

Kitesurf



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Stripped! the leading ladies of kiting bare all!

Competition and riding plans for this year, the difference between men and women kitesurfers, and where these girls' bikinis have ended up...2003 World Champions Cindy Mosey (1st), Ingrid Kollbichler (2nd), Petra Goeschl (3rd) and fourteen other women from the PKRA World Tour share some girl talk with Flo Ducalet. And yes, there was some nudity!!! So first up, before Flo asks the questions, here's a brief introduction to each girl - and this lot reads like your dream page of personal ads! Girls...and they kitesurf!

INTRODUCTIONS

Kristin Boese (26) Germany. Kristin is spending this winter in Maui, and she's looking to ride every wave she can get while she's there. On hand is her boyfriend, bringing her tea and snacks when she's off the water. So, if asked, would she marry tomorrow? Apparently if it was the man of her dreams, she'd say "why not the day after tomorrow?" I suspect that's because she'd check out the wave forecast for the next day before she answered!

Claire Bunton (34) Guildford, England. Claire's home spot is LA. That's Littlehampton, not Los Angeles. Though as most people know, she does get to her fair share of the far flung locations, in her career flying 747-400s. She's had a great time competing over the last 18 months but now she's planning to kitesurf just for fun, and hoping to travel a lot to new places with husband Kev. Claire will be the girl to ask this year about hot new kitesurf locations.

Laurel Eastman (26) from the Californian mountainside but now living in Cabarete, Dominican Republic. Laurel's been kitesurfing for a while, having first started in 2000, in New Zealand. She's pretty happy with life at the moment. As well as getting out on the water, she's running her school - Laurel Eastman Kiteboarding - in Cabarete. "It's the best feeling, doing what you love for a living."

Carol Freitas (22) Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Carol's been kitesurfing for 3 years, starting with a course that was a present for her 19th birthday. As well as her action on the water, she's also involved with GUST - the first and only Brazilian kitesurf and windsurf magazine. Although the website is in Spanish, you can check out some great pictures of Carol and others on www.gust.com.br

Julie Prochaska Gilbert (early 30s) from landlocked Idaho, currently living in Maui. From a windsurf and wave-sailing background, Julie got into kitesurfing when the sport barely existed. Nowadays she kitesurfs in Maui for the regular wind and less regular but incredible waves; Waddell Creek, California for the wind and wave combination, and the Gorge - because it's still home. Kitesurfing is "hands down the most dynamic sport I've ever done."

Petra Goeschl (28) from Germany, but now summers in Holland and spends winters in South Africa. Petra's been kitesurfing for a while now. She got into it from a windsurfing background and with the similarities found it quite easy to get started. She highlights the quick progression as one of the best things about kitesurfing compared to other sports. She's certainly doing OK, coming third in last year's PKRA World Tour.

Michelle Glazman (19) lives in Oahu, Hawaii. Originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, Michelle first got hooked on kitesurfing watching her brothers and cousins in Punta del Este, Uruguay. One of those cousins by the way is Martin Vari. You might have heard of him. A lot to live up to - but this girl has the drive to do it... Deserted somewhere with no wind, what would she do? Take the first plane somewhere that did have wind, of course!

CJ Jones Australia. Ceridwen (CJ) has been kitesurfing for two years and runs Kitesurf Gold Coast, Australia's largest kitesurf school. For anyone heading out to Oz, bear in mind that CJ's perfect birthday present would be a "full body massage by a gorgeous guy". Also bear in mind she runs

that school with her boyfriend. Still, we did find out that he was understanding about the lost bikini...

Ingrid Kollbichler (33) Austria. Ingrid is unusual in that she doesn't live by the sea - preferring to stay by the lake in her home town of Vienna. This allows her to spend time with her family, and do other things to keep life interesting - not kitesurfing so much that she loses her love of it. For Ingrid, "the best place to go kiting is always the place where you can be with your friends". The formula works - Ingrid was second placed in last year's PKRA World Tour.

Daphnée Laliberté (21) is French Canadian, living in Cabarete, Dominican Republic. Coming from Canada which can get pretty cold, it's maybe no surprise that Daphnée came from a snowkiting background. She seems happy enough to swap the snow for the warm waters of the Caribbean though, kiting nearly every day "without a wetsuit!". She's delayed her university entrance to concentrate on kitesurfing, and wants to travel and go to as many events as possible.

Cindy Mosey (29) New Zealand. Winner of the 2003 PKRA World Tour - no introduction needed! When she's not competing, Cindy lives with boyfriend Andy on their boat, the "Mosey Along", moseying along in the South Pacific. Her words of wisdom are to "do what you are passionate about." Certainly seems to be working for her!

