

# Jim Collis

## MARGINAL MANOEUVRING EPISODE 4: DEVELOPING BOARD CONFIDENCE

**JIM COLLIS**, PROFESSIONAL COACH, RYA INSTRUCTOR TRAINER AND TESTER FOR WINDSURF MAGAZINE CONTINUES HIS SERIES ENTITLED “MARGINAL MANOEUVRING”; DOING USEFUL SKILLS IN MARGINAL CONDITIONS THAT WILL HELP US TO DEVELOP IN BOARD AND RIG CONFIDENCE AND WILL ULTIMATELY MAKE US BETTER, MORE ROUNDED SAILORS. **PICS:** LOUISE WILLIAMS

In last month's episode Jim took us through some exercises that would give us even more confidence with our handling of the rig, namely sailing 'clew-first' and sailing 'front to sail'.

This episode Jimbo is moving on to developing our board confidence so that we can feel more stable and secure whilst sailing around, whether planing or not, and, more importantly, now that the nights are closing in and the temperature is starting to drop, so that we can stay dry and warm!!

Jim, in his simple yet effective style, is going to guide us through doing some switch stance sailing, some body and sail 360's, and to top it all off... some pirouettes!

As has been mentioned at the start of all of these episodes of 'Marginal Manoeuvring', it is important to re-emphasise that these easy-to-achieve exercises are not about doing some complicated freestyle moves on a tiny board. It is all about making life easy for ourselves so that we have fun and a good time in lighter winds whilst doing simple skills that form the foundations for everything that we do when the wind picks up a bit, whether it be blasting back and forth and doing the odd turn, doing some freestyle, riding in waves or just cruising around 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 use a smallish rig rather than some monster. In the pictures the kit being used is a Fanatic Viper 80 (190 litres) and a Gaastra Manic 5.3m. As we become more confident at throwing a rig and ourselves around in marginal conditions, so we might also go down in board size a bit, but we should always keep the rig at a manageable size.

### DEVELOPING BOARD CONFIDENCE

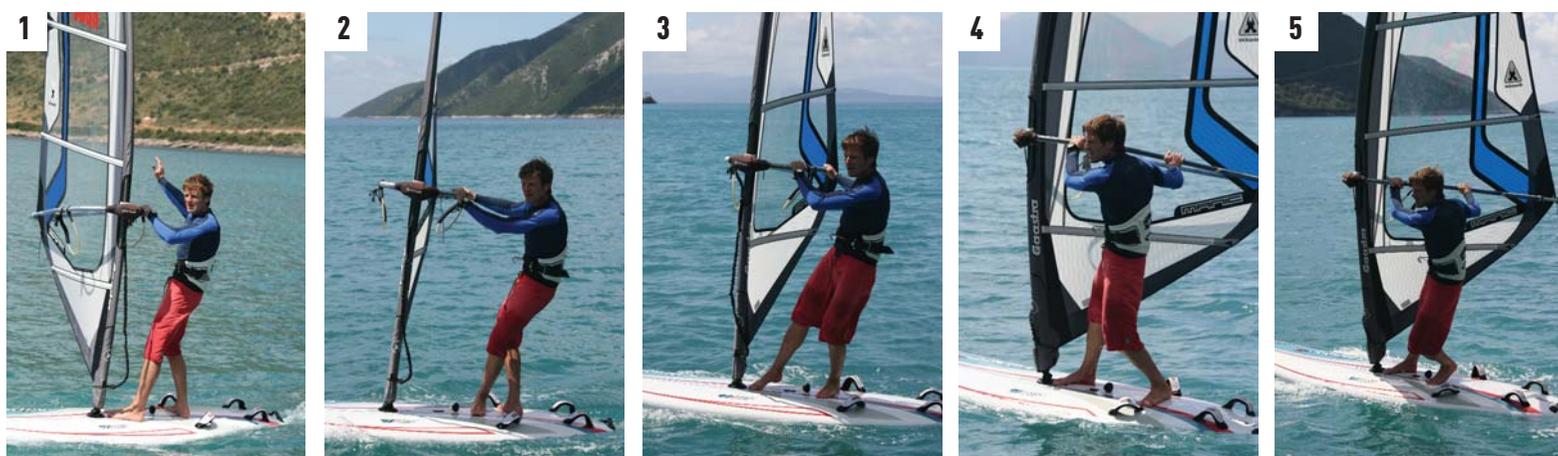
I can hear the mutterings already, mucking about on a board at this time of year...What is he, a sadist?!?!?

