

JIM COLLIS: TECHNIQUE



# LAYING IT ON THE LINE

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**This month's test of slalom kit brings to the forefront of people's minds various suppressed dreams and desires... for example going at mach-10 on your windsurf kit head to head with Dave White and beating him in front of an adoring crowd... or more likely hammering into gybes on slalom kit and pulling off flawless lay down gybes where you exit with flames coming out of the back of your board! Whatever your dream, Jim Collis will offer some simple technical tips on how to achieve the latter of these two hedonistic desires; the slalom or 'lay down' gybe.**

## KIT

The best thing about using slalom kit is that it goes fast. Combined with the well-known fact that to produce a good carve gybe you must have plenty of speed on the entry, things are already looking good for anyone wanting to improve their gybes when using slalom kit. The other thing about slalom kit, which unfortunately puts this first plus point about speed into your gybes rather in the shade, is that to really get the most out of a slalom board you must sail with a lot of power, and generally being 'on the edge' and overpowered is pretty much a 'must'. When equated to gybing this can be viewed as a slight drawback...desperately trying to keep everything under control so as to produce a smooth carving arc when it all feels like it wants to take off... This is where the 'lay down' technique for a gybe comes in useful, or more to the point, comes into its own.

## TECHNIQUE

As most people are aware, the essence to gybing stems from 3 things - looking in the right place throughout the turn (Look into the turn, or downwind, as you go into it and then look out of the turn, or at the clew of the sail, as you exit), constantly counterbalancing against the rig with your body at any given point in the turn (i.e. wherever the rig is your are not!), and finally keeping a low body position (knees bent!) throughout.

Pronounced lay down with rig back, body forwards particularly obvious



Upright freeride gybe

Straight front arm down to the water, back arm naturally pulling clew of sail so boom is parallel to water



Gybing a 100-130 litre freeride board comfortably powered on a 6m rig can be achieved very easily without the sailor having to dramatically and energetically position the rig or themselves.

However, when gybing slalom kit overpowered (or pretty much any kit overpowered for that matter!), although the 3 foundation stones for gybing don't actually change, there is a bit more input, commitment and 'energy' required from the sailor to de-power the sail and bring everything under control during the turn.

This slightly more committed and 'energetic' approach manifests itself in the form of pushing the straight front arm down to the water on the inside of the turn when the sailor has started carving, whilst the back hand (which, as with any good gybing technique, should be positioned well down the boom) naturally ends up pulling the clew up so that the boom is pretty much parallel with the water.

This action effectively causes the sail to be over-sheeted and results in the disappearance of the immense surge of power that is felt as you first bear away into the turn; a welcome respite from feeling maxxed out and just what the doctor ordered to

enable the board to be controlled effortlessly in the carve. As the board is carved through the downwind position the sailor then opens up the sail as with any normal gybe, changes where they are looking to the exit of the turn (or clew of the sail) and starts the foot change and rig rotation as per normal.

Some critics might argue that this style of gybe is very different from any other gybe as it breaks with one of the 3 foundation stones of gybing; counterbalance. In theory, as the rig is 'laid' down into the inside of the gybe then both sailor and rig are on the same side of the board - i.e. committed to the carve - whereas on a normal gybe the sailor and the rig are constantly opposing each others' position; as the sailor moves over onto his/her back foot to increase the carve so the rig is moved across to the outside of the turn so as to counterbalance the movement of the sailor (see main pic.).

In actual fact counterbalance is still key for the lay down gybe. As the sailor lays the rig down into the inside of the turn and at the same time commits their weight onto the inside rail for the carve, the rig is actually fractionally behind the sailor, who in turn is still looking forwards into the turn and so whose body is fractionally forwards of the rig. The result is

counterbalance - rig back, body forwards. And then when the sailor starts to open the rig up in preparation for the foot change and the rig rotation so the usual counterbalance kicks in; the rig is moved to the outside of the turn as the sailor continues to angulate into the inside of the turn with their head looking for the exit.

All in all, the key to a lay down gybe is commitment. Looking into and out of the gybe, counterbalancing throughout, and keeping low are still absolutely crucial, but remember...you're driving a Ferrari now rather than a Ford Mondeo and so you must tame the beast's power and bring the kit under control by over sheeting the sail during the carve; drop your front hand down to the water and allow the back hand to naturally pull the clew up behind you.

All that remains is to get out there and get amongst it!

'Laying it on the Line' is written by Jim Collis - Pro Coach, RYA 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)