The Kiteboarder magazine

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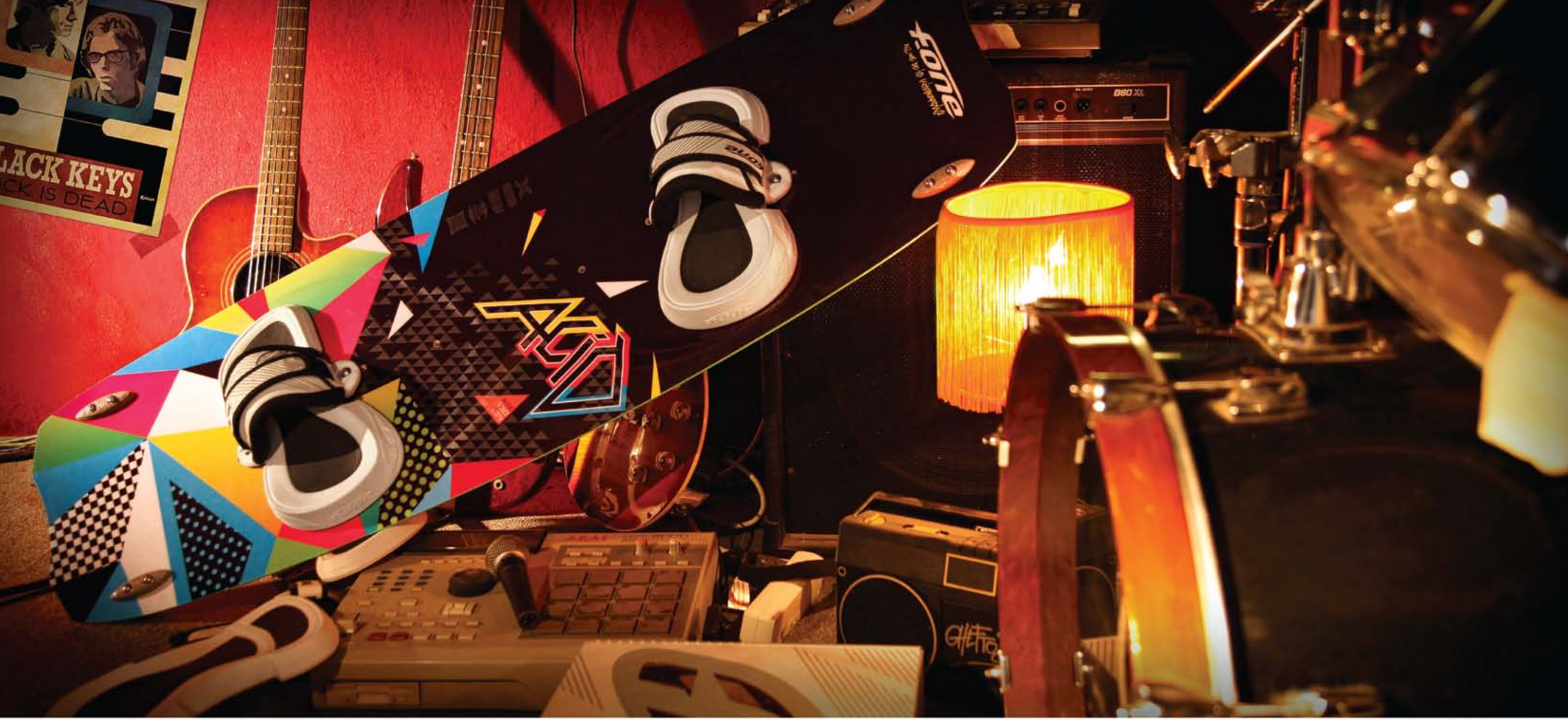

UNI BOX
50 MM FINS

ACID :
The ACID is THE New-School freestyle board. New for 2011, we added on the ACID the Twist Cross Control technology. The cross is the perfect add-on to the ACID double concave bottom. The cross gives the board better control when edging and landing tricks. The pop is more aggressive, precise and effective without taking away from the comfort and flex of the board.

UNIBOX :
The new and patented UNIBOX system and RESPONSE fins have a radical effect on the new ACID: the asymmetrical profile improves the general ride and early planning. However, it is the flex of the RESPONSE fins that gives amazing rail-grip as well as pop and forgiveness on heavy freestyle landings. The fins actually twist under pressure which alleviates pressure at the same time as keeping control.

TRAX

TX4

SK8

ACID

NEXT

Photo: David DeVries Rider: Peter Schiebel

The Kiteboarder magazine

Liquid Force rider Jan Schiegnitz called this session at Harmanus in South Africa the best session of his life. Photo Jens Hogenkamp

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THINK

No Need to Pout

As the Editor of this magazine, I have been lucky enough to travel to many amazing places to go kiteboarding over the past year. At first, I would spend the days and weeks leading up to trips thinking about how much riding I was going to do and how incredible the kiteboarding was going to be. Over the past few months though, I've begun to look at trips in a different way. Now, it's not necessarily the kiteboarding that I anticipate the most. Instead, it's the act of traveling itself, seeing new places, meeting new people, and seeing old friends again.

Sometimes the most memorable parts of a kiteboarding trip don't involve kiteboarding at all. Photo Craig Lumpp

Kiteboarding is a wind-driven sport, and that means that we need wind to ride. Unfortunately, as all too many of us know, the wind can shut off at even the most dependable locations. There are few things more frustrating than traveling halfway across the world for the perfect kiteboarding session, only to arrive to hear the classic "You should have been here last week." There is nothing that can guarantee that the wind will blow at a certain time and in a certain place. When the wind doesn't blow, I have seen kiteboarders spend days sitting on windless beaches with kites inflated, waiting for wind that never arrives. I've definitely been guilty of doing the same. By being determined to only go kiteboarding when on trips, we are setting ourselves up for extreme disappointment if the wind doesn't blow. Kiteboarders have to be just about the only group of people who travel to beautiful exotic locations and then spend the whole time pouting when the weather is perfect for doing anything other than kiteboarding.

Now don't get me wrong. We all love to ride and spend as much time on the water as possible. I'm not saying that I love to ride any less now than in the past, but when I think back on the kiteboarding trips I've been on, it's not the actual kiteboarding that stands out in my memory. It's the friends I've made and the things we've done between kiteboarding sessions that I think the most fondly of. Many of the best kiteboarding destinations are also great for a number of other activities. We just need to make sure we are open to the possibility of doing something other than kiteboarding when traveling.

Much of the traveling I do is to attend kiteboarding events, which have become something similar to large family reunions for me. Some of my closest friends are people I have met on these trips. We share the same passions and enjoy the same activities, but these are friends that I might only see once or twice a year. It's great to get out on the water with these friends, but it's also great to enjoy a beer on the beach, eat good food, and explore whatever area we happen to be in. I'm still recovering from the 2011 La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo as I write this and it's the memories of what we did off the water that I keep thinking back on despite the many kiteboarding sessions I scored in perfect conditions.

Next time you find yourself pouting in a beautiful new location because the wind isn't blowing, try to take a step back. Kiteboarding may be our passion, but there is a lot more to life than riding.

The Kiteboarder magazine

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Send your submission to editor@thekiteboarder.com

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The new Kitehero Fin Mount is a solid way to attach your GoPro to your twin tip. Photo Jim Stringfellow

By Ryan Roberts/www.kitehero.com

GET FOCUSED!

In the past, it was rare to see POV kiteboarding photos or video because very few people owned waterproof cameras they could take out on the water. Mounting a video camera on a kiteboarder used to be a complicated process that involved custom-made equipment and a lot of trial and error. Today, it seems like almost every kiteboarder out there owns a GoPro camera and an assortment of mounts, which has made it possible for anyone to capture interesting photos and video while they ride. However, the number of different mounting options and camera settings can be a little overwhelming. Additionally, there is a new line of cameras from Contour that are also suitable to use for kiteboarding, so it can be a bit of a challenge to figure out exactly what you need to capture your kiteboarding experiences.

Both the GoPro and Contour cameras produce a killer point of view and each one has a handful of different mounting options. GoPro uses a quick release system and Contour uses what they call a T-Rail. Both systems offer waterproof housings. Currently, Contour only makes a case for the Contour HD Video Camera, but one for the Contour GPS is rumored to be coming soon. Both cameras are really simple to use and include a wide range of photo and video settings to choose from. For shooting photos or video we suggest using a large memory card (at least 8GB) and make sure you pick one with a high write speed (Class 6 or higher). Skimping out on a less expensive card will cause the videos to end up really choppy after being recorded because the memory card can't keep up with the camera.

For clarity while riding, putting RainX on your housing helps keep water off or you can use the same method surf photographers use: Spit on it. As weird as it sounds, spitting on and licking the port on the housing works really well for keeping drops from forming on the lens. For close up action, the 1280x960 resolution is usually best. If hard drive space is not an issue, set it to 1920x1080 to capture the true HD experience. If you think you will want to show some of your video in slow motion, 1280x720 at 60 frames per second will allow you to do that without sacrificing quality. The viewing angle on Contour cameras is 135° and GoPro has a 170° ultra wide angle in WVGA, 720, or 960 modes, and a 127° wide angle in 1080 mode. A big advantage of the Contour HD is that the lens can be rotated to any angle, while the GoPro has a fixed lens.

Brandon Scheid shows us the view from the Kitehero Line Mount. Photo Brandon Scheid

BOARD MOUNTS

For mounting a GoPro to your twin tip, the all new Kitehero Fin Mount is a much safer and more secure alternative solution to GoPro's adhesive disk mount. Utilizing the standard fin holes on virtually any kiteboard or wakeboard, the durable low profile plastic base gives riders an unobtrusive way to mount a camera to their deck. When mounting the GoPro to their board, one of the biggest problems users were experiencing was housing failures. Riders were either breaking latches, housings, mounts, or just simply losing their camera completely. After months of development on a new mount solution, we came up with a unique way to encapsulate the GoPro housing in a durable shell that secures the camera by nesting the housing and holding it by the body of the housing rather than putting stress on the two mounting ears. Kiteboarding is an extreme sport and water impacts can put excessive forces on your boards. This mount holds the camera sideways, which allows the user to position it close to the rider while giving the ability to get the complete wide angle view all the way up to the kite. The new fin mount utilizes the fin hole screws, which is a standard within the kiteboarding and wakeboarding industries. When using this new mount, you should get new screws that are approximately ¼" longer to accommodate for the new thickness of the mounting system.

As far as surfboard mounts go, both GoPro and Contour have a sticky disk system which allows you to mount your camera system to just about any decently flat surface. Mounting the disk far enough away from the rider on the nose of the board will give you a full view. On shorter twin-tip kiteboards we have found it a little bit harder to capture everything at once. The only disadvantage to this setup is that the sticky disk can possibly ruin a surfboard if you try to remove it.

RECORD WHAT YOU SEE

Helmet mounts have also been really popular with riders. GoPro offers two types of helmet mounts: A vented helmet strap and slightly curved sticky helmet mounts. Contour and GoPro both offer helmet camera systems. GoPro has a $299.00 retail price point on their HD Helmet Hero package and Contour offers a vented helmet strap and sticky low profile mounts for either the left or right side of a helmet. The Contour GPS is $349.99 and the standard HD camera is $279.99, with no mounts included with either camera. However, the offset in retail price for Contour HD systems gives riders the ability to purchase the individual mounts they need.

RECORD YOURSELF

The Kitehero Line Mount is designed to work with four or five line kites and can be set up in just a few minutes. Its lightweight design and positioning keeps your photos and videos free from obstructions without interfering with your ride. New to our lineup is a line mount system for the Contour HD camera. Regardless of the camera, the point of view from the line mount is a unique way of capturing your experience with photos and videos. On some kites, the mounting point is just far enough up that it captures a full view of everything going on.

Wherever you choose to mount your GoPro or Contour camera, you can almost be guaranteed to get interesting photos or video that would have been almost impossible to do just a few years ago.

Don't forget to send your best kiteboarding POV shots to paul@thekiteboarder.com. You might just find yourself featured in the Local Homies section of this magazine.

MORE INFORMATION:
http://www.kitehero.com
http://www.gopro.com
http://www.contour.com

Cape Hatteras provides miles of riding in knee-deep water, perfect for a demo event! Photo courtesy KHK

KITEXPO COMING TO HATTERAS

By TKB Staff

The Kiteboarder Magazine has partnered with Kitty Hawk Kites to bring the first ever KiteXpo demo event to the East Coast. From May 28-30, 2011, experienced riders will be able to try out all the latest 2011 kiteboarding and SUP gear and accessories from participating vendors at Kitty Hawk Kites and Waves Resort in Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. For beginners, informational seminars will be held throughout the weekend. Pros will also be conducting clinics. We expect a lot of talent to be in town in preparation for the Triple S the following week. SUP races, nightly parties, daily raffles, and more are planned for this first annual event which will round out The Kiteboarder's KiteXpo event schedule for the year.

Kitty Hawk Kites and Waves Village are located in Rondanthe. The resort features nine luxury sound-front condos, each with more than 1,600 square feet of living space. Every unit features three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a full kitchen, dining area, living room, four television sets with DVDs, and a private balcony with a hot tub overlooking the Pamlico Sound. Condos can also be partially rented out for a single room. On-site shopping options include Kitty Hawk Kites, Life is Good, Forbes Candies, Route 12 Coffee & Tea Company, and Good Winds Seafood and Wine Bar. The Kitty Hawk Kites Kiteboarding Center is at the heart of the resort which boasts a spacious launch site, air compressors, outdoor showers, and a seasoned full-time staff. See **www.thekitexpo.com** and **www.thekiteboarder.com** for full details and updates.

This year's Pismo Beach KiteXpo has been moved to April. Photo Susan Benaron

TKB KITEXPO SCHEDULE:

PISMO BEACH KITEXPO; Pismo Beach, CA, April 22-24, 2011
Pure kite and SUP demo event, Saturday evening beach bonfire/BBQ with live music, pro rider beach clinics, and daily raffles. ***This year's event is also a fundraiser for event founder Kinsley ThomasWong.***
www.xtremebigair.com/kitexpo

HATTERAS KITEXPO; Rodanthe, NC, May 28-30, 2011
Pure kite and SUP demo event, nightly entertainment, beginner seminars, pro rider beach clinics, and daily raffles ***In cooperation with Kitty Hawk Kites and Waves Village.***
www.kittyhawk.com

LA VENTANA CLASSIC AND KITEXPO; La Ventana, Mexico, January 18-22, 2012; January 15-18: Early week pro clinics, community projects; January 18-22: Main event with kite and SUP demos and competitions, nightly entertainment, and daily raffles. This is a fundraiser for the local schools and community projects. ***In cooperation with Palapas Ventana.*** **www.laventanaclassicbaja.com**

IKA TEAMS UP WITH KSP FOR WORLD WAVE TOUR

By TKB Staff | Photo Courtesy Sky Solbach

The KSP aims to hold events in dream locations.

The International Kiteboarding Association (IKA) has partnered with the newly formed KiteSurfPro (KSP) to create the 2011 Wave Kiteboarding Championships. To be completed in two stages, the first stage will run through the PKRA World Tour with a series of not less than six wave events scheduled for the year. The second stage, the finals, will be run by the KSP, a new tour set up by a group of the world's finest wave riders, including PKRA Wave Committee member Guilly Brandao, Mitu Monterio, Sky Solbach, and Kristin Boese.

Qualification for a spot in the KSP is only possible by competing and placing on the PKRA World Tour or by getting one of the few wildcards that will be available through application to the IKA or the local organizers. The top eight male riders and four female riders from the 2010 PKRA tour season are already qualified for the 2011 season. Another eight slots are available through the 2011 PKRA World Tour ranking, until one month before the start of the KSP. The number of participants is limited to 24 men and 12 women. Details concerning tour cards and how to apply for one of the available wild cards will be at **www.internationalkiteboarding.org**

KB4GIRLS ENTERS NEW PHASE

By TKB Staff | Photo Mirko Bennetz

After the success of their 2010 World Tour that promoted kiteboarding for girls all over the world, the KB4girls team headed by World Champion Kristin Boese is now taking their concept to a whole new level. Now established as a non-profit foundation, KB4Girls is introducing three different event types for 2011. The KB4Girls PRO events specifically target competition coaching and will motivate females to start kiteboarding on a competitive level. The KB4Girls UNITE events are going to unite females around the world and give them the opportunity to meet new female kite friends and experience a female-only environment. Lastly, the KB4Girls FOR A CAUSE events introduce fundraising events into the schedule and program by teaming up with local charitable organizations to support women and children in need.

KB4GIRLS TOUR SCHEDULE:

Philippines: March 8 – 12, 2011
Australia/QLD: April 19 – 22, 2011
Turkey: May 10 – 12, 2011
USA/CA: May 28 – 29, 2011
Netherlands: June 17 – 18, 2011
United Kingdom: June 23 – 26, 2011
Germany: July 8 – 10, 2011
USA/OR: July 16 , 2011
USA/NY, September 16-18, 2011
Australia/WA, December 16 – 18, 2011

The 2011 tour will cover a total of 10 events on four different continents and a total of three beginner clinics will be included to give females that have never been in touch with kiteboarding before the chance to get into the sport. For further information about ambassadors and partners, support options, the 2011 KB4Girls event venues, online registration, and much more go to: **www.KB4Girls.org**

SMACK

Courtesy SPIkiteroundup

Organization of the 2011 SPI Kite Round up is in full swing. Shortened to a 5-day event, new dates are set for May 18-22, 2011. This year's event features an industry-wide product demo and five signature contests including speed trails, long jump mega loop big air contest, max spin old school big air freestyle contest, the revival of Boarder X course racing, and a freestyle contest incorporating a slider park. Be sure to mark your calendars for one of the biggest North American kiteboarding events in consistently windy South Padre, Texas. For more information, lodging deals, and registration, visit **www.spikiteroundup.com**

Photo Colby Haase

Look for the single light! If you've never experienced a Baja hot dog, you are missing out on one of life's greatest culinary treats. At the recent La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo, hot dog expert Anna Stevens of Palapas Ventana gave us a tour of the different levels dogs available, ranging from your basic level 1 dog all the way to level 6 or more. For a good laugh and the inside scoop on where the best dogs are in La Ventana, check out the video section at **www.thekiteboarder.com**

Photo DiNG

Wainman Hawaii is proud to announce that Hannah Whitley, two-time British Kitesurf Pro Ladies Champion has joined the

INSIDE JOB

Photo Pilar Woodman

DAVID HASSELL

COMPANY: Kite Adventures (*http://kiteadventures.com*)
JOB TITLE: Co-Founder **YEARS IN INDUSTRY:** 7
WORDS OF WISDOM: If it inspires you, go for it!
YEARS KITEBOARDING: 8 **KITE:** Best Waroo/Nemesis
BOARDS: Aggression 128 twin tip, 6' Neptune Surfboard

How would you describe your job at Kite Adventures? My job at this stage is primarily as an advisor and director. Initially, I helped start the company with Alberto Duarte and my now ex-wife Jessie Simon, as I was focused on an Internet advertising company I'd founded in NYC. After leaving that company, I took over running Kite Adventures for a number of years and then brought on a new partner, Dan Tealdi, to head up sales and marketing here in the US. He now effectively runs the company from here and Alberto runs our Brazilian operations and coordinates our tours.

