

SPRING 2026

This issue of Tonic Mag features some of the most influential riders and designers shaping foiling right now. We sit down with industry pioneer Svein Rasmussen to explore the thinking behind modern foil design and the ideas pushing the sport forward. On the water, Alina Kornelli shares her perspective

on the foiling universe, while Mathis Ghio gives us insight into the mindset of one of the most exciting racers on the planet. Alongside the features, we dive into the latest gear reviews and technique tips to help you get more out of your time on the water.

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- SVEIN RASMUSSEN -
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EDITORIAL



SVEIN RASMUSSEN -
PUSHING THE FUTURE
OF FOILING



THE FOIL POD:
MATHIS GHIO



WATERWOMEN:
ALINA KORNELLI



THE PEOPLE'S PRESTIGE



TECHNIQUE



TECH FOCUS:
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MOVIE NIGHT



FRONT COVER RIDER BRANDON SCHEID
PHOTO ERIC DURAN

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RIDER VICTOR LOOIJESTIJN
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ISSUE 27

JESSE RICHMAN ON THE NEW OZONE FLOW V2, LAUNCHING APRIL
PHOTO SLATER NEBORSKY

What A Time To Be Alive

The world feels like a pretty crazy place right now, a rollercoaster of madness that doesn't seem to want to slow down. Thankfully, the ocean is still out there, and if you are anything like me, time on foil is measured in smiles that are miles wide. No matter what's going on in the world, that solace on the sea will always reset the mind, body and soul.

As we enter spring here in the Northern Hemisphere, I'm excited to be looking forward to a summer of foiling and getting wet every chance I can get. The planet might be going to hell in a handcart, but that won't stop me from getting my foiling fix, and what a fix that is. When I started windsurfing all those years ago, I could never have dreamed of where this water sports journey would end up.

I pinch myself that every day is a foil day, no matter what the conditions bring, you can always get out on the water! This week I've been lucky enough to prone foil, wing foil, have a parawing session and beat myself up on the DW board, a skill I am still firmly developing. It sometimes feels like a game of Pokémon, you gotta catch 'em all.

Once you've cracked wingfoiling, the skillset of the foil is so transferable that all these other disciplines are within reach. I can't think of another sport where that's open to you. Not only are they transferable, but they also develop skills that support each other. Any time on foil will enhance your skillset across all the disciplines. It's just the icing on the cake that any time on foil is also a bloody good time.



We're lucky to have this sport in our lives, and we're lucky to be a part of it when development is happening so rapidly. The foils we are riding now are so much more advanced than they were 6 years ago. Some of the new foils coming to market just make everything easier, faster and more enjoyable, and the best news is that it will keep on getting better too.

There is so much passion for development within this sport, from the growth of the sport itself to the improvements across all aspects of the gear we ride, it's hard not to feel the stoke. And when we are flying above the water, that passion flows right through us.

Foiling is the perfect antidote to some of the things I see on the news each day. It's easy to get hung up on the bad news, but it's important for our own mental well-being that we get that pure hit of foiling freedom as much as we possibly can.

Whatever you ride, here's to warmer weather, more time on the ocean and lots of good sessions with friends.

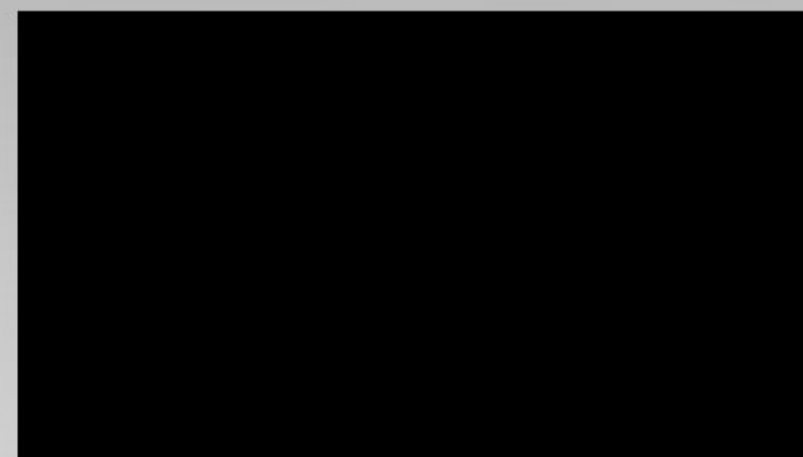
Rou Chater
Publishing Editor

JESSE RICHMAN ON THE NEW OZONE FLOW V2, LAUNCHING APRIL!
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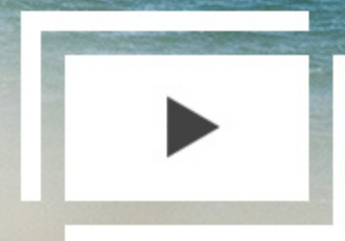
RIDER BENOIT CARPENTER
PHOTO KILIAN BURAC

WORDS ROU CHATER

Few people have influenced modern watersports as much as Svein Rasmussen. As the founder and CEO of Starboard, he has spent more than three decades shaping the direction of board sports, from the explosive growth of windsurfing through to the global success of stand-up paddleboarding and now the rapidly evolving world of foiling.

SVEIN RASMUSSEN

DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF FOILING





“THE PREMIUM PRODUCT TO DEVELOP IS ENTRY-LEVEL. THAT IS WHAT GROWS THE SPORT.”

Over the years, Starboard has built a reputation for pushing design boundaries. Many of the company's ideas have initially looked unusual, sometimes even controversial, before eventually becoming widely accepted across the industry.

For Svein, that process is simply part of innovation.

“Sometimes the ideas that look the strangest at first are the ones that change the sport,” he says.

Today, as foiling continues to evolve at a remarkable speed, Svein's focus remains the same as it always has been, building equipment that helps more people enjoy being on the water. Increasingly, that means designing gear that makes the first experience of flight easier than ever before.

Because once someone feels that first flight, everything changes.

A PHOTOGRAPH THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Svein's passion for watersports began with a single photograph. Growing up in Norway in the late 1970s, he remembers seeing an image of windsurfers gliding across clear blue water in a National Geographic Kids magazine.

“That one picture gave me clear guidance,” Svein recalls. “I said to myself, this is what I want to do in my life.”

The obsession started immediately. He spent the following year delivering newspapers through freezing Norwegian winters to save enough money for a second-hand windsurfer. It was heavy,

“ I WAS WINDSURFING EVERY SINGLE DAY, EVEN WHEN THERE WAS ICE ON THE WATER. ”

basic equipment by modern standards, but the sensation it delivered was enough to ignite a lifelong passion.

“I was windsurfing every single day,” he says. “Even when there was ice on the water.”

That enthusiasm soon turned into competitive success. Norway had a strong windsurfing scene at the time, and Svein quickly found himself racing against some of the best sailors in the world. He won a junior world title and spent the next decade travelling internationally as a professional windsurfer.

Even during his competitive career, he was already fascinated by equipment design, constantly experimenting with setups and working with brands to refine boards, sails and rigs.

Eventually, that curiosity led him to start his own company.

BUILDING STARBOARD

Starboard was founded with a clear philosophy, push watersports forward through experimentation, curiosity and practical testing. Svein quickly realised that many of the best ideas come not from theory but from simply building prototypes and trying them on the water.

“I prefer to test things rather than debate them,” he explains. “You go to the workshop, build something, and a few days later you know if it works.”

RIDER SVEIN RASMUSSEN PHOTO BOB STAWICKI



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“THAT ONE PICTURE GAVE ME CLEAR GUIDANCE. I SAID TO MYSELF, THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO DO IN MY LIFE.”

That hands-on approach became central to Starboard's development culture. With a workshop located beside the water in Thailand, the team can prototype boards, wings and foils and test them in real conditions almost immediately.

The early years of the company were not easy. Svein had only ten thousand dollars saved from his competitive career, and mould production in Europe cost hundreds of thousands. The breakthrough came when he discovered Cobra, a factory in Thailand capable of producing moulds at a fraction of the cost, making it possible to start building boards without huge financial backing.

“The first five years were really hard,” he says. “If anyone asks how long it takes to prove a business, I say at least five years. Do not give up before that.”

Eventually, Starboard's design ideas began to pay off. The brand introduced wider, shorter windsurf boards at a time when the industry was still dominated by long, narrow shapes. Once riders began winning events on them, the rest of the industry quickly took notice.

“And when you win, people understand,” Svein says.

THE RISE OF FOILING

Today, the focus of Starboard's development has shifted toward foiling, an area where innovation is happening faster than almost any other watersport.

For Svein, wing foiling represents one of the most exciting developments the industry has seen in decades.



“ IF ANYONE ASKS HOW LONG IT TAKES TO PROVE A BUSINESS, I SAY AT LEAST FIVE YEARS. DO NOT GIVE UP BEFORE THAT ”

The appeal lies in its simplicity and versatility, with a board, foil and wing opening up an incredible range of riding possibilities.

“There is nothing like it,” he says. “One wing, one board and one foil, and you can ride in so many places and conditions.”

More importantly, he sees wing foiling as the gateway into the wider world of foil sports.

“Wingfoiling is the avenue into everything else.”

Prone foiling, downwind foiling and emerging disciplines all grow from the same basic skills, but for most riders, their first experience of foiling will happen with a wing. That is exactly why Svein believes the beginner experience matters so much.

THE HOLY GRAIL OF WINGING

If there is one challenge that excites Svein most in the current stage of the sport, it is making the learning experience easier.

“The holy grail is when someone gets on the board, and everything is stable, they pop up

early, and they feel that sensation straight away,” he explains.

Designing equipment that allows riders to experience flight quickly has become one of the most important goals for Starboard. Larger, stable boards give newcomers confidence, forgiving foils allow them to lift smoothly without perfect technique, and balanced wings make it easier to control power while learning.

“You put someone on a sensible board, maybe around 140 litres, and let them get that first flight without drama,” Svein says. “That is what hooks people.”

While much of the industry focuses on pushing performance further and further, Svein believes the most important innovation may actually happen at the beginner level.

“ONE WING, ONE BOARD AND ONE FOIL, AND YOU CAN RIDE IN SO MANY PLACES AND CONDITIONS.”

“The premium product to develop is entry level,” he says. “That is what grows the sport.”

THE NEXT GENERATION OF WINGS

Alongside making the sport easier to learn, Starboard continues to explore how wing design itself can evolve.

One of the concepts Svein frequently refers to is reflex, a principle borrowed from windsurfing sail design. Reflex describes how quickly a wing returns to shape after being loaded with power, creating a lively and responsive feel.

“It is not just about stiffness,” Svein explains. “It is about how fast the wing comes back.”

Advances in materials, reinforcement layouts and construction techniques will all play a role in improving this sensation. At the same time, Svein expects the overall shapes of wings to evolve as designers search for better ways to distribute loads and reduce drag.

“From an engineering perspective, the current shape does not make much sense,” he says with a smile. “But we are learning.”

Reducing swing weight, improving balance and refining the aerodynamic profile of wings could make them dramatically easier to handle, especially for riders still developing their skills.

PASSION FOR BUSINESS AND THE SPORT

For Svein, however, the story of Starboard is not only about product design. It is also about building a business that allows innovation to continue.

RIDER SVEIN RASMUSSEN PHOTO BOB STAWICKI





Over time, he has come to view business much like a competitive sport.

"Business is a sport," he says. "You try things, you learn, you improve, and you try to perform at a higher level."

Running a global watersports brand means constantly balancing design, production, partnerships and distribution across many countries. Yet Svein clearly enjoys that challenge as much as he enjoys being on the water.

"IT IS NOT JUST ABOUT STIFFNESS IN A WING, IT IS ABOUT HOW FAST IT COMES BACK."



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"SOMETIMES THE IDEAS THAT LOOK THE STRANGEST AT FIRST ARE THE ONES THAT CHANGE THE SPORT."

"As a brand, our responsibility is to inspire," he says. "To motivate the suppliers, the distributors, the shops and the market."

That enthusiasm extends to the sport itself. Despite decades in the industry, Svein still

spends as much time as possible riding and testing equipment whenever conditions allow.

DESIGNING RESPONSIBLY

Alongside innovation, Svein believes watersports brands must also take responsibility for protecting the environments their sports depend on.

Starboard has been measuring the carbon footprint of its products since 2017 and has

invested heavily in mangrove restoration projects that help offset emissions while supporting coastal ecosystems.

The company has also launched large-scale ocean plastic collection programmes, tying the amount of plastic collected directly to the weight of products sold.

Svein hopes these programmes will continue to evolve alongside the sport itself.

LOOKING AHEAD

After decades of innovation, one thing about Starboard has remained constant. New ideas still begin with curiosity and are refined through constant testing on the water.

And sometimes those ideas look unusual at first.

Svein hints that Starboard may soon release something very different in the wing foiling world.

"We have been testing something for two years now," he says. "It looks very strange, but it works incredibly well."

If history has taught us anything, it is that the ideas that look unusual at first are often the ones that push a sport forward.

For Svein, the goal is not simply to follow trends, but to keep exploring how equipment can help more people enjoy being on the water.

And if the next generation of designs helps more riders experience their first flight sooner, then the future of foiling looks brighter than ever.

