer the kite up with both hands and as the kite moves, ease the bar out so that it doesn't pull you off your edge. The bonus here is that as you ease the bar out, your board will turn a little further upwind, which prepares you for the turn. Here you can see that as Karine gently moves the kite up and feathers her bar out, her board turns further upwind. This gives



her a better view of downwind, takes some speed off and sets the board up nicely for the rest of the move.

WEIGHT SHIFT PIC C

As the board slows, you'll do exactly what you do in a normal transition. Shift your weight forward towards your leading foot. As you move your weight, you're getting yourself steady and ready for the eventual pull. You can see that compared to the last photo Karine's board has flattened off from nose to tail because her weight moved forward. If her kite was lower and she was moving quicker she'd sink the nose, but because she's slowed and turned upwind everything is hunky-dory.



SLIDE & LOOP PIC D

Now that you're ready it's time. As the title suggests there are two parts to this. Firstly, you'll slide the board with your trailing foot, so that you're not on an edge. This bit is pretty simple as when you're blind the board always wants to slide. As soon as the board slides, it's your thumbs up to loop the kite. Keeping the bar on the sweet spot give it the beans, pulling down on your lead hand and pushing up on your rear hand. Here Karine's board is sliding, and she pulls the trigger on her down-loop. Game on!



LOCK IN & FOLLOW PIC E

As your kite starts to turn down, lock the bar in so that your kite continues into the loop, keeping as much pull push as you can. As the board slides, keep your weight on the balls of your feet. As if by magic you'll feel your toe-side edge bite in and the board will start to carve downwind, following the kite. Keep your eyes on the kite. Karine is watching her kite, she's on her toe side edge and is carving down and through the wind. Perfect.



LEVEL OFF PIC F

Your aim is to exit with speed, so you don't want your kite to loop all the way back up to 12. Keep your eyes on it, and once it's climbing and heading forward in the new direction you can level the bar off and fly it forwards. Once you level, it's the perfect time to let the bar out so that your kite can fly happily to the edge of the window. All the while you keep carving. Here Karine is still very much committed to carving around, her kite is climbing forward so she levels the bar and eases it out so that her kite can breathe.



G

RIDE OUT PIC G

All that's left is to open your hips, centre your weight and ride out toe-side. Karine relaxes into her usual toe side stance, drops her front hand off the bar and cruises out. Happy days.

TOP TIPS

For many of us, riding blind with two hands on the bar will already be a challenge. If this is new to you, work on this first. Trimming your sweet spot closer and only rotating your shoulders are key.

Moving on, you can then practice drifting the kite up and feathering your bar out as you would do in a conventional slide turn.

Once you're confident with these you're good to go. Just make sure that you're not overpowered and that you have plenty of space.

COMMON PROBLEMS

If you're getting pulled backwards as you go for your down-loop, it's a sure sign that you haven't turned up enough and haven't got the board sliding. Realistically you're looping from an edge! Ease the bar out and

turn your head to look at the kite, and make sure you move your bum over that leading, upwind foot.

If you're crashing your kite during the loop. Firstly, make sure it starts high enough. Secondly make sure the bar is on the sweet spot and stays on the sweet spot. If you let it out as the power comes on the kite will stop turning and crash, so lock in. However, be aware if you pull the bar in past the sweet spot the kite will stall and likely crash too!

KEYSTONES

1. Trim your sweet spot close
2. Two hands on the bar once you're blind
3. Lift kite and ease bar out to edge up
4. Shift weight
5. Pull-push and lock in watching your kite as it loops



HOW TO POP NOSE GRAB HOOKED-IN ▶

Kite - FX2 7m

Board - Ace 135

The nose grab is an absolute classic popped trick. It's guaranteed to get you buzzing and makes for a proper money shot in your holiday snaps. We're keeping things sensible and looking at the hooked in variant. This type of low altitude move is all about adding some style and as well as working deliciously in flat water, it's just begging to be thrown down of a little kicker. If it's not howling with no PB in sight, this'll put the smile right back on your face.

