



CAPE & CRACKER



PWA WORLD TOUR '07

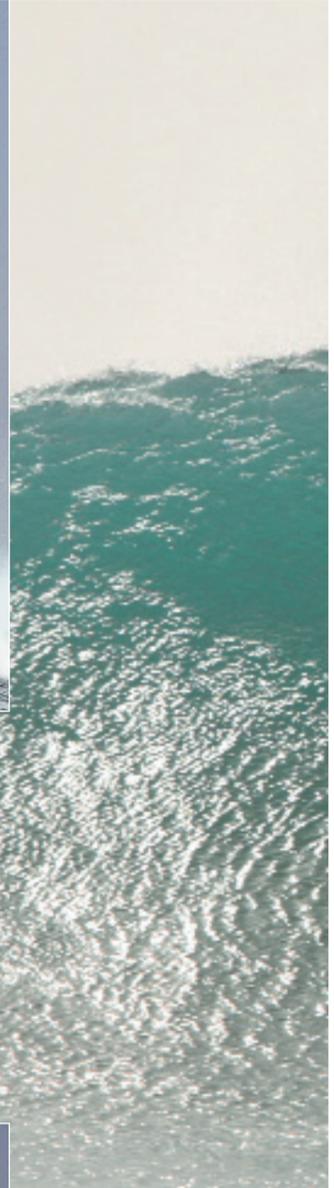
It was, without question, the greatest wavesailing event in the history of windsurfing – and we were there to witness it. **Bill Dawes** tries not to let his superlatives run away with him, but fails miserably...

Just look at this picture. Feast your eyes on it. The way the enormity of the wave utterly dwarfs the tiny windsurfer, hovering there, frozen for eternity in such an impossible, gravity-defying position. Hanging under the lip, a rag-doll about to be swatted aside by that huge wall of vertical blue water. A perfect wall, at that – smooth like a baby's bum, but more powerful than an express train. And sooooo long. Feast your eyes on it. Imagine yourself there, in that position.

Now turn the page, and look at the next pic. Absorb the colour of the water, the shadow, the wonderful light shining through the wave. Shut your eyes, and add in for yourself the extra details – the sound of the cheering, freaking crowd around you, the roar of the white water and the wind buffeting your back. The atmosphere of pure elation, disbelief even. Your World Cup heroes amongst the spectators, ecstatic even though they've been knocked out of the competition, the sheer joy of everyone sharing the sensation of spectating at the most amazing wavesailing the world has ever seen. Dear readers, this really was something quite sensational. I've seen some great things in my 20 years of windsurfing journalism, but never anything like this. It was more than just a great wavesailing event – it was *theatre*. There were moments when we all just looked at each other, just lost for words, struck dumb by what we'd seen. It was equally special for the sailors, who were finding themselves on a whole new level of sailing. *"I thought; if I let go I'll probably die ... and if I hold on I might still die"* said Phil Horrocks of one move. Phil is not a man who scares easily...

Rather than a blow-by-blow account of the action, I'm going to pick out some highlights; a particular heat or two, to try and give some idea as to what watching something like this is really like. Hopefully I'll succeed, but if at any point I'm losing you, just go back to the pictures and stare at them for a while. Because this really was a serendipitous experience – the perfect swell, wind and sailors coming together at the right time. There have been events in Cape Verde before, and there most certainly will again. But whether we will ever again see anything like this is for the gods to decide. (If you do want the full blow-by-blow account of the action, check out the PWA reports which are all on our website.)





Firstly, the background. The competition was very much the brainchild of Josh Angulo, who moved to the island of Sal on Cape Verde some ** years ago. Settling in Cape Verde provided him with one hell of a training ground. Although predominantly lightish winds, Sal has a wide variety of good wavesailing breaks on both tacks, including the already legendary Punta Preta; a fast, hollow and extremely gnarly starboard tack point break. He soon proved what a smart move his relocation was by winning the World Wave title in 2005, and then confirming that it

was no fluke by acing the Aloha Classic last winter.

Now very much a Cape Verde local – his sail number is CV-1 – an event on his home turf was an obvious next step. With extensive help from Cape Verde Investments, who very quickly raised the money from the many companies investing heavily in putting CV on the map as a major tourist destination, the event rapidly progressed from proposition to reality. The ten days earmarked for the competition was hopefully enough to coincide with a decent swell coming in. Punta Preta was the preferred venue, but other locations could easily be considered if conditions warranted.