WINGFOIL



MATHIS GHIO, RACING, SPEED AND THE FUTURE OF WING FOILING

WORDS ROU CHATER PHOTOS WINGFOIL RACING/ROBERT HADJUK

Wing foil racing is still one of the newest and fastest evolving corners of the sport, and few riders have had a better view of that development than Mathis Ghio. With a background in windsurfing and sailing, a sharp race brain and a growing role in the development of Ozone's Fusion wings, Mathis sits right at the point where elite performance meets innovation. We caught up with him to talk about how he got started, why racing hooked him so quickly, what it feels like to hit over 40 knots on a wing, and where he thinks the sport is heading next.



" I STILL REMEMBER THE FEELING OF THE CHOP HITTING THE BOARD, THE SPEED BUILDING AND THE WIND IN MY EARS "

Rou Chater: Let's start at the beginning. How did you first get into watersports?

Mathis Ghio: It was really a family story. My father was a windsurfer and used to compete at a national level, so from a very young age, I was always on the beach watching him. I was bored with just playing in the sand; I wanted to be on the water with him. At first, I was too young, so he would sit me on the front of the board and take me out with him. I still remember the feeling of the chop hitting the board, the speed building and the wind in my ears. That is what made me fall in love with watersports.

After that, I started in the Optimist class, which gave me a lot of tactical and strategic knowledge, and then I moved into windsurfing. I spent around twelve years doing that, with national competitions and some international podiums, before eventually moving into wing foiling.

Rou: Did the Optimist and windsurfing background give you a big advantage when you moved into racing?

Mathis: Yes, definitely. The equipment is different, of course, but the race knowledge transfers really well. In the Optimist especially, I learned a lot about strategy, positioning and understanding the racecourse. I had very good coaches in France, and they taught me a huge amount. Even when I was young, I knew I was doing all of that to eventually windsurf like my father and my older brother, so I was always trying to absorb as much as possible.





Later on, once I had the basics of wing foiling sorted, all that race knowledge came back. That was a big help.

Rou: Was the Olympic pathway a serious goal for you before winging came along?

Mathis: Yes, that was the dream for a big part of my life. I really wanted to build an Olympic campaign in windsurfing. But when I reached the point where I wanted to join the French team properly, I was told I would have to choose between my studies and the Olympic path. I was doing engineering studies at the time, while some of the other riders were fully focused on sport. The federation did not believe I could do both in the long term.

“ I WAS TOLD I WOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN MY STUDIES AND THE OLYMPIC PATH ”



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"I KNEW I HAD MORE EXPERIENCE ON THE RACING SIDE, AND ONCE I FELT MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE EQUIPMENT, I NATURALLY STARTED PUSHING THAT MORE."

So I made the choice to continue my studies and move into wing foiling. Looking back, I am happy with that decision.

Rou: What was your first wing foiling session like?

Mathis: Honestly, it was much closer to swimming than wing foiling. I started on a 29-litre board with a five-metre wing, so it was not exactly the easiest setup. I did not even manage to fly on that first session.

It was a very long swim back to shore.

But even then, I could already feel there was something special in the sport. Then a strong Mistral came in, with waves in the south of France, and the next session was amazing. I was not tacking or jibing yet, but I was able to ride the swell and feel those free flight moments. That was when I really got hooked. Being able to put the wing aside and just ride in silence, that is what made me fall in love with wing foiling.

Rou: Did you get into winging with racing already in mind?

Mathis: At the very beginning, no, I was just trying to get my jibes, my tacks and the

foundations. But I have always had a competitor's mindset. Since I was very young, I needed competition to really feel like myself. So, quite quickly, I wanted to enter an event and see what the level was like.

At that time, the scene was still small enough that we could do both freestyle and racing at the same events, so I tried both. But I knew I had more experience on the racing side, and once I felt more comfortable with the equipment, I naturally started pushing that more.

Rou: When did you realise wing racing was going to become seriously competitive?

Mathis: In 2023, really. That was when I started seeing more and more riders coming in from windsurfing,



**“THE YOUNG RIDERS ARE ALREADY PUSHING HARD,
AND THE LEVEL KEEPS RISING.”**

people I had raced against before, and I knew immediately the level was going to jump. Riders like Alessandro Tomassi, for example, people I had competed with as teenagers, suddenly we were meeting again on a wing foil racecourse years later. That was exciting because I knew what level they could bring once they adapted to the equipment.

Rou: How do you feel about the direction of wing foil racing now, especially with governing bodies and format changes?

Mathis: I think we are in a transition phase. The class is still evolving, and a lot is still being built step by step. But I do like some of the newer formats, especially the medal series system, where more riders still have a chance on the last day. It creates drama, which is good for the public and for making the sport more watchable.

At the same time, the big goal is to move towards the Olympics in 2032. That is exciting, but I also think it is important that wing racing keeps its own identity and does not just become a copy of kite foiling or IQFoil. That matters to me.

Rou: Do you have 2032 on your own radar as an athlete?

Mathis: It is hard to say. I will be 30 then, and the sport is moving very quickly. The young riders are already pushing hard, and the level keeps rising. I do not know whether I will still be one of the top competitors or if I will be more involved as a coach or in another role. But I do want to help the sport get there. That is the first priority for me.



“MANY RIDERS HAVE VERY SIMILAR SPEED, SO THE DIFFERENCES COME MORE FROM TACTICS, WIND SHIFTS, GUSTS AND COURSE EFFECTS.”

If I can be part of bringing wing racing into the Olympics while keeping its authenticity, that would already mean a lot.

Rou: What is it actually like on the start line in a big race? From the outside, it looks absolutely terrifying.

Mathis: It is a lot of adrenaline, for sure. You have that shaky feeling because you do not know exactly what the riders around you are going to do, what tactical choice will be best, or what will happen when the horn goes. But there is also trust. We are all there to race hard, not to hurt each other, and usually, you are racing with riders of a similar level, so the fleet spreads quite quickly.

Once the race gets going, it is not only about speed. At our level, many riders have very similar speed, so the differences come more from tactics, wind shifts, gusts and course effects. That is what I love about it. You have the cardio, the pumping, the physical effort, but at the same time, you are making strategic decisions all the time.

Rou: Talk us through your current foil setup.

Mathis: Right now, I use the Levitas Air 6 foil, with a 480 square centimetre front wing, paired with a 1.12 metre mast and a Levitas race board. What is very special about this foil is how efficient it is in light winds. The span is very high, so when I pump it really converts the energy well. That gives me a big advantage in those conditions, because I can climb higher and maintain speed more efficiently.





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"THE DOUBLE SURFACE CONCEPT REMOVED A LOT OF THE TURBULENCE YOU GET BEHIND A BIG INFLATABLE LEADING EDGE. THEN ONCE I TRIED IT, I WAS COMPLETELY CONVINCED."

Rou: The other huge talking point is obviously the Ozone Fusion. What did you think when you first saw it?

Mathis: I saw it first as a prototype at AWSI in Hood River, and immediately, I thought it made sense. Even before riding it, I could see it was the direction to go. Aerodynamics had become the priority, and the double surface concept removed a lot of the turbulence you get behind a big inflatable

leading edge. Then once I tried it, I was completely convinced.

The first thing you notice is the stability, but it is not only about stability. The upwind angle is much better, the overall speed improves, and because the wing is calmer, you have more freedom to think about tactics and the riders around you instead of always having to manage the wing itself.

Rou: So the double surface concept really has changed the race scene?

Mathis: Yes, absolutely. In the top ten now, maybe only one or two riders are not on full double surface wings, but on the podium, it is basically always full double surface.

It just brings too many advantages. You go faster, you point better, and you can focus more on racing.

Rou: A lot of freeriders look at those wings and wonder if they are a nightmare when you crash. Is that actually an issue?

Mathis: Not really, once you know how to handle them. The main thing is to keep the air intakes facing the sky and not let them sit on the water. If you do get some water inside, it drains out quite quickly through the system. So on the racecourse, I would say there is no real disadvantage.

The bigger disadvantage is probably only when you need to repair one, because the sail repair people are not always so happy to see them coming.



"AXEL BRINGS HIS HUGE EXPERIENCE FROM KITE RACING AND DEVELOPMENT, AND THEN I BRING THE WING FOIL RACING PERSPECTIVE."

Rou: You have also been deeply involved in the development side with Ozone. How has that relationship worked with your engineering studies?

Mathis: It works really well. Ozone has given me a lot of freedom to continue my studies while racing and training, and I am very grateful for that. It means I can pursue both goals at the same time. Then, naturally, because I have the race experience and I am studying engineering materials, it made sense to get involved in development too.

This year, I have been working more closely with the R and D team, especially with Connor Bainbridge and Axel Mazella. Connor works on the design side, Axel brings his huge experience from kite racing and development, and then I bring the wing foil racing perspective. We test, compare, refine and try to make the fastest wing possible.

Rou: You mentioned there are already new refinements in the next generation. What sort of things are being worked on?

Mathis: One of the things we worked on was an adjustable trimming system that can be used while riding. The idea is to adapt the profile of the wing more effectively between upwind and downwind, so you can have better lift and power when you need it downwind, but still keep the wing more neutral when you want it to fly by itself.

I had been working on a version of that myself, using ideas from windsurfing and from my studies,



"MANY RIDERS HAVE VERY SIMILAR SPEED, SO THE DIFFERENCES COME MORE FROM TACTICS, WIND SHIFTS, GUSTS AND COURSE EFFECTS."

and then Connor and Axel improved it and made it more durable and easier to use. So it is really satisfying to see that process work, where your ideas can help shape the final product.

Rou: Let's talk speed. You broke the 40 knot barrier on a wing foil, which is just mental. What did that feel like?

Mathis: It was incredible. I was in the south of France at Le Rouet, with very strong Tramontana, and from the moment I arrived, I knew it could be the day. It was absolutely niking. Sand everywhere, chop everywhere, everything was smoking.

When you bear away and really load the wing, there is this moment where everything around you starts to feel slower. The water, the chop, even the other riders. Then the wing starts to fly more by itself, the foil feels flatter and easier to control, and you are just trying to hold the whole thing together for as long as possible. It is a very intense feeling. A lot of adrenaline, but almost silence at the same time.

Rou: And the crashes?

Mathis: Very hard. I was wearing a helmet and an impact vest, but even then, I felt like I needed more protection. After the first session, I came back with a full wetsuit reinforced with foam in different areas, because when you are pushing for that kind of speed, the crashes are serious.

Rou: Do you think 50 knots is possible one day on a wing foil?



Mathis: Fifty is still a step away, I think. But 45 knots, yes, I believe that is already possible with the current generation of equipment. The gear is much more stable now than it was when I first broke 40. So I think we will see that barrier move again quite soon.

Rou: And finally, what advice would you give to any younger riders or anyone listening who is thinking about getting into racing?

Mathis: Just do it. That is really the advice. The atmosphere in wing racing is amazing, and the level

of progression you can make at a competition is far beyond what you can usually do alone at home. Being around other riders, learning from the fleet, racing in that environment, it pushes you forward very quickly.

And if you ever get the chance to do something like Defi Wing, you have to try it. Six hundred riders on the line, that is something special. It is very hard to describe that feeling, but it is something every wing foiler should experience at least once.

From Olympic kite foil racing to dock starts in jeans, Alina Kornelli has built her path through watersports by staying curious, competitive and creative. We caught up with her to talk about growing up in Bavaria, the realities of Olympic racing, her love of foiling in all its forms and how social media has opened up a whole new chapter.

WATERWOMEN

WORDS ROU CHATER

ALINA KORNELLI





" HE ALWAYS WANTED ME TO LEARN AS MANY SPORTS AS POSSIBLE, AND WINDSURFING WAS ONE OF THEM. "

From Olympic kite foil racing to dock starts in jeans, Alina Kornelli is not easy to pin down. The Bavarian-born athlete has built a career on movement, curiosity and a refusal to stay in one lane for too long. One minute, she is chasing Olympic qualification, the next she is wing foiling in Cape Town, pump foiling on a lake near Munich or figuring out how to make social media work on her own terms. We caught up with Alina to talk about growing up far from the coast, the intensity of Olympic racing, why dock starting clicked, and how she has built a social media presence that feels completely her own.

Rou Chater: Let's start at the beginning. How did you first get into watersports?

Alina Kornelli: I'm from Bavaria, from the south of Germany, so not exactly the first place people think of for kitesurfing or wing foiling. But my dad used to be a professional windsurfer, so I grew up around it. He always wanted me to learn as many sports as possible, and windsurfing was one of them. When I was about ten, we would travel to Spain or Italy, and that was where it all started. Then, in 2011, I got into kitesurfing because my older brother skipped windsurfing completely and went straight onto a kiteboard. I thought what he was doing looked so cool, so I wanted to do it too.

At first, I was really just a holiday kitesurfer. I perhaps only kited 30 days a year. But then I started posting a few photos on Instagram, and people at school were surprised that I could actually ride properly.



That was how it all began, really, just every holiday going somewhere to kitesurf.

Rou: You were also into snowboarding quite seriously. Were you always competitive?

Alina: I was not super competitive as a little kid in the obvious way, but I always wanted to be as good as the boys. That was probably the thing driving me most. I wanted to be the best in sports class, and I wanted to be good at everything I tried. Through friends, I got into snowboard cross, and I ended up doing pretty well. I became the German youth champion. At the same time, though, there was a chance for me to go to the Youth Olympic Games in kitesurfing, so I got to a point where I had to decide.

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WANTED TO
BE AS GOOD
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"FREESTYLE WAS THE DREAM AND I WANTED TO RIDE ON THE FREESTYLE WORLD TOUR."