What do you do outside of Kite Adventures? I lead entrepreneurs and their teams through one-day strategy retreats through *discoveryourstrategy.com* and have a software startup focused on helping companies have more open communication.

Why did you decide to start a kiteboarding travel company? Why Brazil? In late 2001 I ended up living with two Brazilians in NYC. I told them I would be there for a maximum of three months, but was still there nearly 4 years later. I quickly fell in love with Brazilian culture and started traveling there to explore. I met Alberto Duarte, who would come to NYC every summer to make money working at some of NYC's most exclusive restaurants and then return to Brazil for the rest of the year to kitesurf. I recall thinking, "Wow, this guy has got it figured out!" A few months later we co-founded Kite Adventures. At the time, I couldn't even go upwind! I was hooked on the sport, saw that the sport was growing exponentially, and was ready to create the most extraordinary adventure trip we could imagine. We'd heard about the amazingly consistent wind along the northeast coast of Brazil and the ability to drive on the beach. We discovered that windsurfing was popular in a few spots, but the rest of the coast was perfect for kiting and nobody was there! Since kite gear is so portable, we realized we could create a downwind trip for kiters akin to what heli-ski operators do for skiers.

What is your typical day at the office like? Is there such a thing? There really is no such thing for me. When I'm in Brazil on tours, I'll usually wake up, mediate, check email, and go kite with our clients. Back home, I keep busy juggling work on my various companies.

Do you see the demand for kiteboarding-specific travel as growing? Who are the riders who go on trips with Kite Adventures? I do see it growing. The sport keeps expanding, and at least in Silicon Valley I find many successful professionals are getting into kiting (entrepreneurs, doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc.). Our customers tend to be intermediate and advanced riders who don't want to waste time trying to figure out where to go, who's going to drive, and dealing with the language. Since we have a 4x4 driver for every 3-4 kiters, they can just keep going downwind. We maximize their time on the water and make sure they're in the right spot at the right tide away from any crowds.

How has kiteboarding changed since you started Kite Adventures? When we started, there were only C-kites, so we saw the rapid evolution of kites from the bow kites to a wide range of hybrids and other designs. The evolution made the sport much safer, more accessible, and also made it possible to travel with fewer kites. When we started, we used to have the Cauipe lagoon near Cumbuco almost to ourselves. Now it's one of the most sought-after flat water spots in the world and is often crowded, so we've had to get good at timing that particular spot and finding other great spots that many people don't know about. Thankfully we've got the entire coastline and 4x4s to get anywhere we want to go.

Is Kite Adventures planning on expanding to locations outside of Brazil? We actually did early on. At one point we were running tours to Thailand, Vietnam, Venezuela, Sadregna, and Greece. We stopped after we realized that none of the other locations even came close to the experience in Brazil, where we're able to cover about 300 km of downwind terrain over a 10-day trip. The unique combination of 85° air, 80° ocean water, 24/7 side-onshore wind, the ability to drive on the beach, amazing food, and beautiful people make it an experience we just haven't been able to replicate anywhere else.

What is the best part of your job? The best part of my job is the people I get to meet. I'm still good friends with many of our former customers. One is an advisor to my new company and another runs all sales and marketing for Kite Adventures.

What advice do you have for someone that wants to work in the industry? My advice is that if you have a vision to create something that you're super passionate about and that people tell you they'd really value, then go for it! Make sure you talk to as many people in the industry as you can to really understand the upsides and downsides and what work will be involved. Also, create a small advisory board that you can update with your progress once each month so that they can help guide you and contribute to your success.

SMACK

International Rabbit Gang Team. Hannah is widely considered to be the finest female kitesurfer yet from the United Kingdom and can out-ride the majority of guys on the scene. Having said that, she is modest, laid back, and has the smoothest style out there. For 2011 Hannah will be initially touring southwest Australia based in Freematle and sessioning the local spots of Woodies and Safety Bay in addition to Augusta and Margaret River. Hannah will also be competing at Kite Stock on February 11-13th in Perth before returning to Europe in the Spring to compete in the UK and EU and catch up with the 2011 Rabbit Gang Tour.

Photo Enrique Abreu

Photo Gavin Bulter

Best Kiteboarding has two new additions to the family, Trisha Smith and Ryan Evans. Trisha is the new West Coast Rep and has been snow skiing since she could stand on two feet. She picked up kiteboarding almost three years ago and has a strong background riding behind boats since the kneeboard days. Trisha has a strong competitive passion for snowkiting and won the 2010 U.S. Snowkite Masters on skis in Skyline, Utah. With seven years of experience in business sales and customer service, she enjoys working with clients to build a strong relationship, meet their specific needs, and have fun while doing so. Trisha resides in Hood River, Oregon, and is ecstatic about her future in spreading the stoke of Best gear to the western U.S., western Canada, Mexico, Central America, and Asia. Ryan was a team rider for Best and has now stepped into the position as their East Coast Rep, responsible for managing all accounts on the East Coast of the US, Canada, the entire Caribbean, and South America. Ryan's really worked his way up through the industry having been a coach, retail sales rep and manager, team rider, and now Brand Representative. Ryan's background as a team rider and coach has given him the unique ability to aid in the testing and development of gear at all levels of riding, and he can throw down too!

continued on page 20

ION EXCELLENCE

HYBRID EXCELLENCE FROM FLEXIFOIL

The 2011 ION from Flexifoil takes the bloodline to all new levels of refinement, continuing to set the standard for hybrid kites. Improvements in construction and aerofoil precision offer the smoothest ride possible, so contact your nearest Flexifoil retailer now and find out for yourself why the ION is known as the Barry White of kites.

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For a full list of retailers please visit www.flexifoil.com

MSRP

$799 (Ion 7.0m - Kite Only)
$889 (Ion 8.5m - Kite Only)
$969 (Ion 10.5m - Kite Only)
$1,049 (Ion 12.5m - Kite Only)
$1,149 (Ion 14.5m - Kite Only)
$339 All-In-One Bar and Lines

The light winds gave Epic and Slingshot a chance to show off their new light wind kites. Photo Dave Burden

2011 JUPITER KITE INVASION

By Dave Burden

Jupiter's seven year stretch of perfect event conditions with 20+ knot winds and head-high waves was broken this year. However, the 75° weather with crystal clear water didn't disappoint participants. Neil Hutchinson and Dimitri Maramenides took turns showing off the incredible range of the newest light wind kites from Slingshot and Epic, an important part of the quiver for many East Coast riders. The crowd was definitely talking about the fact that with these kites and some new surf designs from Jimmy Lewis, riders were doing a lot more than mowing the grass while the rest of us stood around next to our 14s and 15s waiting for a little more breeze. Mid-day Saturday saw the wind pick up enough for Cabrinha rider Jon Modica to take a couple of short downwind runs on his 14 and show some sick style in the small surf. Team SUP races and an impromptu surf competition showed that this mix of kiters was determined to enjoy their time on the beach rather than gripe about the conditions. Jupiter Kiteboarding delivered on the party promise as well with great cookouts, movies on the beach, and a chill vibe throughout the weekend. So, while my kite stayed in its bag this weekend, I'll definitely be back for the 9th Annual Jupiter Kite Invasion whether the wind shows up or not.

Guilly Brandao, 2010 World Wave Champion. Photo Toby Bromwich

PKRA MIXES IT UP FOR 2011

By TKB Staff

For 2011, the PKRA has more stops than ever with five continents hosting the tour. Combined with the new wave tour with KiteSurfPro (KSP), the busy calendar promises an exciting year with nine freestyle events, six wave events, and six racing events. PKRA's event pages will be updated periodically with updates and new information. Make sure to check the event status field of each event before making any plans or buying airline tickets! Check **www.pkra.info** for more info.

2011 PKRA TOUR SCHEDULE

FREESTYLE: Thailand: March 14-19, **Morocco:** March 29-April 3, **France:** April 23-28, **Cabarete:** June 22-26, **Fuerteventura:** August 2-6, **Germany:** August 20-28, **Brazil:** September 14-18, **New Caledonia:** November 23-27, **Australia:** December 5-11
WAVE: Morocco: March 29-April 3, **Lanzarote:** April 6-10, **Gran Canaria:** April 13-17, Tenerife: August 8-13, **Australia:** December 5-11, **South Africa:** December 26-31
RACING: Thailand: March 14-19, **Mexico:** March 23-26, **Fuerteventura:** August 2-6, **Germany:** August 20-28, **Brazil:** September 14-18, **South Africa:** December 26-31

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SHOP TALK

Lyle with son Eric on his first tandem skydive.
Photo Keith MacBeth

FULL FLIGHT SPORTS

SHOP NAME: Formerly the Drop Shop but just changed the name to Full Flight Sports to reflect new identity as a pro shop for kiters and skydivers
OWNER: Lyle Presse **AGE:** 47
LOCATION: Sebastian, Florida **YEARS RIDING:** Beginner!
FAVORITE CONDITIONS: Warm and windy for kiteboarding, warm and calm for skydiving

What do you think is the common bond that skydivers and kiteboarders share? Kiteboarders and skydivers share very similar personality traits as well as a passion for life and action sports. Both sports are connected to weather and nature in ways that most other sports are not and I think that is appealing to us.

Kiteboarders crossing over to skydiving motivated you to integrate Kiteboard Sebastian into your skydiving operation. Have you seen much crossover from skydivers? Absolutely. In the last few months several of the skydiving instructors here have started to kiteboard and are now on the water whenever it's too windy to jump. Everyone on both sides is happy to have something new and exciting to do and the new friendships are as solid as any I've ever seen. I'm convinced that this is just the tip of the iceberg and that we are going to see this trend continue.

As a new kite center without a lot of experience, how confident can people feel when booking a lesson with you? We are a new school but we have a staff of fully qualified, insured, and respected instructors with years of experience that conduct all the lessons. Pro rider Matt Sexton just earned his A license in skydiving and he will be here in Sebastian working with us this spring.

What is your March event, F.U.C./K. (Flying Under Canopies and Kites), all about? What I hope to accomplish with the combined event is actually just a simple introduction. I want the participants to see each other in action and meet at the bar afterwards to talk about it. We'll see where things go from there, but I expect that this is just the start of the two sports interacting more regularly. Anyone who crosses over can stop worrying about wind and just choose the right gear bag for the conditions. We had fun making the ad for the event and the acronym is an eye catcher for sure, but what it's about is meeting new friends.

Do you teach year round or seasonally? Right now we are training from October to May as we rely on frontal winds throughout the winter months. Our summer winds are most likely from thermals or an approaching hurricane, which can be great fun for experienced riders but are not something we can count on with any consistency. We can kiteboard in any wind direction and typical riding winds run from 20 to 30 mph.

How do you handle lessons if there is no wind? The cost of aircraft and fuel has taught skydivers to take full advantage of our time on the ground. The briefing, debriefing, and use of video in our training methods take full advantage of any down time. We have boats and jet skis to tow riders that want to practice their board skills in low wind conditions too, but we are marketing ourselves as a multi-sport location where we simply change to other sports and activities depending on the weather and winds. Kiteboarding and skydiving are only two of many options available. We also have great access to kayaking, fishing, scuba diving, powered parachute and airplane flying lessons, and indoor wind tunnel skydiving, as well as wonderful wildlife and camping areas.

What are the lodging options in your area? **www.kiteboardsebastian.com** has substantial information readily available. Everything from free camping at the drop zone and low budget motels to Gloria Estefan's new resort, Costa d'Este, is available.

What is the nightlife like? There are several great watering holes and restaurants along the riverfront and there's live music in the area every day. The drop zone is always good for a night around the fire but quite often the most action in town is happening at our tiki bar. Some events bring in over 200 skydivers.

Where do you draw kiters and skydivers from? The skydive center draws people from across the US, Canada, Europe, and South America primarily, but we also see people from Asia, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and other countries. The kite school draws from these same visitors and makes Skydive Sebastian a more interesting choice for jumpers because of the kiteboard school.

Any words of wisdom you want to share with our readers? As a skydiver the #1 rule in freefall is "Never Give Up". Under canopy it's "Never Stop Flying". I think they apply to kiteboarding too and maybe life in general.

SMACK

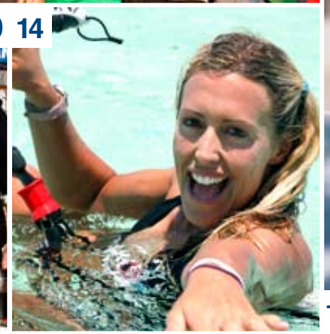
Photo beachouseprea

The Beach House, Prea, is a beautiful property on Jericoacoara's main kite beach bordering a nature reserve. Stunningly designed, it offers 180° beach views and magnificent ocean sunrises and sunsets. The luxurious house can sleep 10-12 and is currently available to rent (bed and breakfast /half board) for around $500 US pp/week. Staffed with four full-time people arranging private kite lessons, massages, beach horse riding, BBQs, downwinders, and incredible local food, the Beach House is upwind of all the kite schools in Prea, providing you with your own private beach paradise in a totally unspoilt part of Brazil. Visit **www.beachouseprea.com**

Courtesy Endless-wind.com

Endless Wind, a specialist kitesurfing operation in the North East of Brazil, is the creation of David Cummane and Andy Levesconte, who for years enjoyed some of the best experiences of their lives kitesurfing with friends along the Ceara coast. Road trips, downwinders, international standard accommodation and restaurants, the best kite surfing conditions the planet has to offer, and the Brazilian energy and culture all fed into the amazing experiences. Endless Wind is firmly committed to replicating their own experiences to offer customers a seamless kitesurfing trip with everything catered with a personal touch. Based at the luxurious Kite House in Cumbuco, from where you can join the pros on Cauipe lagoon, ride waves at Taiba and Paracuru, and downwind with 4x4 beach support on the infamous road trip to the magical Jeri, early bookings for July are being offered at a 10% discount. See **www.endless-wind.com** for details.

SEND IT



1. Everybody wants their picture taken with the legendary Baja Joe. **Photo Paul Lang**
2. This is the La Ventana Classic class of 2011, almost 130 kiteboarders who made it safely from Isla Cerralvo to La Ventana. **Photo Paul Lang**
3. Trisha Smith presents an excited Jesus Allen with a Best Short Stick, which he won in the raffle at the 2011 La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo. **Photo Trisha Smith**
4. El Zombie. **Photo Paul Lang**
5. Cynthia Brown's new houseguest. **Photo Nat Lincoln**
6. Seattle kiteboarders Andrew and Amy Olive got married on the small island of Culebra just off the coast of Puerto Rico and then were able to go kiteboarding off the same beach they were married on. **Photo Dmitry Kraskovsky**
7. Piper Rexford was so excited after winning a new Mystic harness in the raffle in La Ventana that she wore it on the beach all day. **Photo courtesy Live2Kite.com**
8. Nate Appel and Grom make quite a team. Photo **Paul Lang**
9. Of course, it wouldn't be a Baja event without the Corona girls in attendance. **Photo Paul Lang**
10. The infamous Bolstad clan was on hand during the La Ventana Classic. **Photo Carol Bolstad**
11. Gary Rhodes, Captain of Pro Leezure. **Photo courtesy Pro Leezure**
12. Luce Durocher and Marie Leclerc were all smiles on Isla Cerralvo. **Photo Paul Lang**
13. They might have fought dirty, but Team Caution (El Spitfire and El Zombie) walked away from the Lucha Libre victorious. **Photo Paul Lang**
14. Kirsty Jones enjoying herself in Mauritius. **Photo Richard Boudia**
15. Carol Corlett was so excited after winning this Wainman HI board in La Ventana that she donated $400 to the fundraiser. **Photo Paul Lang**
16. According to Dimitri Maramenides, "Who needs a wetsuit when you are kiting on an Epic Kite?" And yes, that's mostly frozen water that he's sitting in. **Photo courtesy Epic Kites**
17. Jim Bison put on his game face for the Big Air/Old School Competition in La Ventana. **Photo Paul Lang**
18. Danny Alvarez and a Baja Cactus. **Photo Danny Alvarez**

If you have a photo that you would like featured in The Kiteboarder Magazine, please e-mail paul@thekiteboarder.com

Craig Van Der Westhuizen cruises by the trusty vessel Rock Steady.

Rum Cay: The Best Kept Secret of the Bahamas

By Jesse Cors/liquidsurfandsail.com
Photos by Jason Arnold

You can find kiteboarders all over the world. It seems like virtually every ridable place has been conquered and written about either online or in print. Our signature is on every continent and in almost every country on the planet. We have kited exotic places like Alaska, Korea, Cambodia, New Caledonia, and even Antarctica, so it's hard to imagine that a location with warm water, steady wind, pristine beaches, and long consistent waves with a mix of reef breaks and soft sandy-bottom barrels has so far been home to only a single kiteboarder. You heard right: Just one person has ever kited this magical place. That is until now...