A few days before the event, a decent swell was rolling in from a good direction, and Punta Preta was definitely on. The competition infrastructure and sailors began to assemble at this rocky, barren little



Above Josh Angulo

Left Scott McKercher

Top left Kevin Pritchard





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“ Josh got the best waves, hit the biggest sections and logged some amazing air-time... ”

bay on the SW side of the island, just a 5 minute drive from the main town of Santa Maria. The fleet featured the best wavesailors on the planet; ex and current World Wave Champions Jason Polakow, Kauli Seadi, Scott McKercher, Kevin Pritchard and of course Josh, plus many others including three other local sailors, and five Brits: Nik Baker, Robby Swift, John Skye, Phil Horrocks and Ross Williams. 32 men, all in all. The pre-event expectation was very much for a 'proper' wavesailing contest; good down-the-line action, and probably no jumping. The winds were from the right direction but stronger than normal, and a good swell was forecast for the first few days of the event. In the warm-ups there was some great sailing on show on really good looking waves getting up to a solid logo-high. Everything looked extremely promising – but we still had no inkling of what was about to hit us.

The contest started straight away on the first official day, with the early rounds of the single elimination in great conditions. Day two,

and on the taxi ride over we could see the tops of the waves way up above the point – thundering great walls of spray, and occasional flashes of sail as someone hit a top turn. After the initial babble of excitement everything went quiet as the scale of what we were seeing became apparent. It was clearly very big – and there was plenty of wind. This was going to be a good day...

So, let's now pick up the action in the third quarter-final of the single elimination. A typical heat, but one made more interesting because it's got the last two remaining Brits in it – Nik Baker and Phil Horrocks, who are up against Keith Teboul and Victor Fernandez. Four sailors, top two go through, 25 minutes on the water to do their thing, and they're scored on their best two waves (x3) and overall impression (x1).

All four sailors are out on the water, ready in the take-off zone, as the green flag goes up. Fernandez catches a beautiful mast-high wave to open proceedings – he slides along the lip in a cloud of spray, just about manages to hold it

together but decides to leave it at that and kicks out over the back, only to find himself now facing a mast-and-a-half-high monster, and only just gets out over it. The crowd exhale collectively and noisily.

There's an awful lot of this early kicking out going on. The perfect Cape Verde waveride opens with a backdoor entry on the outside bowl, accelerating down-the-line to set up a big first hit, followed by a couple more turns as the wave comes right up to the point, then a wee pause on the shoulder as it sets up for the real point break section, which can give four to six more turns on a smaller but absolutely smooth perfect peeling section right in front of the judges. However, an awful lot of the waves don't connect through to this inner section, so selection is a real issue here.

Anyway, we're nearly three minutes in to the heat now, and other than Victor's abortive first wave nothing has happened. Everyone is out the back, jockeying for position. Waiting, waiting... You don't get any sense of this from the video clips, but actually a 25 minute heat is a long and →

WAVESAILING





“ Nik screams down-the-line, hits a superb and distinctly Baker-like top turn; a really vertical entry and digging that tail in... ”

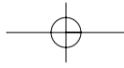
drawn-out drama production. It's more like watching cricket than, say, tennis; there are these sustained pauses when nothing's happening, but it's *really* tense and expectant.

The pauses certainly give you time to reflect on the sheer hostility of the environment. Your front is getting roasted by the sun, and your back's getting sandblasted by the wind. You could perch uncomfortably on a boulder, but when you're lower down you're just getting a face-full of sand the whole time, so it's less painful (albeit more tiring) to stand. The wind is so offshore that it's basically coming right across the island and is *laden* with dirt. At times it's more like a sandstorm; you can barely see the sailors out there. And all evening you're shaking sand out of your ears – indeed, I'm still finding it

in odd crevices even now. It's about as inhospitable a viewing environment as you can imagine. But no-one gives a monkeys, because no-one has ever had action in their face like this before. My old Aunt Agatha could get front-cover-quality pictures here – and she's 90% blind. The action is SO close to the shore that many people are simply using their phones to take pix. The sailors are riding past the corner of the point just metres away – you could easily reach them with a well-aimed stone. You're looking *up* when they're at the top of the wave or banging out an aerial. And *they* can hear the hoots and hollers from the crowd, which adds to the atmosphere all round. The only place you normally get interaction between sailors and spectators is in the indoor arena (but there's no

way even the French would ever allow 5m waves at Bercy...) It's all so up close and personal, so much better than Ho'okipa or even Jaws, where your elevated viewing position makes it all seem smaller, and the action is that much further offshore anyway.