I could either go properly into snowboarding and join the national team pathway there, or I could choose kitesurfing. I could not do both anymore. In the end, I chose beach life.

Rou: At that stage, the Youth Olympic format was twin tip racing, right? Then later you moved into foil racing. That is quite a jump.

Alina: It is. At first, I actually wanted to do freestyle. Around 2016, that was what looked cool. Big air was not really the thing it is now; freestyle was the dream, and I wanted to ride on the freestyle world tour. Then the Youth Olympics came along, so I started doing twin tip racing because it was a big opportunity.

After the Youth Olympics in 2018, I thought I would go straight back into freestyle. But then I heard kite foiling was becoming an Olympic sport. At first, I did not want to

touch it. My mum thought it was too dangerous, all those sharp foils, and honestly, I thought maybe I would just stay with freestyle. But after a while, I realised that if I wanted to go for the Olympics, I had to focus. You cannot seriously do three disciplines at once. So I chose the Olympic path and moved into foiling.

Rou: What was your first kite foiling session like?

Alina: Funny enough, I usually pick up new sports pretty quickly, so I expected kite foiling to be easy.

"WITHOUT COMPETITION, I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP. BUT BECAUSE THERE WAS A RACE GOAL, I HAD TO PUSH THROUGH IT."

I went to Egypt with my dad and tried it first on a normal kite foil with a tube kite. That part was actually okay. I could get going quite quickly, even if my stance was completely wrong and still very twin tip.

But the step from that to proper race gear was massive. Suddenly, you are on a race board, a race foil and a foil kite, and it feels like a completely different sport. It was like learning from zero again. The kite feels different, the bar feels different, and the whole body position is different. And then of course you want to learn everything fast. Tacks, gybes, racing in light wind, racing in strong wind, riding in flat water, in waves. I remember falling again and again, trying to get those first good tacks and gybes.

Without competition, I probably would have given up. But because there was a race goal, I had to push through it.

Rou: That race environment must have been intense. What was it like going from twin tip racing to full kite foil racing in a fleet?

Alina: It was a huge step up. Twin tip racing and kite foil racing are just not the same thing. Foil racing is really high-performance. It is fast, technical and honestly pretty scary at times. Once you trust your gear and your own level, you start riding a lot on instinct, but in the beginning, it is a lot.

I had one really bad incident in 2022 that stayed with me. We were reaching into a mark at full speed,





"FOR ME, IT WAS ALWAYS SAFETY FIRST. THAT CRASH STAYED IN MY HEAD FOR A LONG TIME."

and a girl in front of me lost control. It happened maybe half a metre ahead of me, and I had no time to react. Her foil just exploded into me. Luckily, I was wearing a full wetsuit even though it was hot, and that probably saved me from a much worse injury. It still cut my foot open and left a huge bruise on my leg.

After that, I definitely became more cautious in close situations. There are some riders who will never back off; they just want to be first, and maybe that is the right racing mindset. But for me, it was always safety first. That crash stayed in my head for a long time.

Rou: You competed for Austria in the Olympic campaign. How did that come about?

Alina: My mum is Austrian, and my dad is German, so I could choose. For me, Austria made more sense because I live very close to the Austrian border, and it was easier logistically than working with the German federation, which is based much further north. The Austrian Sailing Federation was also really enthusiastic about kite foiling, and they supported the project from the beginning.

It was a very professional environment. We had coaches, support boats, physios, a personal trainer, everything. It was very different from what I had known before in freestyle or twin tip. It felt like a proper Olympic sport. The only difficult part was that in Austria, it was just me and Valentin Bontus in kite foiling, so I did not have a big training group as some other nations did. I had to find training partners from different countries.

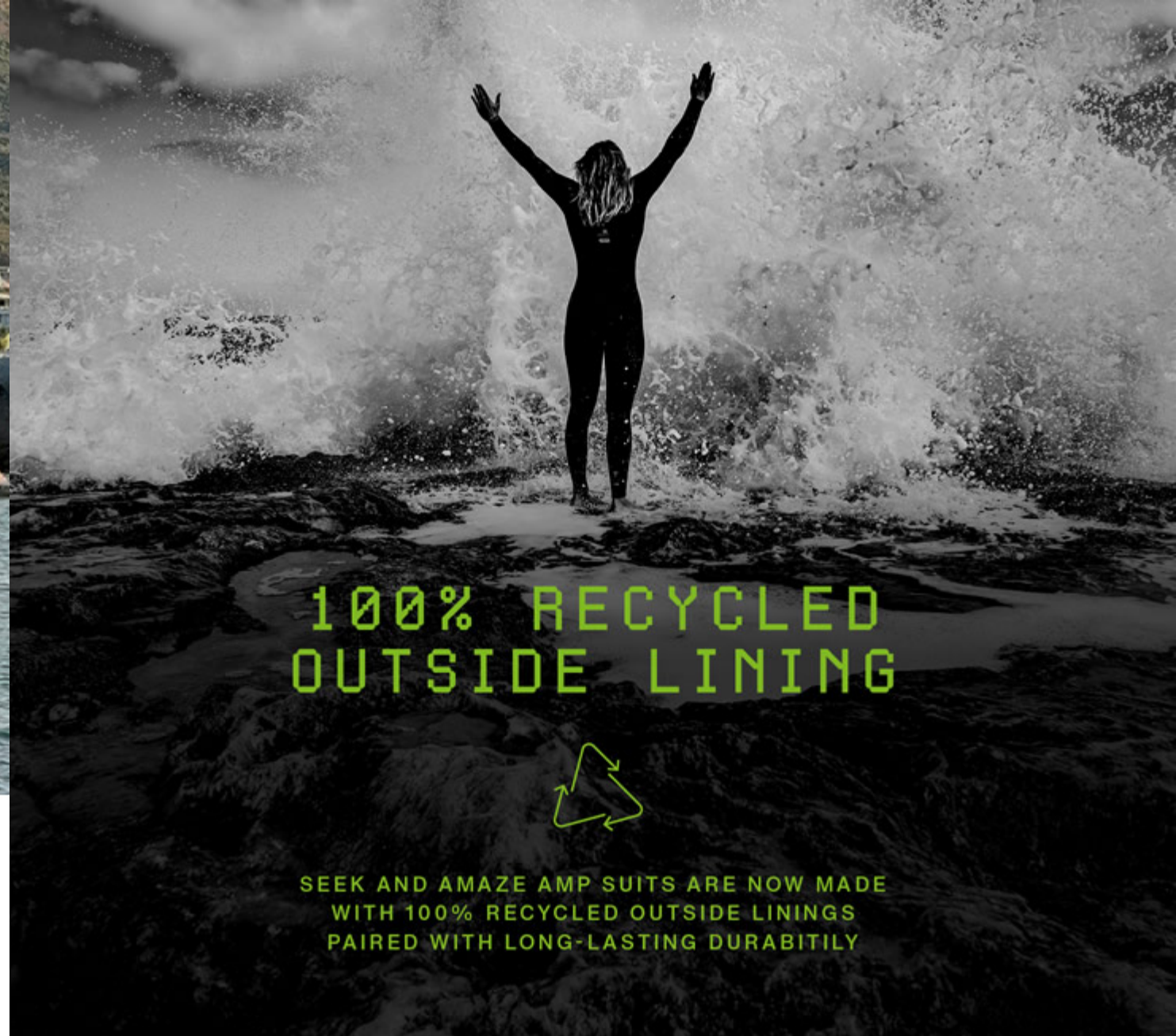


Rou: The weight issue in Olympic kite foiling became a big talking point. How difficult was that to deal with?

Alina: It was honestly one of the hardest parts for me. At the start, everyone was just trying to learn the discipline. Then, after a while, we all got technically quite close, and it became obvious that the heavier riders had a real speed advantage. It was not subtle. You could see it.

So then everything became about weight. More gym, more food, more shakes, less cardio, less extra sport. I had to gain something like seven or eight kilos, and for me, that was very hard, not only physically but mentally too. I love being active. I love doing sports all the time.

" I HAD TO GAIN SOMETHING LIKE SEVEN OR EIGHT KILOS, AND FOR ME, THAT WAS VERY HARD "



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"THE OLYMPICS ARE NOT JUST TWO WEEKS, IT IS REALLY THE WHOLE FOUR-YEAR JOURNEY."

Suddenly, the message was basically, do less, eat more, and keep the weight on. That is really strange for someone whose whole identity is built around movement.

It was especially frustrating because in very strong wind and waves, or in really light technical conditions, I was very good. But in those flatter, medium wind conditions, the heavier girls just had more speed. That was hard to accept.

Rou: Was it all still worth it when you made it to the Olympics?

Alina: Yes, definitely. The whole experience was worth it. The opening ceremony was amazing. We travelled to Paris for that, even though the sailing events were in Marseille, and for those few days, it felt like all the pressure had finally lifted. You had done everything. The training, the testing, the sacrifices, the weight gain, all of it. You could just stop and think, okay, I made it.

But I think a lot of people only see the two weeks of the Olympics. For athletes,

it is really the whole four-year cycle. That is what the Olympics are. It is not just arriving there; it is everything that comes before it.

Rou: You had already started wing foiling during that period, right?

Alina: Yes, always a bit on the side. I think I get bored if I only do one thing for too long. If I get good at something, I often want to learn something new. That keeps me motivated. So I was wing foiling in my time off from kite foiling, or when the conditions suited it better. If there were nice waves, I would go winging for an evening session.

Then, after the Olympics, I went to Cape Town with both my kiting and winging gear, and that was where I really felt myself leaning more into wing foiling. The wave conditions there are just so good for it.

Rou: What do you spend most of your time doing now?

Alina: Right now, it really depends on the conditions. If I am in Cape Town and the waves are good, I want to wing foil. If there is no wind, I might surf. If there is flat water and a chance to twin tip, I would love to go kiting because that is still so much fun. In summer, I want to do more kite foiling again in lighter winds.

I also want to get better at SUP downwind foiling and parawinging. I did my first parawing downwinders here in Cape Town, and that was so fun too. I think my favourite thing now is just choosing the right tool for the conditions.

" RACE FOILING IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM SURFY FOILING. IN KITE FOIL RACING, YOU WANT TO BE LIKE A TRAIN. YOU WANT TO LOCK IN AND GO FAST. "

Rou: Did wing foiling come easily because of your kite foil racing background?

Alina: Yes and no. The foil control definitely helps. If you have spent years on a foil every day, a lot comes naturally. But race foiling is very different from surfy foiling. In kite foil racing, you want to be like a train. You want to lock in and go fast. You do not really do all those smooth carving, surf-style turns. So the pure control was there, but the wave-riding side of winging was something different.

Still, the race background definitely made the learning curve much easier.

Rou: Let's talk dock starting. When did that become a real thing for you?

Alina: I first tried it in 2021 because everyone was doing it at foil events when there was no wind. But I did not love it at first. The pump foil setups are huge and felt a bit wild, and I was worried about getting injured on non-race days. So I left it alone.

Then, after the Olympics, I got into SUP downwind foiling, and that really taught me how to pump properly. Later, a friend took me behind a boat on a lake in Munich and suddenly, pump foiling felt really easy. I posted a random video from that day, and it got around 2.8 million views. That was the moment I thought, okay, maybe I should actually learn the dock start properly.





“PEOPLE THOUGHT IT LOOKED UNREAL, LIKE SOMETHING THEY HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE.”

Once I had a good technique explained to me and got over the awkwardness of running with the board in my hands, it clicked pretty fast.

Rou: Your dock start videos are what a lot of people know you for now, especially the ones where you are fully dressed. How did that idea happen?

Alina: It was very random. I had started thinking more seriously about social media after the Olympics, and I wanted to post regularly. I had been learning a new dock start spot in Munich, and one day I was wearing white jeans and a black top. I just said to my boyfriend, imagine if I did the video like this. He said maybe wait until you are a bit more confident, but I told him just to film, and if I made it, I made it.

I landed it first try.

After that, people loved it. I think it looked unreal to them, like something they had never seen before. A girl with dry hair and normal clothes flying over the water. People kept commenting that it looked like AI. Then it became a bit of a signature. The dry hair, the jeans, changing outfits between clips. Suddenly, it was a whole thing.

Rou: It does feel different from what a lot of women in watersports are doing on social media. Was that deliberate?

Alina: Not in some big planned way, but I think it happened naturally. A lot of people have told me it is cool that I did not go the bikini route and still managed to grow. For me, it was more about making something that looked surprising and satisfying,



"I CAN TRAVEL, CREATE, AND WORK FROM WHEREVER I AM."

something people would stop and watch. The clothes just made it look even more unusual.

I think there is space to do it differently and still get attention. Maybe that can be inspiring for younger girls, too.

Rou: How serious has social media become for you now?

Alina: It is a proper job now. Before, I was

always doing a bit of everything, racing, sponsor work, training, and posting when I could. After the Olympics, I decided to really focus on social media and see what happened. I started researching more, posting more, editing more, trying to understand what worked and what people connected with.

A few months ago, I had around 19,000 followers, and now I am around 80,000 across Instagram and YouTube, so it has grown very quickly. I still do everything

myself, the editing, the ideas, the emails, brand conversations, all of it. My boyfriend helps me with decisions and strategy, but the day-to-day work is all mine. It takes a lot of time, but it also gives me freedom. I can travel, create, and work from wherever I am.