Well...yes, and no! We are going to have a look at moving around on our boards at this time of year, but not so as to fall in and cause ourselves major discomfort!! Trying skills like sailing switch stance, body and sail 360's and pirouettes will surprise us at how achievable they actually are and, more to the point, how little we get wet and yet how much benefit we get from doing them. If we do come a cropper and take a dunking then we'll probably remember to keep that front arm straight or keep looking where we're going for next time, but more importantly we'll probably feel alive and enthused by the fact that we're doing something; it's all too easy, and we've all done it, to go out on the water at this time of year and 'play it safe' to the point where we might as well have stayed at home curled up by the fire. Go on...take a chance – you might even enjoy yourself!

### SAILING SWITCH STANCE

Over the years sailing switch stance, or the wrong way round, has been deemed very difficult and reserved only for those with extremely supple bodies. In actual fact, nothing could be further from the truth. This skill is not only exceptionally achievable but also helps hugely to develop our 'angulation' or natural counter balance with the rig, which pays massive dividends for our gybes, whether planing or non-planing. It also helps to get our feet unstuck and moving on the board, helping with our tacks and gybes and any other type of turn and our general feeling of ease moving around on our board whilst we are sailing.





### Sequence for sailing switch stance

1. From a Beam Reach...Keeping the head looking where you are going move the back hand down the boom
2. Move the front foot back and place in front of back foot in 'heel to toe' position over the centreline of the board with toes pointing towards the wind.
3. Move the back foot up to the mastfoot

4. Keep looking ahead, if not slightly upwind, and keep that front arm straight!

5. To control power in the sail, bend the back leg more (the leg nearest the back of the board, even though your legs are the wrong way round now!) and look further upwind

6. To return back to sailing normally, reverse the process above

### TOP TIPS FOR SAILING SWITCH STANCE

- Keep head looking where you are going and even a bit upwind.
- Maintain a straight front arm all the time.
- Always have a 'soft' flexed back leg whether sailing normally or switch stance.
- Try to minimise foot movements and keep them over and around the centre line of the board.



### BODY AND RIG 360

Aside from this being a fantastically enjoyable skill, the body & rig 360 is invaluable for helping us develop more nimble footwork on our board, which in turn will improve our tacks, gybes and general stealth moving around whilst sailing normally. Having done some switch stance sailing, this will actually help us when trying some body & sail 360's...