Author Jesse Cors scores a flat water session in the salt pond.

"Apparently it's completely illegal to have unsanctioned bodies falling from the sky without notifying the Bahamas Civil Aviation department."

Rum Cay is home to some of the clearest water in the world.

Craig Van Der Westhuizen swoops into the marina.

With only 60 full-time residents, be prepared to be fully immersed in the island lifestyle.

Bobby Little and son Jarret at the helm of Rock Steady.

"Wait, where am I supposed to sit?"

Kristyn Joyce enjoys a little fishing on the salt pond.

A little over three years ago I met Bobby Little, owner of Sumner Point Resort and an all-around waterman.

He told me about his island and some insane stories of surfing clean barrels, catching seven-pound lobsters, spearing 30-pound grouper, and kiting butter-flat water that he enjoyed all to himself. He recounted stories of the occasional passing sailboat crewed by a few surfers but never any kiters. I couldn't believe such a place existed and had so far been overlooked by the entire kiteboarding community, so I pitched him an Idea I had been holding for many years about operating an extreme sports resort consisting of free-diving, kitesurfing, shark feeding, skydiving, surfing, ATV tours, stand up paddleboarding, spearfishing, and anything else that involved a mix of island, saltwater, and adrenaline. Like most great ideas, this one was born over a couple of drinks. About six months later I received a phone call, and in his island dialect Bobby simply said, "Jesse, remember that thing you were telling me about the extreme sports stuff? Let's make it happen."

I couldn't pull off the first trip myself so I called the craziest kiteboarding trip organizer I know, my long time friend Neil Hutchinson, to help make this pipe dream a reality. Before we could drop into this venture we needed a few key elements. First, we needed a jump-plane and pilot. No problem. A few phone calls and several emails later we found what we were looking for out of Skydive New England in the form of a Cessna 206 and a scruffy young pilot named David Hanks. Next, we needed a photographer. I thought hard as I scrolled though my phone book. Bingo! Jason Arnold, pro surfer and renowned underwater photographer. I thought to myself, "Damn, this is easy!" Next, we needed to assemble a group that could not only kite but also knew how to skydive. We all know kiters that can crossover to snowboarding, wakeboarding, surfing, and fishing, but what about skydiving?

The result was the First Annual Rum Bum Boogie, consisting of ten guys, five girls, a pro photographer, well known skydivers, kiteboarders, surfers, and some just plain crazies. The trip was on! But wait! Having been so caught up and excited we forgot to ask ourselves the all-important question. Is this even legal? Can we just lease a plane, fill it with a bunch of adrenaline junkies, fly out of the U.S. to a different country, and tell everyone to jump out over an island in the middle of the Bahamas? The short answer is no! Apparently it's completely illegal to have unsanctioned bodies falling from the sky without notifying the Bahamas Civil Aviation department. Usually this involves submitting a ton of paperwork, jumping through a few hoops, cutting some red tape, and reciting the alphabet backwards as fast as you can while balancing a midget sitting on a chair on your head. However, luckily for us Bahamas tourism feeds off promotional events like this and hosting this style of trip which had never been done before sounded exciting to them. A few emails to the Bahamian Aviation Controller Office and Bahamian Tourism plus a signature here and a signature there landed us a waiver excluding the Bahamas Government from being sued if one of us became fish food. Approved!

Our group departed from Fort Lauderdale around 8:00 a.m. and 45 minutes later touched down in Nassau where our layover was to be about an hour but soon turned into two and then three hours. Finally five hours and a few Kaliks (Bahamian beer) later we boarded a twin prop island hopper and were on our way, but not before truly learning what it meant to be on island time.

“Every day we tried to explore a different part of the island whether it was surfing a new break, diving a new reef, or landing at a new beach.”

World Champion paddleboarder Ekolu Kalama scores on the north side of the island.

Rum's own burning man is made of rebar and dried coconuts.

Up close with one of the locals.

A few of the local kids show how to apply mud as sunscreen.

Our accommodations consisted of a few beachside cottages punctuated by a restaurant on one end and a two bedroom house on the other. A normal day on Rum consists of a little work and a lot of play, so after waking up some of us grabbed a few paddleboards to go hunt for conch and do a little fishing while the rest of our group took our trusty vessel, Rock Steady, out for a little diving for some lunch. After we loaded up the coolers we would drive the short trip to the airport to jump out of our Cessna in the standard issue Rum Cay dress code: boardshorts, tank tops, and sandals. After falling from 10,000 feet we would land on our private white sand beach, trade our skydive gear for our pre-rigged kites, and hit the water pumped full of adrenaline.

We sessioned in a huge protected salt pond where the ancient relatives of the locals used to harvest salt both for food and trade. We practiced all the freestyle we could handle before heading out to the reef for a little surfing. Lunch was the morning's catch – fresh-caught conch prepared fresh from the coolers on the beach. As we left our secluded landing areas by boat, we trolled for Wahoo and dove for dinner. Seven-pound lobster and 30-pound grouper are the norm, so much so that you can a catch huge lobster in six feet of water with only a pair of shades, as Bobby proved to us on one of our many water excursions.

As the sun went down the marina would come alive. That's when the dinner bell rang for the man in the grey suit. While we cleaned our fish and conch we got the opportunity to hand feed a few of the locals. Then someone thought it would be a great idea to skydive into the marina and dip our toes in the water where the sharks were being fed. The crowd issued a unanimous yes. Who could turn down such a genius idea? So we did, landing on a small spit of a sandbar in front of the marina that was a really tight landing. If you undershot you were in the water with the feeding sharks, if you overshot you were in the water with the feeding sharks. That was motivation enough for everybody to make a spot on landing. Afterwards, as if that wasn't daring enough, we set out to go shark fishing from the paddleboard to see if it would give us a ride. Jason Arnold hooked onto a seven-foot bull that ended up dragging him about 100 yards before taking a bite out of the board and leaving three teeth behind as souvenirs. When the moon came out we set fire to Rum's own 'Burning Man' that Bobby built out of rebar and stuffed with dried coconuts. The air was filled with stories of the day's events, and, of course, plenty of rum. The day's catch was prepared at the Into the Blue restaurant, the chef non other than our host Bobby Little. This was our lifestyle for six days and every day we charged it.

Every day we tried to explore a different part of the island whether it was surfing a new break, diving a new reef, or landing at a new beach. Our final day arrived and we were sure that we had seen everything. The island is only a few miles in any direction after all. Yet, the locals pointed us in the direction of a place called Sandy Point. Properly named, it is a huge point on the southwest corner of the island where fifty yards offshore the ocean floor drops away from 25 feet to 3000 feet straight down. There is no reef, just sand. Bobby showed us pictures of him surfing 15' waves at this break where the water was neon Kool-Aid blue from the sun reflecting off the white sand bottom. We weren't as lucky this day but still were able to catch a few knee-slappers on our SUPs. As we ventured back by boat we all just took it in. There were no words to describe what we had just accomplished. The expressions on our sun bleached faces said it all. We had just experienced a little taste of Rum.

THE 2011 RUM BUM BOOGIE IS SET FOR DECEMBER 8-13, 2011

For more info visit ***www.rumcaymarina.com*** or email ***Jesse@liquidsurfandsail.com***
US Office: 954-822-5373
Bahamas Office: 242-225-7624
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ABOUT RUM

Rum Cay (pronounced Rum Key), is located 360 miles east of Miami and is home to only 60 full-time inhabitants making this island one of the most remote spots in the Caribbean. The island covers about 36 square miles. It's only nine miles long by five miles wide at its widest point and is mostly flat with several rolling hills. It's one of the most eastern islands of the Bahamas. Pretty much anything east of there is Atlantic Ocean until you reach the coast of Africa. The island was given its name by virtue of a shipwrecked West Indies vessel laden with none other than a cargo of Rum! The only town on the island, Port Nelson, has one small store and a few restaurants and bars (there's even a pool table). These little haunts are fun places to sample laid-back island life while making new friends. If you opt to try one of the restaurants it's best to call ahead as normal business hours mean little here.

WHEN TO GO

The best conditions can be found Fall-Spring with winds averaging 15-20+ knots and waves averaging 5'-15'.

GETTING THERE

By Air: Fly to Nassau and connect with Pineapple Air who will take you the rest of the way.
By Boat: Longitude: 23°40'N, Latitude: 74°58'W

WHERE TO STAY

Sumner Point, ***www.rumcaymarina.com***

Spencer spots his landing mid-kiteloop.
Photo Paul Lang

TIPS

- Take a bunch of shorter sessions instead of just one long one. It makes me feel like I have more energy to kite more and gives me time to think about what I've been doing wrong on the latest tricks I'm trying to learn.
- Pump your kites up tight, limp is never good.
- When things go wrong and you're getting yarded, a lot of people need to remember to LET GO!

SPENCER LUJAN

AGE: 20 **HEIGHT:** 5'10" **WEIGHT:** 185 lbs. **YEARS KITING:** 5 **FAVORITE SPOTS:** Sherman Island, Maui, and La Ventana **FAVORITE CONDITIONS:** 9m and flat water **FAVORITE MOVES:** Anything with a loop **SPONSORS:** Wainman Hawaii, Kite Naked, and KGB Shwag, but I also want to thank Live2Kite because they give me insane deals when I need gear

GEAR SETUP

BOARDS: Wainman HI Blunt 130 and Joke 134 **KITES:** Wainman HI Gypsy, Smoke, and Boss
HARNESS: Mystic Warrior II

By Paul Lang

Spencer started kiting when he was 15 after hanging out at Sherman Island with his family. His dad, Maui Mike, was already kiting and soon the two went to Maui where Spencer was introduced to Lou Wainman. "He showed me how sick the sport is and I just wanted to try everything that I was seeing him do out there," said Spencer. "After that, I was at the beach whenever possible because I was addicted."

Sherman Island seems like a pretty special place in the world of kiteboarding. Can you talk about the kiteboarding scene there? Oh man, it's like no other place I've ever been to. The nuking wind and beautiful spot is just the icing on the cake. The people and the way everyone gets along with each other down there just gives off an amazing vibe.

How did you get started in kiteboarding? My dad Maui Mike got me into it. He had already been doing it for a few years and I finally ended up taking lessons at the local school, Edge Kiteboarding.

You've known some of the kiteboarding icons for awhile now. How did that feel when you were learning to kite and you already knew some of the people that other riders thought were legendary? That was definitely cool. I was able to watch and get tips from some of the best riders in the world. At the same time I learned that many of the world's best riders don't have the cocky mindset that pros from other sports can have and I have made good friends with some truly amazing people.

What riders influence you the most? I would have to say Lou Wainman, Shawn Richman, and also his brother Jesse. They are incredibly talented people who show their passion for kiteboarding in the way they ride. Also my dad is a big influence because he is a prime example of someone who gets out on the water because it makes him happy. When it comes down to it, that's what it's all about.

What do you most appreciate about your gear? I love the power of my kites and I really like the way they loop. My Joke makes for some nice soft landings even when I'm coming in a little hot and it also has great pop.

What do you do off the water? I try to do things that keep my lungs and body in good shape so I don't get drained on the water. I also watch the really boring instructional videos on moves that I'm trying to learn.

What is something about you most people wouldn't know? I guess outside of kiteboarding people wouldn't know that I also really like to play guitar.

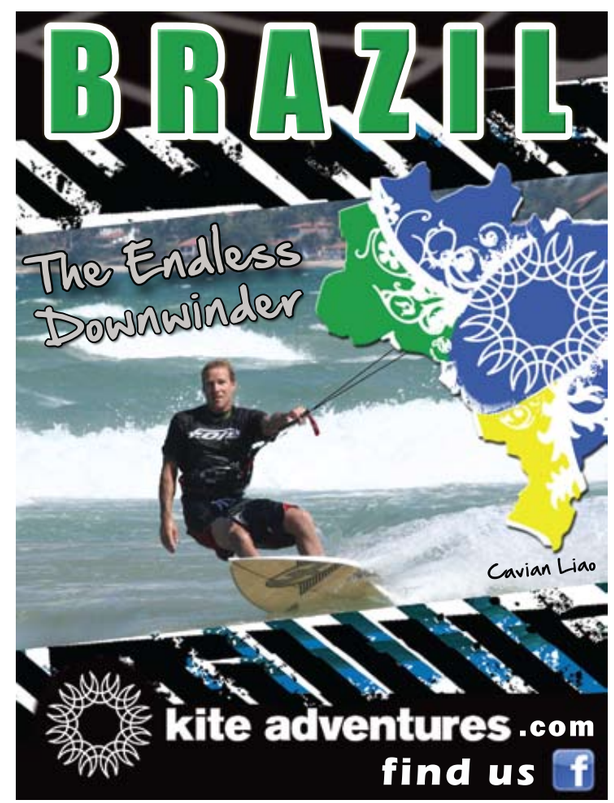
What is your worst wipe out? My worst wipeout is definitely the time I got yarded into the reeds at Sherman. I was trying to help someone get out of the bushes by the islands and I ended up getting stuck between his lines and the bushes. I was pushed into the reeds, so I tried to body drag out, but I lost my board. I went back, got my board, and was almost out when my bar caught on the plants and my kite looped twice. I was launched a good 25' into the reeds. I landed in about four feet of water, but a few steps over, the water was only a foot deep.

Where is your favorite place to kite? It's definitely Sherman Island. I love the strong and steady wind that we get and we also have some sick flat water behind the islands. It's not just the conditions that I love about Sherman but I also really dig the people and the vibe there.

What is your most memorable kiteboarding experience? When Sunny Freeman and I went for a night session during a full moon at Sherman at about 12:30 a.m. We didn't come in until about 2:30 in the morning.

What are your must haves that you can't live without? My must haves are my family and friends. I wouldn't be anything without my family and I have extremely chill friends that are a blast to party with and are the best people on the planet.

Any words of wisdom you want to share with our readers? Don't wear board shorts that are too big for you. Trust me, just tying them tighter doesn't work when you eat it with some speed.



A holiday in Los Barriles changed Megan's life. Photo Ian Sanders

MEGAN O'LEARY

AGE: 32 Height: 5'6" **WEIGHT:** 130 lbs. **YEARS KITING:** 6 **FAVORITE SPOTS:** Los Barriles, Mexico **FAVORITE CONDITIONS:** Waves and gentle ocean swell **FAVORITE MOVES:** Unhooked kiteloops and landing anything to blind **SPONSORS:** North Kiteboarding

GEAR SETUP

BOARDS: North Jaime Pro 128 and North Pacific 5'3" **KITES:** North Fuse 7m **HARNESS:** ION Nova

TIPS

- The most important thing I have learned owning a kiteboarding school and store is that our crew and instructors make our business what it is. Treat those who work for and with you well.
- Carry a kite knife. You may never need it, but you may be able to help someone else who does.
- Don't rig based on what your pump gauges and wind meters read. Learn what the wind is blowing and how to pump your kite by feel.

By Marina Chang

A native of Anchorage, Alaska, Megan grew up skiing, snowboarding, sailing, and playing soccer, which took her all over the world. While on break during graduate school, she traveled to Los Barriles to visit her parents, learned to kiteboard, met her future husband Ian Sanders, and never went back! In 2004, Megan joined Ian at ExotiKite Kiteboarding School in Los Barriles and this season they opened up a new retail store in the downtown area. She currently manages the new store and is trying to find a balance between the new retail location, water time, and the couple's new baby boy, Kody.

When did you start kiteboarding? I was on a break from graduate school and came to visit my parents in Los Barriles, Baja. It was blowing for the entire first week I was there. I was tired of trying to find a place out of the wind to sunbathe so I decided to find a way to enjoy the wind!

Have any other sports helped influence your kiteboarding? I truly believe that yoga helps keep me balanced and allows my body to bend and move as it should. When you are limber and strong, the crashes don't hurt as much.

When did ExotiKite open for business? ExotiKite Kiteboarding was opened in 1998 by my husband Ian. I came onto the scene in 2004. I was so impressed with the conditions in Los Barriles that I decided to defer graduate school and put my efforts into growing ExotiKite. Now, we have an IKO affiliated center on the beach, a retail store in town, and a crew of eight instructors. Ian oversees the school and I oversee the store. We can't imagine ever leaving beautiful Los Barriles, but may expand to other locations at some point.

What riders influence you the most? Ian has influenced my riding since he taught me how to kiteboard in 2004. I continue to be inspired by both his humble manner off the water and his kick ass style on the water. The person I laugh with and have the most fun with on the water is Cabrinha rider Kirsten Ulmer. We influence each other to have fun, no matter what else is going on.

Do you have any plans to compete? I have competed in small races here in Los Barriles and would love to compete in the Lord of the Wind competition in Los Barriles and the La Ventana Classic in 2012. Right now, I am pretty busy with our four-week old son, Kody, but I will be back on the water soon.

What do you most appreciate about your current gear? My general rule of thumb is if your control bar sucks, nothing else matters. I love that North makes a safe, simple, and solid control bar.

What are you currently working on? I took a break from kiteboarding in August 2010 when I was six months pregnant and too fat to get my harness on. Back then I was trying to get bigger megaloops, and with those, it's only fear holding you back! Now my biggest challenge will be leaving my sweet son with a babysitter.

What is your favorite style of riding? I just love freestyle! I have so much fun trying to push myself and come up laughing after every crash.

What is something you do outside of kiteboarding that most people wouldn't know? I used to fire dance, but I haven't done it in quite a while. I was told babies and swinging fireballs don't mix.

What is your scariest kiteboarding experience? My scariest experience was going out at Punta San Carlos after having learned only three months prior.

What is your most memorable kiteboarding experience? About twice a year the ExotiKite crew gets out on the water and rides from Los Barriles to La Ribera. It's a 17-mile downwinder with waves, flat water, and ocean swell. We always have a blast riding with each other, so every time we go is memorable.