We're going to have a look at the approach and pop on the way to the grab, as without a decent take off you just won't get pulled into the right position. However, we are assuming that you can already pop, we're just going to ramp it up a bit. It is possible to learn this with the kite higher, as a hybrid style pop, but you will find it more difficult to get a decent tweak and your board's tail won't kick up. It's also worth noting that if you can already back hand nose grab in a jump, the movement won't be quite so alien, but who doesn't love a challenge anyway?

YOUR APPROACH IS EVERYTHING PIC A.

They say that power is nothing without control, and when it comes to popping it couldn't be more true. You can come in with all the speed and power in the world, but without control and timing you're on a hiding to nowhere. Check out this sequence and you can see the following from Karine.



-Popping is all about tension, so it's a good place to start, riding with comfortable speed on an edge with your kite around 11 or 1 o'clock. This way your kite is parked in the right place, and you can feel it. You don't want to be heading hard upwind, but you need this tension. The more power you have, the more tension you need and therefore the more upwind you'll need to point.

-Popping Stance. To pop you need to be using the curvy tail part of your board. This helps and encourages the board to carve up. You need to move your hips back a fraction and open them to get more onto your back foot. You can't pop if you're not riding the tail of your board.

-Direction. It's imperative to bear away to pop. Bearing away has two effects on your pop. Firstly, as you bear away, your kite drops a little deeper (more downwind) in the window. This gives you something to pop against and directs you in that direction once airborne, making the landing easier. Secondly, by bearing away you have time and space to drop and carve up without stopping. Try to pop from upwind and you'll find it rather hard going.

To bear away relax your legs and stand up gently over the board. Make sure you keep your hips and shoulders upwind, don't bend over like those freestyle pros! The more upwind your initial approach, the further you'll need to bear off.



-Timing. The aim is to do all of the above in a dynamic way, changing direction sufficiently and quickly enough to move the kite and drop tension so that you can pop. However, avoid leaning forward and carving off the wind on your toe-side edge, as this will then make it harder to get back on your heels and carve up. Final thought. You need to keep your bar around the sweet spot. You're changing direction to dump power. If you push the bar out, your kite will fly forward towards the edge of the window and you'll have nothing to pop against!

DYNAMIC CARVE PIC B

Now that you're set up you need to get a wiggle on and carve back up. To carve you need to drop your bum low, drive through your legs, forcing the board against the water, so that it'll turn back upwind. You can see that Karine now feathers her bar out so that she can sit her derriere down. She turns her head gently to look where she wants to go and keeps her

front leg rigid (not to be confused with locked out straight. With her bum low she resists through her legs and the board carves up. Don't lean your shoulders back as your drop, as this will make you pull on the bar. In essence as long as you're using the tail, it's just a matter of getting back on your edge whilst maintaining this position.

POP – OWN IT PIC C

We say this for every pop move, you have to make it happen and you decide when it happens. If you wait for something, nothing happens! For this move you want a mean pop so that you can get into a shifty-esque position. That's why your approach and carve are so important. Get them right and you're in the perfect position to stamp against your board and pop yourself off the water. You can see her that Karine's rear leg has extended, she's given it 180% against her back leg. Timing wise it's better to pop too early than too late, or else you'll slow down too much.