Fabienne d'Ortoli (Age? The one you want!) Origins are Corsican and Russian. Fab is full of energy, can't stay anywhere for too long, loves change, loves meeting new people. Passion, dreams and friends are really important to this girl. Her view of the perfect man? One who lives for his passion, follows his dreams - which brings something to his looks she can't resist! She also describes herself as a bit of a dinosaur though - no fast food - "nothing is better than real good home cooking!"

Angela Peral (18) Tarifa, Spain. Angela's the youngest of this group. She windsurfs as well as kitesurfs, so getting to every stop on both those World Tours can be difficult. In between the events she can get to, she's training hard all year round with the Spanish team in Tarifa.

Sheldon Plentovich (29) North Carolina. She might admit here to being 'Queen of the Airheads' after what can only be described as a very blonde car park experience, but don't be fooled. Sheldon not only has the brains to work toward a PhD (researching conservation of biodiversity), she also had the good sense to choose as her research sites Oahu's offshore islets. "I could kite to them in a pinch."

Gabi Steindl (27) Austria. Proving that a cold and landlocked country can't stop you, Gabi first read about kitesurfing in this magazine, and soon quit the "serious job". Training in Morocco and Venezuela followed, along with an unusual kitesurfing injury of a near toe amputation from gangrene - "would have been hard to stay in a footstrap?" - and a lot of caipirinhas! As well as her competition plans, Gabi has business plans too - starting with 2 kite centres in Egypt this year. Look out for the "Gabinha" on the bar's cocktail menu!

Fiona Wedenig (24) Switzerland, but mostly living in Tarifa, Spain. Despite spending a year in Tarifa, Fiona wasn't initially interested in kitesurfing - she was working with horses who weren't too keen on the kites either. However, she's another girl for whom a trip to Uruguay got her hooked, and since returning to Tarifa she has made room for both horse-riding

and kitesurfing in her life. **Andriya Wharry** ("A bit of a grandmother of the women's circuit.") Cornwall, England. Like the rest of us here in the chilly UK, Dreya says that she's waiting for Global Warming! While she waits, she runs Extreme Academy -teaching kitesurfing at Watergate Bay near Newquay. Having herself started learning 4 years with no magazines, no schools - "only mistakes" - to teach her, she says there's no excuse for anyone now...

ON THE WATER

So what are your plans for 2004 - competition or the free ride road?

Well, the good news is you'll be seeing nearly all the girls in comps this year, and they've got big plans!

Gabi "I definitely want to compete on the PKRA tour 2004... I strive to continuously improve my ranking (currently 7th) with the aim of becoming World Champion over the next few years." **Dreya** "Definitely competitions - I love it, I love the girls, the travel and seeing the new moves first, and the urge it gives me to learn new stuff!"

Of course, having to travel to the comps can be a problem - **CJ** is based in Australia "I don't do that many events, just a few a year and most of the time I'm at my home spot in South East Queensland, Australia. I hope to get another sponsor so I can do more events this year. We will see!" For **Daphnée** too, getting sponsors and getting experience will be a focus for this year. "I hope to get more sponsorship so I can finally be part of more competitions and kite trips. It's difficult to perform well at competitions when you can only do 2 or 3 competitions a year. I know that I need to get some more experience competition-wise but hopefully I will get all the experience I need soon!"

A lot of the girls talked about the friendly side of competing too - **Carol** "2003 was my first year competing in the World Tour, so I knew that it was going to be hard to compete against the best girls in the world. But it was a wonderful experience, I learnt a lot and it was really nice to know the girls and the guys that compete in the tour, it's like a big family and I want to be part of it!! In 2004 I will do everything to make sure I will be at every event of the PKRA!" Which just goes to show that it's not all just about competing, but about having fun - and that includes making time for free riding too. **Fab** is looking forward to the competitions, "but also some good road trips with friends". **Cindy** and **Sheldon** both think it'll be a mix of competition and free-riding - and **Laurel** says "I think it's important to balance these two, they are both fun in different ways." Getting that balance isn't always easy - Ingrid "I would love to do more free-riding, but to live from kitesurfing I have to do the World tour. But it's not so bad and the good thing about contests is, you get better and keep on trying."

Trying to get that balance right is something that is important to all of the girls: **Fiona** "The free ride road is very tempting and more my thing, I guess. But I want to keep up the PKRA tour just for the fun of it. It's a good way of keeping up with the level when you are kiting together with the other girls. So in 2004 I plan to do more free riding trips besides the PKRA."



**"Kitesurfing brings pleasure at the beginning -
as soon as you have the kite in the air and play with it! *Fab*"**



do the wave contests, because that's where my passion is... wave kiting. We'll see...I haven't made any definite plans yet."

Kristin "I am going to compete next year again and I will try to have as much time for free riding as possible. Let's see what the sport itself is doing and where it goes."

Petra "Try to free-ride, have fun and do some comps, and meet all the girls." Seems like there'll be a lot of girls to look out for at the comps next year, and all having a great time – but maybe some will be a little envious of **Claire**, and her decision for this year – "no more comps for me...purely free-riding with maximum SF (smile factor). Lots of chilled travelling with Kev, tracking down new spots."

