





IN THE LAST FEW ISSUES JIM COLLIS HAS TAKEN US ON A JOURNEY THROUGH HIS "FLUID FOUNDATIONS", a series looking at the core skills in windsurfing; the skills that make or break us as a windsurfer – from getting planing, to carve gybes and waterstarts.

Although the tendency at this point would be to rush into more advanced skills, Jim is keen to help us consolidate what we have taken on board over the last 7 episodes, and at the same time develop our rig and board confidence whilst having some fun out on the water!

It is with this in mind that Jim is starting a string of articles called Fluid Progressions: Freestyle for Everyone, before embarking on a "Fluid Advances" series for more advanced skills such as jumping, waves and carving, and aerial freestyle.

## FREESTYLE FOR EVERYONE EPISODE 1: MOVING THOSE FEET

### FREESTYLE FOR EVERYONE

Before turning your nose up at the title and thinking, "...not more b^%!\$%^ freestyle, where I just fall off, get wet, miserable and achieve nothing...!" This set of articles is not about the latest 'hoochy-ka-poochy' manoeuvre, involving being upside down and inside out whilst travelling backwards at speed! Instead these articles are about getting on the water, whatever the conditions and whatever our ability level, and getting better at handling a rig and moving around on a board in a fun and entertaining way... what freestyle is really all about! The end result is that, as well as having a good laugh every time we go on the water (especially as the number one rule in freestyle is: "if you're not falling in, then you're not trying hard enough") we will be learning and consolidating core skills so that we improve our general sailing without even realising it. We will also be gaining key foundations in freestyle so that if we ever want to take it further then we will be set up to do so.

### 10 SIMPLE SKILLS

Rather than heading out on the water and randomly trying 'twirly things' on a board that a mate has showed us but we have no idea what to do or what benefit it has to our sailing, we are going to work our way through a simple progression of 10 easy to achieve freestyle skills that get progressively harder and can be done in non-planing or planing conditions. These 10 skills underpin the essential movements in windsurfing that help us as sailors to get better at all skills in windsurfing. We will find that certain skills will work as great exercises for certain moves that we are trying in our general sailing, and that as we get more confident with the 10 skills, we can start to link them together and create new skills, gaining new and far-improved confidence with our rig and on our board without even realising it! Whether we want to improve our rig handling and

foot movements for our tacks and gybes, get more confidence on our kit for more control in a wider range of conditions, become the next freestyle guru or just have a laugh on the water... Whatever our motivation, "Freestyle for Everyone" is for all and sundry!

### KIT AND CONDITIONS

Although there will be a few doubters amongst some of you reading this article, more often than not because you've been there and tried it, fallen off more times than is healthy for anyone and got very frustrated, "Freestyle for Everyone" is not about doing some complicated freestyle move on a tiny board. This is about making life easy for ourselves, so that we have fun and a good time in comfortable conditions whilst doing simple skills that form the foundations for everything that we do whilst windsurfing currently; whether blasting back and forth and doing the odd turn, performing some freestyle, riding in waves or just cruising around and enjoying the view. To this effect, we should help ourselves from the start by jumping on a bigger board than perhaps we would usually go on and using a smallish rig rather than some monster. Ideally, good kit to go out on is a board of around 130-200 litres (depending on our weight) and a sail of between 4.5m-6.5m (depending on what we feel comfortable with). We should also start by going out in light to marginal winds (Force 1-3) rather than throwing ourselves into it during a typhoon and wondering why nothing seems to be working! As we become more confident at throwing a smallish rig and ourselves around in marginal conditions and on a more stable platform, so we might then 'up the ante' a bit to improve our skill level by going down in board size a bit, going out in slightly stronger winds and maybe increasing the rig size a fraction (although we should always keep the rig at a manageable size for the sake of manoeuvrability).

For those really light wind days, or perhaps when getting to the water is just not feasible for that day, then there is always the option of taking your fin off and doing some of the skills on land on a fin-less board and rig. Remember...all time spent on your kit is time well spent!



### KEEPING IT STUPIDLY SIMPLE!

As always with learning any skill, simplicity is the key! As such, each of the 10 skills will be broken down with the use of Jim's K.I.S.S. ("Keeping It Stupidly Simple") coaching methodology; 5 basic terms that help to simplify and strip skills down to their core working components so as to make them easily achievable and understandable. (For more information about K.I.S.S. please refer to Jim's "KISS Series" from June 2007).

## THE 5 ELEMENTS OF K.I.S.S. ARE:

**HEAD** - Looking where we want to go and being aware of everything around us

**ARMS** - Keeping a straight front arm thereby distancing ourselves from the rig and causing us to naturally counter balance against it, and using our back arm to 'sheet in' or draw power from the rig

**LEGS** - Adjusting leg and foot positions on the board to keep it flat and us stable!

**BODY** - Changing our body's position/shape according to conditions and how we feel, i.e. if we feel over-powered or threatened we get lower and if we feel underpowered or inefficient we become more upright

**BREATHE** - Remembering to breathe so that we can be relaxed, alert and responsive when sailing, which in turn helps us to flow and perform more naturally whatever the skill or conditions.

## THE FIRST 2 FREESTYLE SKILLS: GETTING THOSE FEET MOVING!

### SKILL 1: LIFTING/Dragging A FOOT

To kick off these skills in "Freestyle for Everyone" we are going to start with an old classic – lifting and dragging a foot whilst sailing.