D



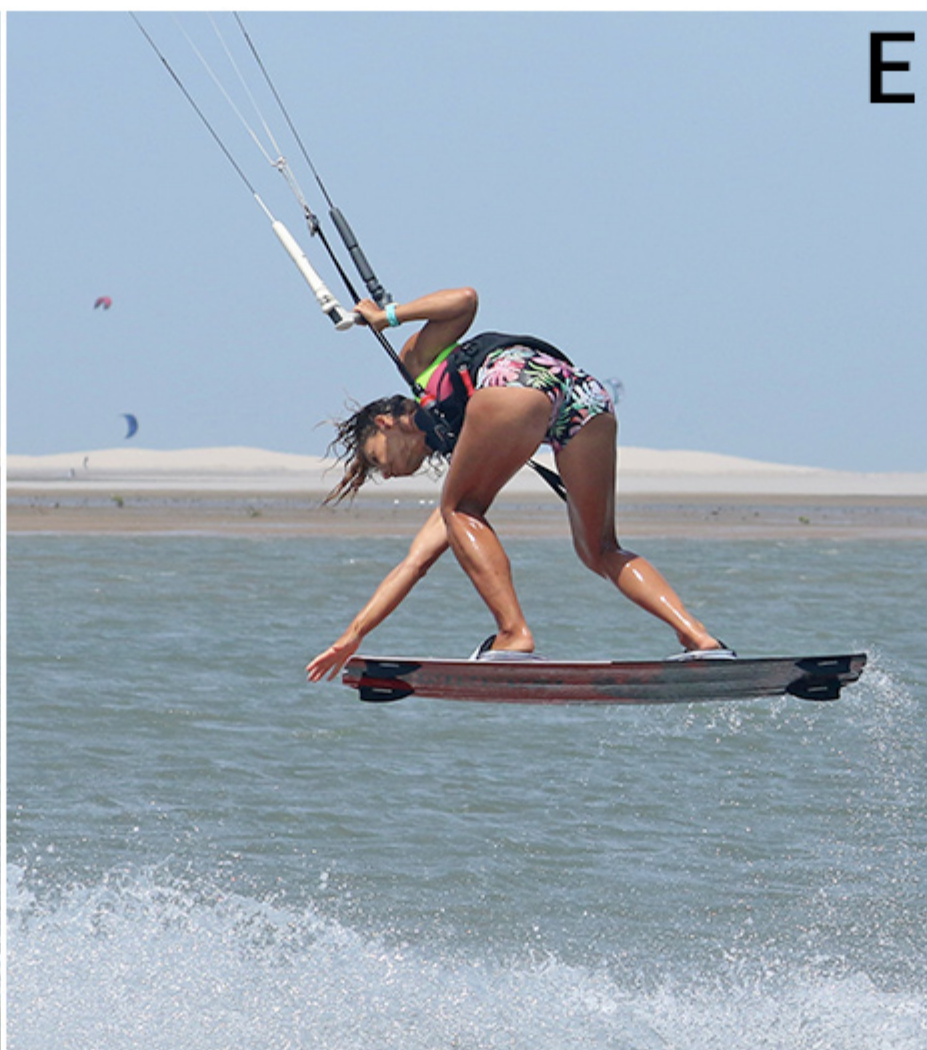
As you pop, leave the bar on the sweet spot, don't pull. You've got enough on your plate resisting against your carve without having to deal with extra pull from the kite.

As you pop release your back hand and bring your front knee up.

UPPER BODY TWIST PIC D

You're hooked in, you've popped and somehow, you're supposed to reach the nose of your board. It may seem like Twister on steroids, but the nose is well within reach if you take the right, but not the most direct path. First off, your centre line and

E



harness are in the way. You can't reach through, so you need to drop your head and twist your rear shoulder down and around. It seems counter intuitive, but you're rolling towards the water, not reaching for the nose!

LOWER BODY TWIST PIC E

The combined effect of the board popping up of the water, the kite pulling you forward and you dropping and twisting. By not aiming for the board, Karine's hand is now pretty close. Here you can see what's going on. Firstly, Karine has dropped and twisted her body as above. Secondly, she is now pulling her front

F



knee under and across her body, twisting her hips and lower body in the opposite direction of her upper body. This brings everything closer.

GRAB PIC F

Your aim, the holy grail, a nose grab. With the two hemispheres of your body twisting against each other your board is now within reach. It's worth noting that Karine's bar is still out on the sweet spot. If you pull the bar in, it's impossible to twist. This action really feels good, and although it'll be over in the blink of an eye, feeling the board kick up behind you as you tickle its nose is really quite sublime.