What are your must have's that you can't live without? Hawaiian Tropic Vanilla-Mint SPF 45 chapstick, my ION harness, and a good attitude!

Any words s of wisdom you want to share with our readers? Be helpful and supportive. It's always good to remind yourself you were learning to kiteboard once too.

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Amery goes big during the Big Air/Old School competition at the 2011 La Ventana Classic.

FROM THE **GROUND** UP

How Amery Bernard Became Slingshot's Kite Designer

Words and Photos by Paul Lang

SPORTING DREADLOCKS AND A GOATEE, AMERY BERNARD BLENDS IN WITH THE TYPICAL KITEBOARDERS ON THE BEACH, BUT WHEN HE LOOKS AT A KITE, HE SEES ALL THE DETAILS THE REST OF US MISS. AMERY'S PATH TO BECOMING SLINGSHOT'S KITE DESIGNER WAS NOT A TYPICAL ONE – IF THERE EVEN IS SUCH A THING IN THIS INDUSTRY. Originally hired by Slingshot as a sales rep, Amery slowly became more and more involved in the R&D process until his role evolved into doing R&D full time. "Amery puts more time in on our products than anyone," said Tony Logosz, Slingshot's Chief Designer. "He works all hours of the day and never complains. That's why we nicknamed him AM-PM. He helps me look at the whole picture and focus on what's next in the industry. I can trust him to focus on the all details of each product, do all the background work, water testing, everything. We're all Swiss Army knives here, but Amery is really willing to contribute in any way he can." When asked about Amery's lack of formal training as a designer, Tony said, "What we do is closer to black magic than aerodynamics and physics. We're similar in the fact that our education has been in the trenches. We've both learned from instinct and experiences on the water. He's paid his dues for sure."

During the 2011 La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo, we were able to sit down with Amery to talk about his evolution from sales rep to designer and his philosophy on the kite design process.

“MY FOCUS IS KITES, SO I'LL DO MOST OF THE GRUNT WORK, TAKING THEM OUT, TESTING THEM, TYING STRING, CHANGING BRIDLES, AND ALSO WORKING A LOT WITH THE FILES.”

A lot of people, especially college students, have asked me how kite designers become designers. What was the path that you took to become a designer? Yea, we probably get a request every other month for an internship from college students that just want to do something in the industry. My path was very atypical. I was hired as a sales rep to start off with. At the time, the kites were kind of less than par on performance, so I just started tinkering with the kites and working with the R&D team. It was mostly bridling. I just played with the bridles and tweaked them. Through tweaking and testing, I was able to come up with something a lot better, so I became a little more involved in the R&D process. The next kite we came out with was the Turbo 2 and that became a good kite for us. I was still doing both sales and R&D at the time, but since then it's migrated to more and more R&D until now I'm at the point where I'm doing R&D full time.

How do you and Tony Logosz split the design duties? It's pretty collaborative. On some projects, Tony will do more work and on others I'll do more. He's the Chief Designer, so he oversees everything from the kites to the kiteboards and wakeboards. My focus is kites, so I'll do most of the grunt work, taking them out, testing them, tying string, changing bridles, and also working a lot with the files. Tony oversees and approves what I do. He tells me, “Nah, that's no good” or “That's good.”

What's your process of designing a new kite? First of all, it starts with listening to what the market is asking for. From there, you work off of what you know. So you take last year's design and then add the modifications that you think will get the results for what the market wants. That's the safe typical route for a project. At the same time, we always add in a few out-of-the-box concepts. Sometimes those will hit and sometimes they'll miss. Say for instance we're going to start a new kite model. Typically we'll make around a dozen different prototypes of a nine meter, all with different shapes, outlines, and profiles. From there, we'll pick a winner if there is one and keep on refining that. Once we're to the point that something is good and we're getting good feedback from the people we test with, then we'll make a full size run and individually fine tune every size.

How long does the process take? The process is ongoing all the time. On the good side it may take three months. On the longer side, it may take six to nine. Our kites are to the point that we're making smaller refinements, so it's on the shorter side, which allows us to spend more time on the out-of-the-box ideas. Hopefully that will allow us to come up with something new and innovative.

When do you decide if a design or concept is worth further development or not? It really comes down to the timeline of the project. We have certain dates we want to release kites by, so that kind of drives our decision making in how hard to pursue a project. Usually we're pursuing a few ideas at the same time, because there is time between the prototype rounds. You can have plan A and concentrate on that, but plan B might be different and slightly iffy, but you keep that running in case it might beat plan A. You can run a few different ideas at the same time and see which one wins.

A few days ago you put up a new race version of the Rally. What are you looking at when you see a new prototype kite in the air? The first thing I look at is how it's holding its structure in the air. Structure and stability are the two most important parts of the kite. You don't want a kite that's going to deform when it's overpowered and you want something stable so it doesn't fall out of the sky for the consumer. It's getting interesting now though, because there are a lot of different disciplines. For example, you might have something for racing for dedicated racers. It might not be the most stable and friendly kite for everyday riding, but it could provide a big advantage to someone who is an experienced kite flyer and knows how to handle kites. In general though, the stable, friendly kites are the ones that will end up being the best.

I heard that you are a CPA. How did you make the switch from that world to the kiteboarding industry? Actually I'm not certified. I took the test a few times and missed it by just a few points every time. You're supposed to study for three to six months before, but I wouldn't start studying until the week before. If I would have studied for two weeks, I'd probably be certified. My degree is in accounting and I went to work for a CPA firm after college. I was doing that for

Amery is also a talented musician. Photo Enrique Abreu

about two and a half years, and I was looking at my managers wondering if that was for me. I saw all the time they put in. It consumed their lives and I didn't think I could live that way. I kept my head down and was good at what I did, but they saw that I had no interest in progressing or moving up the ladder, so I was laid off. From there I went to work for a surf shop, All Surf Industry. I did kite lessons and eventually helped manage the shop. From there, Slingshot found me and hired me for the Northwest Sales Rep position. The good thing about the accounting degree I have is that there is a lot of information and tracking involved in the testing and development, so that's been kind of an asset for me. Tony's the mad scientist. He's got great ideas and he's a real free thinker, but when it comes to organizing the project and making sure everything is consistent from round to round, then I step in and help him out a lot with that.

I also heard that you are a musician. Yea, I was in a band for like seven years. I was in an island reggae band. Everyone was from Hawaii, and yea, it was great. I kind of started playing music late. Everyone in Hawaii grows up playing the ukulele at some point, but I never really got into music until college. My goal was just to play for a crowd that had come to see me. That was supposed to be it, and that would have made me happy, but then I hooked up with some other guys and we started this little project. That turned into some small gigs here and there. Eventually, we had a Monday night gig in Vancouver, Washington, and you wouldn't believe it until you saw it, but at its peak, we'd have like a good 300 person crowd on a Monday night. It was a good time.

You have a background in two completely different worlds, an accounting/numbers based one and a music/creative world. Do you feel the design process is a creative process or a numbers and science based process? Fortunately, with that kind of background, it fits in perfectly with what I do, because it's just as much an art as a science. You do have to be creative in the sense that you have to come up with new ideas and new performance goals, but at the same time you need to keep track of all the specs. The specs are super important. The whole music and accounting thing, the art and creativity mixed with the analytical side of things, it kind of meshes back in forth. Sometimes it's split 50-50 and sometimes it leans one way or the other, but you just have to roll with whatever the project requires.

What are some of the ideas you are working on now? Right now we're just kind of going through our cycle. We just came out with the Turbine, our light wind kite, so I've been working on that a lot. Now, we're rolling in to next year's Rally. We're going to refine that some more. We've also got the next year's RPM and Key — basically, we're just going through the product line to refine everything we have. We're still working on some new ideas, which I'd love to delve into right now, but those are kind of in our pocket right now.

What kind of feedback are you looking for from riders who fly your kites? The best kind of feedback is comparative. Whoever we get to ride the kite, we always know their background like how long they've been riding, what kites they're used to, and what conditions they usually ride in. From that, we have a point of reference to base their feedback off of, because it's really relative depending on what you're used to. Usually we get people we know and have worked with in the past like our regional and international team riders. Once we get it to a certain point where we think it's satisfying them, then we run the gamut and get it into anybody's hands we can.

Do you ride kites from other companies as part of the design process? Yea, definitely, for sure we do. If I wasn't doing that, I wouldn't be doing my job. We keep our eye on what other companies are doing and the direction they're taking. Now we seem to be at a point of slow growth with innovation, but if something does gain traction with the competition, then yea, we'll take a close look at it and get as much information as we can. We'll try to get our hands on the kite and fly it, but we're never really spying on guys and taking photos. We've got too much work as it is to play that game.

As a designer, what are the first things you are looking at when you fly a new kite, either one of your own designs or one from another company? The first things I'll look at are stability, relaunch, and range. I'm surprised to find that a lot of the kites, in my opinion, they're kind of poor on relaunch. We try to focus on that and make sure it's really easy for the consumer because that's a big part of being satisfied with your gear in our opinion. After that it comes down to safety systems, bar configuration, and the finish on everything.

What do you have to say to people who want to work in the kiteboarding industry? Is there such a thing as a typical path to becoming a kite designer? I think it really comes down to who you know. If you want to go that route, then you really have to start building relationships with people in the industry. You want to be a good rider and know what you're talking about and have experience flying a lot of different brands and models. If you're good with a computer, you can learn all the CAD stuff relatively easily. It just comes down to building relationships with people in the industry and seeing if they need help. I'm sure a lot of companies could use help, so if you're willing to take the time and do the intern thing, I'm sure a lot of companies would be able to work something out.

To watch the video of this interview, visit www.thekiteboarder.com/2011/02/interview-with-amery-bernard/

Baja Joe comes in for a landing to kick off the 2011 La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo.

Shawn Richman dominated the Big Air/Old School competition.

Words and Photos by Paul Lang

2011 LA VENTANA CLASSIC AND KITEXPO: MAKING A DIFFERENCE SOUTH OF THE BORDER

For the past few years, it's been known that the best way to guarantee a few windless days is to have a kiteboarding event. Even when scheduled for places and times that should provide tons of wind, any talk of holding an event usually causes the wind to completely shut off, leaving organizers scrambling to find something to keep everybody occupied. However, for the 2011 La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo, Mother Nature delivered near-perfect weather, which allowed a ridiculous about of kiteboarding to happen in La Ventana this year. As always, this event is not just about the kiteboarding. The main purpose of the La Ventana Classic remains bringing people together to raise money for the local schools. This year, a total of $18,759 was raised by people having such a good time it could almost be called criminal.

It's quite a sight to see well over 100 kites spread out over the channel for the race back to La Ventana.

Damien LeRoy throws a huge Kung Fu during the Big Air/Old School Competition.

Toga! Toga! TOGA!!!

Local schoolchildren put on dance performances throughout the event.

Caution Fight Night got everybody ready to rumble.

As always, organizer Tim Hatler was able to come up with twisted beach games to keep people entertained for the brief periods of light wind.

2011 LA VENTANA CLASSIC RESULTS

PADDLE ROYALE 11-MILE SUP CROSSING
MEN: Kiwi Fields
WOMEN: Betsy Rudigoz

SUP 1-MILE RACE
MEN: Jason Maartense
WOMEN: Betsy Rudigoz

SUP 5-MILE DOWNWINDER
MEN: Jason Maartense
WOMEN: Sky Robbins

LA VENTANA CLASSIC 11-MILE CROSSING
FASTEST: Brian Metcalf–Perez, windsurfer, 22:23
MEN
1. Johnny Heineken, 22:45
2. Damien LeRoy, 22:50
3. Sean Farley, 23:10

WOMEN
1. Kirsten Ulmer, 28:17
2. Shannon Gormley, 28:56
3. Marie Leclerc, 29:04

BIG AIR/OLD SCHOOL FREESTYLE
MEN
1. Shawn Richman
2. Damian LeRoy
3. Sean Farley

WOMEN
1. Michelle Gabriel
2. Britney Todd
3. Laura Maher

COURSE RACING
MEN
1. Damien LeRoy
2. Adam Koch
3. Andrew Koch

WOMEN
1. Britney Todd
2. Cynbad Brown
3. Kris Kinn

The TKB team got an early start in La Ventana this year and arrived early enough for No Mas Basura, an annual trash cleanup project in the La Ventana/El Sargento communities. Almost the entire town, including the schoolchildren, participated and collected 10.5 tons of trash in one day! We were also there early enough to catch the Burning Bush, an annual pyromaniac's heaven held on the outskirts of La Ventana. Burning Bush is a hard experience to describe, but imagine what can happen when you combine flammable art projects, a few hundred people, copious amounts of gasoline and propane, and virtually no fear of liability and you'll have a good idea what it's like. Also during the week leading up to the event a number of different clinics were held on topics including strapless riding (Mark Bavis and Brendan Richards), kite racing (Andrew and Adam Koch), and a special women only trip to Isla Cerralvo (Marie Leclerc and Laura Maher).

The first day of the La Ventana Classic served up light wind, which actually worked out perfectly for the 11-mile Paddle Royale SUP Island Crossing. This year, 25 participants (including eight women) got up early for the boat ride out to Isla Cerralvo. Kiwi Fields was the first paddler back, finishing in just over two hours. Also, the light wind provided the perfect conditions for emcee Neil Hutchinson and the legendary Baja Joe to kick off the event by jumping out of a plane 10,000' above the event site. Neil just recently got into skydiving and thought it would be cool to start the event with the announcer landing on the beach, but had no idea that Joe was an experienced skydiver himself. When Baja Joe was asked if he knew where to find a plane, he said, "I'm a skydiver, I'll jump too!" Joe has more than 800 jumps and jumped out of the plane with a 1970s vintage parachute strapped to his back. Both Neil and Joe landed safely at the event site as the crowd erupted around them. For the remainder of the day, participants talked with industry reps on the beach and kicked the tires on all the latest kiteboarding gear that was on display. The first official party was the annual Toga Party at Pablo's and, as usual, details are fuzzy on what actually happened.

Friday morning found 127 kiteboarders and a few windsurfers on the beach waiting to be loaded into pangas for the trip to Cerralvo for the La Ventana Classic, the 11-mile sprint back to La Ventana. This is an event like none other in the world and this year the weather was perfect. After a clean start (no tangles this year), the race was on. As much as it pains us to say it, windsurfer Brian Metcalf–Perez was the first person back, setting a record time of 22:23. Kiteboarder Johnny Heineken (Ozone) was the first kiteboarder to finish with a time of 22:45. You better believe the kiteboarders will be training hard to take back the title of fastest across the channel next year. Once everybody was safely back, the Big Air/Old School competition got underway in near-perfect conditions. A mix of pro and amateur kiteboarders battled it out and board offs, one-footers, and dead-men were thrown down with pride. While all this was happening, the demo booths were working full time getting the many participants out on 2011 kiteboarding gear. Friday was finished with dinner on the beach by Ventana Windsports' new resataurant, Coyas, and live music by KL Reggae.

The wind delivered again on Saturday, and the kiteboarding demos continued. The semi-final and final heats of Big Air/Old School were held and it was Shawn Richman (RRD) who came out on top in a unanimous decision from the judges. Shawn has developed a style of riding that is all his own and is one of the most unique riders to watch. Even the experienced riders on the beach have no idea what to call the moves he does. Michelle Gabriel (North) took the women's title after a series of intensely competitive heats. Also on Saturday, the kiteboarding course racing got underway, with Johnny Heineken winning every race of the day. As the action on the beach wound down, the area was being prepped for a beach buffet provided by Su Amigo Pancho Taqueria and Caution Fight Night, a full-on Lucha Libre wrestling match held at the event site. Professional Mexican wrestlers were brought in and put on an amazing show for the crowd. After a number of body slams and broken chairs, El Zombie and El Spitfire walked away victorious after expert coaching from Peter Shiebel and Brendan Richards.

Sunday, the wind delivered again for the final day of the event. The demo booths were busy yet again as the racers chased each other around the buoys for another day. Unfortunately, Johnny Heineken had to go home early to return to work, which opened the door for Damien LeRoy (Cabrinha) to take first place. Also on Sunday, a group of SUPers were taken up to the Hot Springs for a 5-mile downwind race back to the event site. Overnight, a kicker had shown up, so that was put in the water for a few riders to session before the wind died. The event was capped off with an awards ceremony at Pizza Vela that featured a slideshow, fire dancers, live music, and the presentation of a check to the mayor of La Ventana/El Sargento.

After four days packed full of action, the La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo was a huge success, raising over $18,000 for the area schools while bringing the kiteboarding community together for an outrageously good time south of the border. Make plans to be there next year, as plans are already underway to take it up another notch for 2012! ***For tons of photos and video from the 2011 La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo, check out http://www.thekiteboarder.com/tag/la-ventana-2011/***

LOCAL BUSINESSES SUPPORTING THE **2011 LA VENTANA CLASSIC**. WITHOUT THESE PEOPLE THE EVENT WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE!

PALAPAS VENTANA *http://www.palapasventana.com*

Opening Palapas Ventana was a result of many years of chasing wind, waves, and fish in Baja, and then figuring out how to stay without starving to death! Tim Hatler envisioned running a small resort that offered guests the best of Baja: Cozy beachside casitas, kite lessons, killer Mexican meals, downwinders, fishing, diving, whale shark tours, and everything else that is unique about the area. That's about what he has today except he also cleans a lot of toilets too! Tim loves eating chilaquiles, listening to Los Tigres Del Norte, kiting virgin spots, and spearing dinner. He started the Classic as a local event and is stoked that it has grown to what it has without losing its vibe and sense of community. Tim said it's nice to see direct use of tourist dollars improving living conditions instead of lining pockets!