Rou: Has that changed your relationship with the sport?

Alina: In some ways, yes. It gives me independence. Before, a lot depended on sponsors, photographers, shoots or events. Now I can think of an idea and go make it happen.

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"I DO NOT WANT TO BECOME ONLY THE GIRL IN JEANS ON A PUMP FOIL."

That is really exciting. At the same time, I do not want to become only the girl in jeans on a pump foil. That is a cool part of what I do, but I also want people to see the rest of it, wing foiling, kiting, snowkiting, travel, all of those adventures too.

Rou: You have been with Core for a long time. What has that relationship meant to you?

Alina: A lot. The first kite I ever used was a Core kite, because my dad was friends with one of the founders, and then later I started riding for them properly. I have been with Core for more than ten years now. They supported me even through the race foil years, even though I was not using Core race gear because they do not make race foils. They were always supportive of whatever direction was right for me.

That long relationship means a lot now because I can tell a full story. I can post a clip

from when I was a kid and a clip from now, and it all connects. That is something special.

Rou: What are you riding most at the moment?

Alina: For wing foiling, I am mostly on a 38-litre Roamer in Cape Town, though my 45-litre board is probably my real all-around favourite because I can ride it from around 10 knots. I love the Halo Pro wings because they are so light. That is probably my favourite thing about them, my arms never get tired.

For kiting, I still enjoy the Fusion board for freeriding and a bit of big air. And then of course the pump foil setup. It is stable, forgiving and perfect for the clothing videos.

Rou: Last one, what would you say to any young riders listening who want to follow a similar path?

Alina: The biggest thing is to have fun. If it is not fun, it is really hard to stay motivated. For me, having a good group of friends around the sport was always a huge help. You push each other, you enjoy the sessions, and that makes you want to go again.

Then, of course, do not give up. You might crash 100 times before something works, but maybe on the 101st try you land it. That is just part of it.

And finally, think step by step. It is great to have a big dream, whether that is the Olympics, building a big social media channel or learning a new trick, but you have to break it down. What is the next small goal? What do you need to learn first? If you just keep building like that, opportunities come.

WORDS ROU CHATER PHOTOS CHIARA SOCIN

SENSI GRAVES AND THE INCLUSIVE FUTURE OF FOILING

Foiling is evolving faster than almost any other watersport on the planet. New disciplines appear almost yearly, gear continues to improve and riders are discovering entirely new ways to use wind and swell. But while the technology is moving quickly, the biggest shift in the sport may actually be who is getting involved. Former professional kiteboarder Sensi Graves has found herself at the centre of that change, not just as a passionate foiler, but as someone helping open the door for more women and newcomers through coaching, community events and her own journey balancing life on the water with motherhood.



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“ FOR DECADES, WIND SPORTS HAVE OFTEN FELT INTIMIDATING TO NEWCOMERS ”

At first glance, Sensi Graves looks exactly like what you might expect from a modern foil athlete. She rides everything, wing foiling, parawinging, downwinding, tow foiling, prone, and spends much of the year chasing wind and swell between Hood River, Baja and beyond.

But talk to her for a while, and it quickly becomes clear that what drives her goes far

beyond simply riding the latest gear or chasing the next discipline. Sensi has quietly become one of the people helping shape the culture around foiling, particularly when it comes to welcoming more women and newcomers into the sport.

From organising free demo sessions on the Columbia River to coaching clinics around the globe and mentoring riders who are taking their first tentative steps into winging, her work sits right at the intersection of progression and accessibility.

In a sport that has often been defined by its technical edge and relentless gear evolution, Sensi represents a different kind of momentum, one built around community, confidence and the idea that more people should feel like they belong on the water.

A DIFFERENT WAY INTO WIND SPORTS

For decades, wind sports have often felt intimidating to newcomers. Kitesurfing, windsurfing and other disciplines require a lot of equipment, technical knowledge and confidence, and for many people that barrier was enough to keep them on the beach rather than in the water.



“THE SETUP IS MORE APPROACHABLE,
AND THE RISK FACTOR FEELS LOWER
IN THE EARLY STAGES.”

Sensi knows this firsthand. She started her career as a professional kiteboarder, riding park style and competing at the highest level before becoming one of the early adopters of kite foiling.

But when winging arrived around 2019, something changed.

“I remember seeing the first wings at an industry trade show and thinking this looks ridiculous,” she laughs. “Everyone was walking up and down the beach trying to make it work, and I was like, what is this sport?”

Like many riders, she struggled during the early sessions.

“If you’re not cursing at the wing, you’re not winging,” she says. “It took me about a week of thinking, this sucks, this is really hard.”

And yet, that challenge turned out to be part of the appeal.

Unlike kitesurfing, where a powerful kite can feel intimidating to beginners, winging offers a different learning curve. The equipment is simpler, the setup is more approachable, and the risk factor feels lower in the early stages.

“It’s not that winging is easy,” Sensi explains. “It’s still really hard to learn. But it’s less intimidating. You’re often learning on a big board, you’re close to the water, and you don’t have this huge kite pulling you around.”

That difference has opened the door to people who might never have considered wind sports before.

“FOR MANY PARTICIPANTS, THE SESSIONS WERE THEIR FIRST REAL EXPERIENCE WITH WIND SPORTS.”

A COMMUNITY ON THE WATER

Nowhere is that shift more visible than in Hood River, Oregon, where Sensi lives. The town has long been one of the world's wind sport capitals, famous for its powerful summer winds and rolling river swell on the Columbia.

In the past, those conditions made it a hub for windsurfing and kitesurfing. Today, winging has exploded across the river.

“We still see plenty of kites and windsurfers,” she says. “But the number of wings on the water now is incredible.”

The accessibility of the sport has played a huge role in that growth. And Sensi has been actively helping to fuel it.

Last summer she ran a series of sessions called Women's Wing Wednesdays, free demo days where women could try the sport in a supportive environment.

Every other week throughout the summer, riders gathered at the river to test Armstrong gear, ask questions and take their first steps on the foil.

“We had so many women turn up every single week,” she says. “At one point I was like, I need an assistant.”

For many participants, the sessions were their first real experience with wind sports.

“We get women from all kinds of backgrounds,” Sensi explains. “Some used to windsurf years ago, some have partners who kite, and some have absolutely no wind sports experience at all.”





“ THE FACT THAT PEOPLE WITH NO PREVIOUS
WATERSPORTS BACKGROUNDS ARE GETTING
INTO IT MEANS WE’RE GROWING THE SPORT ”

And that is exactly the point.

“The fact that people with no previous watersports backgrounds are getting into it means we’re growing the sport,” she says. “That’s really exciting.”

FROM THE BEACH TO THE WATER

One of the most powerful changes Sensi has noticed is how winging is reshaping who feels welcome in the sport.

“For years you’d see women sitting on the beach while their husbands or partners kited,” she says. “Now they’re looking at winging and saying, actually, I could do that.”

The difference is not just physical; it is psychological.

Because the equipment is smaller and the learning environment often feels more manageable, people who might have been hesitant to try kiting are suddenly curious.

And once they start, many quickly fall in love with the feeling of foiling.

“You progress a little bit every time,” Sensi

says. “Even when you think you’re not getting better, your body is learning.”

That idea has become a central message in her coaching.

“People get really frustrated and start telling themselves they suck,” she explains. “But the reality is, just showing up and trying is already a big step.”

In fact, she often reminds students how unusual their situation really is.

“Think about how many people in the world are even putting themselves in the position to learn to wing,” she says. “Very few. So just being out there is something to celebrate.”



“ I’VE BEEN PART OF THIS INDUSTRY FOR SO LONG, AND I WASN’T READY TO STEP AWAY FROM IT. ”

LIFE, FOILING AND MOTHERHOOD

While Sensi has been helping grow the sport on the water, the last two years have also brought major changes in her life away from it.

In July last year, she gave birth to her son, Flint.

For many athletes, motherhood can feel like a moment when their careers slow down or even stop altogether. Sensi was determined not to let that happen.

“I didn’t want having a baby to be a limitation on my career,” she says. “I’ve been part of this industry for so long, and I wasn’t ready to step away from it.”

Her return to the water came sooner than many expected.

Just five weeks after giving birth, she found herself back on the river.

“It wasn’t some big goal,” she says. “It just happened that the conditions lined up, and Brandon asked if I wanted to go.”

The first session, however, was humbling.

“It was horrible,” she laughs. “I could barely get up.”

Still, the experience reminded her why she loves the sport in the first place.

And now Flint is simply part of the routine.

Trips to the beach take longer, and sessions are often shared between her and her husband, Brandon, each taking turns on the water while the other watches Flint.

“IT IS ABOUT MAKING SURE THE SPORT CONTINUES TO GROW IN A HEALTHY WAY WELCOMING NEW PEOPLE ”

“We rarely ride together now,” she says. “But we still get out there.”

In many ways, the change has strengthened their connection to the lifestyle they built around wind and water.

“Our philosophy is that Flint comes along with us,” she says. “We don’t want having a baby to stop us from doing the things we love.”

MORE THAN JUST PROGRESSION

In a sport that evolves as quickly as foiling, it is easy to focus entirely on the next piece of equipment or the next discipline.

Wing foiling leads to downwinding, which leads to parawing, prone foiling and tow foiling. The list keeps growing, and many riders find themselves chasing each new challenge.

Sensi is no different.

“I’ve been trying all the disciplines,” she laughs.

But for her, the bigger picture is about something else.

It is about making sure the sport continues to grow in a healthy way, welcoming new people rather than intimidating them.

That means encouraging beginners when they struggle, creating spaces where women feel comfortable learning and reminding people that progression does not happen overnight.

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And sometimes, it simply means embracing the challenge.

“Embrace the suck,” she says, quoting author Brené Brown. “It’s going to be hard. But that’s part of the journey.”

Because once you break through those early frustrations, the reward is something special.

Foiling has a way of pulling people in completely. The sensation of flying above the water, linking swell lines and gliding silently across the surface is addictive in the best possible way.

And thanks to riders like Sensi Graves, more people than ever are discovering it for themselves.



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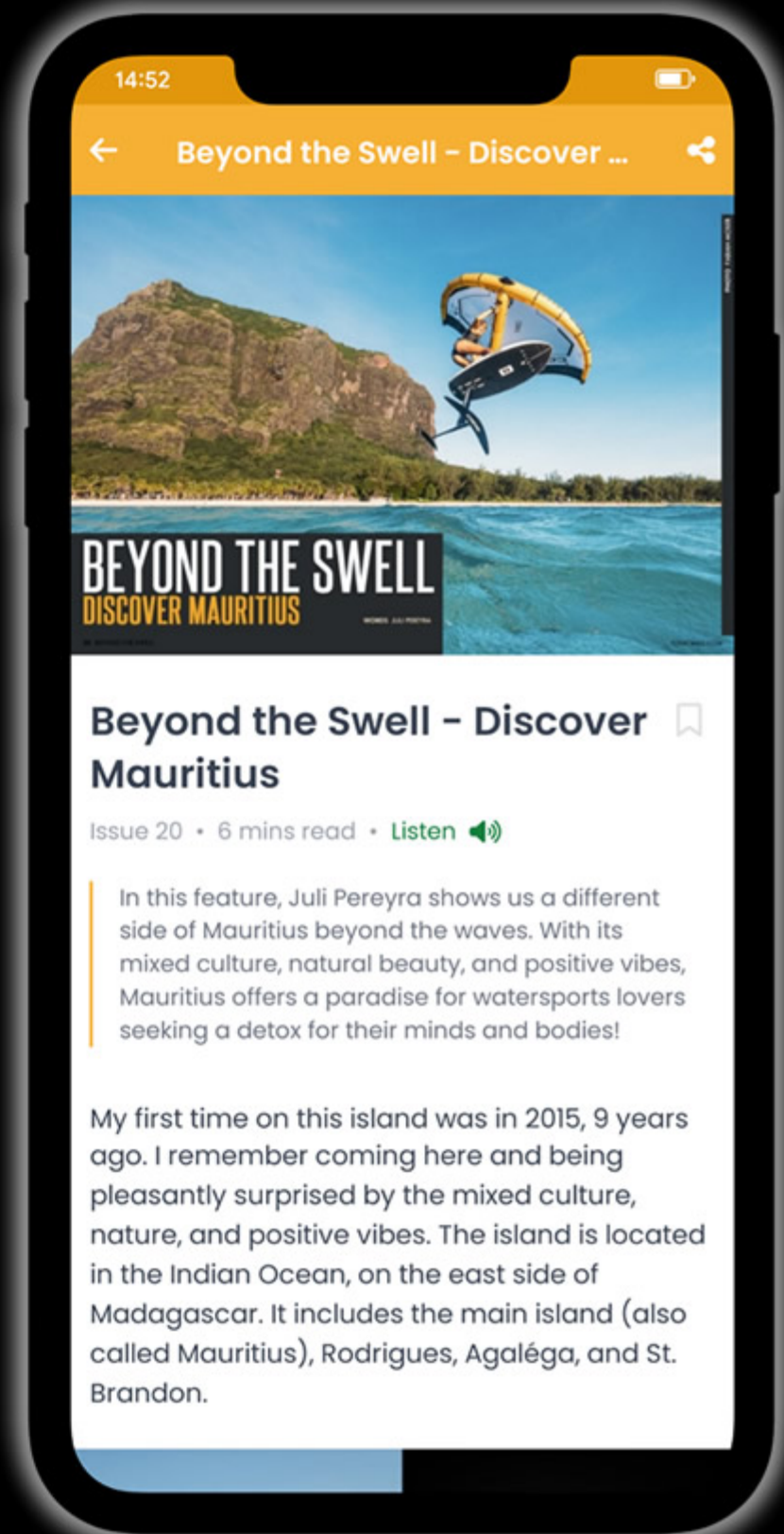
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WORDS ROU CHATER PHOTOS JAMES BOULDING

When a new foil system launches, there is always plenty of marketing noise around it. Technical claims, design explanations and carefully produced test videos all promise the same thing: better performance and a better ride.