G

GRAVITY PIC G

Now before we get too ethereal, you will be coming quickly back down to earth. The good news is that as long as you release your grab and lift your head, your board will drop underneath you and you should be able to stomp the landing. You can see that Karine's board is swinging underneath her and with her momentum directed off the wind from her initial approach the landing should be comfortable.

TOP TIPS

First and foremost, you should try the twists and grab on land. If you don't understand the movement, you'll struggle to get the grab in the extremely short time you have from your pop.

To start with you can position the kite higher or go for a hybrid pop with a tiny bit of kite movement to give yourself more time offered by the kite to get the grab.

Check out the full sequence and have a look at the video on the IKSURFMAG channel.

COMMON PROBLEMS

If your board is not kicking up behind you, you're not getting enough pop. Throwing yourself forward doesn't help, but kicking yourself upwind against your edge does.

If you're twisting fine but still missing the grab, try extending your back leg. This should tilt the nose up a touch, whereas if you pull your back leg up, it'll tip the nose away from you.

KEYSTONES

1. Approach on an edge with kite around 11 or 1, hips back in popping stance
2. Bear away
3. Carve and pop hard
4. Release back hand and twist down
5. Lift knee and twist across - Grab



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BECOME A SUPPORTER

TRIED & TESTED

For Issue 114 of IKSURFMAG, the team put the latest ION Seek Select 5.5/4.5mm Hood Front Zip wetsuit through its paces in some freezing conditions. They were also testing the all-new Mystic Legacy Helmet and the Ride Engine Air Box Mini electric pump!

SELECT
SEEK

BRAND ION

MODEL SEEK SELECT 5.5/4.5 HOOD FRONT ZIP

YEAR 2026



"THE BUILD
QUALITY HERE IS
SECOND TO NONE.
YOU WON'T BE
DISAPPOINTED!"



TO SEE MORE PHOTOS,
CLICK [HERE](#)

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE,
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AT A GLANCE

The Seek Select 5.5/4.5 Hood Front Zip sits right at the top of the ION wetsuit range, and it feels every bit the flagship model the moment you put it on.

This is a premium cold water suit. The recycled inner jersey adds some welcome eco credentials, while the generous graphene warmth lining runs through the legs, chest and back, targeting the areas that matter most when the temperature drops. The integrated hood is part of the package, making this a serious winter option for riders who refuse to sit out the cold months. This is a new suit for the 2026 season, and it replaces the older 6/4 that many readers will know I love.

That was one of the warmest suits on the market that still had plenty of flexibility. I'd been wearing it for years, so I was keen to see how this new version stacked up. It's slightly thinner, so it should be more flexible, but will the missing 0.5 mm lose any of the heat? It's great to see it's fully taped on the inside and the outside, helping to massively reduce any water ingress.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



BRAND MYSTIC

MODEL LEGACY

YEAR 2026



"STYLISH,
COMPACT AND
INSPIRES
CONFIDENCE
WITHOUT FEELING
BULKY"



TO SEE MORE PHOTOS,
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AT A GLANCE

The Legacy Helmet follows in the footsteps of the much-loved Impact Cap in the Mystic range, and builds on that foundation with one key upgrade, a hard shell exterior.

Where the Impact Cap focused on low-profile, soft-shell impact protection, the Legacy adds increased resistance to sharper objects such as fins and foils. In a world of big air and high-speed crashes, that extra layer of protection makes a lot of sense.

It remains sleek, minimal and stylish, with a shape designed to suit a wide range of head sizes. On first impression, it feels snug, secure and confidence-inspiring.

ON THE WATER

I was a big fan of the Impact Cap, so this had a lot to live up to. Thankfully, it delivers.

