Harty in 1991 looking very proud of his packages.

There was a time when a launching quota was a sign of success. The truth is now that you don’t need as many bulging quiver was a sign // There was a time when a masterclass technique Peter Hart helps you amass the bespoke quiver. just some of the questions facing you as you assess the rig market. HOW MANY? WHAT’S THE BEST GAP BETWEEN SIZES? CAMS OR NO CAMS? SHOULD YOU MIX THE BRANDS? These are ALL A QUIVER a 5.5 wave sail. It’s by finding that perfect match the design and volume of that board - in this case maximum efficiency, choose the rig that compliments - it’s only by sailing a certain combo incessantly that you get super-sensitive to the tuning and feel and can make it perform across that wide range. however, this is not a feature designed to persuade you to empty the contents of your van/trailer/ garage onto the scrap heap bar one board and rig. Even in the earliest days we soon discovered that one board and rig, although convenient, wasn’t enough, that you get super-sensitive to its tuning and feel. It’s only by sailing a certain combo incessantly that you can get them to perform in conditions way outside the recommended. And talking about getting boards and rigs to perform – it’s only by sailing a certain combo incessantly that you get super-sensitive to the tuning and feel and can make it perform across that wide range. Within a few years you’ve amassed an impressive hardware mountain. However, within that multi-generational collection there are double-ups and cross-overs and combo, which simply don’t work. Here are three stumps to square recently.

• One guy had a fairly ancient 4.2 and a 4.7 from different brands – when we laid them over each other they were exactly the same size.
• Rich found that his ten year old 6.5 got his old 25/sm, 120 litres free-ride board planing earlier than his brand new 7.0.
• Tom, a bit of speedster at heart, was keen to around his ‘straight-lining’ ways and picked up a second hand 87 litres Quad wave board. He loaded it up with a modern 5.5 one-litre free-ride sail and spent the whole session going sideways. The individual parts were fine – but not together. The 5.5 was producing the wrong sort of power.

So here we go …

The Measurement Question

This feature was prompted by a query from an experienced reader from the States who was struggling to get the right spread of sizes and asked some very pertinent questions. Having owned brand’s 7.3 was a LOT bigger than another’s 7.2, his first query was “do all the brands measure their sails the same way?” (Apparently not.) In the pre-CAD days I have to say that sail measurements were at best random and sometimes downright deceitful. There was one brand in particular who would mark their race and speed sails with a figure as much as 0.5 sq m less than the reality to make them seem incredibly powerful and efficient. “Look at Roddy. He just bought a 5.0 and everyone else is on 5.6! No he didn’t. His sail just had smaller numbers.

However, now that all sails are at least recorded, if not 100% designed, on computer, the exact areas should be available at the press of a button.

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THE MAST QUIVER

The choice of every quiver has to be personal and is informed by so many factors like sailor size, skill, habitat, sailing preferences etc. Abiding by the law that there’s a perfect sail size for every man and every wind scale, but not necessarily all at the same time. A sail of a different brand may also work on that mast but it’s there (these differences are before any of Ken Black’s interpretations of a constant curve for example). As Ken mentioned, setting and tuning the sail properly is key and the mast has the most influence of all.

DIFFERENT BRAND AND DIFFERENT ERA

A particular point when you are picking together windy quivers, in that they don’t mix well with other brands of sail but also ages. They assume the sail will get rethink, so when it comes to the small ones especially, they go and change. There was a dastardly last week in Ireland. A guy had a beautiful new 5.2 setting on a ten-mdium sized sail. Sailfully the wind cranked up to 55 knots for 2 days so he rolled out the 15 year old 4.0. He said the main but the 4.0 was designed around an old 5Dm. Isn’t is like a bag of smelly stuff? Sail sizes have lost their head over the years. Designs from different eras and brands rarely set well on the same mast. People’s failure to get comfortable in strong winds is so often due to the strength of the wind but a disastrously trimmed small sail.

DIFFERENT POWER

The actual area of a sail is only a guide as to the sail’s power. Top Irish based big wave sailor Rich Jones (more of his later), who spends much of his day actually upregulating different designs (he’s a sail report), is especially partial to why people would have a mix of brands.

“We sail in particular era are different these days and you develop your style around a particular feel. Some like a powerful sail (I do stuff) others like that ringer stimuli stuff. This is not a criticism of either sail for example, I really prefer sails across 6.0 - 6.5 power. There is a very interesting balance around the 15- knot block (force 5).

I have mentioned this before in last year’s feature about power but as increase in wind speed is not proportional to the extra pressure it produces. The pressure gain exponentially greater with every knot of wind to the square force 5, although only 6 knots greater than a force 4, actually creates twice as much pressure. So it is that around the top end of a force 5, pretty much everywhere. Although sailing sailors may still be handling on 8.5, you would be free-stylers steering their improver staff with a 4.7.

