

Rider: Malin Amle
Photo: Mland Pictures

kiteista Presents HOW HIGH ARE YOU?

With kiting, we can do a lot of things that other sports do: we can catch a wave on a surfboard, sail with a hydrofoil, hit sliders and kickers wakestyle, but there is one thing that (literally) puts us head and shoulders above all other sports, and that is the ability to jump very high. Over waves, boats and possibly the cable park and powered only by the wind. With that in mind, we were astounded to see

that Nick Jacobsen had jumped 26.7 meters. That is two meters higher than the previous record of 24.8m, held by Aaron Hadlow. Although there may have been higher jumps that have been spoken of in bars and around camp fires, with the emergence of WOO and PIQ we now have bonafide technical proof which enables us to differentiate between tall tales and reality. So, let's look at some boost philosophy...

KITE CONTROL

Jumping high requires supreme kite control. You only need to look at the leaders on the WOO ladder to see that the top guys are all riders who have a lot of talent in other areas such as freestyle and surf, but they share one thing in common: they are 100% connected to their kites and most of them have been in the game since a time when the understanding of your kite was not a luxury, but a necessity.

We have it very easy these days: send any kite to 12 with a bit of speed and pull the bar and you will likely get yanked off the water into the air, but do it slowly without yanking the bar in and you can carry on about your business as usual as you have access to acres of depower and your kites are relatively safe.

Rider: Bibiana Magaji

Go back in time 15 years and that was not the case. If the kite went up, so did you... You only have to look at some crash footage from some of the early pioneers in Maui to know that there was a time when no one had quite figured it out, and they were just working it out between themselves through collective trial and error.

Following immediately on from those pioneers is a generation who got into kiting because it was an extreme sport and they wanted a challenge that came with the reward of soaring high in the air. There were still very few kite schools, and even if you did take some lessons, you inevitably finished on the water with your mates, figuring it out as you went along. To make it in this game you had to have supreme kite control. Which you never really lose. So if you see these guys kite you will appreciate their awareness and complete control. It's a pleasure to watch.



Rider: Bibiana Magaji
Photo: Alexandru Baranescu

MOVING FORWARD, BUT NOT UP

Skip forward a few years and we have experienced a paradigm shift in what is considered by the media and most of the public to be a top class kiter. Whereas our heroes used to be soaring high above us, they are now spinning through the air in moves we find it hard to even comprehend, let alone aspire to emulate. For those who want to do 'tricks' on a twin tip and win kudos and praise from those on the beach, the accepted direction is firmly routed in new school freestyle.

Now don't get us wrong here, we love freestyle and powered unhooked moves as much as the next person, but we do sometimes feel that the road to kiting greatness through individual style and expression seems to have been replaced with a pre-requisite trick list of handle-pass moves. The more you can perform, the higher your perceived level as a kiter becomes. This has two negative effects on the individual. Firstly, it can lead to frustration and a negative sense of worth (especially amongst the girls for whom the challenge of passing the bar during a powered move appears tantalizing close at all times, yet often just out of reach). And secondly, this fast track route young riders take to freestyle moves means bypassing the fundamental kite control lessons that come with being hooked in and learning to use your kite to get you up in the air, keep you there, then down to earth without a bang. Plus: boosting is supreme fun!

Rider: Malin Amle
Photo: Mland Pictures



EMBRACE THE LOOP

A lot of kites fear the loop, as it is seen as an extreme freestyle maneuver to be attempted by only the most fearless and experienced of kites. However, performing a powered kite loop and looping your kite are not the same thing at all...

For instance, the late loop on the edge of the window (or 'safety loop' as it is sometimes called) is a fundamental part of jumping very high and is used to ensure the final part of your landing is both smooth and contains enough forward momentum to ride away like a boss and not tea bag into the water.

Likewise, the download transition can be stylish and used as part of a trick, but it is also one of the fastest and safest ways to change direction very quickly. But time and time again on the water we see riders terrified of the looping movement of the kite and with no sense of how it can be used and controlled.

This is no fault of the rider, it is a side effect of kite school culture. Most people who take a course want to get up and riding as soon as possible, and the kite schools want happy customers and prefer to keep their equipment and clients in one piece. So there is little interest in letting someone kite-loop-body-drag themselves downwind just because it is both very fun and installs knowledge and control of the fundamentals of the loop.

Photo: PIQ with North.
Now you know how
high you go

WHERE DID THE SKILLS GO

Take a moment to sit on the beach at any local kite spot (the lagoons of Cumbuco at this time of year being an exception) and you will notice that the water is mainly populated by Average Joe kites, happily cruising up and down and flinging themselves around into snappy kite supported back-rolls and yanking in the bar to jump a few meters up in the air. Don't get us wrong, these people are smiling from ear to ear and think the sensation is awesome and that kiteboarding is the best thing since sliced bread, and we are not trying to take away that satisfaction. What we would like to see, though, is their faces as they appreciate the combination of all of the aspects of a good jump and then get propelled twice as high as they have been before, and then they get to see what jumping is really all about.

Of course there will always be those who just get it, maybe not in the first few attempts, but soon enough they are starting to break the 5m barrier. To get to the 10m barrier, however, takes some persistence and an analytical mind. But when you get there, you will no longer have to ask people if they saw your jump: they will tell you.

DO WE HAVE A POINT?

Actually we have two, whilst this started out as a piece designed to motivate you to go out there and develop core kite skills in order to improve your riding we have strayed into the realms of the importance of 'individual style'. There are two riders we would advise you to go and check out on YouTube after reading this: The first is Dimitri Maramenides, and the second is Brandon Scheid. Each from a very different generation of kiteboarders but both with one thing in common: They are extremely versatile, talented riders and this can be seen instantly through their unique styles of riding.

Many of our sister boardsports (such as skateboarding and wakeboarding) have riders who have pushed the sport through their individual style and the ability to seek out and find new tricks and ways of riding that others before them have not, and it would be a great shame not to see kiteboarding go down the same road.