The low-profile design is what really sets it apart. When you are riding, you barely notice you have it on. During wipeouts, there is no heavy, top-loaded sensation and no neck strain. It genuinely feels closer to wearing a neoprene hood than a traditional helmet,

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



BRAND RIDE ENGINE

MODEL AIR BOX MINI

YEAR 2026



"IT'S WORTH
EVERY PENNY AND
IS REALLY GOING
TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE TO
YOUR SESSIONS"



TO SEE MORE PHOTOS,
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TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE,
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AT A GLANCE

The Air Box Mini is Ride Engine's new offering in the electric pump game, and at just 900 grams, it is genuinely travel-friendly. It is around 35% smaller than the predecessor, and it takes up far less room in your bag than a standard manual pump and is light enough for it not to be a concern in a packed bag full of gear.

The Build quality is excellent. It feels solid, well finished and comes with a proper set of valve adapters that have worked flawlessly across every kite and wing I tested. With a maximum pressure of 20 PSI, it is not just for kites either; it will comfortably handle higher-pressure wings and make short work of your SUP.

Battery life is impressive. After inflating multiple kites and wings during testing, I was still sitting at around 50% charge. Even more impressive is that it is 20-30% faster on average than the previous version; the new brushless electric motors are much more efficient. This makes it far more practical than many electric pumps I have used in the past.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