VENTANA WINDSPORTS

http://www.ventanawindsports.com

Stephen "Esteban" Winarski first came to the La Ventana area in the mid-80s and spent the next several winters there camping and windsurfing between sea kayak trips around La Paz. He fell in love with the place because of the natural beauty, the great wind, and the good community of tourists and locals. Esteban quickly became obsessed with the idea of buying land on the beach and starting a business. At first it was just going to be a small juice bar with a yurt for accommodations. From that humble beginning Ventana Windsports has grown over the years to nine separate cabanas, a bodega for kite, windsurf, and SUP gear, and Coyas restaurant, which is now open to the public for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Esteban said he is thrilled to be part of the LV Classic/Kite Expo as it's a great opportunity to give something back to the community while sharing the stoke of the great sports that La Ventana has and have a panga load of fun!

BAJA JOE'S *http://www.bajajoe.com*

Joe and Angie Cheek first came to La Ventana to windsurf and eventually bought property so they could hang out a little longer. Friends wanted to hang out too so they built a couple of extra rooms. They didn't really have a vision for Baja Joe's as a resort. It was more of an evolution resulting from more friends wanting to visit and stay with them so they built more rooms and charged a little rent so they could stay even longer. Today, they live in La Ventana full time and have built up a good business with fly fishermen during the off-season. Joe and Angie support the Classic because the beach in front of their property is the ideal location for the event and they want to give back to the community that has accepted and embraced their endeavor and adventures in Mexico.

CAPTAIN KIRK'S *http://www.captainkirks.com*

After buying the remains of a bankrupt windsurfing shop in Southern California in 1992, Kirk Robinson needed to develop a business in the off-season by creating an "endless windy summer." Captain Kirk's Mexico then started running trips to La Ventana from La Paz and then bought a beautiful property there a year later to pursue this dream. Kirk chose his property because of its perfect gentle slope to the beach, the classic cactus that overlooks the beach, and the nice breaking swell right in front of it when an El Norte hits. Their neighbors at Palapas Ventana, Tim and Jimena, are good friends - they share the same beach and have always supported each other. Kirk and his wife Kitty gave computers and even an old school bus to the local schools prior to Tim's creation of the Classic and now, through Tim's efforts, Kirk said the entire community is involved so the support for the schools is really fantastic.

LA VENTANA BUILDERS

http://www.laventanabuilders.com/

Mike Donahue took the summer of 2000 off to finish his own house in La Ventana and while there he received a call from friends Sarah and Garvin Cross who asked if he had time to build them a house as well. Making some money while finishing his house sounded great so he acquired the necessary documents to open a business in Mexico and he was off and running. The success of the business has grown beyond his expectations and has enabled him to live in La Ventana full time for the last eight years. Mike said living and working in Baja is a dream come true for him as there is nothing like going to work and then going kiting without having to change clothes! Mike said he is involved in the La Ventana Classic and KiteXpo for two reasons. First, he will support anything that Tim Hatler is involved with. Second, making the schools better is the best gift we can give the children and the communities of La Ventana/El Sargento.

KL Reggae put on a great show Friday night.

Nate Appel was able to session the kicker that magically showed up overnight.

The winner's podium for the men's kite crossing.

LA VENTANA BAY PROPERTIES

http://www.laventanabayproperties.com/

Lana and Dave Nixon first experienced La Ventana over 13 years ago. The laidback lifestyle and "every little thing is gonna be alright" attitude of the community was really appealing to them. After a few years of winter vacations they decided to semi retire, purchase property, and build a home in the area. Soon after they had friends approaching and asking if they could help design and build their home in La Ventana too. Thus began the Nixon's home building business adventure. Today they are averaging about four custom homes a year along with various other side projects. Their son, Corey, a journeyman carpenter, recently joined the business as project manager and now resides in La Ventana full time. He is an active member of the local community and enjoys volunteering for the fundraising event. Dave said, "The Classic is a fantastic way to give back to the community, which has given so much to us. We eagerly look forward to many more years of sponsoring and volunteering for this wonderful event."

LA VENTANA SUR REAL ESTATE/LVX

http://www.laventanasur.com

LVX was formed on the basis of a friendship and a vision to combine local Ozzy Ramirez's years of kiteboarding and instructing experience in Bahia La Ventana with the business acumen of Jeff and Leni Neumeier to offer kite enthusiasts the opportunity to learn the sport in such an incredible location. They love working in the elements of the ocean and living by the rhythm of wind and water while having the freedom of an unconventional work schedule combined with a professional lifestyle. LVX also offers real estate and property opportunities, as many visitors fall in love with the area and make La Ventana their second home. Ozzy, Jeff, and Leni are involved in the La Ventana Classic because they believe it is a great event that promotes the sport and supports the local public schools. They said it is awesome to have the opportunity to see world-class kiters in action, learn about all the new kite gear, and enjoy the other evening events that bring everyone together for a good time in Baja.

Luckily, the start of the La Ventana Classic 11-mile crossing was a clean one with no tangled kites this year.

2011 LA VENTANA CLASSIC AND KITEXPO SPONSORS

EVENT ORGANIZERS: Palapas Ventana and The Kiteboarder Magazine

GOLD LEVEL: Hands of Faith and Pelican Reef

SILVER LEVEL: La Ventana Windsports, Slingshot, Baja Joe's, La Ventana Home Services, Dakine

BRONZE LEVEL: Sol Kiteboarding, Captain Kirk's Kiteboarding, Morris Olson Courtroom Lawyers, Elevation Kite School, Isle Surfboards, SUP Mexico, SurfCraft, La Ventana Builders, La Ventana Bay Properties and Custom Homes, Patagonia, Caution, Wainman Hawaii, Oregon Screen, Scenic Charms, Teva, Best Kiteboarding, Mystic Boarding, Underground

VENDOR LEVEL: Downwinder Inn, Mokies, Team Duke Sunscreen, La Ventana Sur Real Estate, Diamante Real Estate, Corona Cerveza, Pizza Vela, Cabrinha, NPX, Caracol Milk, Baja Boardriders, Paddlesurf.net, Underground, Live2Kite, North, Mystic, RRD, Naish, Liquid Force, Ozone, Best, F-One, Airush, Ikitesurf.com

RAFFLE WINNERS: Piper Rexford (Mystic Harness), Carol Corlett (Wainman HI Surfboard), Jesus Allen Cosia Lucero (Best Short Stick), Jesus Davila (Caution Kite), Ellen Tercier (Underground Tahee 134)

The course racers chased each other around the buoys for two days of competitive racing.

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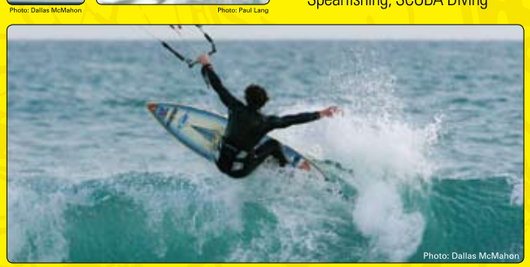

Photo: Dallas McMahon

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GUIDE TO BAJA BUSINESSES:

LA VENTANA

DOWNWINDER INN: The newest property in La Ventana, owners Wayde and Char Yates invite you to experience their piece of paradise with six rooms in a garden setting conveniently located near great beach launches. Each room has a queen bed, storage shelves, personal refrigerator, coffee maker, and complete bathrooms with hot showers for $65/night, double occupancy. Roof tops are available for relaxation and eye candy to enjoy the fabulous sunrises, sunsets, or just star gazing like you have never seen. A spacious outdoor community dining area provides all necessary items from the quick breakfast to a sit-down relaxing dinner. Free downwinder shuttle service available as well as wifi internet. **www.downwinderinn.com**

PALAPAS VENTANA: Founders of the La Ventana Classic Race, owners Tim and Jimena Hatler's property is located upwind of the main riding area where waves often break when there's swell or a strong El Norte. You'll know you're at the property when you see the palapa roofs of their quaint casitas with large porches, each overlooking the Sea of Cortez and Cerralvo Island. Lodging includes authentic home-cooked meals (breakfast/lunch) served at the convenient restaurant/bar located just above the launch area or stop in for a killer espresso and wifi. With a central location to riding, area markets, and restaurants, Palapas Ventana's warm atmosphere will make you feel like you have a home away from home. Sport fishing, diving excursions, and day trips to the island are also available. **www.palapasventana.com**

VENTANA BAY RESORT: Located halfway between the main town and the hot springs, Ventana Bay Resort offers you a choice of accommodations from beachfront rooms to private bungalows nestled in the beautiful desert landscape. Their on-site private restaurant serves delicious and healthy meals. Guests can keep to themselves on their private patio or join other guests for a cocktail at the clubhouse overlooking the bay. The Resort also offers lessons for all levels with all of the latest windsurfing and kiteboarding equipment along with a sports package with mountain biking, snorkeling, and kayaking equipment. **www.ventanabay.com**

VENTANA WINDSPORTS: In the middle of the action but seemingly a world apart, Ventana Windsports offers a casual laid back atmosphere in an intimate setting with super comfortable rooms. With a large launch/land are directly in front of the property and a 2,000 gallon hot tub for soaking after your session, you'll also enjoy healthy gourmet meals (included in accommodations), thick futons, feather beds, and fine bedding and furnishings, along with plenty of hammocks and lounge chairs for your "Baja Deluxe" holiday. Lodging also includes wifi and use of sports gear (SUP boards, kayaks, bikes). **www.ventanawindsports.com**

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GUIDE TO BAJA BUSINESSES:

ELEVATION KITEBOARDING: Elevation Kiteboarding is headed by Marie Leclerc and Mark Bavis. Marie, the reigning queen of the La Ventana Classic Race, and Mark, the strapless king of the beach, have been pioneering the sport on the west coast since 2002. Based out of Baja Joe's in La Ventana in the winter and Nitinat in Canada in the summer, the school provides lessons for all levels using the most advanced teaching techniques. From radio assisted lessons with the latest waterproof radio helmet systems to watercraft assisted lessons, Elevation caters to all levels of riders and also offers girls camps, lessons for kids, island trips, downwinders, and more. **www.elevationkiteboarding.com**

LOS BARRILES

VELA/DARE2FLY: Vela/Dare2Fly has been creating and perfecting the windsports resort experience for nearly 25 years. Whether you are looking for long tropical beaches with reliable side-shore winds, perfect flat water, or good surf breaks, Vela offers stand alone lessons or packages with gear, lessons, and lodging options at many locations around the world. Check out their website for their full offering of destinations with wind reports from their center managers, videos, and feedback from other travelers to give you a sense of what to expect. **www.dare2fly.com** or **www.velawindsurf.com**

KITEBOARDING BAJA: An IKO school based in Los Barriles, just 45 minutes outside of Cabo San Lucas, Baja Kiteboarding offers radio helmet lessons in a private or group setting with boat support. Stocked with the latest gear from Cabrinha, you can also take guided day trips to nearby riding spots and find the right place for your style and budget. **www.kiteboardingbaja.com**

EXOTIKITE: ExotiKite Kiteboarding School has been teaching kiteboarding in Los Barriles since 1998. An IKO certified and insured school on the East Cape boasting professional and experienced instructors, jet ski lessons and rescue, radio helmet instruction, and a guaranteed safe, successful, and enjoyable learning experience, they operate year round offering kiteboarding lessons, advanced wave riding and trick clinics, rentals, SUP tours and rentals, snorkeling, surfing, kayaking, and accommodations. Visit their new store after November 20 next to Smokey's Cantina or their school one mile north of town at kitebeach. **www.exotikite.com**

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I'LL CALL THAT

Tom Court drops in on the action at the table between Ned Taylor, Luke Whiteside, Cielito Marbus, and Cesar Portas. **Photo Gwenael Veige**

EXPOSED

DON'T FALL

Those dark spots in the water under Jeff Biege are black tip sharks on their semiannual migration near Palm Beach, Florida. "They are just a part of kiting and surfing in south Florida," said Jeff. "Some days there are thousands, but this day I only saw a few hundred. They are generally pretty mellow. They run if you ride at them, but after you pass them they sometimes chase you! It was all good this day except when I dropped my kite and had to swim with them for a few minutes." **Photo Jeff Biege**

SIT RIGHT THERE FOR A MINUTE

Dimitri Maramenides is known for his crazy antics involving jumping over things, so we're used to getting interesting images sent to us from him. This photo is proof that if Dimitri asks you to hold still for a minute, you run away as fast as you can. **Photo Charles Ash**

EVENING SESSION

Brandon Scheid grabs one more session before the end of the day in Cape Hatteras. **Photo Bryan Elkus**

BENDY

Shawn Richman has developed a style of riding that is all his own and he often leaves people scratching their heads when they try to think through what he actually did in the air. If you want to ride like Shawn, you better start stretching. **Photo Paul Lang**

EXPOSED

PRODUCT WATCH 10 NEW PRODUCTS TO CHECK OUT

CAUTION 2011 PADDLE BOARDS

For 2011 Caution introduces the 9'0" x 33" Wide Body SUP to the lineup. Caution standup paddle boards are fun high performance shapes that offer stability, control, and drive. Each board comes with an inset carrying handle and features shorter length, lower weight, and wider templates for stability. New for 2011, all boards now feature a vent plug to protect the boards from extreme changes in temperature and elevation. Epoxy EPX II glassing technology offers the perfect cross between durability and weight, making the boards feel fast and lively in the water.

SIZES: 10'6" x 32", 10' x 34", 9'8" x 31, 9'6" x 29.5", 9' x 33", 9'2" x 31", 9'0" x 30", 8'6" x 30"
COLORS: RED/WHITE
MSRP: $1115
www.cautionsantacruz.com

F-ONE VOLT / NEXT PACKAGE

The Volt is the new 2011 freeride kite in the F-One catalog. This kite benefits from four years of Delta C-Shape R&D. New for 2011 are three struts, one pump, and a new profile. It combines the qualities of the Bandit IV with the easiness of the Revolt. The Volt will be released in April alongside the new Next twin tip in an attractive package. The Next is an evolution of the Fluid and 50pro boards with significant gains in smoothness and control thanks to a new concave. The Next will be equipped with the same accessories you find on more advanced boards, including F-One's Unibox Asymmetrical Fin system and the Platinum pads and straps.

SIZES: Volt: 7, 9, 11, 13m; Next: 135, 138, 140cm
MSRP: Starting at $1649 for kite and board
www.f-onekites.us

HYPERFLEX PLAYA HZ (HARNESS ZIP)

At the request of many kite instructors and dealers, Hyperflex added the new Playa HZ for 2011. The mini zipper allows you to feed your spreader bar hook through the front of the jacket, so you can wear the Playa HZ over your harness for total warmth while teaching or riding.

SIZES: S, M, L, XL, XXL
MSRP: $124.99
www.hyperflesusa.com

LIQUID FORCE KITEBOARDING COMP STRAP SET

Liquid Force revolutionizes the kiteboard strap and pad board interface with the 2011 Comp Strap set which utilizes the Liquid Force X-Chassis connection interface, creating the ultimate adjustable connection between you and your board. A newly redesigned 3D ergonomic injection molded EVA pad provides smooth, uniform support and plush comfort. Plus a unique adjustable toe bar allows the rider to dial in the perfect, most comfortable individual fit.

SIZES: S, M, L, XL, XXL
Colors: Black/Red with beautiful embossed detail
MSRP: $169.99
www.liquidforcekites.com

MYSTIC STAR 3/2 STEAMER FOR KIDS

The 2011 Mystic Star 3/2 Steamer is the answer for the little rippers who want to hit the colder water. Super flexible panels make the suit easy to get in and out and the long zipper provides easy access. Also available in a shorty (black/red) for $75.95.

SIZES: S to XL for kids 3 to 8 years old
COLOR: Black/Green
MSRP: $109.95
www.mysticboarding.com

MYSTIC CODE HARNESS

The 2011 Code is built on a similar outline and construction to the Warrior III, Mystic's most popular harness which offers unrivalled support and comfort. The complete redesign from 2010 with its thermo molded interior and exterior foam offers a lighter and stronger product without compromising its durability. Mystic's new anatomical back support is now fully adjustable to completely change the characteristics of the harness depending on your riding style. The BOA ratchet system uses clever gearing attached to supportive cables throughout the back and sides of the harness which are controlled by turning the knob at the rear. Push in and turn clockwise to tighten, pull out and it loosens off once again. The system can completely change the harness from a fully flexible freeride to a tight fitting highly supportive wakestyle machine or anything in between!

SIZES: XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL
COLORS: Black, Titanium
MSRP: $289.95
www.mysticboarding.com

ION QUANTUM SEMIDRY 4/3

The Quantum is Ion's premium class skin wetsuit line with the highest quality materials and a clean, technical style. This means that you'll get fully glued blind stitched water sealing seams to make you feel comfortable and warm inside. The surface is almost completely skin neoprene outside for best performance to fight the wind chill factor due to evaporative heat loss. The Quantum is made for riders who want the warmest skin neoprene wetsuit with best stretch to ensure that every move on the water feels as if you aren't wearing it.

SIZES: XS to XLT
COLORS: Black
MSRP: $369.95
www.ion-essentials.com

KITEHERO KITEHERO VERTICAL NEST

The Kitehero Vertical Fin Nest replaces their standard horizontal fin mount, provides an alternative to the GoPro Surf Hero Sticky Disk, and ensures almost no chance of camera loss. The Vertical Fin Nest encapsulates your GoPro camera inside of a protective casing that ensures the camera housing mounting points don't break and the housing cannot come open at any time. Ride as hard as you want with this setup! In the future Kitehero plans to release other mounting options that utilize the Vertical Nest for surfing, snowboarding, and other action sports.

SIZES: GoPro Family of Cameras
COLORS: Black Nylon
MSRP: TBD, available April 2011
www.kitehero.com

SU-2 FREESTYLER

SU-2 Kiteboard's technology is one of the most sophisticated in the market and brings innovations every year. Their board lineup for 2011 features the new Freestyle board line with new SLS pads and lace-up straps, as well as a lot of new sizes. The Freestyler is completely redesigned from its predecessor the Pro Series III. The core of the Freestyler boards was modified to give it an amazing ride in all conditions.