But the real story usually appears a few months later.

THE PEOPLE'S PRESTIGE



“THE COMMENTS KEEP COMING BACK AS SURPRISINGLY SIMILAR AND CLOSELY MATCH OUR OWN TEST FINDINGS.”

That is when the early adopters have been riding the gear in their own conditions. Small waves, messy wind, long downwinders, harbour walls, reef scrapes and the everyday sessions that actually define what we do on the water.

Since Cabrinha released the Union system and the Prestige range of foils, we have been hearing a steady stream of feedback from riders around the world. Some of them have been riding Cabrinha gear for years; others have switched from other brands, but the comments keep coming back as surprisingly similar and closely match our own test findings.

Stiffness.

Glide.

Simplicity.

And a feeling that the foil somehow gives you more time when you are riding.

To dig a little deeper, we spoke with riders who have been spending serious time on the Prestige and looked through the conversations happening around the community.

This is the foil as described by the people who are actually riding it.

PATRICK – @foilwithme

If there is one thing you notice straight away when talking to Patrick, it is how quickly his enthusiasm for foiling comes through.





“IT TURNS, IT PUMPS, IT GLIDES, IT IS FAST, IT CAN GO SLOW.”

He has been riding the Prestige 1150 paired with the 160 stabiliser, and for him, the standout characteristic is just how easy the foil feels in real-world down wind conditions.

Small swell, shifty winds and low power in the ocean are exactly the sort of conditions where a foil can either shine or frustrate you.

For Patrick, the Prestige quickly made things feel simple.

“The paddle up was super easy,” he explains.

“These waves are really small and fast, but I can park the foil and just stay right on them.”

What surprised him most, though, was the sheer range the foil has once you are up and riding.

“The range on this thing is insane. You can sit there and slow it right down, then when the wave starts running, you just kick it and start racing the section.”

That mix of efficiency and performance is something many riders have been talking about.

For Patrick, it means the foil adapts to whatever the wave decides to do.

“You can just stay in the pocket or shoot past sections and pick up another wave. It is so smooth and so easy.”

But he is quick to point out that the ease of use does not mean the foil lacks performance.

“It still feels high performance. It turns, it pumps, it glides, it is fast, it can go slow.”

Then he pauses and laughs.

“I know we all hate hearing someone say something does everything, so I am not going to say that... but honestly, it kind of does.”

NICK GOLDSPIK – A Lifetime in Board Sports

Nick’s journey into foiling stretches back through several generations of watersports.

He first started surfing at the age of eleven, long before hydrofoils even existed in the public consciousness.

84cm



“BOARDS BECAME SMALLER AND MORE RADICAL, AND EVENTUALLY HE DISCOVERED KITESURFING AS WELL.”

Now sixty-three, he has seen the sport evolve from traditional surfboards to windsurfing, then kitesurfing and eventually wing foiling.

“When I joined the military, I got posted to Cyprus,” he explains. “There was no surf there, so I got into windsurfing instead.”

That path eventually led him to competitive racing.

“I sailed the Division One World Championships in 1987,” he says. “Those big Mistral boards, they were absolute tanks.”

Over time, the equipment evolved, boards became smaller and more radical, and eventually he discovered kitesurfing as well.

“We saw people like Laird Hamilton kiting and thought we had to give that a go.”

Nick’s first kite was a Cabrinha Black Tip, and his first board was a Cabrinha Prankster. From there, he stayed closely connected with the brand as foiling began to develop.

Like many riders, he started with Cabrinha’s early foil systems, including the Double Agent and later the Carve series.

When wing foiling arrived, he moved to the first-generation X Series, though he admits that experience was not entirely positive.

“Honestly, I thought it was terrible,” he says bluntly. “It was really difficult to ride while I was learning.”



“LISTENING TO RIDERS TALK ABOUT THE IMPROVEMENTS IN STIFFNESS, HE DECIDED TO GIVE THE PRESTIGE A TRY.”

He eventually switched brands for a while before returning when Cabrinha released the X Series Mark II. That foil worked well for him, particularly paired with the hollow mast and a 1300 front wing, but like many bigger riders, he experimented with mast options to find the right balance.

“At first, the hollow mast felt a bit twitchy,” he says. “I am quite a big rider, about six foot five and around 105 kilos, so I actually bought the aluminium mast to stiffen things up.”

Eventually, he returned to the hollow mast once he became more comfortable riding waves.

But when Cabrinha announced the Prestige system, he was not immediately convinced.

THE SWITCH TO PRESTIGE

Nick remembers his first reaction clearly.

“When Cabrinha said they were changing the whole connection system, I was a bit annoyed,” he admits.

For riders who have already invested in a foil setup, major design changes can sometimes feel like a forced upgrade.

“If you have just bought a setup and suddenly everything changes, it can be a bit of a turn off.”

However, curiosity eventually won.

After hearing more about the reasoning behind the design, particularly the move from M6 bolts to stronger M8 bolts, and listening to riders talk about



the improvements in stiffness, he decided to give the Prestige a try.

His first session answered many questions very quickly.

“The first thing I noticed was stiffness,” he says.

“The whole system just feels much stiffer.”

That additional rigidity changes the way the foil responds under load.

“Everything feels more connected. When you put pressure through the foil, it reacts instantly.”

In terms of lift, he found the Prestige 1150 comparable to the larger wing he had been riding previously.

“The lift is very similar to the old 1300 Mark II. There might be a tiny difference, but it is very close.”

Where the new foil stood out, though, was speed.

“Because you are effectively dropping a size, the foil feels much faster,” he says. “The old 1300 could feel a bit sluggish sometimes, but the Prestige never feels like that.”

Instead, he describes the overall feel as simply more refined.

THE GLIDE FACTOR

If there is one characteristic that keeps coming up when riders talk about the Prestige, it is glide.

That sensation of effortless forward motion that allows you to link sections, complete transitions calmly and stay on foil even when the energy in the wave fades.

“YOU DO NOT HAVE TO RUSH ANYTHING. THE FOIL IS DOING A LOT OF THE WORK FOR YOU.”

For Nick that was the moment the foil really impressed him.

“The first thing I said to my mate afterwards was that I could not believe how much time it gave me.”

That sense of extra time can completely change the way a session feels.

“It feels like you have loads of time to complete transitions,” he explains. “You do not have to rush anything. The foil is doing a lot of the work for you.”

For many riders, that glide also translates into better riding overall.

“It actually improves your riding because you are not constantly scrambling to stay on foil,” he says. “You can just focus on the wave.”

Living in an area without big, powerful surf, Nick also noticed another advantage.

“With the Prestige I can ride really small waves and still have fun,” he says. “For me, winging is mainly a way to get onto waves.”

At this stage of his life, he is not chasing huge surf.

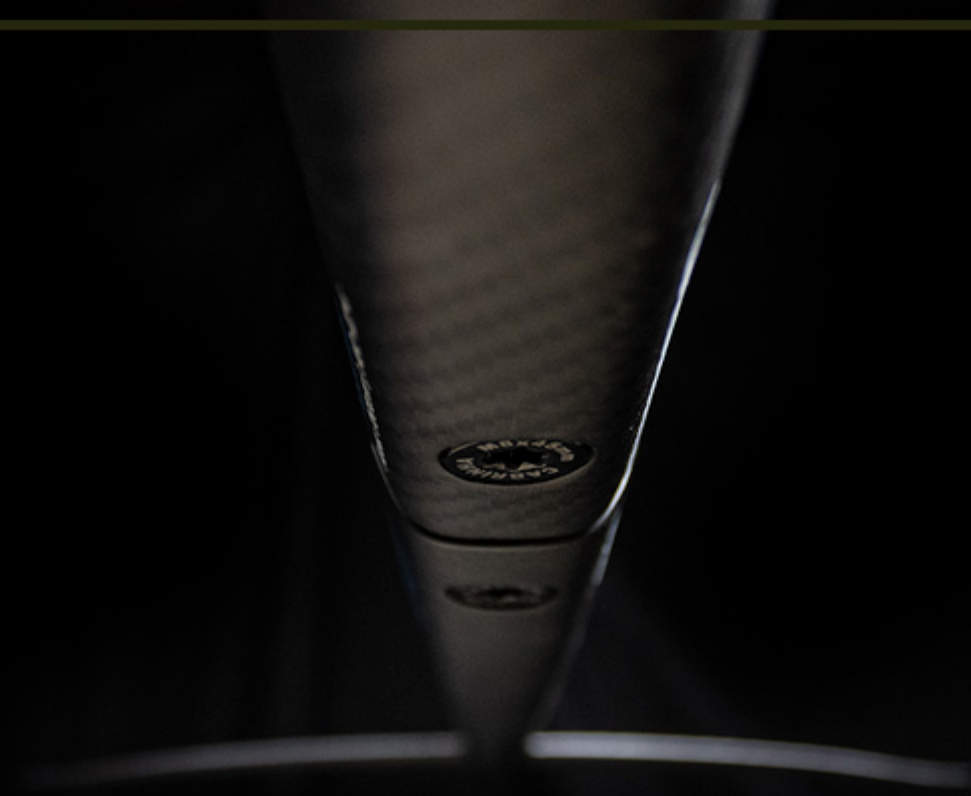
“I am not interested in double overhead waves anymore,” he laughs. “Waist to shoulder high waves are perfect.”

And for that type of riding, the Prestige works exactly the way he wants.

BUILT FOR THE REAL WORLD

One of the most interesting aspects of the Prestige story is that the feedback from riders is remarkably consistent.





"I HAVE NEVER FELT SUCH A DIRECT CONNECTION TO MY FOIL BEFORE"

Across different riding styles, winging, prone foiling, downwinding and surf foiling, the same themes appear again and again.

One of the most talked about elements is the Union connection system, which simplifies the way the foil assembles.

"I am in love with the simplicity of the assembly and stiffness of the whole Union system," said one rider.

Others focus on the mast itself and how stiff the setup feels in the water.

"The stiffness you have achieved in a fourteen millimetre thick mast is genuinely impressive."

That structural rigidity translates directly into feedback for the rider.

"I have never felt such a direct connection to my foil before."

And sometimes the comments are even simpler.

"Cleanest feeling foil I have ever ridden."

"Stupid easy to use... can I keep it?"

SPEED, GLIDE AND THE CHEAT CODE FEELING

Beyond construction and setup, many riders talk about the way the Prestige feels once it is moving.

One comment that stood out describes the Prestige

1150 as a foil that almost feels like cheating.

"The 1150 is the undisputed glide champ," the rider explained.

"When you get it high in the water column it feels like you are riding an e-foil. It just goes."

That efficiency becomes particularly noticeable when linking waves or pumping across flat sections.

Other riders have been equally impressed by the smaller wings in the range.

The 760 in particular has developed a reputation for combining speed with surprising lift.

"The low-end lift on the 760 is absurd," one rider commented.



“THE 905 IS THE ONLY FOIL YOU WILL EVER ACTUALLY NEED FOR DOWNWINDING, PARAWING OR WINGING.”

Meanwhile, the 905 has become a favourite for riders looking for one foil that covers multiple disciplines.

“The 905 is the only foil you will ever actually need for downwinding, parawinging or winging.”

That versatility is part of what makes the Prestige range so appealing.

Rather than feeling like specialised equipment that only works in perfect conditions, the foils seem to adapt easily to the messy reality of everyday sessions.

SURVIVING THE UNEXPECTED

Gear durability rarely gets mentioned in promotional material, but it quickly becomes important once you start riding in challenging environments.

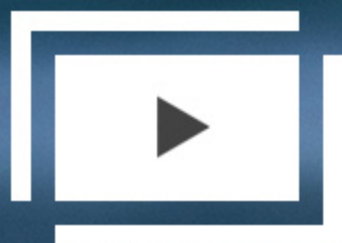
During a recent trip to Morocco, we unintentionally gave the Prestige system a fairly serious durability test.

The swell was huge, and the conditions were chaotic.

While prone foiling, we snapped two leashes, and the board and foil were dragged across the reef and smashed repeatedly against a harbour wall before we managed to retrieve everything.

Under those circumstances, most riders expect significant damage.

Instead, the foil came back with only a couple of small scratches and some cosmetic damage to the tips.





“NOW PEOPLE CAN START WITH EQUIPMENT THAT ALREADY WORKS REALLY WELL.”

After a quick sand down using a rock on the beach, it went straight back into the water.

For riders who regularly deal with reefs, rocks and heavy surf, that sort of resilience matters.

THE VERDICT FROM THE RIDERS

When we asked Nick whether the Prestige lived up to the expectations he had built up before riding it, his answer was simple.

“Yes, I think it does.”

He also points out that new riders entering the sport today are benefiting from years of experimentation.