What's the biggest wave you've ever taken and how big would you go for?

We know that **Julie** wants to do the wave contests this year, so let's start with her. "You know, I haven't ever really measured the waves I've been in...I've just concentrated on kiting them and having the time of my life. I've dropped into a number of huge ones at Lanes, Kite Beach, and Waddell Creek, and I plan to continue to keep getting into bigger and bigger waves. I don't like to talk wave size, because everyone measures differently. Wave kiting is absolutely where it's at for me. I love it, I'm passionate about it, and it's where I want to continue to excel, so I'll be looking to find great waves for kiting all around the world". Seems like a lot of the girls think size isn't everything!

Ingrid "I don't measure when I am riding, kiting is all about spirit and fun, that's what counts for me."

Sheldon "Kiting on Oahu pushes every kiter's wave riding limits. I don't think about how big it is as much as I think about the conditions as a whole...is the reef covered? Is the wind steady or unpredictable? Is it side-on or side-off? I'm much more willing to push size limits in situations where other variables are favourable."

Daphnée "I enjoy the waves in Cabarete, but we don't often get really big scary waves. The waves here are just good for me at the moment. I don't think about the biggest wave that I want to ride, but more about the longest one!" But however you measure them, seems like all the girls are looking for those waves, and a lot of them are looking in Hawaii: **Laurel** "I was out in Maui last autumn, at Spreks, in some waves that for sure I should never have been out in! They were huge! I can fully imagine myself kiting huge waves, one day..."

Fab "It's always hard to say the biggest you took, because it's quite subjective...you always think it was much bigger than it really was!!! I think the feeling you have on the wave is much more important than the size. You can ride a perfect small one, and suck on a big one. So, the biggest, I don't know, perhaps the one in Morocco, it was quite high and we looked very small on the video a friend took!!! And one day in October at Lanes, Maui, Hawaii was also quite big. The biggest I would ride depends on how strong the wind is, but also the temperature of the water. It's much harder when it's cold, and more stressful...but I think it could be 6-7 metres..."

Kristin "The biggest one I have ever seen was no bigger than 1.5 metres but I hope to see some much bigger ones while I am staying in Maui over the winter. And then I will ride every one I can get!"

Fiona "That's hard to tell, when you're in front of the wave, it always looks f*#\$@ huge and scary, but from the beach it looks like a small wave... I guess, the biggest waves I ever rode were on the East Coast in OZ and in Mokuleia this fall. This winter, I'll be spending some time in Perth, so I hope I can try some bigger waves."

It doesn't always look like a small wave to those on the beach though – ask **Michelle's** mum "When I moved to Hawaii, the first time I went riding at Mokuleia Beach, all the pros were riding 10ft waves. I went riding on the inside on flat water, until my cousin Martin Vari told me to follow him. I ended riding on huge waves, it was pretty sick. My mother was filming and she didn't stop yelling to come back!" But don't worry you don't have to go all the way to Hawaii for waves – we have them here in the UK too!

Dreya "Watergate Bay has seen some big days and is pretty heavy when there's a gale and a big swell, as well as South Africa last winter. I'm confident in big waves but I still can't get riding a wave well with a kite. I think I try to ride

like I'll be doing mostly free riding. I still want to do the wave contests, because that's where my passion is... wave kiting. We'll see...I haven't made any definite plans yet."

According to **CJ**, wave-riding definitely gets the adrenaline going – "Although I didn't come from a surf background I love riding in the surf, it is one of my biggest challenges in kitesurfing. The largest wave to date is not so big, around 6m. The bigger the better, waves really get your adrenaline pumping." Maybe it's down to that adrenaline rush, and added danger – but for some reason, talking waves seemed to make people think Jaws...

Carol "The biggest wave I ever took was in Rio de Janeiro Barra da Tijuca Beach, the sea was very mixed after a storm. The series of the biggest waves measured about 2 metres, but I know it's not that much but for me it's enough! The biggest wave I would ever think of riding are the ones in Jaws, but only in my dreams - I don't think I have that much courage!!"

Petra "Biggest wave, I don't remember. Sometimes we have quite big waves in South Africa. If I was a port tack...that would be quite scary!" Scary or not, every one wants to ride 'em – **Claire** "We don't get waves at L.A. (Littlehampton) - so my wave-riding isn't that good - yet I'm just starting to get into waves now on my travels - now there is no more 'training' for comps. I'm really looking forward to gently building up my wave experience." **Gabi** "Not quite sure how big was the biggest...guess, perhaps some 4 or 5 metres. I would loooooove to ride really big waves and definitely plan on improving my skills in really big waves (unfortunately I haven't been to many destinations yet where I get the opportunity to do so...). I would like to become known as a big ass huge-wave riding woman..."