SIZES: Freestyler: 130x41, 132x41, 135x41; Prorider: 132x41, 135x41, 137x43; Big Foot(light wind board): 135x45, 140x45, 145x45.
MSRP: Starting at $599
www.su2us.com

SLINGSHOT BALLISTIC HARNESS

New for 2011, Slingshot introduces the Ballistic Kite Harness. Designed and developed by riders for riders, the Ballistic harness is the answer for any kiteboarder who values the ultimate in performance, style, and fit. Slingshot's unique 3-D thermo shaping conforms to the body allowing for maximum mobility without sacrificing support and comfort. The integrated Lock Down Spreader Bar and Anchor Pad displaces the load and does not twist or ride up. Fiberglass battens provide just the right amount of back support and the flexible outline that makes everything comfortable to avoid chaffing and extend your time on the water.

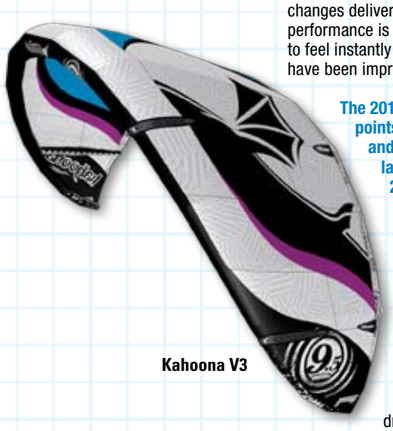
SIZES: S, M, L, XL
COLORS: White/Red/Green
MSRP: $185 Complete with Bar and Pad
www.slingshotsports.com

BEST KAHOONA / NEMESIS HP

The Kahoona V3's revised canopy profile provides smoother airflow and reduced drag while the modified wingtips improved the kite's high wind stability and steering responsiveness. Photo Gavin Butler

Now in their third revisions, both the Best Kahoona and Nemesis HP kites have gone through significant design and performance changes over the years. For 2011, they have both undergone significant refinements. The Kahoona remains the all-around kite for riders of all levels in the Best kite range with excellent wave riding characteristics. The Nemesis HP is better suited for more experienced riders seeking a high-performance kite perfect for big air and pushing their limits. Best Kiteboarding's designer, Peter Stiewe, answered our questions about these two new kites.

What refinements were made to the Kahoona and Nemesis HP kites? Many parts of both kites were tweaked, refined, trimmed, polished, and improved. While some of these changes may only represent small value changes in absolute terms, say a centimeter or two trimmed from the wingtips or a few millimeters taken out of the center chord profile, what these changes deliver in terms of improved ease of use and greater performance is anything but subtle. Riders can expect both kites to feel instantly familiar, but they'll quickly see how both kites have been improved.



Kahoona V3

The 2010 Kahoona featured new bridle connection points, an updated leading edge seam construction, and a continuation of the quad-strut delta kite layout. What are the design changes on the 2011 model? Some design improvements are a direct response to customer feedback on the kite and some are based on our ability to improve some technical aspects of the construction or material selection. The Kahoona V3 uses our advanced infusion Dacron and ripstop materials that were developed with new fiber treatments and material coatings to give reduced load elongation and longer service life. The V3 handles with a new crispness in its steering response. The canopy profile was revised to provide smoother airflow and reduced drag. The wingtip shaping was modified to give a more stable platform, which provides a level of high wind stability that riders will come to love and trust. The wingtip changes also allowed us to add multiple rear line attachments points. Now riders can really tune their Kahoona V3 for different riding styles and best performance in all wind conditions.

Are there major performance differences that previous Kahoona riders will notice immediately when riding it for the first time? Why would a rider want to upgrade to the new model? The first time a current Kahoona owner unpacks the V3 kite they will see the new features and construction details that have been added to the new design: Kook proof attachments, strut strings, new Dacron and ripstop material, and the AB custom tune options. As soon as they fly the V3 they will instantly notice the improvements in high wind stability and steering responsiveness as well as realize that it has retained 100% of what made the Kahoona such a firm favorite with so many different riders in the first place.

Any tuning tips you can share that riders may want to try out for different conditions or riding styles? The Kahoona V3 back line options are simple to use. There are two pigtails positions, A and B. Using the B setting will give you a kite with more feedback, a heavier feel on the back lines, better down the line surfing, and more predictability when unhooking. Using the A setting puts the back lines towards the trailing edge to give you faster turning, a broader and sweeter depower feel, and is better for freestyle tricks and jumping.

The Nemesis HP has made a return this year. Why did you phase out the Nemesis NXG? A lot of NXG riders swapped over to the Taboo when it was launched. With more available sizes the Taboo gives more options for building a complete quiver and there's overlap in the performance of the kites, particularly unhooked. The success of the Taboo killed off the NXG, which was a good problem to have! We're really happy that the Taboo has such a broad appeal, just as it was intended. It also means we can reintroduce the Nemesis HP to cater to those customers who simply won't settle for any other kite. It has a really loyal following with riders who like to ride overpowered, old-school, mostly hooked in, and just can't help throwing massive airs.

This is the third version of the Nemesis HP. What have you learned from the kites that have been developed while the HP was unavailable? We've not made a Nemesis HP since '09 and that's a long time in terms of development. Since then we've changed the sail loft we build at, developed new Dacron and ripstop fabrics, and introduced a whole host of improved construction techniques and added features. Naturally all these made their way into the HP V3. The HP V3 is really the return of the prodigal son. Everyone who still rides one or ever tried a Nemesis HP knows exactly what that kite does, how it turns, goes upwind, delivers power, and what happens when you pull the trigger. What we've learned since we last made the HP is how to make it stronger, faster, lighter, and even more reactive. The HP V3 beats both previous models for handling response and jumping ability.

The HP is the only kite in the current lineup to use Twister Tech and Cuben Fiber. What are the benefits of building a kite this way? Using Cuben Fiber allows us to make the kite with a thinner LE than we can with Dacron. We can use higher inflation pressure to give a structure that is stiffer and lighter. That means more stability, less drag, better upwind ability, and better jumping and hang time. A reduced diameter LE is pretty much the most beneficial design choice you can make and Cuben allows us to do that. Because Cuben is so stiff both in flexure and torsion we developed Twister Tech to allow the LE to twist for better steering responsiveness while still retaining the tip-to-tip stiffness. On the V3 we've revised the placement of the Twister Tech segments and the locations of the bridle attachment points to give the best possible load distribution across the LE and maximum turning speed. It's a real step forward from the HP V2 and very different from how the NXG flew.

Can you give us some tuning tips to get the most out of the Nemesis HP V3? The Nemesis HP has the same rear line connection options as the Kahoona V3 so the advice for the Kahoona applies to both kites. Of course, if you really want to get the most out of the HP, then ride it lit.

Is there a new control bar for 2011? The Redline Performance Bar continues for the 2011 season. We've already introduced several rolling changes to the design including a tighter cuff with slightly higher release load, a large size chicken loop for riders who love unhooking, and we are looking at a single front line leash kit for the future. The standout feature remains the quick release cuff with its load-independent release pressure and integrated swivel. Every part on the bar is replaceable, so a new Redline Performance Bar can keep going and going. It's here to stay.

Why would you recommend a rider choose the Nemesis HP versus the Kahoona V3? They are very different kites suited for different types of riding. Of course both of them can be used as cruisers, but that's missing the point. The Kahoona is a kite for any rider, any skill level, and all riding styles. It has a bias towards freeride and waves, but it's the easiest kite in the range to jump and handles superbly unhooked. Most of our team will pick a Kahoona for practicing new tricks. The Nemesis is very different. Its bias is towards aggression, jumping, and speed. It's unforgiving and is a kite that demands to be thrown about and needs a firm and experienced hand on the other end of the bar. If you want to go big and fast then the HP V3 is the kite to do it on. It's the original surface to air missile.

Nemesis HP V3

Product Name	Shape	Style	Conditions	Stand Out Feature	Sizes	Available
Kahoona V3	Delta	Freeride/Waves	Any	Auto-relaunch	3.5, 5.5, 7.5, 9.5, 11.5, 13.5m	April 2011
Nemesis HP V3	SLE	Freestyle/Big-air	Loves to be overpowered	Cuben LE with Twister Tech	8, 10, 12, 14m	April 2011

On the Nemesis HP V3, Best revised the placement of the Twister Tech segments and the bridle attachment points to give it the best possible load distribution across the LE and maximum turning speed. Photo Carlos Moncho

EPIC
RENEGADE INFINITY

DESIGNER'S CORNER

Dimitri says that his first light wind kite, the Infinity, makes kiting in 8-10 knots fun where riders won't be just "mowing the lawn." Photo Helen Trotman

New for 2011, Epic is introducing the Renegade Infinity, its first light wind specific kite. The Infinity is in the same family as the rest of the Renegades, but it was designed a little differently and larger to take advantage of light wind options. Owner and co-designer Dimitri Maramenides decided not to assign this kite a size, but says it turns like a 12m kite but has the power of an 18m.

Why did you decide to release this kite as the Renegade Infinity instead of just adding a larger size to the Renegade line? We're very excited about the Renegade Infinity, and the test kites have already received some impressive feedback. We made a decision not to distinguish this kite with a size written on it as large kites may intimidate some riders. If you want to ride in 8-10 knots, this is the kite to make that happen while having a fun time on the water. Current kite meter sizes are relative and with so many advancements over the last few years, what does a 12m kite really mean anyway? Smaller kites are becoming as powerful as 12m kites, so the numbers are starting to have less relevance. The Infinity is our light wind solution in the Renegade family of kites. Give one a try and pick a number that feels right for you!

Is the profile or construction of the kite different from the other 2011 Renegades to accommodate for light wind riding? We don't want to give away all of our secrets, but the Infinity is not just a larger Renegade. We designed it specifically for light winds, but it has the same Renegade feel that riders have fallen in love with. The trick here was to create a light wind kite that had the flying characteristics of smaller kites. Most light wind kites are very slow and that can be frustrating. We've put some pep in the Infinity. This requires a slightly different shape, profile, and bridle layout. We take great care in the construction details of our kites and stand behind every product we sell 100%. Great products and unbeatable customer service is what we strive for daily.

Realistically, will riders be mowing the lawn with this kite for a water fix or will they be able to get a little more freestyle action? When we set out to create this kite, we wanted to develop something that would be different from the current sluggish light wind kites. Riders, when using the proper board, will enjoy freestyle riding in under 10 knots. We've proven that through our testing. When the wind picks up, change boards or adjust the kite a little and enjoy the view! We didn't begin this project as a solution to mow the lawn. That's what the kid next door is for! We want to go kiting.

Why would you recommend a rider get the Renegade Infinity versus the 14m Screamer? They are very different kites. The 14m Screamer is a high performance freeride machine with unreal hang time, great vertical lift, and very grunty low end but requires a little more attention when flying. The Renegade is a kite that is very user friendly, easy to adapt to, and backs up very well for wave or wakestyle riding. It's performance driven yet forgiving. The Infinity builds on that feel. It has a consistent pull and powerful low end to get you on plane, but it's very predictable and super fun.

How do you think your kite differs from other light wind specific kites currently on the market? Easy: We make light wind riding fun! Really, in conjunction with Momi, our kite design guru, the Renegade Infinity performs like a kite developed for medium winds, yet has the capacity to enjoy riding in winds just under the 10 knot range. We worked very hard to ensure that the Infinity has a snappier feel than other light wind kites.

Does the new kite offer any tuning options? It sure does. All of the Epic kites have tuning options. Quick adjustments at the bar and kite while rigging can enhance the kite's performance for different wind conditions. We've taken this kite from 7 knots all the way to 20. Not that we'd suggest using this kite in 20 knots, but it is possible.

Do you have any tips for riders to get the most out of this kite in light winds? We developed the Oxygen board to compliment this kite and get the most out of light winds. With the right board and tuning options of this kite, you'll look at light wind in a different way and have a much longer riding season.

Is the control bar the same as the one that comes with the Screamer and regular Renegade kites? The Renegade Infinity uses the same Xtend bar as our entire kite line. The bar length can be adjusted in moments at the beach.

Product Name	Shape	Riding Style	Conditions	Stand Out Feature	Size	Available
Renegade Infinity	SLE/C-Shape	All-Around	Light wind machine for Free-style, Waves, Wakestyle	Will get you in the water in 7 to 9 knots	Top Secret	End of February

LITEWAVE
LACE-UP FLS

DESIGNER'S CORNER

Litewave's 2011 Lace Up FLS can morph to any foot shape or size and can be adjusted forwards, backwards, and side to side. Photo Tom Leeman

The Litewave Lace-Up was popular last year, but for 2011 it has undergone a lot of changes. It is now lighter and stronger and is constructed using injection molded EVA. This has allowed Litewave Designs to make more contours to fit the foot and give better grip and edge control which translates to more control in your riding. The strap can be morphed to any size/shape foot making it a very versatile and comfortable strap system. Litewave Dave Turner filled us in on the new Lace-Up FLS.

Building upon the popular Litewave Lace-Up bindings introduced to the market in 2010, did you majorly change the design of your 2011 bindings or are the changes minor tweaks? It was a major overhaul. We spent a lot of time to make a 3D design for an injection mold on the pad. Also, there is a super strong plate that is molded like a milk-crate with ribs for amazing strength. It all hides in a recess in the pad, so you never know it's there except by the amazing edge control performance gained.

The 2011 Lace-Ups feature a super wide strap, perhaps the widest we've ever seen. What does this accomplish? It puts every movement of your muscles to the edge of the board. This is the same theory in a good fitting pair of ski or snowboard boots. You can move the strap forwards, backwards, and side-to-side before locking it in with the Velcro and laces. This makes it able to morph to any foot shape or size.

What's the purpose of the toe ledge that drops off so drastically? This makes it natural for the rider to hang on with their toes so that the board really stays on, especially during air-raleys or other moves where riders have trouble with their feet staying in the straps.

Since the new bindings give you a really locked-in feel, how do they feel and perform when riding waves? Amazing. The increased edge control lets you carve harder than with normal straps and pads. It locks you in, yet lets you change your heel angle so that you can point both feet in the same direction versus being locked in to a duck stance.

Will the new bindings accommodate smaller and super-sized feet? The S/M size will go from a women's size 6 to a men's size 10. The L/XL will go from a men's 10-14. The adjustability is another definite advantage of the Lace-Up FLS.

What else changed on the 2011 bindings? For 2011 the FLS is stronger, lighter, and easier to mount to the board. The amazing non-skid skin is the same as in 2010. The grip on the surface of the pad is much grippier than any other molded surface out there.

Can you give riders some tips about specific design features they should look for when choosing bindings? Of course, it's most important to choose something that is comfortable, but that also fits your foot snugly. Being easy to take on/off the board is also important. If you ride a narrow board, look to see that the toe and heel of the binding won't hang over and interrupt the water flow while you are riding.

Your binding is patent pending in 300 countries. Why? The Lace-Up FLS is patented in 300 countries because it is truly unique in its design. It took years to develop this system and making the tooling was no easy task. The patent is designed to protect Litewave's interests because everyone is going to want these!

Product Name	Product Type	Stand Out Feature	Colors:	Sizes	Available
Lace-Up FLS (Foot Lock System)	Sandal Binding	Patented strap-to-pad connection	Black and White	S/M & L/XL	March 1

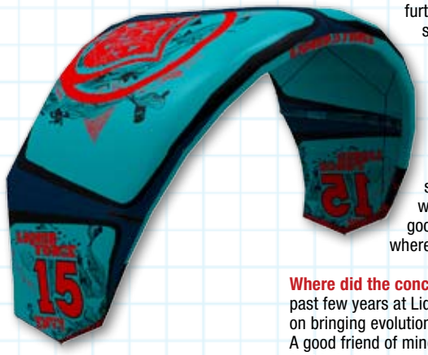
LIQUID FORCE

MAX FLOW / 2011 ENVY

Max Flow, LF's new inflation system, takes one pump a step further and gets you on the water 40% faster than with traditional systems. Photo Bryan Elkus

For 2011, Liquid Force introduced the all new Max Flow system on all its kites. Max Flow is an entirely new high-capacity valve that allows you to inflate your kite faster. Designer Julien Fillion also worked on refining LF's second generation Envy kite, their high performance all around three-strut SLE kite first introduced to the market in 2010. We spoke with Julien regarding why Liquid Force is so excited about the new Max Flow system and its benefits, as well as what we can expect from the 2011 Envy.

Why do you think the market was ripe for Max Flow? Is saving a few minutes pumping up your kite really that big of a deal to most consumers? Max Flow is all about ease and convenience. It takes one pump systems one step further and it fully antiquates non one pump systems just based on ease, speed, and reliability. It gets you on the water 40% faster just in inflation time! Deflation is way faster and easier also as when you roll the wingtips to the center it does not push the other side out. So if you have to rush out of the office to get a 45-minute session, now you can get a 50-minute session and it is faster to roll your kite up when you leave the beach. This works out good when you have a gal at home wondering where the heck you are too.



Where did the concept for Max Flow come from? In the past few years at Liquid Force, we have focused our energy on bringing evolution that matters: Function first, design next. A good friend of mine was working on an inflatable baby crib for his baby product company and needed help working with bladder and kite materials for his concept. Since we gained so much knowledge in the past few years bringing the quality of our bladder and kite construction to the highest level, we had a lot of very valuable knowledge to make his crib a success right away. Along the way, he started to develop a very simple and fast one way valve. The original valve was designed to inflate and deflate the crib in a very quick and efficient way. We knew we were on to something when we realized how simple, easy, and efficient the valve was on the baby crib. Then we started the long two-year process of customizing this valve to make it suitable and reliable for kiteboarding.

How does Max Flow work? What is so amazing about Max Flow is the fact that you get the maximum amount of airflow going into the kite with each motion of the pump and the least restriction possible from a one-way air cap inside. There is nothing in the way to obstruct the airflow and the air is automatically secure inside the bladder. Pumping with the Max Flow is amazing and makes setting up your gear so much easier, as you can now inflate your kite in almost half the time and effort compared with using a traditional valve.