“We have all done the guinea pig work testing the early gear,” he says.

“Now people can start with equipment that already works really well.”

For him, the Prestige represents that next stage of refinement.

“It ticks a lot of boxes,” he explains. “Technically, it is probably an intermediate foil, but it is still very user-friendly considering the performance it offers.”

And in the end, that balance between accessibility

and performance might be the biggest compliment riders can give it.

Because once the equipment disappears beneath your feet, the session becomes about the riding itself.

As Nick puts it,

“If the kit works properly, you cannot blame the equipment anymore. Then it is just about improving your own skills.”

And judging by the conversations happening across the foiling community, that is exactly where the Prestige seems to be putting riders.

Right where they want to be.

TECHNIQUE

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It's definitely time to have a look at the Race Gybe. We've had a few questions concerning the difference between this power dumping speedster and the good old duck gybe. Funnily enough, unbeknown to many wingers, their duck gybe may well in fact be a race gybe as they can look extremely similar when done smoothly. At the end of the day, it's all about what you do with your hands. Either way the Race Gybe, as well as being a new challenge, is yet another enjoyable, stylish and practical alternative to your standard gybe.

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A



B



C



HOW TO WINGFOIL #19 – THE RACE GYBE

The beauty with this bad boy is that it works equally well in light winds and also when you're well powered. In light winds, much like the duck gybe, the race gybe's wing position means that you won't get backwinded by your induced wind as you carve through downwind. In strong winds, the wing position allows you to dump power and aides in keeping your weight centred over your foil, preventing breaching. Truly irresistible! More good news, if you find the duck gybe, or more specifically, the idea of letting go with your front hand whilst carving into a

gybe somewhat intimidating. Here in the Race gybe, you can keep both hands firmly on the handles much longer.

The prerequisite for trying this. You should already be gybing comfortably and balanced heel to toe on the foil, meaning you can carve and ride toe side. Right, let's dive into the how, with a little recap on some gybing pointers as we go.

APPROACH & SET UP PIC A

For learning purposes we're going to go for the same approach as we use for the regular gybe. Your aim is to get over the board and into your gybing stance, position your wing low and pointing forward and check for space. Start off sailing slightly upwind and have a good check around to make sure that the coast is clear,

and you have room to gybe! Pointing slightly upwind helps you get your bearings, and it can make it easier to get your wing down and pointing forward. Make sure you're standing on the board, not supporting yourself too much on the wing. Finally check your feet. If you usually move your back foot a tad further across and a touch forward to help with carving, do the same here, and it helps with carving to point your back foot slightly forward. Here Karine is heading upwind, over the board, she's checked her feet, her wing is down and pointing forward and she's had a good look.

BEAR AWAY PIC B

You should be well versed in the art of bearing away by now. Bearing away helps you get over the board and therefore makes it easier to carve. Bearing away also makes you go faster, moving the apparent wind so that your wing behaves better whilst also giving you more momentum and glide to get around your gybe. You can see that Karine has pushed her wing forward and has sheeted in to push the nose of her board away from the wind. As your bear away keep your wing down.

CARVE PIC C

Now that you're balanced you can flex your ankles, lean gently onto the balls of your feet and drive your knees across to start your carve. From this moment on, it's the same motto as any gybe, "keep carving"! Your aim is to keep the board turning whilst you do the rest until you're comfy and happy flying out on your toes! As you initiate your carve, keep the wing sheeted in with your rear arm and push down on your front hand to keep the wing low. Karine's ankles are flexing, her knees are driving across and as a result her board and foil bank over and start to carve. Her wing is low, pointing forward and sheeted in.



WING DOWN PIC D

Whether you're used to gybing or duck gybing, this is where things get very different. You're aiming to get your wing pointing straight down at the water whilst keeping both hands firmly on their handles or boom. To get the wing into this position start by pushing your front hand down. As the wing drops, any wind left in it will help push it down. At the same time push your rear hand up and forward to keep the wing tip out of the drink. If you're powered you can sheet the back arm out as you do this. Aim to keep the leading



edge close to your board. As long as you are carving, and therefore turning further away from the wind you'll be delighted to find that the wing drops and depowers. You can see that Karine pushes her front hand down and lifts her rear hand. Once her wing is pointing down, Karine holds her front hand in, to keep the leading edge close whilst her rear hand has pushed up and out, so that her wing is almost leaning away from her. Brilliant!

PATIENCE PIC E

Timing is everything, and with the Race Gybe it's all about waiting. There's no rush as you will be using the wind to help lift the wing. This means that you need to carve through downwind and slightly further



than you'd think sensible. It's back to your keep carving motto. It's worth reminding yourself that during a gybe you won't know exactly where you are in relation to the wind. Remember the downwind zone from our first gybing video. It's the same here. What you will notice is that the wing will go light with no wind in it once it's down and the perpendicular to the wind. This gives you an inkling that you're in that zone. In this photo Karine has passed through downwind, she's held the wing in the same position and focuses on carving, making sure that her board and foil stay banked, and she keeps turning. The sequence at the end of this article really demonstrates how many frames Karine has the wing down for!

F



WING LIFT PIC F

Should I stay or should I go now? Whilst learning the Race Gybe it's better to go early rather than late. If you go too early your wing won't be supported by the wind as you lift it, so the trailing edge will drop, and your wing will point up. Not a great look but hardly catastrophic. If you go too late and wait too long, you'll get back winded and knocked off your board. We're sure you'll agree, the first option is preferable. The good news is that as you get

more comfortable you can progressively go a tad later until you get the floatiest of lifts.

The action. Your aim is to lift the leading edge so that the wind gets under your wing. You can start to lift the wing whilst you still have two hands holding it. Lift your front hand, pushing the leading up. If it feels right for you, you can also pull the back handle over your head to help the wing on its way. Note, Karine is still carving!

HAND SWAP PIC G

In the Race Gybe you release your back hand first! Duck Gybers take note. As you push the leading edge up with your front hand, release your rear hand and

G



reach it forward to grab the front handle, or front of the boom. You can clearly see that Karine has released her back hand and has moved it forward, grabbing the front handle just behind her other hand. Karine continues to lift her wing although it's not got wind underneath it yet. As soon as you have a good grip you can release what was your front hand.

POWER ON PIC H

It's not over yet, you still need to get your front hand up and rear hand on the rear handle, carve the board around to at least across the wind, point the wing forward and get the power back on.



With the leading edge up, your wing will be supported, allowing you to carve around until the rear handle is within reach. Resist the temptation to look back and stretch for the rear handle as this can shift your weight back and stall your foil. You've done the hard work, so keep flying and claim it. Karine continues to carve and she's pointing her wing forward. This allows her to grab the rear handle without reach back for it, so her board and foil stay trimmed, and she flies out.

TOP TIPS

We've touched upon the timing and how as you progress you can inch later and later. However, the timing will also depend on how much power you have in relation to your speed. Without wanting to open a tin of worms, it's all about apparent wind. The faster you go, the more favourable your apparent wind will be for a delayed lift. If you're powered but slow, as a result of not bearing away, you're likely to get back winded much earlier. Bear this in mind.

For those of you who already duck gybe you'll need to concentrate on keeping both hands on the handles as you push the wing down into position. No letting go. Then remember, you'll release your rear hand, so that you have two hands on the front handle!

Finally, as you get to grips with this gybe you can lay into it, going faster, carving harder and spilling wind. Any ex-windsurfers amongst you will love a good lay down gybe:)

Have a look at the Sequence to see the full step by step guide. You can see how many frames Karine is holding the wing in the straight down position, patiently waiting for the moment to lift!

Keep your eyes for the upcoming video on the TONICMAG YouTube channel soon!!!



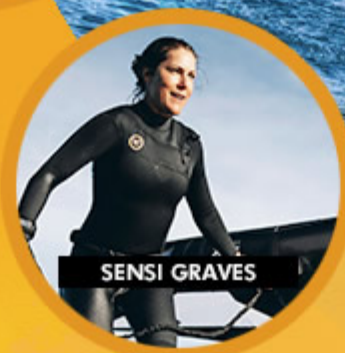
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RIDER ANCOR SOSA
PHOTO JAMES BOULDING

WORDS ROU CHATER
PHOTOS RIDE ENGINE

RIDE ENGINE CHARGER HELMET

As foiling continues to evolve, the conversation around safety is changing too. Helmets designed specifically for dynamic water sports are starting to appear, and Ride Engine's new Charger helmet is one of the latest. We caught up with Gary Siskar to take a closer look at the thinking behind the design.





"WHAT FOLLOWED WAS NOT JUST A PRODUCT BREAKDOWN, BUT A WIDER LOOK AT HOW HELMET DESIGN IS EVOLVING FOR WHAT SISKAR CALLS "DYNAMIC WATER SPORTS" "

Safety has never been the most glamorous topic in watersports. For decades, helmets were seen as something for kayakers smashing through whitewater or cable park riders sliding rails, not something that had ever really taken hold in the windsports or surf lineup. But as foiling evolves and speeds increase, the conversation around protection is changing quickly.

In a recent episode of the Foil Pod, Rou Chater sat down with Ride Engine's Gary Siskar to dive deep into the thinking behind the new Charger helmet. What followed was not just a product breakdown, but a wider look at how helmet design is evolving for what Siskar calls "dynamic water sports", activities like wing foiling, prone foiling, tow foiling and surfing, where speed, height and sharp equipment combine in ways that were never part of traditional board sports.

The Charger is Ride Engine's answer to that challenge, a helmet designed specifically for modern water use rather than borrowed from another sport. The result is a piece of

equipment that tries to solve several long-standing problems at once, hydrodynamics, impact protection, fit and comfort.

WHY FOILING CHANGES THE SAFETY EQUATION

Foiling has introduced a completely new set of risks into board sports. Traditional surfing wipeouts typically involve water, the occasional board impact, or the ocean floor in shallow breaks. Foiling adds something else to the mix, a large, rigid structure moving through the water at speed.

Modern foil setups are getting sharper; in the quest for speed and glide, they are designed for efficiency rather than forgiveness. When things go wrong, any interaction with the foil is costly.

“A RIDER MIGHT BE STANDING A METRE ABOVE THE WATER ON THE FOIL, THEN FALL FROM THAT HEIGHT WITH THE ADDITIONAL MOMENTUM OF SPEED.”

If you foil, and you are reading this, the chances are you've fallen on the sharp end more than once. The classic fold in half and stare at the blades moment is one we've all been through. Our wetsuits all have the scars to prove it.

Anyone who has spent time foiling has probably experienced the classic breach crash too. The foil exits the water, loses lift and speed, and the rider is thrown forward. Because the rider is often elevated above the water by a mast that can be close to a metre tall, the fall can be surprisingly violent.

Rou Chater summed it up perfectly during the podcast conversation. A rider might be standing a metre above the water on the foil, then fall from that height with the additional momentum of speed. Add body height, and the distance travelled in the crash can reach three metres before impact with the water.

At that point, the water itself becomes a hard surface. Riders frequently describe “ringing their bell” during these crashes, the kind of head impact that might leave you seeing stars for a moment before continuing the session.

The concern is not only the initial impact. In offshore conditions, downwind runs or remote surf breaks, a knockout or disorientation could quickly become a serious situation.

This is the environment the Charger helmet was designed for.





"A BULKY HELMET CAN CATCH WATER DURING A CRASH, CAUSING THE HEAD TO STOP ABRUPTLY WHILE THE BODY CONTINUES MOVING."

THE PROBLEM WITH TRADITIONAL WATER HELMETS

Most helmets used in watersports today were not originally designed for the way foilers move through the water.

Many come from kayaking or wakeboarding, where impacts are typically against hard objects like rocks, rails or obstacles rather than the water surface itself. These "bucket" style helmets are often bulkier to offer protection from the more likely hard object impacts they are designed to protect you from.

While they provide protection, they also create several issues when used for surfing or foiling.

The biggest is water drag. A bulky helmet can catch water during a crash, causing the head to stop abruptly while the body continues moving. That sudden deceleration can actually increase neck strain or rotational force on the brain.

Then there is the practical side of surfing. Traditional helmets do not work well when duck diving under waves or being rolled in the impact zone. The extra volume and shape create resistance, making them uncomfortable in situations where the rider needs to move smoothly through the water.

Siskar describes these older styles as "bobble head" helmets, designs that sit slightly off the skull and rely on adjustment systems rather than a close anatomical fit.

The Charger takes a different approach.



"THAT HYDRODYNAMIC BEHAVIOUR IS CRUCIAL. IT REDUCES THE SUDDEN STOP THAT OCCURS WHEN WATER PRESSURE BUILDS UNDER A BULKY HELMET."

HYDRODYNAMICS FIRST

The defining design feature of the Charger helmet is its low-profile shape.

Instead of sitting away from the head, the helmet is designed to fit extremely close to the skull. This has two key benefits. First, it reduces the overall drag of the helmet moving through water. Second, it allows the

helmet to break the surface tension of the water during a crash rather than catching it. In simple terms, the helmet penetrates the water rather than slapping onto it.

For activities like wing foiling, tow foiling or big air kiteboarding, where riders can hit the water at speed, that hydrodynamic behaviour is crucial. It reduces the sudden stop that occurs when water pressure builds under a bulky helmet.

The shape also helps the helmet stay in place. When a helmet fits tightly to the head and follows its contours closely, it is less likely to shift during an impact or wipeout.