Four minutes in, and Victor gets another wave. He tends to loiter a bit closer in than the others, so gets first dibs at the set when it appears. It's not amazingly huge, he carves two nice turns on it, and then kicks out again. Keith Teboul takes the next wave in the set – links some lovely turns, powering down towards the point – and he's chosen well; the wave obligingly holds up right through to the inside, allowing him two more turns and then a



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Above & left
Nik Baker



nice little aerial, but he doesn't manage to land it back on the wave so he takes his cue to depart, and waterstarts swiftly back out. Phil Horrocks takes the next wave, cranks some nice turns on it, but again kicks out early. It's not a big set, and when it's been flat for a while, a medium sized set is often fairly swiftly followed by a rather bigger one – and nobody wants to be inside when that happens. Head Wave Judge Duncan Coombes has been here since early this morning, timing the sets and trying to schedule the heats so that each should get at least one decent sized set. But nobody can really predict what the ocean is going to do...

Six minutes in now, and a HUGE set has arrived – out to the right it's just *ginormous*. Big ones out there don't necessarily push right through though, and there's no point ripping up some monster if the judges can't see it. Phil Horrocks is tempted, but very quickly drops out over the back of the wave and retreats to the take-off area again. Nik Baker, meanwhile, has worked his way so far upwind out to the right that he's almost out of sight, although he doesn't actually realise this. When he

does take off on one of the monsters, he looks up at the point as he's thundering down-the-line and to his consternation notices that all the spectators have buggered off – but a crowd seems to have gathered at the next bay down... The penny drops and he kicks out from the wave to put himself in a better position, cursing his stupidity.

The wind is so offshore that it's really hard work to catch the waves – they're coming in so fast, and mostly the sailors are going pretty much from a standing start, so there's a whole lot of pumping going on, often leaving the sailors teetering perilously on the brink of the ever-heightening, ever-steepening wall of water, caught in the uprush. A lot of really good waves go unriden simply because the sailors just can't get set up on them in time. This happens to Teboul, then Fernandez. Phil finally catches one, but frustratingly it turns out to be a one-hit wonder and flattens right off, so he's legging it back out to the take-off point again. They all know a good set will come soon, but it's now nearly 10 minutes in and nothing really significant has happened yet. For the disinterested spectator this might seem kinda boring, but for us – rooting for the Brits and appreciating the drama being played out on the water – the tension is magnificent.

Ten-and-a-half minutes, and another decent set arrives. Victor Fernandez again is the first to go – it's a risky strategy always being first, but everyone's desperate to start getting some solid scores on the doors. He gets a decent ride and links it through to the inside. But behind him Phil Horrocks is setting up on a substantially bigger wall; comfortably mast-high and looking very promising. Fernandez finishes with his wave and kicks out, to see Phil power down-the-line, lay the rail in hard

under the biggest section of the wave which is now well over mast-high, blast up the face and smack a nice slidey top turn that looks for a heart-stopping second like it's gone horribly wrong ... but he holds it in and accelerates down into his next turn. Nice one Phil! He rides on and in. It's funny how your perspective so quickly adjusts. When you're watching these guys on the really big outer walls, which look SO huge, it actually looks almost insignificant when they're riding the smaller inside section, even though it's still solid logo-high and smooth like a skateboard ramp. But if you saw it at your local beach you'd be freaking.

Nik Baker gets another very promising looking wave, a solid mast-high wall, and he's in the right place on it this time. He screams down-the-line, hits a superb and distinctly Baker-like top turn; a really vertical entry and digging that tail in, in his own inimitable style. But there's nothing else for him to do as the wave shoulders off and goes flat. He quickly gybes back out yet again. We're halfway through the heat now.

Another decent looking set appears, and Phil takes a wave; it holds up nicely for him and he gets a few nice turns. It links to the inside but he pushes his luck a little too far, and comes off. He's down in the foam, trying desperately to get back to his kit before the next wall of water hits him. The rip along the shoreline is a good 2-3 knots, so strong that the luckier sailors who get it wrong actually find themselves and their kit ripped right along in front of the rocks to slightly deeper water on the corner, where they may just be able to get going again if there's a lull before the next set comes through.