Along with the Max Flow valve, we redesigned our entire one pump system to be very simple and extremely reliable with a hardware-free valve connector to connect the struts to the LE. The unique thing about this connector is that it works perfectly on our custom LF strut valve, but was also designed to work on any standard 8mm strut valve. So wherever you are around the world, if you get unlucky and need a replacement bladder, our valve connector will work like a charm.

Finally, to close the circle of the Max Flow System, we completely redesigned our pump. We worked very hard to create an outstanding relationship with our pump supplier for both the kite and wakeboarding parts of our business (mostly for towable tubes). By doing this, we were able to use a completely redesigned two-liter pump to go along with Max Flow. The inside air chamber of the pump was completely redesigned so no more popping gaskets or breaking inside parts. The inside airflow section of the pump is now a single molded complex plastic piece which helps prevent any failure on your pump. We are very proud to be the first one to introduce this pump to the market.

Kiters need a special pump for Max Flow. Are they just out of luck if they forget it? Max Flow does require a special nozzle which comes with our Liquid Force pump. If one day you forget your pump at home, no worries, we also included a standard 8mm valve on the LE of our kites so you can inflate your kite the traditional way using any other kite pump.

The 2011 Envy features a shorter bridle which improved relaunch and gives riders a more direct feeling while the new strut and panel structure improved its stability and durability. Photo Bryan Elkus

Liquid Force released the Envy kite in 2010, their first three-strut SLE kite design. What is the most significant change to the 2011 model? After researching and developing the perfect outline, LE, and wingtip angles to accommodate the three struts while keeping the arc stable in flight, in 2010 we released what we believe was the lightest high performance all-around SLE kite on the market. For 2011, we basically had to work on the one issue that most three-strut kites have, trailing edge instability, which translates into fluttering during narrow radius turns or when extreme depower is used. An unstable (flapping) trailing edge slows down the kite during turning and gives uneven feedback to the control bar. We modified the strut positions and applied the right amount of tension on the overall trailing edge and the problem was solved!

Were any other construction or design changes made to the 2011 Envy? The 2011 Envy features a shorter bridle which helps increase ease of relaunch and gives the kite an even more direct feeling. It also has a new strut and panel structure reinforcement for improved stability and durability. New strut ends round out the changes which prevent the bridle from wrapping around them.

Did you make any changes to the kite's performance? The kite's performance was refined for 2011 and it's a bit faster turning with enhanced power to give riders a more direct feel in turns and a smoother more constant power stroke so it won't rip out of your hands in loops and won't jack, slack, or bog you down in gusty conditions.

Liquid Force introduced the CPR control system in 2010. Is the bar the same for 2011? We increased the space between the center of the control bar and the top of the chicken loop to give more room for rider's hands.

Product Name	2011 Envy
Shape	Beyond Delta SLE
Riding Style	All Around, Waves, Everything!
Conditions	Freestyle, Wave, and Freeride, also perfect to learn on
Stand Out Feature	Most reliable kite ever produced
Sizes	5, 7, 9, 12, 15m
Available	Now

ANALYZE THIS

CAUTION SPITFIRE

TESTED: 9, 11m **AVAILABLE SIZES:** 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16m
TESTED IN: La Ventana 21-25 knots, large chop

FROM THE MANUFACTURER

The 2011 Spitfire is our latest SLE C-shaped hybrid that's guaranteed to make you fall in love with Caution all over again. Our R&D team was so confident that the 2011 Spitfire will be one of those epic models that offers our customers breakthrough performance, ease of use, and durability that we named it after our classic C-kite that first earned Caution it's notoriety for durability and performance in the old school days. The 2011 Spitfire blends our two kite platforms from 2010 into one well balanced, high performance wing that delivers super stable "no way this thing's falling out of the sky" flying characteristics merged with fast turning and across the window flying speed. In terms of construction, the 2011 Spitfire continues in the legacy of Caution's bulletproof design with some additional features to increase performance and durability. Check out the 2011 Spitfire, the flame continues strong.

THE KITEBOARDER REPORT

OUT OF THE BOX: Our first impression when unrolling the Spitfire is that this kite is built to take a beating. It's a five-strut one pump kite with a compact bridle. Both the front and rear bridles use one pulley per side, but Caution uses a unique molded block with no moving parts, meaning that it is unaffected by sand and salt. The rear bridle is adjustable and each strut features a small zipper near the front, a welcomed addition to make removing and installing bladders much easier. Each strut has a unique taper at the trailing edge, which Caution claims offers a cleaner airflow off the trailing edge. The strut to leading edge connections are unique in that they are solid back and forth yet allow the strut to move side to side, something Caution says allows the kite to withstand severe impacts. The 2011 Caution Bar features a push-away quick release (with integrated swivel), an above-bar depower strap, 24m braided Dyneema lines, and adjustable (47-56 cm) ends. The bar feels slightly thicker than most bars.

ON THE WATER: The Spitfire is a very stable, well-behaved, and direct-feeling kite. Turns initiate immediately and it's an easy kite to fly without having to look at it, thanks to the excellent bar feedback. The Spitfire is a grunty kite that goes upwind well and turns fast. Bar pressure is in the medium to medium-heavy range. Relaunching is easy and we were impressed by how stable the canopy of the kite is with a minimum of distortion or fluttering. The Spitfire depowers very well within a relatively short amount of bar travel. Jumping performance is good and predictable with the Spitfire providing floaty jumps with a lot of hang time. When riding downwind, the Spitfire remains stable through carves, drifting downwind with the rider and is always ready to turn on command.

TESTER COMMENT:

"From the moment I had it in my hands, I was immediately in tune with this kite. It had super smooth power, responsive turning, boosted big, and was super easy to relaunch."
– Marina Chang, 130 lbs., All-Around Kiter

PROS:

- The Spitfire is built to Caution's legendary surf-tough construction standards and is meant to take a beating.
- Excellent stability and downwind drift make this kite very well-suited for wave riding.

CONS:

- The 2011 control bar is a little thicker than usual, which may take some getting used to for some riders.
- Bar pressure might be a little high for some riders who prefer kites with very light bar pressure.

THE VERDICT:

The Caution crew spends most of their time in the waves, and our impression is that the Spitfire is a kite that excels in the waves. Its turning is fast and direct and the Spitfire gives very good feedback so you always know where it is. The bar pressure may be a little high for riders who prefer a light bar pressure, but the pressure is nowhere near excessive. It's stability and responsiveness when riding downwind is excellent. This kite has enough all-around performance to satisfy most riders, but where it will really shine is in the surf.

TIPS

- ✘ Move the rear line bridle forward to slow down turning speed, move it back to speed up turning.
- ✘ In light conditions move the back lines to the middle or top knot to get a little more power.

FLEXIFOIL ION

TESTED: 8.5, 10.5m **AVAILABLE SIZES:** 5.5, 7, 8.5, 10.5, 12.5, 14.5m
TESTED IN: La Ventana 21-28 knots, large chop

FROM THE MANUFACTURER

We don't believe in change for change's sake, but continually improving on what we know works. That's why with the Ion you'll find a number of refinements in quality and performance to give you a product that's of the usual high Flexifoil standards. This is evolution, not revolution. Continuing to deliver the combination of C-kite feel and Hybrid performance that the Ion has provided in the past, this season's revision promises unique enhancements designed to focus its strength to your style of riding. The Ion delivers fast, positive, and progressive steering, enabling you to turn quickly into jumps with constant strength, power, and lift and giving great hang time and the freedom in the air to excel beyond what you thought possible. If you're already kitesurfing and need a kite that'll support you in pushing beyond your existing limits into a new world of skill and enjoyment, then there is no better choice than the Ion.

THE KITEBOARDER REPORT

OUT OF THE BOX: The first thing we noticed about the 2011 Ion is its heavy duty construction. Every possible area of the kite seems to be beefed up to take abuse and even the fabric that makes up the kite feels more sturdy than normal. We were initially perplexed when we tried to inflate this kite as it has two wingtip dump valves, which Flexifoil added so that you can choose which end to roll up from and to deflate the kite faster. The Ion is a six-strut one pump kite with a relatively compact bridle. The front line bridle features one pulley per side and has settings for low and high wind (we only tried the stock low wind setting). The rear lines connect directly to the kite and there are settings for faster or slower turning.

The Flexifoil All-in-One bar is simple and very clean. It features a push away quick release, above bar depower strap, and is adjustable from 48-54cm. The depower throw is relatively short and the depower strap is long, which could place it a bit far from some riders when set to full power. The bar itself has a smaller diameter than usual with a raised grip.

ON THE WATER: Every tester who rode this kite, both the 8.5 and 10.5, commented about how well constructed and powerful the Ion is. All riders found the kite to have consistent power with quick turning and smooth power delivery. The Ion also builds apparent wind fast when underpowered. The Ion's handling and amount of depower felt closer to a C-kite than a bridled kite which means it's not well suited for beginners or riders who like kites with extreme depower. The Ion's low end grunt, boosting ability, unhooked performance, and consistent feel through the bar are excellent. It flies far forward in the window and goes upwind very well. Bar pressure is in the medium to medium-heavy range, especially when overpowered. We found the Ion to be easy to relaunch but not automatic like a more SLE-oriented kite. It's fast turning and forward flying characteristics mean it is a really fun kite for more experienced kiters to ride powered and fast on.

TESTER COMMENT:

"I was really surprised by how much power the 8m produces. The Ion is not the best kite for beginners, but it's fun to ride powered up for an aggressive session."
–Paul Lang, 200 lbs., Surf Kiter

TIPS

- ✘ Close both wingtip valves before inflating the Ion. We felt silly after trying to inflate it with one of the valves open.
- ✘ This kite generates a lot of power. You might be able to get by riding a kite one size smaller than you would normally ride.

PROS:

- The Ion has great low end power and handles gusty conditions very well.
- The 2011 Ion features possibly the most heavy duty construction we've ever seen.

CONS:

- The depower strap is far away when set to full power and riders without long arms may have trouble reaching it. You can move it closer by retying the depower line.
- Some riders may want more depower than the Ion offers. Use the trim system in addition to the bar to get the most depower possible.

THE VERDICT:

If you want an aggressive and powerful kite that offers constant power, check out the Ion. These kites are powerful, handle much closer to a C-kite than most bridled kites, and don't have as much depower as more SLE-oriented designs. Turning is very direct and quick with solid unhooked performance, lift, and hang time. Its low end grunt and rock solid stability make it especially good for heavier riders. If you are looking for more of an all-around kite with more depower, try the Flexifoil Proton. If you want to have a stable, powerful, and direct feeling kite and are comfortable controlling power with the edge of your board, you should give the Ion a try.

ANALYZE THIS

F-ONE BANDIT 4

TESTED: 8m **AVAILABLE SIZES:** 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14m
TESTED IN: La Ventana 24-28 knots, large chop

FROM THE MANUFACTURER

For 2011, the Bandit 4 has a brand new shape. We modified its span, tips, profile, leading edge diameter, and lowered the number of struts to three. All this was done in order to get an extremely homogeneous kite. The sharp Delta angle at its center (patented by F-One) is identical to the B3, which gives the kite plenty of stability, depower, and auto relaunch. Three struts mean a lighter, smoother, and more dynamic kite. The squared tips allow two different back line settings and a cleaner aerodynamic flow during turns. The profile and the structure of the Bandit 4 is more rigid for better control and greater depower in high wind conditions. With the B4, we overcame a difficult challenge: It excels in every program with an unmatched feeling. It suits every style and disciplines without any adaptation time.

THE KITEBOARDER REPORT

OUT OF THE BOX: The F-One Bandit, the original Delta kite, is now in its fourth generation and it has undergone a major redesign for 2011. It is now a three-strut one pump kite with square wingtips. The three struts are integrated into the canopy instead of being attached to the bottom of it. The bridle still features three pulleys per side but now the rear bridle is adjustable to change the turning speed of the kite. Despite the changes, the Bandit retains its Delta shape. Once inflated, you can see that the leading edge comes to a subtle point in the middle.

For 2011, F-One has released the Airlite bar which is the first bar to be built from one solid piece of aluminum. The ends, tubes, and center make up one single piece as opposed to separate pieces that are assembled together. This new bar feels light and rigid and every member of the test team enjoyed using it. F-One has decided to stick with a Velcro and pin safety release as they feel there is no chance of it being jammed with sand.

ON THE WATER: The Bandit 4 is a very stable kite in the sky and we immediately fell in love with the feel of the Airlite bar. The bar pressure of the Bandit 4 is in the light-medium range, much lighter than the previous Bandit III. Turning speed is fast and the kite's handling is very direct. Power delivery from the Bandit 4 is very smooth and the kite depowers a great deal within a short amount of bar travel. The Bandit 4 goes upwind well and is easy to relaunch. While carving on the large chop of La Ventana, the Bandit 4 drifts back in the window and responds to inputs instantly. Jumping performance is also very good and the kite zips back up to the top of the window after loops.

PROS:

- The F-One Bandit 4 is a fantastic all-around kite that truly does everything well.
- The unique one-piece Airlite bar was very well-received by our test team.

CONS:

- The Velcro safety release can only be operated from one side.
- Some riders may not like the Bandit 4's tribal graphics.

THE VERDICT:

The F-One Bandit 4 fits the bill as an all-around kite that seems to do everything well. It simply seemed to handle anything our testers could throw at it. It has a wide wind range, excellent jumping and upwind abilities, smooth power, and fast and predictable handling. It's stable and relaunches easily. The new Airlite bar felt like the perfect size and the grip felt just right. We would like to see F-One move to a safety release that can be operated with either hand in an emergency. The nimble and direct handling makes it feel like you can put the Bandit 4 wherever you want it and the stability and responsiveness should serve well in the surf.

TESTER COMMENT:

"The very direct handling combined with the nice feel of the Airlite bar make the Bandit 4 feel like a kite that you can quickly place anywhere in the window you want it."
–Paul Lang, 200 lbs., Surf Kiter

TIPS

- ✘ Get in the habit of always putting the safety release on the same side so you know where it is if you need to use it.
- ✘ If you unhook a lot, consider moving the rear lines forward to slow the turning speed of the kite. This will make the kite more forgiving to small bar inputs during unhooked moves.

NORTH EVO

TESTED: 9m **AVAILABLE SIZES:** 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14m
TESTED IN: La Ventana 21-28 knots, large chop

FROM THE MANUFACTURER

The Evo presents a seamless blend of free-ride and new-school characteristics. Offering an incredibly stable C-oriented feel with the smoothness and depower ability of a hybrid, the Evo allows you to bang out the latest unhooked freestyle tricks, jump high, throw kite loops, and cruise with ease. It is an easy to fly freeride kite with predictable, polite manners. Consistent, predictable power development and steady bar feel makes the Evo excellent for unhooking and super easy to throw kiteloops while providing tons of pop for throwing new-school moves! Super easy relaunch due to the round, compact shape of the Evo makes trying new moves all the more tempting. The profile created for the Evo is more powerful and improves the upwind abilities drastically. Continuous rEVOlution.

THE KITEBOARDER REPORT

OUT OF THE BOX: The Evo is a five-strut one pump kite that shows North's usual attention to details. Like the rest of North's 2011 graphics, the Evo's graphics are bright and attention grabbing. This is a bridled four-line kite (it can also be flown as a five-line) with a very compact and simple bridle. The front bridle features one pulley per side and the rear bridle is adjustable to change the turning speed of the kite. Each of the struts and the leading edge are tapered at the trailing edge. Compared to the other North kites, the Evo has a fairly low-aspect profile. The Evo is constructed using the North-exclusive Techno Force D2 fabric, which North claims offers more strength and less stretch than other fabrics.

The North Trust Four-Line bar is a very simple and well-thought out control system. It features a push-away quick release with integrated swivel, above-bar depower cleat, adjustable stopper, and an adjustable depower throw. The bar comes in one size which is adjustable from 46 to 55cm.

ON THE WATER: Like other North kites we've tested, the Evo is an extremely stable and well-behaved kite in the air. On the edge of the window, it takes virtually no effort to fly. The Evo is a smooth flying kite that delivers consistent power throughout the wind window. The bar pressure is in the light-medium range and it's very easy to feel where the Evo is without having to look at it. Turning performance is very direct and quick. The Evo depowers quickly in the first few inches of bar travel, which gave it a bit of a punchy feeling when riding really powered. The Evo loops very easily and zips back up to the top of the window with no tendency to stall. When taking off for jumps, the Evo's explosive pop off the water feels like a rocket ship ride, yet it's easy to control. When riding and carving downwind the Evo remained very responsive and it drifts back very well with the rider.

TESTER COMMENT:

"As a woman, I didn't feel like it had super heavy bar pressure that would tire my arms, but it also wasn't so light that I couldn't get a good feel of the kite. It was just right."
–Ginette Buffone, 130 lbs., Freestyle Kiter

TIPS

- ✘ With the North Trust bar, you can easily adjust the amount of depower travel to your own liking so the bar is never out of reach if you have short arms.
- ✘ When rolling up the Evo, roll it continually from one wingtip to the other towards the dump valve. This makes it easier to keep the battens aligned for folding the kite.

PROS:

- Jumps with the Evo are explosive yet the kite is very easy to control in the air.
- The Evo's handling is very direct, smooth, and precise.

CONS:

- Bright attention-grabbing graphics may not be to everybody's liking.
- When riding really powered, the first few inches of depower feel a little punchy.

THE VERDICT:

The Evo is a great all-around kite that will satisfy a lot of riders at all skill levels. The extreme stability and easy relaunch suit beginners well and the Evo's amazing boosting performance and easy loops will satisfy advanced riders. All riders will appreciate the smooth, direct, and predictable handling and the light-medium bar pressure. The Evo remains responsive and stable when carving downwind, which leads us to believe this kite will work well in the surf.

