



NAKED BACKSIDES



# wannabe a Wavesailor

**Jem Hall** continues to give you a break from his fully frontside series as he gets you working on your backside waveriding. Photos by **Dave White**

**A**s we move into summer and find ourselves out in smaller waves and perhaps onshore conditions we should now be looking to show our backsides with pride.

Backside is not often practiced. People who sail in waves as opposed to wavesailors often ignore these enticing lumps on the way in as they boy-race their way through the break, and advanced sailors just want to go frontside, dude! But backside done well is great fun. You can make it rad and it can lead you into your frontside turns in cross-shore winds, as the wave forms up while you're stalling for this to happen. It will also enable you to work sections of the wave before you go frontside in cross-on – but more on that later.

The jumps you're now doing will help with backside aerials and jumps – backside airs on the way in mean you get good at jumping both ways. Getting proficient and eventually vertical backside leads to some great turns and will improve your frontside as your timing, aggression and technique will be constantly improving. You can't but be impressed by



**MAIN:** Work that section

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Eyes on the prize – seek out these powerful sections for a smacking good time. Rig back, body forward and a flat carving board will ensue. Backside can get you vertical and should be aggressive. Back-winding the sail and leaning over in the top turn will get you into a 'shuv-it' feeling

some of the backside antics our illustrious pros get up to in sloppy conditions like Pozo or Sylt – and of course in quality waves like the left at Lanes, which you see in a lot of vids.

It's all in the name. When you're waveriding backside you have your back to the wave and you are indeed using your arse and hips to help you change direction. As you are backside you'll be going upwind and there will thus be less power in the sail, and as such it's a good initiation into easy riding. You are more able to suck it and see as you develop your gentle turns into more vertical and aggressive riding.

### THE RULES...

The basic ground rules follow the guidelines for all your fundamental windsurfing skills. Basically it's all about the head and hands!

**THE HEAD** Where your head goes your body will follow. Exaggerating this movement of the head is often the easiest way to improve your riding and all-round sailing.

**THE HANDS** While waveriding your back hand should really be working up and down the boom. The front hand should also not be too far forward on the boom.

At first I suggest not going for top or bottom turns, but just practice staying on the wave while unhooked, which will help you when you get into your top turns.

Aim to make little turns on your heels and toes, heels towards the bottom of the wave and toes towards the middle or top of the wave. You can also do this in rolling swell to get a feel for it.

Turn your head to look upwind for your heelside turn, and then look downwind to come back down the wave and get your speed back up.

These will be your first backside bottom and top turns.

**“There are two types of forecaster – those that don't know and those that don't know they don't know”**

– *Some City analyst type*



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## HOW TO...

This sequence was shot in Jeri, Brazil, on a 5.2 Ezzy Wave Panther 2 and a RRD Freestyle-Wave 96 with a smaller fin fitted. I was well powered in cross / slightly-on conditions and tacking at both ends to keep me upwind (and therefore doing short reaches to get more rides and jumps in).

1. Catch a wave out the back and travel along it until it starts to peak. Drop down the wave and as your speed increases (but before you come too far out) rock back on your heels as you **look** upwind and begin to bring the rig back with your hands shoulder-width apart. As the rig is coming back and in, get your body low, **forward** and **out**. This ensures a smooth and fast backside bottom turn!
2. The more the rig goes back and in the more your body counterbalances this movement by going forwards and out. This will assist you in keeping more speed. Move your body inboard as you get ready to turn on your toeside rail and come into your top turn.
3. Your rails will now begin to change from heelside to toeside. Start to move your body over the board almost like you're trying to fall forwards headfirst. The head leads your weight change and it also begins to look downwind to where you want to go.
4. You're now coming into your top turn and are ready to trust your rails by starting to fall onto the rig in anticipation of back-winding it.
5. With your weight over your toes you're turning the board back downwind and the wave is redirecting the underside of the board, as this is the bit that's exposed to it. Keep falling over more, **look** downwind and begin to push out with your back hand, which is now **well** down the boom. The more aggressive you are in the top turn the more you fall over and push out to back-wind the rig. (This particular sequence is quite a mellow one.) Scissoring your legs harder will throw more spray and see you changing direction faster.
6. The top turn is finished now and all that energy near to the top of the wave and the white water is pushing you back down the wave as you fall back and power up the rig. Your legs are still scissoring, with the back foot pulling and front foot continuing to push.
7. Gain speed back down the wave and get low. Your rig will fill with wind as you continue to fall down the wave. Have a look around and see if you can go for another turn before going too far out in front of the wave, or just fly upwind and look for another section.



6.



7.



## PRO'S PROSE

"Hitting it backside is an essential skill for anyone who sails in onshore conditions. Going more vertical and with more power is the ultimate goal. For me there are two types of backside hit; the first is the shuv-it style, with the sail down low and the board above the body. The second type is what I would call the McKercher snap, which is a full power snap right in the pocket of the wave.

"For the first method, aim to learn shuv-its going out as it will teach you all the basics and get you exploding out the top of the wave and throwing a tweak into the mix too. Speed is key and getting the hands close together. You need to carve hard upwind to get some pop, so bear away beforehand to get speed AND when you carve up, you are not carving too far into wind. You can take-off still across the wind and have forward speed to the move. Working your shuv-its both ways will really help riding backside aggressively.

"For the second method, the McKercher snap, again speed is the key. Bear off a bit to get speed then carve hard on your heels before throwing everything you have onto the inside rail to snap the board around and throw buckets of spray. As you do this you must really scissor your legs to get the board facing back downwind. When done well you can even get the tail to slide a bit too."

– John Skye

## HALL'S HOMEWORK

With the wind not exactly hugely prevalent at this time of year you have to really sail like every day is your last, and even if it is lighter you have to get out there to keep your machine oiled and ready for battle on the big days. With smaller waves, warmer water and gentler winds in the summer it's a great time to learn some new moves or really push your existing ones. More jumps, higher jumps, one-handed jumps, more vert backside, learn to forward and – shock-horror – maybe do some useful freestyle moves like carving 360s up and downwind and some heli-tacks.

Take action – you are the master of your windsurfing destiny!

## JEM'S BRAND NEW WAVE TECHNIQUE MOVIE 'WINNER TO WAVESAILOR' IS READY TO PURCHASE NOW, AND FOR ALL YOUR FUNDAMENTALS THERE'S 'BEGINNER TO WINNER'

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## next month

I'll be off games as I'll be deep in coaching mode in Rhodes, but I will be back to crack the whip in September!

Photo: John Bainbridge

