



K.I.S.S. SERIES

EPISODE 2 – USING YOUR HEAD!

Last month heralded the beginning of the 'K.I.S.S.' series - 'Keeping It Stupidly Simple'. A beautifully simplistic approach for learning, consolidating and perfecting our windsurfing, the K.I.S.S. methodology consists of 5 central key themes that run through our windsurfing at any level, whether novice through to expert, and for any skill whether planing or non-planing. As mentioned last month, this is not some crazy, half-hatched idea but rather just my interpretation of a widely used concept in a huge amount of sports; the idea of bringing everything down to 'base' level and creating firm foundations from which to build a solid skill level and above all complete understanding through simplicity.

Having briefly taken a glance at all 5 of the key themes of K.I.S.S. last month, namely Head, Arms, Legs, Body and Breathing, this episode we are going to focus in on the first of these elements, the Head. So as to gain as clear an insight as possible into the usefulness of such a simplistic concept, certain 'core' skills, both planing and non-planing, are best used to

demonstrate the versatility and broad encompassing ability of these 5 themes of K.I.S.S. These core skills are straight-line sailing, steering, tacking, gybing, beach-starts and water-starts. Although some of you reading this may feel that these 'core' skills are not relevant to your ability level, you should regard them as a cross-section of common skills

that help represent this concept of just using the bare essentials, like your 'head', when sailing rather than seeing them as a specific technique guide. This in turn should help you to apply this simplistic concept to the area of windsurfing that you are involved in and let you reap the benefits of Keeping It Stupidly Simple!

WHAT DOES OUR HEAD DO FOR OUR SAILING?

When sailing, our Head is paramount in whatever we might be doing. Our head controls where we are going and where we want to go, and we should use it to keep us aware of everything around us, whether it be other people or changing conditions such as wind or water state. In a nutshell, where we look is where we go.

Here are some classic examples relating to the 'core' skills, whether planing or non-planing.

WHILST SAILING IN A STRAIGHT LINE, WHETHER BLASTING OR CRUISING OFF THE PLANE, LOOKING AHEAD AND BEING AWARE OF EVERYTHING AROUND US...





UPWIND - WHILST STEERING, LOOKING WHERE WE WANT TO GO!



DOWNWIND



IN A TACK, LOOKING INTO THE WIND AS WE GO INTO THE TACK...



AND AWAY FROM THE WIND AS WE COME OUT FROM, OR 'EXIT', THE TACK...



IN A GYBE, LOOKING DOWNWIND AS WE ENTER INTO THE GYBE (WHERE WE WANT TO GO!)...



AND THEN LOOKING UPWIND ON THE NEW SIDE TOWARDS OUR 'EXIT' TO FINISH THE GYBE (DEFINITELY WHERE WE WANT TO GO!)...

JIM COLLIS TECHNIQUE



AND FINALLY, WHILST BEACH-STARTING AND WATER-STARTING, LOOKING AT THE MASTFOOT TO START WITH (WHERE WE WANT TO COME UP AND OVER ONTO THE BOARD)...

AND THEN LOOKING WHERE WE WANT TO GO ONCE WE'RE ON (USUALLY STRAIGHT AHEAD!)...

As was mentioned earlier as well, our head is also very important to keep us aware of everything around us, whether it be other people or changing conditions such as wind or water state. Although this is a smaller point regards technique compared to what we have seen above, it is a massive safety tip. If we are looking where we are going and where we want to go then we will be much more aware of everyone around us, thereby helping to prevent any sort of collision or clash. By being aware of changing conditions, such as wind or water state, we will also tend to be safer on the water and will definitely get more out of a sailing session. For example, being aware quickly that the wind is picking up due to more white caps on the water means that you get in earlier rather than later, and save energy so that you can get back out on a smaller sail size.

But I'm sure I always look where I'm going when I'm sailing, don't I?

It all seems too obvious and simple...surely we all look where we're going and where we want to go when we're out on the water! But do we really? We are all guilty, from time to time, of looking intently at our equipment whilst sailing along (more affectionately known as 'gear gazing') or being distracted by something on the shore or close by to us, and as a result not performing to our best! Probably one of the most common examples of using our head whilst sailing, albeit inadvertently and not to a terribly good end result, is when we are heading towards someone else and we stare at them very fixedly...and surprisingly enough keep going towards them!

A few other classic examples, taken from some of our 'core' skills, of looking perhaps where we shouldn't be looking might help us to re-assess whether we are in fact looking in the right place all the time when we are sailing.

The first of these examples (**Below**) is steering and sailing upwind (both planing and non-planing). The real trick to using your head whilst sailing is that you genuinely 'use' it! If you want to go somewhere, glancing at it isn't really going to cut the mustard. You need to stare or even glare at where you want to go and completely 'want' it and almost will your whole body to go there! The result of staring so intently at where you want to go, especially when sailing upwind, is that your shoulders and hips, conveniently attached to your head, also turn towards your esteemed goal and result in you driving the board towards it. The best thing about this is that all you've got to remember to do is look where you want to go, and it really does work!

However, more often than not we might start out with good intentions when sailing upwind, but our eyes can sometimes wander and before we know it we are losing ground downwind, and all because we lost our 'focus'. Remember, where we look is where we go!



The second example (**Below**) is the gybe (again both planing and non-planing). One of the biggest problems with gybes is continuing to steer out of the turn once we have steered ourselves downwind. A common scenario is that we keep looking through the sail when we are already downwind and surprisingly enough we keep going downwind rather than steering out of the turn. As a result a whole catalogue of problems arise, such as getting overpowered by the sail and being unable to rotate the rig. This is solved through one simple point – turning your head to look towards the 'exit' or out of the

turn. By turning our head, our shoulders and hips turn as well and result in our body driving the board round the last part of the turn.

Hopefully this article has demonstrated the huge benefits of using your head when sailing. Not just this but also that it is simple points like this that make the difference to our sailing rather than complex intricacies; Appreciating, practicing and consolidating the foundations of windsurfing as opposed to battling with symptomatic problems. Next month I will be moving

on to the second of the K.I.S.S. elements – the Arms, and looking at how a simple aspect like this, just as with the Head, can help improve and consolidate our windsurfing. All that remains until then is to get out there and use your head!

The K.I.S.S. Series is written by Jim Collis - Pro Coach, Instructor Trainer and Tester for Windsurf magazine. If you'd like any more information on coaching or training to be an instructor with Jim please contact him on jimcollis@windsurfevolution.co.uk or visit windsurfevolution.co.uk