You'll see most of the girls back on the comp circuit next year, and you can see how driven they are with the excitement for big waves. But how many of them hope they can make a career in kitesurfing?

It's certainly the aim for most. As **Angela** says "yes of course, and it's certainly one of the better careers in life!" **Julie** agrees – and it's easy to see why "it is definitely my career...absolutely...and I am super stoked about it. I wouldn't trade this career for any other one, that's for sure. Not a day goes by that I don't pinch myself and think about how fortunate I am to have companies like Red Bull, Cabrinha, Billabong, etc. supporting me. It's rad! My kitesurfing career has been a dream come true...the beach is my office, I travel around the world kitesurfing, meeting new people, and I make a living doing it. I still have my outside interests, like reading, writing articles, photography, and other sports to keep life balanced, but luckily I can call kitesurfing a career. I wouldn't have it any other way."

Most of the girls are very definite about wanting kitesurfing to be a career. But many recognise that with the nature of any sport, the competitive side of their career may have a limited lifespan. They are realistic – **Dreya** "I definitely love it but I also know that it's not gonna last forever." So several are looking at other ways to enjoy a kitesurf related career.

CJ "Yes! My partner and I own Kitesurf Gold Coast, which is a School in Queensland, Australia. The school opened in 1999 and is currently Australia's largest school which operates 7 days a week all year round."

Laurel "For sure, especially now that I have my school. It's the best feeling, doing what you love for a living."

And **Fiona** sees her time kitesurfing as a springboard to another career later – "At the moment kitesurfing fills my life, so I would say it is kind of my career but in the long term, I see my time as a team rider as an experience for a later job, especially within the sport. By being a professional kiteboarder there are many things you can learn as you are constantly travelling, meeting different people and different cultures, organising your trips, practicing languages, marketing yourself, etc."

Daphnée too is considering other options, "Not yet...for the moment it's more a passion! And it's fine with me this way...at this time! I don't want to limit myself to one thing. I still think about what I'm going to study later...but we never know what will happen, maybe in 10 years I will still be working in the kite industry!"

According to **Sheldon** kitesurfing isn't her career but "a really bad habit I picked up several years ago and can't seem to stop". Sheldon says her career "is in the field of



conservation biology. I want to continue doing research on questions that are pertinent to the conservation of biodiversity and eventually teach at a university". Looks like it's a bad habit she's planning to keep "I'm working on my PhD in Zoology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Careful planning has made my research interests coincide with my kitesurfing habit. My research sites are windward of Oahu's offshore islets, just out from my house in Kailua. I could kite to them in a pinch."

Other riders have managed to make their alternative career work alongside their passion for kitesurfing. **Claire** says it's definitely not a career for her, "it's just for fun. I had a fantastic 18 months doing two of the best jobs in the world...the world tour, pro kitesurfer thing and being a professional pilot, but it couldn't last forever, time and energy wise. I'm passionate about kiting, but I'm more passionate about flying planes - I'm very lucky to be able to do both, so now it's back to flying 747-400's as my number one career." Whether following a career in kitesurfing, or making time for their passion alongside another career, everyone would agree with **Ingrid** and the need for flexibility "I worked for 10 years as a teacher, I took a break and did some competitions and I was successful and still am. Trying something new every time, not standing still, moving on and living my dream!"

Compelling this year, conquering those waves, forging a career - it's not all serious stuff! Any embarrassing kitesurfing moments? Or non kitesurfing?

Dreya's reaction is fairly typical of the group, "What re-live it again!!!!????????? And tell thousands of people???? No way!" Sounds like she has had her share of embarrassing moments! Kite-related stories first, starting with **Carol**. "I slept for 5 days (including my birthday) in Amsterdam airport after the Fuerteventura PKRA event. All the flights to go back to Brazil were over booked and there was no way to get home, but that's not the worst part. I was on standby and couldn't make the flight, but my bag with my clothes made it!! So imagine, no clothes, no money, a birthday party waiting for me in Brazil... In the end everybody in the airport knew about me and my sad history and every woman that worked for the airline company wanted to take care of me! I will never forget all this!" At times of embarrassment, it might be best to follow **Gabi's** advice: "To be quite honest... I can't recall a moment... I'm hardly ever embarrassed... I stand up to the things I do and definitely always find a way to talk myself out of 'tricky' situations... PLUS: I can laugh about myself !! That definitely helps..." Would definitely help when like **Gabi** you're prone to kiting with one naked bouncing breast... (details later on...) And if all else fails, smile for the camera like **Fiona** "On my last day on Oahu this fall, I wanted to do one last handle pass before packing up and going to the airport, but it all went wrong and I got dragged towards a house, so in the end I let go of the kite with the result that the (brand new) kite ended up on the roof! I had to go and ask the owners of the house for a ladder and climb up the roof to get it down again whilst certain persons were standing there laughing and taking photos instead of helping me..."