**This skill is invaluable –**

- It is great for helping us to progress onto or polish our footstrap technique alongside our beach start and water start technique.
- It really helps to enhance our control of the rig, board and even ourselves!

**Here is the sequence for some 'foot lifts':**

1. Get yourself comfortable sailing across the wind (on a 'beam reach')



Front foot lift

2. Start with the front foot.

Keeping your head looking where you are going, transfer weight onto your back foot and at the same time really extend your front arm forwards (like a "1 inch punch!") whilst still 'sheeting' the sail in as normal with your back arm. This will cause your rig and body to be naturally counterbalanced (rig forwards, body back) and allow you to un-weight your front foot and lift it off the deck of the board.



Do some foot lifts the other direction as well

3. Hold for 1-2 seconds then replace your front foot by the mast foot. Try for longer and/or higher on the next 'lift' and remember to do both directions!



Back foot lift



Back foot lift

4. Try lifting the back foot instead of the front one.

Look upwind and allow the sail to move slightly backwards as your body moves slightly forwards onto your front foot (un-weighting your back foot). Maintain good distance between you and the rig with a straight front arm for good counterbalance (rig back, body forwards!) and lift your back foot off the board.



Longer lifts and both directions

5. Hold for 1-2 seconds, then replace your back foot in the normal sailing position and look across the wind again (where you want to go!) See how much you can lift your back foot off the board and whether it is easier or harder than lifting the front foot! Try the other direction as well...

### Top Tips for foot lifts

- Use counter balance between the rig and your body when lifting a foot by keeping the front arm straight/rig away (rig forwards, body back for front foot; rig back, body forwards for back foot)
- Always look where you want to go

# JIM COLLIS TECHNIQUE

Once you've got the foot lift cracked, have a go at dragging your foot in the water instead of lifting it up!

## HERE IS THE SEQUENCE FOR A FOOT DRAG:



### 1. As before, start with the front foot.

From a beam reach, turn your head to look at the mast foot



2. As before in the 'front foot lift', transfer weight onto your back foot and at the same time really extend your front arm forwards (like a "1 inch punch!") whilst still 'sheeting' the sail in as normal with your back arm. Lift your front foot up and place it in the water on the windward side of board (side closest to wind).



3. Hold for 1-2 seconds, then replace your foot by the mast foot and bring your head back up to look where you are going.

Repeat the process but try 'dipping' your foot for longer and get deeper! Try in the other direction as well...



### 4. Try dipping your back foot...

Just like the 'back foot lift', look upwind and allow the sail to move slightly backwards as your body moves slightly forwards onto your front foot (unweighting your back foot).

Now turn your head to look at the mast foot and, maintaining good distance between you and the rig with a straight front arm for good counterbalance, place your back foot in the water on the upwind side (windward).



5. Hold for 1-2 seconds, then replace your back foot in the normal sailing position and look across the wind again (where you want to go!) See which is easier, the front foot drag or the back foot drag.

### Top Tips for foot drags

- Look at mast foot when dipping and dragging a foot
- Keep front arm extended/rig away when a foot is dipped/dragged (creates good counter balance between the rig and your body)
- Remember to look back up to where we are going once your foot is back on the board.

# JIM COLLIS TECHNIQUE

## SKILL 2: KNEELING/SITTING/LYING DOWN WHILST SAILING

Another easily achievable, but equally fun and useful classic! Just as with the foot lift/drag, this skill is incredibly beneficial to our sailing –

- It serves as a great practice exercise for beach starting and water starting

- It enhances control of the rig, especially when holding the foot of the sail and the mast only.
- It gets us moving on the board rather than being 'stuck' to it, which is superb for tacks, gybes, footstrap work and anything else where we need to move around a bit.



Go onto front knee first →→

1. From a beam reach, look at the mast foot and, keeping your front arm extended and back arm sheeting the sail in as normal, transfer weight onto your back leg and slowly bend it, gently going down onto your front knee.



Then onto back knee

2. Transfer weight onto your front knee and gently go down onto your back knee.



Look where you are going so as to sail normally

3. Once kneeling turn your head to look where you are going again (across the wind).



Return to standing in similar fashion to getting on the board in a beach/water start... back foot, then front foot →→

4. To return to standing repeat the process in reverse remembering to look at the mast foot and keep the front arm extended/rig away.



Try sitting or even lying down!

5. Maybe take it a step further on the next go and hold the mast below the boom with your front hand and the foot of sail with your back hand when kneeling and see if you can sit or even lie down!

### Top Tips for kneeling/sitting/lying down whilst sailing

- Look at the mast foot when adjusting position and look where you are going when settled
- Always keep your front arm extended and the rig away for good counter balance
- Keep body low for extra stability

This brings us to the end of this first part of "Freestyle for Everyone". All that remains is to get out there, try the skills and see if, as well as having a good laugh out on the water, we can see the benefit of the first of these 10 freestyle skills! Next month we will move onto the next 2 skills in the progression – switch stance sailing and pirouettes.

### "Freestyle for Everyone"

is written by Jim Collis - Pro Coach, Instructor Trainer and Test Editor for Windsurf magazine. If you'd like any more information on coaching or training to be an instructor with Jim please contact him on.



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