MATERIALS AND IMPACT PROTECTION

While the Charger helmet prioritises hydrodynamics, protection is still the core purpose of the design.

The outer shell is made from injected glass-filled nylon, a material chosen for its combination of strength and durability. Inside the shell sits a layer of impact EVA foam that absorbs shock from collisions with boards, foils or other hard objects.

Unlike some cycling helmets that are designed to crush during a single major impact, the Charger is intended to handle repeated smaller hits, which are more typical in water sports. Riders might clip a foil, take a board strike or experience multiple wipeouts in a session.

“ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING ELEMENTS OF THE CHARGER DESIGN IS THE APPROACH TO FIT.”

The helmet carries CE certification for protection against hard-object impacts, an important benchmark in safety equipment. Achieving that certification requires the helmet to pass a series of impact tests where the shell and internal foam must absorb and disperse force within defined limits.

According to Siskar, the development team focused on proven materials rather than experimenting with entirely new composites. Using established impact foams and shell materials helped ensure the helmet could pass certification while maintaining a lightweight construction.

CUSTOM FIT INSTEAD OF MECHANICAL ADJUSTMENT

One of the most interesting elements of the Charger design is the approach to fit.

Many helmets rely on mechanical adjustment systems, usually a dial at the back of the head that tightens an internal cradle. While effective, these systems add weight and moving parts that can break or corrode in saltwater environments.

Ride Engine chose a simpler method.

The helmet comes in two shell sizes, extra small to medium, and large to double XL. Instead of adjustment dials, the fit is refined using removable EVA inserts placed inside recessed areas of the helmet.

These inserts come in different thicknesses, allowing riders to fine tune the internal shape of the helmet to match their head. The concept is similar to custom boot fitting in skiing or snowboarding, where small adjustments can dramatically improve comfort and stability.





“THE RESULT IS A HELMET THAT FEELS ALMOST MOULDED TO THE RIDER’S HEAD.”

Riders place the helmet on their head, identify any gaps or pressure points, and add foam inserts where needed. Thicker inserts can be stacked to take up additional space if required.

The process takes a little time, but the result is a helmet that feels almost moulded to the rider’s head. Once dialled in, the helmet should stay firmly in place without shifting during movement or crashes.

PROTECTION AROUND THE EARS AND JAW

Another distinctive feature of the Charger helmet is the extended EVA protection around the ears and upper jaw area.

Foiling introduces a unique hazard in this region. While riders instinctively protect the front of their faces during a fall, the sides of their heads remain vulnerable. A foil wing or mast can easily strike this area during a crash.

The Charger uses EVA padding that runs from the ear down toward the upper jaw line to shield this area from impacts.

However, Ride Engine also recognised that not every rider wants this level of coverage. Kiteboarders, for example, often ride at higher speeds where wind noise becomes a factor.

To accommodate different preferences, the ear protection can be modified by the user. A marked cut line allows riders to trim the padding or remove it completely if they prefer a more open design.

This flexibility means the helmet can be adapted to different disciplines within the foiling world.



"FOR SPORTS WHERE RIDERS ARE CONSTANTLY SCANNING THE WATER, LOOKING FOR WAVES OR BALANCING ON FOIL BOARDS, THAT ADDITIONAL WEIGHT QUICKLY BECOMES NOTICEABLE."

LIGHTWEIGHT BY DESIGN

Weight is another critical factor in helmet comfort.

The human head already weighs several kilograms, and adding extra mass can increase fatigue or neck strain over long sessions. For sports where riders are constantly scanning the water, looking for waves or

waves or balancing on foil boards, that additional weight quickly becomes noticeable.

By eliminating mechanical adjustment systems and focusing on a minimal shell structure, Ride Engine aimed to make the Charger one of the lightest helmets in its category.

The result is a helmet that many riders reportedly forget they are wearing after a few minutes on the water, an important factor if helmet adoption is to increase across the sport.

DEVELOPMENT AND PROTOTYPING

The Charger helmet was not developed overnight. Siskar traces the earliest discussions about the project back to around 2019, when Ride Engine began noticing changes in the surfing world. At the time, helmet use in heavy-wave locations like Pipeline and Puerto Escondido was beginning to increase.

A trip to Indonesia reinforced the idea. In certain lineups, a surprising number of surfers were already wearing helmets, particularly the Gath models that have been a staple of big wave surfing for years.

Foiling was also growing rapidly during that period, bringing its own safety concerns.

“IT IS RARE TO SEE SNOWBOARDERS WITHOUT HELMETS, ESPECIALLY AFTER SEVERAL HIGH-PROFILE ACCIDENTS”

Ride Engine began exploring concepts and testing existing helmets to understand what worked and what did not. The real design process began around 2022, with engineers creating digital models and producing 3D printed prototypes to refine the shape.

Finding the correct head shape turned out to be one of the biggest challenges. Human heads vary widely, from round to oval profiles, and a helmet that fits poorly is unlikely to be worn regularly.

Through repeated testing and adjustments, the team eventually arrived at a shell shape that could accommodate a wide range of riders when combined with the internal EVA inserts.

Overall, the development process took around two to two and a half years.

THE BIGGER SHIFT TOWARD PROTECTION

Beyond the helmet itself, the Charger reflects a wider shift happening in foiling and water sports.

For years, protective equipment in surfing culture was often viewed as unnecessary or uncool.

Snowboarding experienced a similar resistance before helmet use eventually became the norm.

Today, it is rare to see snowboarders without helmets, especially after several high-profile accidents highlighted the risks involved.

Siskar believes water sports are heading in the same direction. As foiling pushes into more extreme environments and athletes continue to innovate with equipment, the importance of protection becomes harder to ignore.





"AS FOILS GET SHARPER, SPEEDS INCREASE, AND RIDERS PUSH FURTHER OFFSHORE, PROTECTING YOUR HEAD IS STARTING TO LOOK LESS LIKE AN OPTION AND MORE LIKE COMMON SENSE."

Helmets are only one part of that conversation. Downwind foilers are increasingly discussing flotation aids, high visibility colours, emergency communication devices and first aid tools like tourniquets.

The sport is maturing, and with that maturity comes a growing awareness of safety.

WILL HELMETS BECOME THE NORM?

The adoption curve for helmets in foiling is still developing, but the signs are clear.

Professional surfers now regularly wear helmets in heavy wave competitions. Many downwind foilers carry safety gear as standard. And more brands are designing equipment specifically for the unique demands of water-based sports.

If that trend continues, the idea of foiling without a helmet may eventually feel as strange as snowboarding without one does today.

The Ride Engine Charger is one step in that direction, a helmet built from the ground up for the realities of modern foiling.

Whether riders embrace it widely will depend on comfort, performance and culture. But one thing is certain, as foils get sharper, speeds increase, and riders push further offshore, protecting your head is starting to look less like an option and more like common sense.





RIDER JULIEN FILLION
PHOTO WILLIAM POLLOCK

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WORDS ROU CHATER

AFS HA ULTRA FRONT WING

Over the last few years, foiling has evolved at an incredible pace. What started as a niche corner of the watersports arena has rapidly expanded into multiple disciplines, including wing foiling, downwind foiling, prone foiling, parawinging and SUP foiling. As riders push further and faster across these disciplines, the equipment beneath our feet has had to evolve just as quickly. One of the biggest developments has been the move toward higher-aspect-ratio front wings.



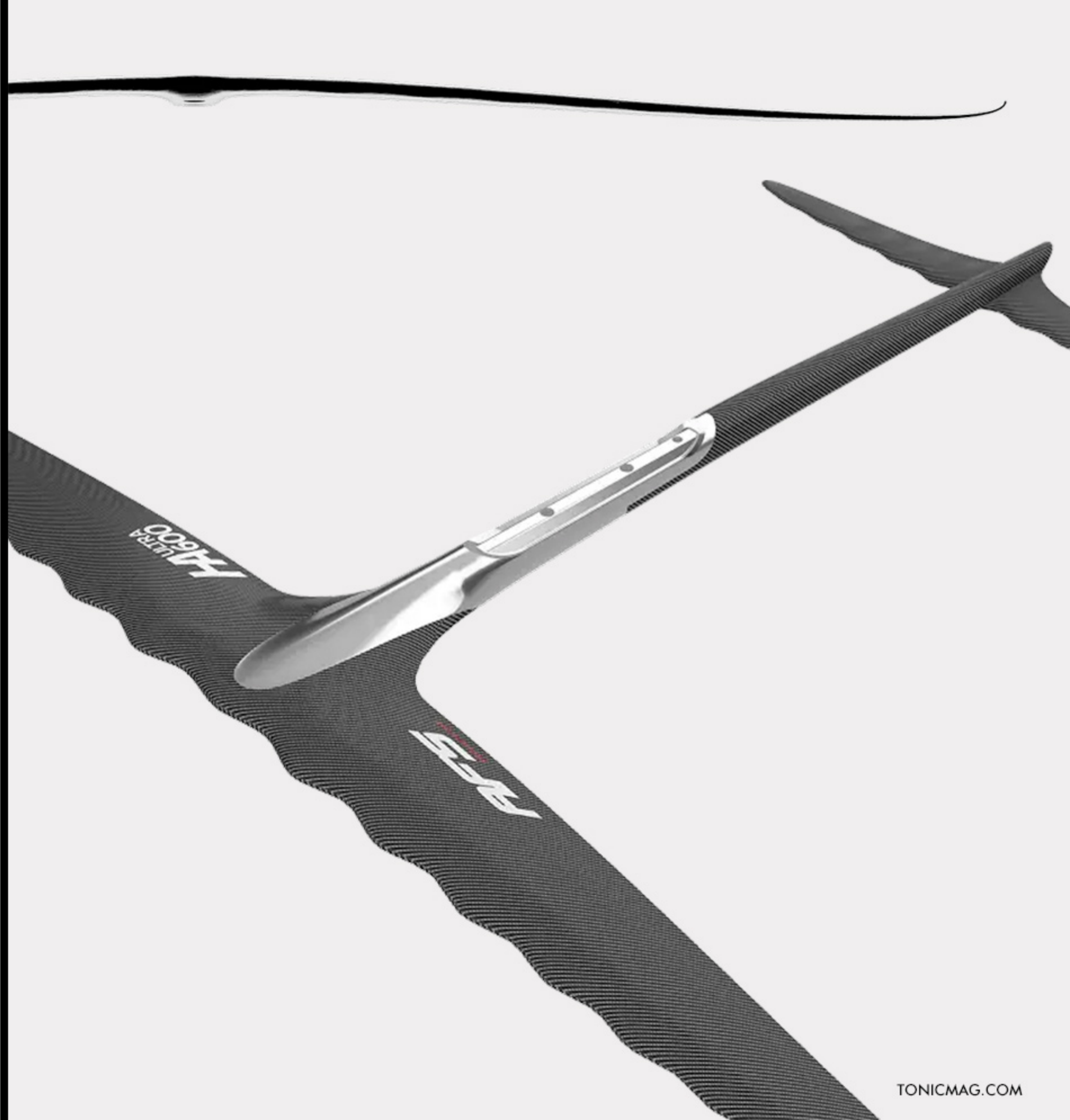
“A HIGH-ASPECT WING ALLOWS THE FOIL TO CARRY SPEED THROUGH FLAT SECTIONS AND MAINTAIN LIFT EVEN AS THE SWELL’S ENERGY FADES.”

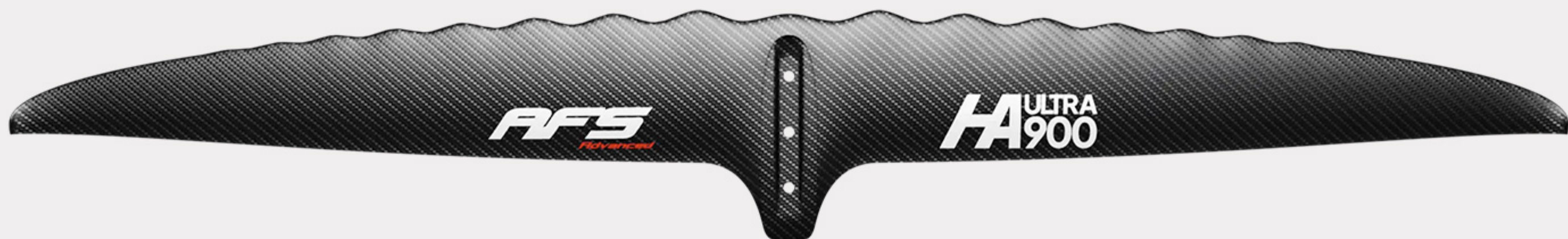
Early foils tended to be shorter and wider, with lower aspect ratios that prioritised stability and early lift. They were forgiving, easy to ride and ideal for learning. But as riders progressed and began chasing longer glides, faster speeds and more efficient pumping, designers started exploring longer, narrower wings. That development keeps going, and we’re now seeing a new generation of refined high aspect designs building on what came before.

High aspect foils have since become one of the defining trends in modern foiling. By increasing the wingspan while reducing chord depth, designers are able to dramatically improve efficiency. The longer span and narrower chord reduces induced drag, while the thinner profile slices through the water more cleanly. The result is a wing that travels further with less effort. The extra sauce is that in the past high aspect wings weren’t very manoeuvrable, but that is changing, and these modern designs can hold their own in the carve too.