So why is there always a camera about when you're about to make an idiot of yourself, **Julie**? "Do I really have to re-live the moments? I think my brain has selectively fogged them in my memory. It would probably have to be the time I was dragged through the seaweed at Kite Beach after a faster launch than I expected. I went under the surface of the water and came up looking like the monster from the deep, with a seaweed wig, a seaweed covered bar, seaweed coming out of the top of my swimsuit, seaweed in my shorts, seaweed wrapped around my bindings, etc. etc. No surprise that there were photographers at the beach, so I am sure a photograph will surface someday when I least expect it. Ugh! Figures that day the beach was packed! Talk about embarrassing. It's not too easy to get released from that much seaweed when you're in the water with a powered up kite in your hands."

With any luck there were no photographers to witness **Laurel's** embarrassment, at "being out of control with a huge kite, getting dragged downwind and having to be rescued by the jet ski...my bikini bottoms were around my ankles and I was flying over the water!"

And it seems there's plenty of scope for embarrassment off the water too...For **Daphnée**, it was "meeting the parents of my boyfriend in the pool, naked". Not sure if that was **Daphnée** and her boyfriend naked, or the parents. The latter might have been even more embarrassing!

Worst has got to be **Sheldon** though - "Losing my truck in off-campus parking at University of Hawaii for 2 WEEKS! I reported it stolen and was about to get an insurance cheque when my friend found it. Unfortunately I had just won the Red Bull "Queen" of the Air on Maui and got a new nickname... Queen of the Airheads."

GIRLS AND BOYS

Do you believe in girl power?

An emphatic 'yes!' from **Michelle**, **Angela**, **Kristin** and **Sheldon** - who says "if you've ever hung out with Rebecca Wolthers and Jody Taliaferro you would not doubt the existence of girl power." **Laurel** agrees "totally. And this year, working with the Women's Sports Foundation (www.womenssportsfoundation.com) has really inspired me and motivated me to get more girls involved in kitesurfing and sports in general." There's some discussion though about what 'girl power' really means though... **Petra** "Girl power sounds a bit rough. It is excellent that the sport is growing and more and more girls are on the water! Maybe we don't have so much power, and it will take really long time to reach the guys level, but most important thing is that we have fun and enjoy ourselves on the water!!"

Fiona too emphasises that girl power is making the most of what we girls have - not setting ourselves against the men. "I believe that most of the women are intelligent, capable and charming living beings, if that is what you mean...I guess this world is made for males and females to work together and not against each other, and the words 'girl power' seem to me a bit too feministic..." Working together, both with each other and with the men takes some work. **Gabi** "I wish I could say 'yes' but I'm not quite sure (also I'm not 100% sure about the meaning of the expression). Unfortunately in my opinion girls find it hard to bond...they're usually way too concerned with jealousy, bitchiness, etc. That's why I prefer to hang out with guys..."

Fab agrees that there can be some clashes, but thinks that the girl spirit is definitely there - "I don't kite a lot with girls...but I think this girl spirit is really there, because we bring what a lot of people were looking for in windsurfing. Kitesurfing is more accessible, more girls do it, and a kind of spirit of helping each other is there. But also, as always with girls, there are sometimes clashes!! I think that the fact we bring some female aspects is really important and give us something in bonus!"

Ingrid and **Cindy** both touch on this collaborative spirit that adds an extra dimension to the power of women in kitesurfing. **Cindy** "I think women have many different qualities to offer people and the world, especially when they get together and work together." **Ingrid** "It's good when women hold together and fight for something. I am sure we can be very strong we just have to recognise our talents and not compare our power with the guys."

Not trying to make a direct competitive comparison makes sense to many of the girls. **Claire** "No...I don't particularly believe in girl power. Just all folk being treated as equals with respect...let's just all get on with it."

CJ "I don't believe men and women were created equal. We have different strengths and weaknesses." And **Dreya** doesn't think it's helpful to just talk in terms of girls versus boys. "It's people power. Things have changed a little; the line between the sexes is closer. Women have just realised that we can do whatever we want to if we really want to, and guys too can take a less traditional career path." 'Girl power' doesn't mean that the girls don't appreciate what men bring to the sport too.

Daphnée "I do believe that girls can always do what guys are doing...in everything. But I believe that guys are, most of the time, the first to push their limits to be able to accomplish new things. I think that they tend to have more guts."