Keith Teboul's on the next wave, he punches a big top turn and cuts back hard into the white →





water. He's getting a really good ride but we're watching Phil, desperately trying to get reacquainted with his kit. Because there's a *major* set building out back, and right now is just so **not** a good time to be swimming – if he doesn't get going real soon, he's going to be drilled onto the rocks big-time. Nik Baker's ideally positioned for this set and catches a beauty nice and early, and stacks hard upwind before taking the drop. He powers through the bottom turn, smacks the lip perfectly. And again. It's not the biggest wave of the heat but it's really vertical and really smooth, and Nik needs a good one. He gets a second turn, and a third ... it looks like it's going to connect right through but he's way upwind on it and it's getting really close – too close; it looks like the whole section's going to come down in front of him. Nik senses this and goes for broke – just metres away from the rocks he digs in hard on the bottom turn and comes up vertically – **wave 360!!!** But he doesn't make it, and now he's in the rip along with Phil, who's still getting tumbled around in incessant white water. We gaze forlornly at the sum of British hopes floundering in front of us. Nik isn't renowned for doing crazy things like this – it was about the only wave 360 attempt in the entire day – but he told us later that he was just super-frustrated by his muppetry, getting so out of position earlier on in the heat. So now he's in the rip, about three feet from the rocks, and if he's quick he may just get away with this; there's a bit of a lull in the waves. He grabs his gear, kicks it round into the waterstart position, but there's just not enough time. Even in the lulls we're still talking head-high walls of white water as the small ones break on the inside. He looks up, sees a nasty little muncher about to unload on him, and with the strength of desperation throws his kit up and over the wave; the offshore wind helps it on its way. He emerges from the foam,

quickly swims to his kit and waterstarts away. We breathe another collective sigh of relief. Phil's still swimming though...

Into the closing stages of the heat, and so far Teboul and Fernandez have definitely been getting the most of the action, with Teboul scoring the better, more varied rides, his greater experience standing him in good stead. However, Nik and Phil are back out there now, and the green flag's still up. It comes down a minute before the end of the heat, and if the sailor's on a wave when the red flag goes up to signal the end of the heat then they still get scored. Phil and Nik have both had a decent wave each, so if they can finish with a really good one it might still be enough to get them through.

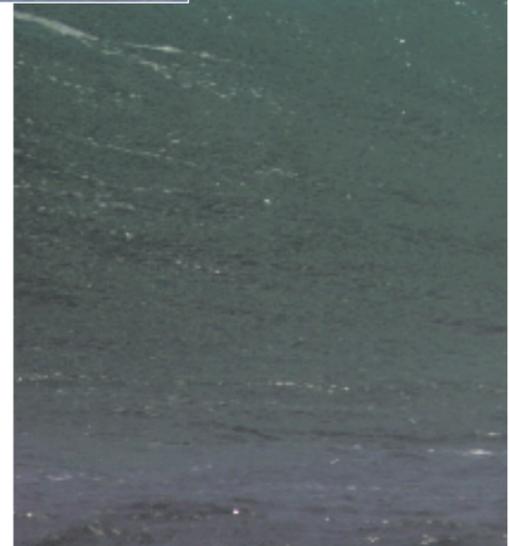
Heavy drama. We're into the last few minutes and a very big set is steaming in. Phil goes for the first one, pumping frantically to get onto it; it builds and builds – will he, won't he, will he, won't he??? No, it's not right, he gybes back out again. Nail-biting stuff. Nik then sets up on a beautiful mast-and-a-half-high macker, hits a lovely turn ... but again, so *frustratingly*, it fades out – Nik doesn't waste a second, he might just have enough time to get back out and score another. Fernandez takes the next one, gets a solid first turn, just about holds it in on the top, then gets another, but again the wave goes iffy. However, behind him – yet again – it's Keith Teboul in the right place at the right time, and another fine wave right through to the inside.

But the set's still building – and behind Keith, Fernandez poddling off the plane on the way out only JUST gets over the nearly double-mast-high wall; it looks absolutely terrifying from the beach, god knows what he was thinking at the time. If he'd been caught inside by that he would have been absolute toast.