ANALYZE THIS

SLINGSHOT RPM

TESTED: 12m **AVAILABLE SIZES:** 4.5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14m
TESTED IN: La Ventana 16-26 knots, large chop

FROM THE MANUFACTURER

We're proud to announce the 2011 Slingshot RPM. The RPM is changing kiteboarding with its innovative 3 strut "Open C" canopy design. It delivers limitless high end performance options for all conditions. Excel your riding regardless of your style. The RPM is the one kite that allows for top performance while executing unhooked freestyle, wakestyle, and surf style. It's also the first and only non "C" kite to take a PKRA championship podium finish. It delivers limitless high end performance options for all conditions. For 2011 we have added Split-Strut design.

THE KITEBOARDER REPORT

OUT OF THE BOX: For 2011, the largest change to the Slingshot RPM is the addition of Spitstrut, which means that the struts are now integrated into the canopy as opposed to being attached to the bottom of it. The RPM remains a three-strut one-pump kite built on an Open-C platform, meaning that the profile of the kite is more open (flatter) than most other kites. The compact and unique Full Suspension front bridle features two pulleys per side and is highly adjustable to change bar pressure, kite feedback, and turning characteristics.

The 2011 Comp Stick bar is similar to last year's version, but the depower cleat has been changed to be easier to use. It features a push away quick release, below-bar depower cleat, above bar swivel, rubberized grip, adjustable stopper, and comes if different sizes. Our 12m test kite came with a 20" (51cm) bar and 25m lines.

ON THE WATER: For the sake of consistency among our testers, we left the RPM on the stock bridle settings. The RPM sits back from the edge of the window and is a very stable and predictable kite. Even though it sits back in the window, it shoots forward easily when edging hard and gets upwind well if you use your board to control power instead of sheeting out. On the stock settings, the RPM has medium bar pressure, but this is adjustable through the bridle. Turning is smooth but not especially fast. Unhooked, the RPM is very well behaved as it remains stable and is forgiving to small inputs from the rider during unhooked moves. After crashes, we found the RPM to be easy to relaunch. One tester rode the 12m very overpowered and found that the RPM depowers very well.

PROS:

- The RPM combines great C-kite like unhooked performance with the depower and ease of use of a bridled kite.
- The highly adjustable bridle allows the RPM to be tuned for a wide variety of conditions and riding styles.

CONS:

- The trim system on the 2011 bar is definitely easier to use than the 2010 system, but it's still a little difficult to use.
- The RPM canopy flutters quite a bit when depowered a lot.

THE VERDICT:

For 2011, the RPM remains a great all-around kite that a lot of riders will like. This kite really shines if you want a kite with C-kite unhooked performance mixed with the depower of a bridled kite. The adjustable bridle means you can tune the RPM to feel how you want it to. The stability (especially for unhooking), smooth handling, and easy relaunch will appeal to many riders. If you don't ever unhook and want a kite that gets upwind easily without having to edge hard, take a look at the RPM Rally. If you are after a great all-around kite that performs well unhooked, try the RPM.

TESTER COMMENT:

"The 2011 RPM felt even smoother than last year's kite. Even through sharp turns, the power stays smooth and even."
–Paul Lang, 200 lbs., Surf Kiter

TIPS

- Pump up the RPM hard, but don't worry about the struts looking soft when the kite is sitting on the beach as this is normal for a Splitstrut-equipped kite.
- Rinse the front line swivel with fresh water occasionally to keep it working properly.

RRD VISION

TESTED: 9m **AVAILABLE SIZES:** 5, 7, 9, 10.5, 12, 13.5m
TESTED IN: La Ventana 21-25 knots, large chop

FROM THE MANUFACTURER

Superior versatility, exceptionally balanced. The VISION Kite is amazing fun and accessible from the minute you hit the water. Easy turns with super smooth power and acceleration. Perfect handling in gusty conditions, water relaunchable on the spot! Usable by the largest variety of kiters in the water today, there are no limits for the rider's progression with the Vision Kite in any conditions.

THE KITEBOARDER REPORT

OUT OF THE BOX: The Vision is a brand new kite from RRD and we were able to get our hands on the first Visions to land in North America at the 2011 La Ventana Classic. According to RRD, the Vision is supposed to fill the gap between the RRD Obsession (freestyle) and the Religion (waves). The Vision is a three-strut one pump kite that is finished very cleanly. It looks and feels lighter than the RRD Obsession we recently tested. The bridle features one pulley per side and the rear lines connect directly to the kite. The rear lines are adjustable to change the turning speed of the kite. Once inflated, the Vision felt especially rigid.

The 2011 RRD Global Bar is much improved compared to last year's version. The hanging leash attachment we complained about in 2010 is gone and this new bar features an above bar depower cleat, a clean and simple push-away release, and a unique center line. Both the safety line and the main depower line pass through a plastic cover that has an internal divider to keep the lines separate. One bar size (adjustable from 50-55 cm) is used on all RRD kites. The bar comes with the RRD exclusive low-stretch Rigid Flying lines. We found the depower throw on the Global Bar to be a little long, especially considering that there is no adjustable stopper.

ON THE WATER: The first thing we noticed about the RRD Vision is its stability and smooth handling. It sits back in the window a little bit and is incredibly stable no matter where you put it. Even when very depowered, the kite remained stable and it hardly ever fluttered while we were testing it. Power delivery is smooth throughout the window and turning is quick, but not lightning fast. To initiate turns, it takes a fair amount of input from the bar, but then responds quickly once turning. While riding, the Vision is very easy to keep in the same place as it is very forgiving to small movements of the bar. With the Vision jumps are easy and predictable with a lot of hang time. The Vision remained stable when carving downwind in the large La Ventana chop, which led us to believe this kite will work well for wave riding. Bar pressure is in the much-liked light-medium range and we found it to be very easy to relaunch.

TESTER COMMENT:

"The Vision is one of the best RRD kites I have ever ridden. It's an excellent kite for freestyle, surf kiting, and just blasting around. Solid!" –Gary Martin, 170 lbs., Surf Kiter

TIPS

- We've said it before and we'll say it again, make sure you pump the kite up hard to get the most performance and to make relaunching easier.
- Use the slow settings for the rear lines if you want the kite to turn slower. This is useful for unhooked moves when you want the kite to stay put.

PROS:

- Very stable canopy that never seems to flutter.
- The Vision is a very smooth and precise handling kite.

CONS:

- The depower throw on the bar is very long and there is no stopper, which may frustrate some riders with short arms.
- The bar is only available in one size (50-55 cm) and feels a little large for the smaller kite sizes.

THE VERDICT:

RRD is marketing the Vision as an all-terrain kite, and we agree with that. RRD used the same materials on it that is found on other RRD kites but the Vision has an attractive lower price point as it comes with a simple stuff sack versus a backpack type kite bag with pockets and is only available in two colors. This is a smooth and predictable kite that will easily handle cruising, freestyle, and wave riding. Simply put, the Vision is a pleasure to fly and we think a wide range of riders will be drawn to it. If you want the best in jumping and upwind performance, have a look at the RRD Obsession. If you want a well-behaved all-around kite that will easily tackle a wide range of conditions and riding styles, the Vision is definitely worth a close look.

WAINMAN HIBLUNT

TESTED: 130 and 137W cm **AVAILABLE SIZES:** 125, 130, 135, 137W
TESTED IN: La Ventana, 16-18 knots and large chop

FROM THE MANUFACTURER

The Blunts are for the people. These thin-rail boards are made for all-terrain ripping. While some might say that compromising sucks, every intermediate free rider, for whom versatile twin tip boards are made, definitely would not agree. To come back from every session stoked, a board needs to handle any condition that the rider may encounter and adjust to any mood the rider is in. At the end of the day, it really is all about the ride. It does not matter what the conditions are when you show up with a Blunt, because this board handles it all. A Blunt always makes a fun, comfortable, and effortless ride.

THE KITEBOARDER REPORT

OUT OF THE BOX: We continue to be impressed with the attention to detail on products from Wainman HI. Boards come with all hardware, a board bag, and even a screwdriver to put everything together. We tested both the 130 and 137W Blunts and they are very lightweight and nicely finished. Wainman HI claims the construction has been beefed up compared with last year's boards. The straps and pads are easy to install and are very comfortable, and the straps feature a new Velcro system for easier adjustability. This is a very thin twin tip with a very deep single concave.

ON THE WATER: Riding the Blunt through the large chop of La Ventana, the first thing every tester noticed was how smooth this board rides. Even when ridden fast and overpowered, the Blunt feels like it has a cushion of air under it and never seemed to send spray up into the rider's face. We found that the Blunt goes upwind really well and is easy to pop off the water for sent jumps. This is a very forgiving board that feels very quick and nimble on the water. We tested both the 130 and 137W and found that while they ride very similar to each other, the 137W is definitely a lot looser through turns compared to the 130.

THE VERDICT:

Everybody who tried this board loved it. The Blunt feels very lively under your feet and is one of the smoothest-riding twin tips we've ever ridden. It is very predictable and easy to control and works great for all-around freeriding. Compared to last year's model which also received excellent reviews from testers, riders couldn't feel much of a difference. We believe the biggest changes for 2011 Blunts are beefed up construction, new graphics, a few new sizes, and redesigned footstraps. If you are looking for a board better suited for load and pop wakestyle riding, take a close look at the Wainman HI Joke.

TESTER COMMENT:

"The Blunt is totally forgiving. If I felt like I was going to land hard, the board just does its thing and softens my landing."
–Ginette Buffone, 130 lbs., Freestyle Kiter

TIPS

- It's important to choose the correct size Blunt for your weight as each size is built with certain sized riders in mind.
- If riding the 137W, keep a lot of pressure on your back foot during turns to keep the tail from sliding.

If you are kiting in a remote location and your gear breaks, your only way home might be a ghetto fix.

GHETTO KITE FIXES

By Brian Miller/Ocean Extreme Sports

Have you ever been on a long downwinder and have something break? Ever been on a kite vacation where the nearest shop is hundreds of miles away? Sometimes gear breaks and you just don't have the resources to fix it the right way. Here are a few quick fixes to get you back on the water, or at least to get you to where you need to go.

BEFORE WE START HERE ARE TWO VERY IMPORTANT TIPS:

1. Keep a piece of spare line tucked into your harness somewhere. A piece of spectra about 2 - 3 feet long will do the trick. This piece of line can be used in many ways and can save your session!
2. Learn to tie a bowline. Be able to tie one in your sleep. It is a kiteboarder's best friend! There are countless resources online outlining how it can be done so I won't bother explaining it here. Simply Google "bowline" to learn how it's tied.

Break your chicken loop or center line?

No sweat! OK maybe a little sweat, but here's what to do. Disassemble the chicken loop/center line and take out your trusty spare line.

Photos courtesy Ocean Extreme Sports

1. Tie a bowline on one end of the spare line with a loop big enough to fit around your spreader bar hook.
2. Now tie the other end of the spare line to your depower strap, making sure the overall length is as close as possible to the original length of your center line.
3. If you have a thicker piece of spectra as a spare, a quick and effective method is to tie a simple overhand knot near the end of the line. Next loop it through the depower strap and tie a regular overhand knot. The first knot near the end of the line will keep it from sliding out. This method is much easier and more efficient than tying a bowline if your spare line is barely long enough.

Be aware that you DO NOT have a safety release with this set up. Only do this as a last resort as it's merely a way to get you home. It's dangerous. It's ghetto.

Aw Snap! Broke a line!

Breaking a line is for sure a session killer but there is one quick trick if you really need to get to where you're going. No kite line is 100% of its original strength once it has been compromised but this method can be as close as 90%.

Photos courtesy Ocean Extreme Sports

1. Tie an overhand knot about one centimeter from the broken area on each piece.
2. Tie the two pieces together using a square knot (once again, look online to see how).
3. Pull the two tightly together making sure all knots are clean. Voila!

If the broken line is one of your front lines, swap it out with a rear line if possible. Your front lines take much more load than your rear lines. Do this as an added safety precaution. Also keep in mind the repaired line can be up to an inch shorter than its counterparts so adjust accordingly if possible!

Pssst... Your Kite is Leaking!

Got a hole in one of your bladders? Find a roll of packing tape! These days there are several bladder patch kits that work very well, but if you don't have access to any of those kits a piece of packing tape will work for the short term. Make sure you clean the area around the hole before you stick the tape. Also, when a bladder pops it often blows at the end of the bladder. If that happens, pull it out, tie a knot in the very end of the bladder, and stick it back in.

REMEMBER: Most quick fixes in kiteboarding are ghetto. Only use these if absolutely necessary. If you do choose to fix your gear with one of the methods described here, you do so at your own risk. Always try to carry spare parts, line sets, bladder patches, spare line, tools, and most of all learn to tie that bowline!

Broken Pigtail

Really, how often do pigtails break? You would be surprised. When it happens, break out that piece of spare line you have stashed in your harness and make a new one. Double over the line and tie an overhand knot at the appropriate length. Don't worry about the excess, let it hang. It's ghetto remember?

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Author Brendan Richards scored this wave by claiming it on the outside and riding it all the way in. Photo David DeVries

By Brendan Richards/sckitesurfing.com

KEEPING THE PEACE:

Kitesurfing Wave Etiquette

Ignorance may be bliss, but not at a heavily kited beach or reef break where everyone knows and expects a lot from each other. Wave etiquette is what maintains the peace and maximizes the fun for everyone. The rules of etiquette are rarely written and are usually implied but they most definitely exist, and failure to figure it out before you jump in can get you into some trouble. When the new guy ruins someone's wave for the second or third time and ends up on the receiving end of a verbal beating, that's not localism. It's in fact a not so subtle invitation to get with the program, because it's expected that you know before you go.

The exact rules can be slightly different at each local spot, but my experience is that most kiters are approachable, especially if you're deferring to their local knowledge and your intentions are to understand the rotation and fit in rather than disrupt the lineup on the water. Our rules of etiquette come from windsurfing as opposed to surfing. Kiters, like windsurfers, are always in motion, seeking out waves and claiming them on the outside before they break. From this evolves a natural rotation around the wind direction and waves. The implied rules maintain the efficiency and fairness of the rotation. Etiquette in the waves can be broken down to two concepts: Knowing when it's your wave and knowing how to get out of the way when it's not.

The rotation is generally democratic and fair. The kiter that goes out the farthest and catches the wave the earliest gets the wave. Short-tacking closer to the peak doesn't create priority. Unfortunately, it's not always that cut and dry as kiters move quickly and various scenarios will arise, but as long as you find a balance between give and take, you shouldn't have any problems. Perceived slights and stand offs rarely get you anywhere positive. Letting waves go or waving others on while settling for non set waves will get you a lot farther, especially as a new face in the crowd.

The efficiency of the rotation depends on each person riding their wave and then quickly getting out of the way. Skill level is worth consideration as routinely dropping your kite in the lineup or fumbling through the lineup won't make you any friends. As you kick out of a wave, it helps to dive your kite and book it through the impact zone nice and early to signal to other kiters they can focus on riding their wave instead of avoiding you. Losing some upwind ground or doing a last minute chicken jibe back to the inside can be a small price to pay for a quick and courteous exit. Simple concepts such as kite placement when crossing paths (downwind kiter lowers his kite, upwind kiter raises her kite) help minimize the space you take up in the lineup and are essential to the smooth flow. With a minimum of skill, awareness, and a good dose of deference toward others you will find yourself in a happier place both in the lineup and on the beach.

There's plenty of room out there for all of us as longs as everyone plays by the rules. Photo David DeVries

TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR WAVE

- Kite far outside and look for sets, turn on what looks like a wave and do your best to stay on top of the wave until it breaks
- Sometimes you might have to give up a wave to someone else when priority isn't 100% clear. This helps keep things civil and usually someone else will return the favor.
- If the wave you selected doesn't pan out to be the wave you wanted, don't slog off the back and try to claim the one behind it. That wave is probably already claimed and doing this is a great way to make enemies.

TIPS FOR GETTING OUT OF THE WAY

- The kiter on the wave has priority. In the surf, no one cares about starboard right of way.
- Keep your head up and be aware of what's going on around you. Ignorance is not an excuse.
- If you're heading out keep an eye on the rotation.
- If you're potentially in the way of someone's wave, either bear off in advance to get clear or chicken jibe back towards the beach.
- In a tight rotation, kite placement when passing other kiters is essential. Keeping your kite lower or higher in the window indicates your intentions and streamlines the rotation.

Bonetti charges at Marquez. Photo DeeDee

LOCALhomies

WINNING PHOTO

Submit your photos of "local homies" riding at your home spot and you could win a killer T-shirt from Transcend Kiteboarding! E-mail **paul@thekiteboarder.com**

Grom lets out a manly scream during the La Ventana Classic Big Air/Old School competition. Photo Paul Lang

Danny Alvarez grabs in La Ventana. Photo Paul Lang

Laura Maher is not only a great rider but she is also the official hairstylist for The Kiteboarder team. Photo Paul Lang

Brandon Cordina throws down in Chucktown. Photo Steve Cordina

Bill Tai during the 2011 Mai Tai Hits the Snow in Park City. Photo Steve Gibson

Cynthia Brown loves to get dressed up every once in a while. Photo Kunta Kenta Forrest

Marie Leclerc eyes up some Baja wind swell. Photo Shannon Gormley

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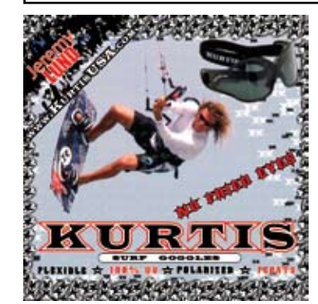

Jim Bison finds himself in a compromising situation during the Big Air/Old School competition in La Ventana. Photo Paul Lang

THE TOP CRASHES IN FRONT OF THE LENS

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Dave Tyburski goes down. Photo Paul Lang

This was the aftermath of top photo on this page. Photo Paul Lang

This yard sale gets extra style points for both the high knee position and facial expression. Photo Paul Lang

Spencer Lujan took his own advice and remembered to let go. Photo Paul Lang

Vilius Laurinacivius loses track of up and down. Photo Aiste Ridikaite/spotas.lt

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