For most people, to plane under 15 knots, they need a 4.0 sail (7.0 plus) but as force 5 depends on many things - sailor weight, sail design and board design, I don’t think you could be straight onto a 6.5 or even a 6.0. (I’m assuming an 80kg pilot here.)

Bjorn Dunkerbeck’s retirement from slalom is down partly to the lowering of the PWK wind minimums to 8 knots which he says makes it impossible for a man of his size (95 kg) to be competitive. Now if he, with his massive experience, strength, skill as well as the best kit money can buy (including a 5.8 m2), can’t perform in that wind, what chance have of the rest of us? Be realistic about the wind you want to plane in.

TESTING TIMES – MARGINAL WIND QUIVERS

I did some experiments with regular sailors recently to run a few early planing myths.

On the beach lay a range of sails from 10.0 down to 7.5. The wind was 10-14 knots – a classic puffy seabreeze. The boards used were 125-135 m5 free-rider boards.

And here’s what we found.

- ABOVE 9.0, the extra area didn’t seem to have any bearing on early planing. But when planing the sails flew and looked like slalom in the unmistakable down wind downwind (where course races are won and lost) – the bigger the bigger (my big 14m man 14m) man sails planed earlier on the 7.8 m2 cam because they found it easier to handle and pump.

- On the 125 board, the 7.8 planed earlier than the 8.5 – proof of the importance of matching board to rig. The 8.5 over-powered it.

- In some hands, the 7.5 cam sail seemed to plane earlier than the multi-camalled all dancing slalom sail! What?

CAMBERED AND CAM-LESS – IN THE SAME QUIVER

I draw your attention to the short interviews with Ken Black of Tushingham Sails and Monty Spinster of Loft Sails elsewhere in the piece, who distill the differences between multi, twin and no cam sail.

The amount of cam, how solid the foil is, how much the sail ‘baggies’ our a massive bearing on the low end pressure (acceleration) and top end (spiral). Hence, if you’re amassing a big sail quiver, it’s utmost to mix up these designs. Furthermore, whether a specific design makes you plane earlier and what size you need depends also what type of sailor you are. A good while back the PCV poll kicked in, I was present while Bobby Nash was defending the qual of two sail styles ranges to a collection of sailors. “This,” he said pointing to a full celled 3 cam design, “is for brain dead sailors.

But this,” he said pointing to a soft cam-less design, “is for active sailors.”

I believe those who like to hook in the car park, get on, sit down, feel power and go. The inference was that you’re not going to work the sail – it had to do all the work. And because of that you needed to rig big.

MASTERNOTE1

14-18 knots, 120 Freestyle windfoil (the one)

25-30 knots, 105 Freestyle twirlyboard

15-18 knots, 105 Freestyle windfoil

10-12 knots, 95 Freestyle twirlyboard

9-12 knots, 85 Freestyle twirlyboard

9-15 knots, 70 Freestyle windfoil

6-9 knots, 4.7 Freestyle windfoil

5-6 knots, 4.2 Freestyle windfoil

5-3 knots, 4.5 Freestyle windfoil

2.8 knots, 7.5 Freestyle windfoil

1-2 knots, 8.5 Freestyle windfoil

A lot of this is subjective but that’s my impression of the area when you are amassing a full range, covering a massive range. 5.7 is a versatile board and with a 5.7 you can handle with a 4.7. There aren’t many winds that are to be used on a different board and different range (if you are lucky to have more than one). For example, I reckon a 4.5 Ezzy creates as much power as a 5.0 Gaastra Manic. So if you had both those sails in your example, I would have a mix of brands.

The way wind pressure works, you can spend a fortune calibrating your sails but it only works if you are realistic about the wind you want to plane in.

THE PERCENTAGE DROP

I’m not a Math’s whizz but I can state with some elements to factor in. Excuse me if I talk around the subject but that’s only way I know how.

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THE BLACK VIEW
Ken Black of Tushingham, has been designing windsurf sails for ever. His knowledge is encyclopaedic – a very good man to quiz on quiver matters. Which designs will get the average sailor planing earlier. Cams or no cams? “Cams in theory give better bottom end as they don’t depend on the wind to create the aerodynamic shape. However, this is not always the case as many multi-cam sail ranges are designed exclusively for top end speed and handling.” Is there a point at which big no-cam sails stop being efficient? “Bigger rotational (no cam) sails tend to need proportionately more wind to get the sail into a good aerodynamic shape. Our experience is that 7.5 is the tipping point. The next size up is significantly more efficient with two cams giving earlier planing and more stability.”