FORTALEZA

MANCORA

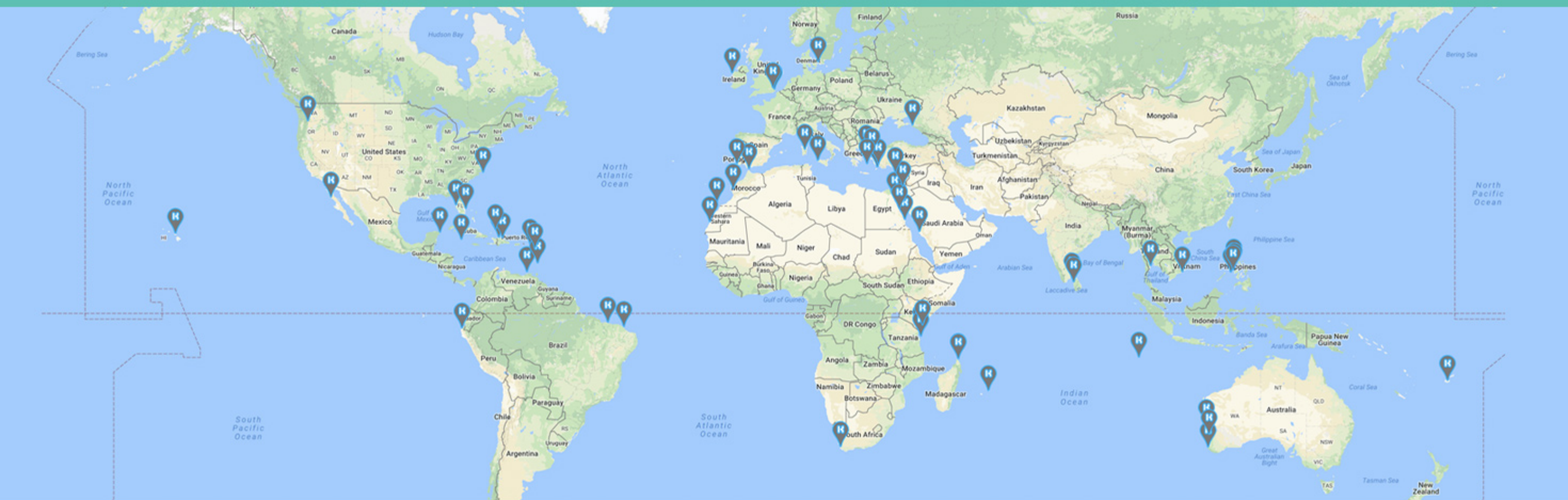
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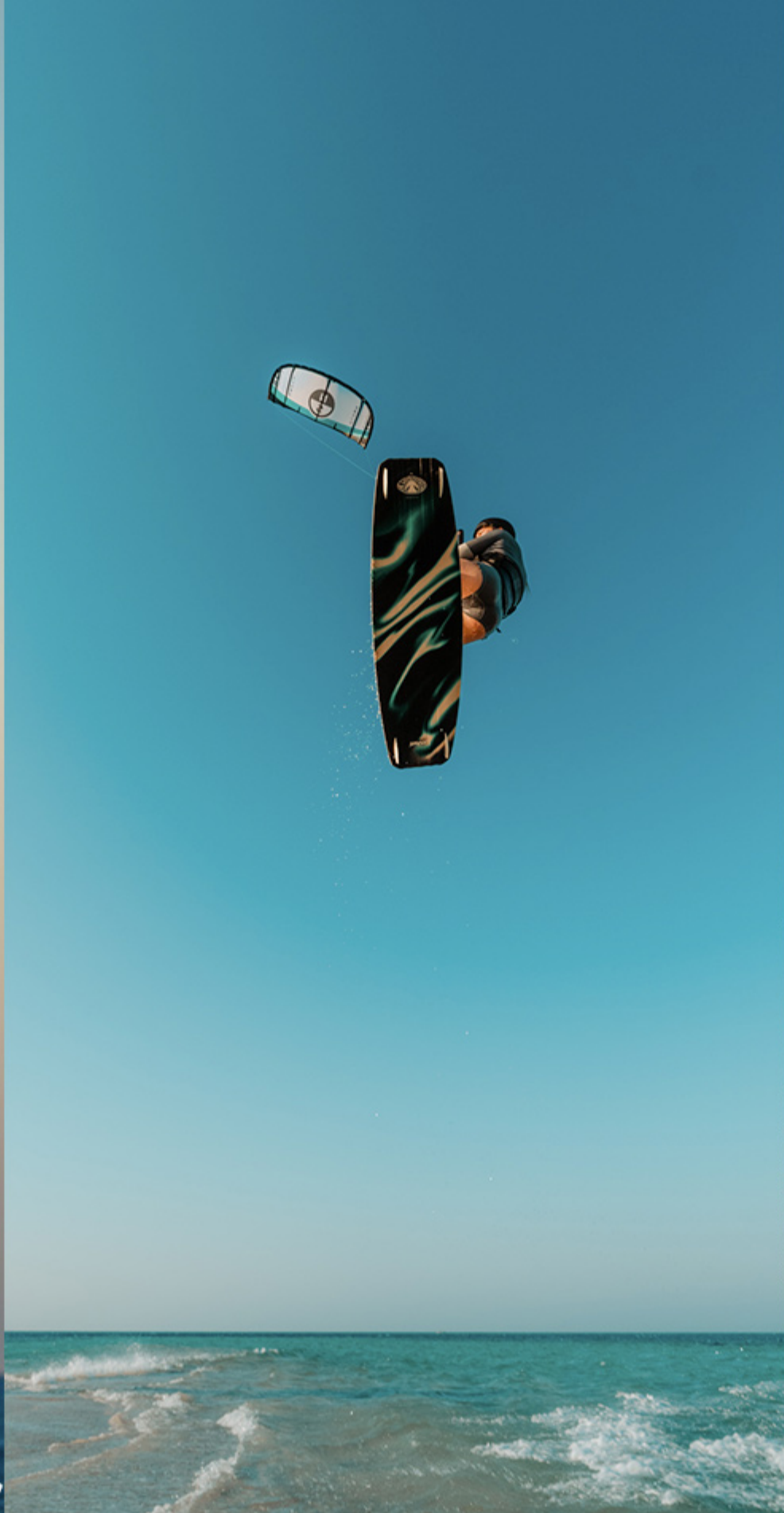
CAPE TOWN

MAUI



More shots with no particular place to go this issue,
feast your eyes!

Lightroom



THE LIEUWE CREW HAVE BEEN SCORING SOME SESSIONS!

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!