Carol "Sure I do (believe in girl power). Men are stronger, have more muscles, and we can say some guys are more audacious, can hold a bigger kite in a gusty wind..."



but girls are more technical, can concentrate better, and we have them (guys) in the water to help us! When we talk about a sport that needs power (physique) girls will always take longer than the men, but this doesn't mean we're not going to do it. We just need to discover how to do it without muscles! **Julie** sums up the mix of answers coming from the girls. Does she

believe in girl power? "Absolutely! I think women are strong, athletic, beautiful, amazing people..." - but she explains further - "the constant talk about women compared to men...well, it's just silly. Women and men are always going to be different...in everything we do...not better or worse...just different. And there's nothing wrong with that. As long as we, as women, focus on the fact that we rip at this sport, and we have fun, and we bring a refreshing presence to the sport of kitesurfing, I think we have the right attitude. I think women are an important aspect of the kitesurfing industry...and as long as we know and believe it, that's powerful."

What makes kitesurfing so different than any other sport, especially for women?

While all agree that kitesurfing rips, not all of the girls thought that it necessarily stood out from other sports...**Daphnée** "I don't think that kitesurfing is so different from any other sports for women (in general). I think that everybody is looking to get something specific through the sport (can be freedom, power, etc.). Some women will find it in kitesurfing, but some will find it in climbing, snowboarding, and many more." **Cindy** suggests that there is a core motivation that isn't necessarily specific to the sport - "It's not so different from many sports. We are still in it to have fun and keep fit." **Kristin** agrees "Nothing, it is all the same. You need to have fun with the sport you are doing, you need some motivation for getting better and you need to want to move and work out your body - otherwise you won't do it."

Julie too says that all sports differ from each

for women: "I also think as a woman I have advantages that help me in each sport...those are the things I concentrate on. Kitesurfing is no different. I think kitesurfing is a great sport for women, because it requires finesse, determination, flexibility, respect for nature, and a good knowledge of one's strengths, to name a few. These are all things that women have, plus more. Because we typically aren't as strong as men, we have the advantage that we don't try to muscle the kite or to "beat nature". Instead, we work with it. That's the only way when it comes to kitesurfing. Nature will always win when it comes to a muscle match, so knowing that ahead of time, we are much better off because we work with Mother Nature."

Being close to and working with nature was a draw for other girls too - for **Gabi**, it's "the freedom, the sensation, the challenge, being on your own with the forces of the wind and the water, the incredible feeling of the 'flow' - what I call it when the mind just shuts down completely and you become at one with the elements". **Ingrid** finds the sport different because of the need "to handle so much power and work with that power just with your technique and feeling." For **Angela** and **Michelle** that power plays a big part.

Angela "It's a more aggressive sport and the girls are ripping". **Michelle** "It's a very exciting and interesting sport because it involves nature, personal strength, and self-discipline to practice it. Kitesurfing defines big air, power moves, and wave rides. In addition, to be able to ride you need to push your limits in every move. This is what makes this sport so unique, and so extreme."

But despite the extreme nature of kitesurfing, it nonetheless has an accessibility sometimes lacking in other extreme sports, and that makes it attractive to get into - as does speed of progression and simply the sheer fun of it!

Fab "Kitesurfing brings pleasure at the beginning - as soon as you have the kite in the air and play with it! Usually, the beginning of the sport is hard, but in kitesurfing it's fun from the start - although you have to be careful, and that's why you have to learn with a teacher. Also, you can practice with light wind and flat water, easy conditions, which is really important because the time you spend learning is as much fun as the rest!" **Dreya** "It's similar to surfing and windsurfing in that you're in the water it's not exercise like aerobics or the gym, its fun. **Kristin** again "The thing is, that kiting is easy to learn and therefore a good sport to give women fun, motivation and a nice work out." **Petra** "It is really fun to do, you don't need to sweat and you progress really quickly!!!"

And what about for women specifically? Any advantages there in choosing kitesurfing over other sports?

Back to **Julie** "I think kitesurfing is also a great sport for women, because the gear is lightweight, so that doesn't hold us back." **Claire** agrees on the weight issue "Kiting is really cool for girls - the kit is super light and super

you out that much, so boys don't have that much of an advantage." **Fiona** "I guess it is quite an accessible sport for women, it doesn't require too much physical strength and the learning progress is quite fast. Besides, you get a nice suntan..."

But perhaps the differences for women are in attitude too, as **Claire** goes on to say "Often, girls will listen and trust

their instructors more, which helps lead to a quicker learning curve (controversial!). All in all, it's a free sport using just natural elements, it looks graceful and of course, kitesurfing is an amazing all over work out." **CJ** has another reason why kitesurfing is so good for women "In kitesurfing the girls really join together to support and encourage each other. I have never experienced this in any other sport." Perhaps the reason why all the girls love the sport so much, is that there is room for so many different answers to this question - like

Carol says, there is so much to enjoy, and everyone can develop in their own way, "Kitesurfing is the most complete sport I've ever seen, and by this I mean that everyone has their own style. It doesn't matter if your style is aggressive or slow like a ballet, you can still be the best rider."

Seems like girls are happier for each other when they do well, but the men don't seem to have that extra function in their brain - how come?

