



WORDS: ALEX HAPGOOD

Back to School with the Bridglets

One new editor needing to brush up on his freestyle knowledge. Three feisty groms who live and breathe freestyle. It was never going to be pretty...

(LEFT) PHOTO: DING

I have to fess up here. I love freestyle – it is from whence all other kiting disciplines came, and is by far the most popular element of our sport – but it has been a while since I was 100% clued up on where it's at move wise, where it's heading, and what marks out your average Joe from your seasoned pro beachside. Rumour has it though, that the Deadman won't turn many heads at the beach nowadays... Shame. I liked that.

So, time for a refresher, and who better to hook up with than the most promising crew of freestyle disciples that, perhaps, kitesurfing has ever seen: the Bridglets. Offspring of Steph (previously freestyle and now race queen) and Eric (all round waterman) Bridge – surely something of the nature and nurture debate in there. And so, with a 10m Vegas optimistically rigged up on a windless Exmouth beach, we settled down on the sand to bring the new kid up to speed on what's hot and what's not in the world of freestyle.

The Moves

These boys have done their fair share of contests, so what's the best way to approach a heat? "Get a couple of solid moves in at the start," says Oli. "Maybe a Railey to Blind or an S-Bend to Blind." And would you save your best moves until the end of the heat – finish with all guns blazing as it were? "No, I normally go for my big moves in the middle of the heat," says Oli. "At the end you can be pretty tired and feel a bit rushed, so get down some solid moves in the middle."

The Bridglets have been turning plenty of heads on the contest scene, both in the UK and further afield. They took the recent European Freestyle Junior championships in France by storm, and are all frothing to move into the higher age brackets. So, what's the big move that the boys hope to land to mark their territory in an average heat? No hesitation from 10-year-old Tom. "Switch KGB." Oli? "Hasselhoff." And Guy. "Hoping for a Blind Judge." And which moves are they putting in the hours to get dialled? Guy's honing the Blind Judge, Oli's working on some combos, and Tom's working on the Switch Slim. Glad we cleared that up then.



(ABOVE) HOW'S THIS MUM?

(FAR LEFT) SCOOTER FUND.

(MIDDLE) DAD, HOW OLD DO I HAVE TO BE BEFORE I CAN STOP WEARING THIS HAT?

(RIGHT) THE BOYS SPOT A JAR OF CHOCOLATE SPREAD...



(LEFT) TIMES ARE HARD IN THE BRIDGE HOUSEHOLD

The Players

Boys will be boys, and the Bridglets spend hours on YouTube seeking out their favourite riders and watching them nail their favourite moves. I think it's fair to say that if there was a Panini album of the movers and shakers in the world of kitesurfing, these boys would have a fistful of swapsies in the playground. And they know whose style they like: "Aaron Hadlow!" almost in unison, with other key players who roll quickly off their tongues including Youri Zoon and Andy Yates. They seem to have little doubt that Youri Zoon will win the PKRA Freestyle Tour 2011, and were pretty amped about the Back Mobe 9 he landed at Dakhla. They were also suitably impressed by Aaron's recent 900 (although Tom assured me that he'd done a 1080, which it transpired he had, but only hooked in: "Still a 1080 though ha ha!" Kids eh).

The Future

The big players on the scene right now will probably have moved on by the time the Bridglets reach their full potential, so they've got one eye on the younger riders and the Junior events in terms of spotting who might be chasing them down in a few years' time. A couple of names immediately crop up: Oz Smith and Liam Whaley. Both of whom have caught their eye as being serious contenders over the next few years – you heard it here first. In terms of where the sport is going in general, the boys are

core freestyle, and don't have a whole lot to say about the whole park/wakestyle side of things. "Looks okay I suppose," says Oli. "It's just all the 'cool' people who do that," continues Guy. I think it's fair to say that they'd like to see some of the guys who've made the transition back doing a few freestyle events, and a bit less fragmentation between the two disciplines. The ideals of youth hey.

Away from the world of flips and passes, Oli is particularly keen to see racing accepted as an Olympic discipline. He's been putting in the hours up and down the East Devon coastline honing his skills on a raceboard. He's entered a few race events, and has apparently been giving Steph a run for her money when conditions are right – no mean feat. He also finished third overall in the Under 18s World Championships in France, has been doing the SW race events this year, and is heading off to Poland for the Course Racing Europeans and to the PKRA date in Germany. If you ask me, you'd be pretty brave to bet against him being on the podium in years to come if the discipline gets the nod from the Olympic committee.

The Secret

Aside from those top drawer genes that the Bridglets picked up, what's the secret of their success? Exmouth – in fact anywhere in the UK – would hardly be top of your list of global 'guaranteed wind' destinations. But, "we get a lot of sea and land

breezes," explains Oli. "We can use the tide too, so even in 10 knots of breeze we can get out." In fact (trivia time) Exmouth has the second strongest tidal flows in the UK – with tides running at up to 6 knots. It's basically like kiting on a river. So great for your kite skills.

With plenty of time on the water – six hours a day is pretty standard in the holidays, and Tom gets time off school to go kiting – they must burn a lot of calories. "We just eat loads of fruit," explains Oli. "And chocolate spread," continues Guy. "And drink lots of water." finishes Tom. A pretty balanced diet then. And what about the prize money that the boys have won on their travels – does this go straight back to mum and dad, a little something towards the airmiles? Nah. Tom points to his scooter which is parked precariously on top of the 'Dangerous Currents sign' that he's been doing backflips off throughout the interview, "I spent mine on an MGP Nitro (the schniz in the world of scooters apparently)." Oli's perhaps showing his age though, "I don't spend it. I'm saving up for later life." Much laughter from the younger brothers. And so, with no sign of the sea breeze, that's me done and it's time to wrap up. Just one final question: What would you like to see in the magazine? "More sequences from Aaron, Youri and Ned," from Guy. "A good front cover," from Oli. And "Less words, more pictures," from Tom... Perfect. This job's going to be a doddle. **ks**

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