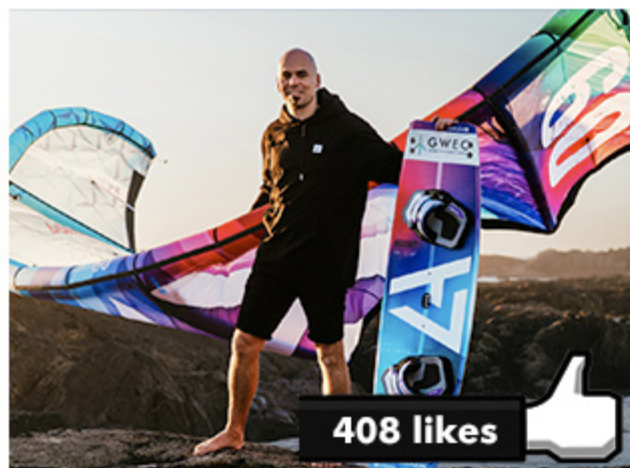
Put the popcorn on, it's Movie Night!

MOVIE NIGHT

#1

THE KITE POD #6 LEWIS CRATHERN

Lewis Crathern opens up about his move from long-time Duotone team rider to Harlem, a smaller sustainability-focused brand, reflecting on community, competition and how kiteboarding can inspire positive change both on and off the water.

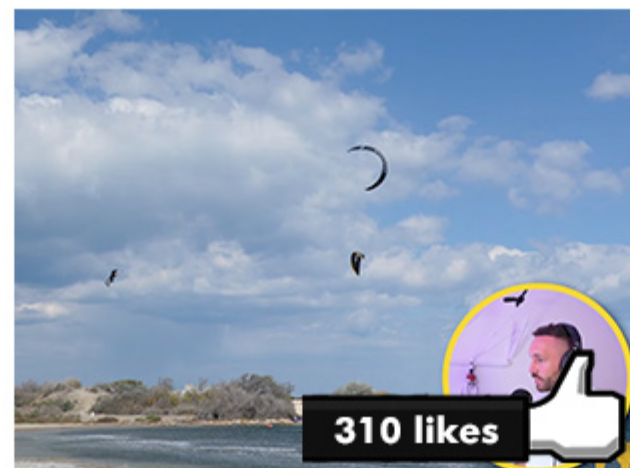


[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2

HOW TO KITELOOP LATE BACKROLL

Want to stay safe and still look good? This tutorial breaks down the key ingredients of a proper kite loop late back roll, covering rotation speed, timing and kite control, with video analysis to help dial it in.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#3

OZONE EDGE VT AND EDGE VT ULTRA X 2026 REVIEW

Rou Chater takes a closer look at the new Ozone Edge VT and Edge VT Ultra X, sharing his on-the-water impressions and insights into performance, feel and rider suitability.

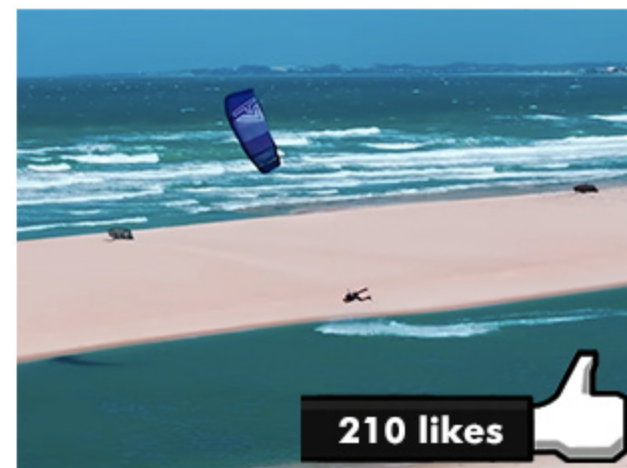


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#4

AARON HADLOW X HADLOW PRO // TAIBA 2025

Back to Taiba Lagoon with a C-kite for the first time in years, Aaron Hadlow returns to freestyle with his Harlem Hadlow Pro setup, revisiting old tricks and throwing new handle passes with pure stoke.



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