Mixed reactions on this one! From **Gabi** "Are you being sarcastic?? I think it's the opposite...sorry!" to **Kristin** "That's because God forgot to give it to them when he built them. Well, I feel sorry for them, but I am still happy to be a girl and happy to be with all the girls on the tour."

So is it as **Claire** suggests, that men just have "too much testosterone"? Or are girls not all sugar and spice and as **Angela** thinks, "just hide their anger better than men?" So, are men from Maui and women from Venezuela? Can't be the only reason, but that's what it seems like.





Fiona "I often see the guys cheering at each other during the heats as well, so I wouldn't say that they are not happy for each other, but it's true that they are a bit more competitive than women in general (must have something to do with the Human Evolution, about men being hunters! For me, the important things I remember about a competition are the emotions I share with my friends on the water. Of course there are moments when you want to make a good heat, but for me it is not the main thing. From the heats in Brazil for instance, I only remember how I was laughing and joking with Petra during the whole heat that we had against each other!"

Laurel "I think women are conditioned through our evolution for co-operation, while men really had to compete, this stays true even today!" Different emotions and ways of showing them certainly seem to be implicated too:

Julie "I think for the most part, women are happy for each other when we do well. I think we build deeper friendships on tour, and at the beach, than the men do. I don't think that the guys are not happy for each other, I just think that women show their emotions more than the men, so it shows that we are truly stoked for one another when we do well. I think the same goes for seeing the emotion openly when we don't do well. It seems to register on the women more than on the men. But I think both are affected either way."

Michelle "Although men and women are very competitive, girls tend to enjoy competition as much as riding for fun." **Cindy** "Most of the guys seem very happy for each other also. I think that women perhaps show it more." **Carol** "I think men are happier for each other when they do well too. Guys are just more explosive."

Fab "I think they have, it's just different! Spirit of competition depends on the person, not on the sex! Girls can be more competitive between themselves, but they also can motivate their friends more than men can do." And different attitudes to competing? **Sheldon** "The women we compete against allow us to move towards our potential as athletes. In a sense, we are all working as a team to push each other's limits. I want to compete against other women at the top of their game and if I am beaten, I feel lucky to have been challenged and think about what I can improve. It would be boring if we won all the time." So are women really different from men in this respect? Is it biology, emotions, attitude? The girl that's got the answer is **CJ** "I'm not even going to try and work out how men think." Wise move!

NUDITY

Of course, being a girl can bring an extra hazard to a wipeout situation - where's the strangest place you ever found your bikini after a big wipe out?!

Seems they get everywhere...most of the girls have experienced an "inadvertent topless session", like **Claire**. Bikinis have ended up upwind, floating off on waves, round waists, round ears - pretty much everywhere except round the bits they're supposed to be covering!

A bit of temporary exposure's bad enough but **Fiona** was lucky the contents of her bikini top didn't end up on tape. Her bikini was "wrapped around my neck after a unhooked move, so it was quite hard to get it back in place without letting the kite go. The bad thing about it was that it happened in front of a video camera, but luckily the filming guy was too drunk to realise and missed it (he was filming for the Slingshot Video, of course!!)" Useful tip there boys? Too much to drink and you'll miss out...

Of course, some men are gentlemen, as **CJ** found out when her errant bikini turned up "in a friend's car. Really! I lost my bikini top and he found it later washed up on the beach, so he picked it up for me. It took some explaining to my boyfriend!"

But perhaps we should take a tip from the world number one on this subject - **Cindy's** answer to the problem? "I wear board shorts and a rash vest to stop my bikini moving." Not always that easy though - **Dreya** agrees, but as she explains, "I don't kite in a bikini for exactly those reasons, but I did manage to raise my harness and shorts a little high exposing my bum to the Dominican sand one year - leaving two massive grazes on each butt cheek - very uncomfortable and not pretty." **Gabi** also tries to avoid problems but, "I've never lost my bikini completely plus, I

usually don't kite in a bikini. I can't really understand how girls do it. I have tried it a couple of times but I always have the same problem: I crash and my boobs are jumping out of the halter...dude, sometimes I don't realise immediately and I'm kiting with (usually only one) naked breast bouncing..." **B** the last word on this subject goes to **Sheldon**, and his intriguing answer "on Ben Meyer." There's a story there...

OFF THE WATER

So, is there more to these girls than kitesurfing? What if you find yourself somewhere without your friends, it's 100°C and there's no wind blowing - what are you going to do?

Well, it says something about this lot that no-one says they don't know! Everybody's got a plan - and the range from the practical to the philosophical, from the energetic to the relaxing. First up, the girls who really think about that temperature...