For disciplines like downwind foiling, this efficiency is crucial. Riders are linking bumps and riding ocean swell for kilometres at a time, and every small gain in glide translates directly into longer runs and less fatigue. A high-aspect wing allows the foil to carry speed through flat sections and maintain lift even as the swell’s energy fades.

The same principle applies to wing foiling. Whenever we transition, or drop the wing to ride a swell or wave, we are relying on the foil’s glide to take us through that manoeuvre, or carry us along the wave.





"IT ACCELERATES SMOOTHLY, GOES INCREDIBLY QUICK AND HOLDS SPEED THROUGH LONG GLIDES, ALLOWING RIDERS TO CONSERVE ENERGY WHILE MAINTAINING MOMENTUM."

A foil that glides effortlessly makes our sessions easier and less tiring.

Even in surf foiling, where manoeuvrability is key, high aspect wings are becoming increasingly popular. They allow riders to connect multiple sections of a wave and generate speed with very little pumping, opening up lines that were simply not possible with earlier foil designs.

This shift toward high aspect performance is

the environment in which the AFS HA HA front wing has been developed. The original HA Ultra 750 Monobloc has already spent the past year quietly establishing itself in this space, and the latest HA Ultra release builds on that foundation, expanding the range into a more complete system.

PERFORMANCE THROUGH EFFICIENCY

The AFS HA Ultra front wing is built around a refined high aspect outline that focuses on maximising glide and maintaining speed. The longer wingspan reduces drag and allows the foil to travel farther between power inputs, making it particularly effective for linking swell or maintaining speed across flat-water sections.

Once up on the foil, the HA Ultra feels extremely efficient. It accelerates smoothly, goes incredibly quick and holds speed through long glides, allowing riders to conserve energy while maintaining momentum. This characteristic is especially valuable during long downwind runs where fatigue can quickly build.

The wing's thin profile also plays a major role in how it performs. By reducing drag through the water, the foil is able to achieve higher top-end speeds without feeling unstable or unpredictable. This balance between speed and control is one of the defining characteristics of modern high aspect foil design.

For riders pushing into faster conditions or exploring larger open ocean swells, this added speed range can make a significant difference.



“HIGH MODULUS CARBON PROVIDES EXCELLENT RIGIDITY, ENSURING THAT ENERGY FROM THE RIDER IS TRANSFERRED DIRECTLY INTO THE FOIL WITHOUT FLEX OR DELAY.”

The HA Ultra allows riders to keep up with faster-moving swell lines while still maintaining a smooth, controlled ride.

RESPONSIVE CARVING

While high-aspect wings are often associated with straight-line glide, modern designs like the HA Ultra also focus heavily on manoeuvrability.

The outline and foil sections have been tuned to provide responsive turning while maintaining lift throughout the carve. This allows riders to push harder into turns without the foil losing speed or stalling mid-carve.

In surf conditions, this translates into smooth rail-to-rail transitions and the ability to link multiple sections of a wave with minimal effort. The foil maintains flow throughout the turn, allowing riders to focus on drawing lines rather than constantly managing speed.

The wingtip design also helps improve stability during aggressive turns. Carefully shaped tips reduce the chances of ventilation when the foil approaches and breaches the surface, maintaining grip and control even during tight carves or when riding steep wave faces.

LIGHTWEIGHT CARBON CONSTRUCTION

Construction is a critical part of any high-performance foil, and the HA Ultra uses AFS's advanced carbon layup to keep the structure both stiff and lightweight.

High modulus carbon provides excellent rigidity, ensuring that energy from the rider is transferred directly into the foil without flex or delay. This stiffness improves responsiveness and gives the rider a more connected feel underfoot.



"THE HA ULTRA IS DESIGNED TO DELIVER PERFORMANCE WHERE IT MATTERS MOST, OUT ON THE WATER."

Weight reduction is another key factor. A lighter foil responds faster and feels more agile during pumping and manoeuvres. Over the course of a long session, this reduced weight also contributes to less rider fatigue, making it easier to maintain performance throughout the day.

The result is a wing that feels precise, reactive and efficient across a wide range of conditions.

A VERSATILE PERFORMANCE PLATFORM

The latest HA Ultra range moves beyond a single front wing and into a modular system, with sizes including 600, 750 and 900. Using AFS's updated connection platform, riders can pair the front wing with different stabilisers and the new Titanium fuselage to fine-tune performance.

The Titanium fuselage is designed to maximise strength and stiffness while keeping dimensions to a minimum, helping reduce drag and maintain a very direct feel under load. This adds another layer of precision to the system, particularly when riding at speed.

This flexibility allows the same setup to be adapted for a variety of riding styles. A smaller stabiliser might favour manoeuvrability, while a more stable configuration can increase control for downwind runs or high-speed wing foiling.

This modular approach gives riders the ability to evolve their setup as their riding progresses, without needing to replace their entire foil system.

MODERN FOILING PERFORMANCE

Foiling continues to evolve rapidly as riders explore new disciplines and push into more demanding environments. Equipment that once seemed cutting-edge quickly becomes outdated as designers refine shapes, materials and hydrodynamics.

The move toward high aspect foils has been one of the most significant steps in that evolution. By prioritising efficiency, glide and speed, these wings unlock new possibilities across every discipline of foiling.

At the same time, ultra-high aspect designs are now sitting alongside more moderate aspect foils, rather than replacing them entirely. Different shapes offer different riding experiences, and it increasingly comes down to matching the foil to the conditions and the rider's style.

The AFS HA Ultra Front Wing sits firmly within this new generation of foil design. With its high-aspect profile, lightweight carbon construction, modular system and focus on speed and glide, it offers a platform built for riders who want to explore the full potential of modern foiling.

Whether linking endless bumps on a downwind run, carving flowing lines on open ocean swell or simply enjoying the effortless glide that high aspect foils provide, the HA Ultra is designed to deliver performance where it matters most, out on the water.

A person is shown from the back, wearing a dark wetsuit and a cap, holding a surfboard with both hands. The surfboard has a dark base color with several light-colored diagonal stripes. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise sky with warm orange and yellow tones. The overall mood is adventurous and active.

For Issue 27 of Tonic Mag, the team put the latest ION Seek Select 5.5/4.5mm Hood Front Zip wetsuit through its paces in some freezing conditions. They were also testing the all-new Mystic Legacy Helmet and the Ride Engine Air Box Mini electric pump!

WORDS AND PHOTOS THE TONIC MAG TEST TEAM
PHOTO THIS PAGE BEN TAYLER

TRIED & TESTED

BRAND ARMSTRONG

MODEL UHA

SIZES 670, 870, 1270

YEAR 2026

"AS I HAVE COME TO EXPECT FROM ARMSTRONG, THE UHA HAS BLOWN ME AWAY ACROSS THE BOARD."



TO SEE MORE PHOTOS,
CLICK [HERE](#)

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE,
CLICK [HERE](#)



AT A GLANCE

For me, the Armstrong HA has been my go-to in surf foil and parawing for a good couple of years now. It has consistency written all over it, low stall speed, great glide and solid turning, the ideal package for my kind of riding. So you can imagine I was overjoyed to hear that Armstrong were releasing a totally new foil, the UHA or Ultra High Aspect.

Armstrong has an epic tagline to go with this new foil: "The evolution of efficiency, turn, connect & flow". So how have they done it? First, I will go into some detail on the new shape and then share how it feels on the water.

Armstrong settled on a 12.6 aspect ratio. They tested foils all the way up to an aspect of 17, but eventually settled on this as the optimum balance between turn and glide. The long, refined outline is built to reduce drag and increase lift-to-drag performance, allowing riders to travel further using less energy.

At the core of the UHA's performance is its construction. Foils endure immense torsional and bending loads, particularly at this aspect ratio, so Armstrong has built

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BRAND ION

MODEL SEEK SELECT 5.5/4.5 HOOD FRONT ZIP

YEAR 2026

"THE BUILD
QUALITY HERE IS
SECOND TO NONE.
YOU WON'T BE
DISAPPOINTED!"



TO SEE MORE PHOTOS,
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TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE,
CLICK [HERE](#)



AT A GLANCE

The Seek Select 5.5/4.5 Hood Front Zip sits right at the top of the ION wetsuit range, and it feels every bit the flagship model the moment you put it on.

This is a premium cold water suit. The recycled inner jersey adds some welcome eco credentials, while the generous graphene warmth lining runs through the legs, chest and back, targeting the areas that matter most when the temperature drops. The integrated hood is part of the package, making this a serious winter option for riders who refuse to sit out the cold months. This is a new suit for the 2026 season, and it replaces the older 6/4 that many readers will know I love.

That was one of the warmest suits on the market that still had plenty of flexibility. I'd been wearing it for years, so I was keen to see how this new version stacked up. It's slightly thinner, so it should be more flexible, but will the missing 0.5 mm lose any of the heat? It's great to see it's fully taped on the inside and the outside, helping to massively reduce any water ingress.

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BRAND MYSTIC

MODEL LEGACY

YEAR 2026

"STYLISH,
COMPACT AND
INSPIRES
CONFIDENCE
WITHOUT FEELING
BULKY"



TO SEE MORE PHOTOS,
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AT A GLANCE

The Legacy Helmet follows in the footsteps of the much-loved Impact Cap in the Mystic range, and builds on that foundation with one key upgrade, a hard shell exterior.

Where the Impact Cap focused on low-profile, soft-shell impact protection, the Legacy adds increased resistance to sharper objects such as fins and foils. In a world of big air and high-speed crashes, that extra layer of protection makes a lot of sense.

It remains sleek, minimal and stylish, with a shape designed to suit a wide range of head sizes. On first impression, it feels snug, secure and confidence-inspiring.

ON THE WATER

I was a big fan of the Impact Cap, so this had a lot to live up to. Thankfully, it delivers.

The low-profile design is what really sets it apart. When you are riding, you barely notice you have it on. During wipeouts, there is no heavy, top-loaded sensation and no neck strain. It genuinely feels closer to wearing a neoprene hood than a traditional helmet,

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BRAND RIDE ENGINE

MODEL AIR BOX MINI

YEAR 2026

"IT'S WORTH
EVERY PENNY AND
IS REALLY GOING
TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE TO
YOUR SESSIONS"



TO SEE MORE PHOTOS,
CLICK [HERE](#)

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE,
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AT A GLANCE

The Air Box Mini is Ride Engine's new offering in the electric pump game, and at just 900 grams, it is genuinely travel-friendly. It is around 35% smaller than the predecessor, and it takes up far less room in your bag than a standard manual pump and is light enough for it not to be a concern in a packed bag full of gear.

The Build quality is excellent. It feels solid, well finished and comes with a proper set of valve adapters that have worked flawlessly across every kite and wing I tested. With a maximum pressure of 20 PSI, it is not just for kites either; it will comfortably handle higher-pressure wings and make short work of your SUP.

Battery life is impressive. After inflating multiple kites and wings during testing, I was still sitting at around 50% charge. Even more impressive is that it is 20-30% faster on average than the previous version; the new brushless electric motors are much more efficient. This makes it far more practical than many electric pumps I have used in the past.

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MOVIE NIGHT

The Tonic Mag website is packed with the latest news and videos. These are the four most popular videos that have been viewed on the site as voted for by you with your thumbs-up likes over the last two months!

#1

BOOM VS HANDLES | REAL WATER TRUTH

Hitting the number one spot this issue is Damien LeRoy tackling one of wing foiling's biggest debates, boom or handles. After real time on the water, he breaks down the pros and cons of both setups, from hand placement and control to simplicity and travel.

655 votes



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2

AFTERGLOW | SUNSET FOILING FILM

Taking second place this issue is the beautiful cinematic edit Afterglow. Shot during ninety minutes of golden sunset light, it captures the magic of foiling at the end of the day, smooth glides, long shadows and that calm feeling when everything comes together.

630 votes



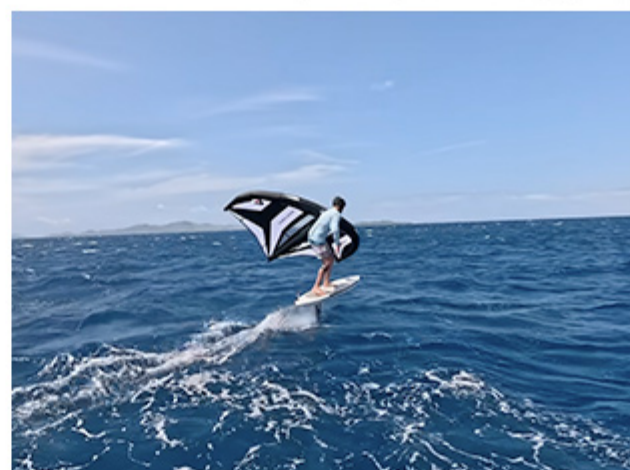
[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#3

ARMSTRONG UHA | ON WATER REVIEW

In third place this issue, we take a closer look at the Armstrong UHA foil range. Designed to push efficiency and glide even further, this on-water review explores pumping performance, linking waves and carving turns with these new ultra-high aspect wings.

372 votes



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#4

FOIL DRIVE FUSION | WORTH THE UPGRADE?

Rounding things out, this issue is a closer look at the Foil Drive Fusion and whether the upgrade is worth it. The video breaks down the latest features and improvements so you can decide if it makes sense for your setup.

300 votes



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

RIDER EMMA BRIDGE, GUY BRIDGE AND OSKAR JOHANSSON
PHOTO BEN TAYLER

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