MONTY SPINDLER
Monty, owner of LOFT SAILS has also been in the game right from the beginning both as competitor and a designer. For a long time he was the brain behind ART sails (and invented the ‘cutaway’). No one has more experience or is more hands on. Which designs offer earliest planing? “In my view no-cam designs can be earlier to plane than cammed designs... but it depends on the trim! Trimmed well for the low end (soft), a no-cam slalom design can exhibit much larger lungs than a cammed design that may be over-trimmed (firm trim). No cam designs have a certain elasticity that may allow you to pump onto the plane before some cammed designs.”

ROB JONES – THE HIGH WIND SPECIALIST
Rob Jones, has lived on the shores of Brandon bay in Kerry Ireland for most of his adult life and has enjoyed much competition success in waves notably on home shores - but his considerable reputation (apart from being an ace sail repairer) is primarily earned from going out in winds that even some of the best brand as ‘unsailable’. At 68kg, he’s not huge but neither is a midget but he still regularly uses a 2.5 to tame the crazy storms that batter SW Ireland notably in winter. Although most in the slalom world, it’s nevertheless interesting to note the specialist’s view on sail selection, which is minimalist to say the least. “I don’t like having loads of kit – I have 0.6 gaps mostly. 5.1, 4.6, 3.9, 3.2, 2.5 and 1.9. I have the 5.1 for contest. Sometimes I use all. Mostly I have to help me upwind but most of the time 4.5 is my biggest. Use all size as a way to test myself! For example at Gowlane (beach break with gusty side-off wind) I’d use the 5.1 on marginal days - but it was pretty easy. I’d catch anything I wanted – so I’d drop board size and use the 4.5 to really make myself work.” Now what about this 2.5? “My mates call it my kiddy rig! I made it myself. I got it to set on a 290 cut down mast and a 130 boom. It takes a lot of work to get it right – but the key, even in 50 knots of wind, is to make it powerful – that’s true of all small sails. Don’t pull the crap out of them or they just don’t work.” What tips do you have for people selecting a quiver? “Invest in the sail (and board) you most want to use, then you’ll use it and make it work. Having said that, I have one important tip... colour! When I was a young dude keen to impress, I always went for the 4.5 because... wait for it... it was red and matched my board. So now I make sure all my sails are the same colour so I make a more sensible size choice!” On the subject of making things work and the tune-ability of sails, one year he did the whole Irish slalom circuit with an 84 slalom board, 2 fins and a 6.2 race rig in winds from 12-35 knots - and he won!
With the cam-less sail, he says, you have to work. You need to sheet in hard to make the sail form its foil. It bags our more, creating potentially more power at the expense of stability. But it’s tighter in the hands, easier to depower and you can potentially get away with a smaller sail.

If you class yourself as a brain dead sailor (or modern equivalent), you benefit from cams because you need to be powered up. But I assert right now that not everyone who uses cammed sails is brain dead. That’s not a very good step in size of wave sail as it allows for gusty winds. Modern sails have a huge range, but so do days on the water. A 4.7 day will at times be light for 5.3 and strong for 4.2. Bigger gaps would work well if the wind was perfect, but it’s rarely so! For the board I weigh roughly 86kg, and always say a wave board (leverage around your weight is the best one board option. 5.3 is normally the first sail that really feels like a wave sail, and at the upper end, I can hold a 4.2 down in a lot of wind. And a 3.7 sail to that quiver and you are covered for everything. I would also stress it’s really important to have the same sails through the whole range. It doesn’t matter so much what they are (although best if they are RRD), but having a consistent feel makes switching up and down simple. When time on the water is limited, you don’t want to have to spend an inordinate amount of time getting used to your gear. When travelling I change my quiver according to conditions and to not get stung too hard at check in. South Africa (for example) is generally windy, so I take 5.0/4.5/3.7, plus a smaller board with an 82/74L combo. Maui is fairly evenly around the 5.0 range, so my standard Maui quiver is 5.3/4.7/4.2. I cover the normal wind with close sizing and have the 4.2 as a storm sail. Look at what you use the most and have closer sizing in this range. I also have my light wind sail set up that I leave in the UK. It lives at my parent’s house, so when I am home there is a little breeze I can get out. It’s based around a 114 X-fire slalom board, which feels very much like a wave sail.

The 114 takes an 8.6 and with some pumping I think I can plane in hardly anything. For sure around a race course a larger board would be beneficial to keep planing and drive upright, but for cruising up and down the coast or giving for a blast, the 114/86 sail is perfect. With an additional 7.8 or even 7.0 you can cover pretty much everything until it’s time to get on the wave board with a 5.3.

Our pro slalom sailors should be applauded for their extraordinary physicality, skill and daring – as well as for bringing such incredible kit onto the open market. But they’re using their sails so completely on the edge of control that copycat sailing is not for the recreational sailor.

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