#### Sequence for body & rig 360

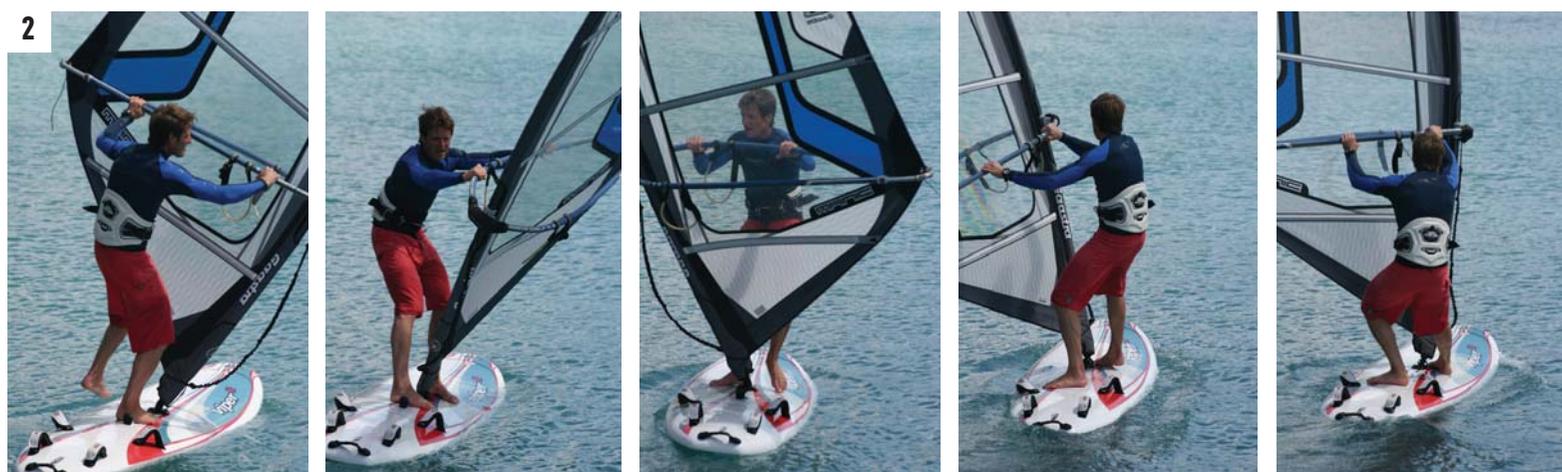
1. From a Beam Reach, prepare for the manoeuvre...
  - Move back hand right down the boom
  - Turn the front foot so toes are pointing into the wind (similar to 'heel to toe' position in switch stance sailing)

2. Leading with the head and keeping arms extended and the rig away, step the back foot up to the mastfoot and continue to walk around until back in the normal sailing position keeping in a low body position throughout
3. Stay in a low body position at end of '360' and allow back hand to slide up the boom back to the normal sailing position

### TOP TIPS FOR BODY & RIG 360

- Prepare with back hand and front foot
- Maintain a straight front arm all the time.
- Keep arms extended and rig away at all times
- Keep feet moving (don't stop once you've started!) and close to the mastfoot like in a tack

- Keep your body low throughout for stability
- Extra hot tip – if you get overpowered and pulled off the board at the end of your 360's, let go with your backhand as you finish the manoeuvre to allow power to spill out of sail before putting it back on and sailing off.



## JIMBO

## PIROUETTES



1. From a Beam Reach go 'Switch Stance' (as we did earlier in this article)



2. Continuing to look where you are going, slide your back hand up to where front hand is on boom and take front hand off boom



3. Turn head to look more into the wind and reach round with front hand to grab boom again where back hand is...



Despite being tainted with a brush for definitely getting the sailor disorientated and often wet, this skill need not be one of those things that we shy away from when sailing around in marginal winds.

A lot of the skills we have covered so far in this series help towards achieving the pirouette and, if truth be known, are actually harder than this one!

As with all these marginal manoeuvres the pirouette has unmistakable value for the rest of our sailing skill level. It teaches us further the nature of rig balance and our constant relationship with it ('counter-balance!'). To add to this pirouettes also emphasise the incredible usefulness of our heads looking where we want to go when sailing and help to develop further still our nimble footwork whilst on our boards.

In the last four episodes of this series 'Marginal Manoeuvring', we have developed our rig handling and our board confidence.

Next issue heralds the last episode of these skills for lighter winds in which we are going to pull it all together with our new found confidence and go for some stylish moves which can be done on both long and short boards – the heli tack and the upwind 360!

In the meantime see how you get on with these ones and above all...enjoy!

Jimbo's Gems 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](mailto:jimcollis@windsurfevolution.co.uk) or visit [www.windsurfevolution.co.uk](http://www.windsurfevolution.co.uk)



4. Once holding boom with your front hand again, release back hand from boom and, leading with your head, lightly move your feet so as to turn yourself 180 degrees so that you are back in the sailing position



#### SEQUENCE FOR A PIROUETTE

- Gain confidence in sailing 'switch stance' before attempting this
- Let your head lead the pirouette
- Keep light and nimble foot movements over centre line of board
- Always return to your head looking forwards, body low and arms extended/rig away at finish



5. Resume looking ahead, keep your arms extended and rig away, and keep your body low as you sail away!