Daphnée "WOW! With 100degrees Celsius. Probably getting crazy!" **Julie** "100degrees Celsius...I think that's over 200 degrees Fahrenheit...HOT! HOT! HOT!" Oh so let's just say it's really hot - and you've got no friends and no wind... what you gonna do?! Being girls, I'm surprised it's only two (**Angela** and **Fiona**) that come up with this option "Use my mobile phone", "try to find a cell phone to call some people..." If I ever finds myself in this situation, I think I want to be with **Claire**, who's ready to practise "survival skills of protection, location, water, food". Sounds like she knows what she's doing...And this is a practical lot - most of the girls like **Ingrid**, would "go for the shade", or apply some skin protection from the sun. But once that's sorted, either relaxing or getting energetic is good. Remember, when the wind is blowing, this lot are getting big air and riding massive waves - a little bit of adversity doesn't phase them...

Petra "Sitting down and relaxing, dreaming of an icy cold Cuba Libre, lying somewhere under a palm tree in the Caribbean and waiting for my lover to save me, if he didn't get lost!"

Julie "I'd keep myself busy by doing something athletic, creating something, reading, or just exploring. Sometimes alone time is good."

Cindy "Sit in the shade and read a book."

Carol "Close my eyes and dream. In a dream you can do everything, you can be whoever you want. So when you want something or "someone" and it's not possible at the time, just close your eyes and you will have exact what you wished for!"

Fab "I would walk, think about all the good times I had in my life and keep on going to live..."

CJ "Eat, drink, work on my tan, make new friends and wait for the wind. It will blow again."

Dreya "Read and sleep!"

Sheldon "Hope I brought some water, start singing at the top of my lungs and check out the desert plants and animals."

Gabi "Bikram Yoga (usually you do it in a room heated up to 40 degrees). I guess, to do it in 100 degrees would be quite a challenge and hardcore but hey, I thrive on challenges and like pushing myself to the limits."

Laurel "Go swimming, float on my back and keep myself entertained with watching nature." Another practical response from **Kristin** "I would try not to be in a situation like this to start with!" So everyone comes up with some way to pass the time, and have some fun. But the most sensible answer has to be **Michelle's** - "I would take the first plane to the nearest beach and go kitesurfing."

Any words of wisdom?

Not all of the girls felt old enough to be doling out wisdom just yet - **Petra** "Wisdom, wait some more years till I have thick glasses no more teeth and grey hair, then I can tell you, 'Ja ja, do you remember in the old days when we were young and stupid, hanging on weird bags called kites and jumping biilig biilig sometimes soooooo high that we were almost flying away...'" Some of the girls shared wisdom they have learnt from others:

"If A equals success, then the formula is: A = X + Y + Z. X is work. Y is play. Z is keep your mouth shut." (**Michelle**, and Einstein)



"I think women are conditioned through our evolution for co-operation, while men really had to compete, this stays true even today!" *Laurel*



"It is more useful to be aware of a single weakness in oneself than to be aware of a thousand weaknesses in someone else."

(**Sheldon**, and the Dalai Lama) "Om mani padme hum" (**Ingrid**, and an ancient Buddhist mantra) One of teachings which accompanies this mantra is the concept that when the mind and heart become united, anything is possible. Lots of the girls talked about heart and mind...a common theme is to enjoy yourself, be yourself, use the luck life gives you, listen to your heart and follow your dreams...

Daphnée "Enjoy!"

CJ "Enjoy life."

Fiona "Always follow your heart!"

Fab "Follow your dreams and your heart..."

Gabi "Live your dreams!! NEVER EVER compromise on living your life the way YOU want to. Don't settle with anything less. Don't pretend, don't hide, don't live to please others, live the life that you feel deep, deep inside that God wanted you to live, be the person that God wanted you to be...that makes happy people! EVERY PERSON has the power to make oneself happy, you just need to dare (that includes risking too) and go for it. That's how I live my life, with the motto: life's not a rehearsal! and believe me if you follow this advice: DREAMS can come true!"

Cindy "Do what you are passionate about."

Carol "Luck is you are prepared to make good use of the opportunities that appear all the time in your life."

Laurel "Live in the present and in love."

Angela "No fear."

Kristin "Be careful with every thing you are doing, but not too careful." Making sure that you enjoy yourself along the way is obviously important to all the girls. For those of you looking to compete, **Julie** offers this advice "make sure you hold true to the reason you started kitesurfing in the first place...to have fun and hang out with friends. The competitive side of the sport is constantly changing, so don't get too caught up in the process...maintain your enjoyment factor. That's the key."

So, would you say your life is perfect at the moment?

Full agreement on this one - unsurprisingly everyone's pretty happy with life at the moment! All the girls say that it's perfect, or not far off. Must be something in this kitesurfing thing... But as **Fiona** says "it would be a sad thing if you no longer had any dreams; I believe you always should seek to learn more and advance in your life." Seems that all these girls are chasing their dreams right now, and my guess is you'll be hearing lots more from them over the coming year...Last words go to **Julie**, who sums up a lot of the feelings - "I feel pretty darn lucky", and **Gabi**, quite simply - "Kiting forever!!!"

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