Above Kauli Seadi

Right Kevin Pritchard

Bottom Phil Horrocks



Next one, Phil and Nik both go for it. Nik gets it, and it's an absolute beauty. He's flying down-the-line at full speed but the wave's feathering, feathering, and just ridiculously big – Nik's doing about mach 2 and only just gets round a huge section that comes crashing down, he fangs back up to the top, punches a nice little aerial, then another turn, now he's coming through to the inside, more good turns, another aerial, soaring along over the white water, re-engages, pulls another lovely turn right in front of the judges, and surely can't fail to notice the green flag coming down while he's there. That might just get him through.

And it did. Nik and Keith Teboul advanced to the next round. Phil did get a last wave but it wasn't enough.

The last quarter-final saw Kevin Pritchard, Levi Siver, Jason Polakow and Alex Mussolini on the water – four very contrasting styles. So let's just talk about style for a moment, because it's what this event was all about. All 32 of the sailors out there are perfectly capable of riding these waves. They all look good. So how do the judges tell them apart? (Indeed, Duncan Coombs confirmed that some of these heats were the closest he's ever witnessed.)

So let's consider our four quarter-finalists. Kevin Pritchard – KP. He's a finely honed contest winning machine; the best all-rounder out there. He's got World titles in Waves and Racing, and finished 2nd in his first proper SuperX





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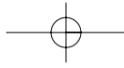


“ Turn, smack, turn, aerial... KP didn't get his hair wet in two hours of sailing, but after a while it was so predictable that we stopped watching... ”

season too. But, even though he keeps on winning stuff, he is a bit – how to put it – mechanical at times. We watched him on the (considerably smaller) warm-up day, taking wave after wave and riding them with almost monotonous consistency. Turn, smack, turn, aerial... He didn't get his hair wet in two hours of sailing, but after a while it was so predictable that we stopped watching. Any of us would sell granny to be able to sail like that, so how can it be boring? The difference is that the really watchable sailors have that slight degree of unpredictability.

However, these bigger conditions aren't letting anyone look monotonous, and KP's certainly rising to the challenge. He's a big bloke and has plenty of power, so he's playing to his (literal) strengths, with some superb aerials and massive top turns. Anyone looks stylish hitting the top on a double-mast-high section. But ultimately, the slight lack of flair and excitement in his riding may end up costing him with the judges. →





“ Kauli cranks it, looks up, and sees this blue curtain coming down... ”

As was illustrated in that very heat, when KP and Jason Polakow were both on waves, but every single head was turned towards Polakow – he was indisputably the one to watch. And sure enough, he rewards us with a superb soaring aerial, that he lands back on the quivering, feathering, tip of the top of the wave, then kinda bounces a couple of times before properly re-engaging with the face and flying off down it for his next turn. Another sudden depletion of oxygen in the atmosphere as 300 people gasp in unison...The man has *style*. He's really powerful, bashes the lip as hard as anyone, and it's all coupled with his trademark full-speed attack. He cranks the bottom turn and gets really vertical, pushing the tail through the top turn at lightning speed. It's all so fast that it just looks dangerous – which, of course, looks great!

Levi Siver is of very similar style to Jason – not surprising as he's a hardcore Ho'okipa wavesailor who learned his trade in the years when JP ruled the roost there. Every wavesailor wants to be like Jason. So Siver's got the same super-high-speed approach, but he's also got that 'new-skool'

attitude on top of it. It's ironic – Polakow's fast and furious style was considered new-skool in its time. But nowadays, new-skool means something more. Not just that extra recklessness; there's a hint of freestyle there – that extra tweak, extra bit of flair even in the groundstroke basics of the waveride; the bottom turn, the top turn. Levi has the obligatory vertical attack, but he often seems to arrive actually underneath the pitching lip, yet somehow projecting the board forward and out under it. Or punching right up *through* it, to complete the turn with his board seemingly hanging above the curl. His aerials all seemed that bit more dangerous too, often landing really sketchily low down on the wave in the white water, but wrestling it back into shape. You can see why he's always so rated at Ho'okipa. Indeed, Nik Baker reckoned that one of Levi's waverides that morning was the greatest, the most perfect thing he'd ever seen in all his windsurfing career. Now that's saying something.

We couldn't quit this examination of style without taking the next logical step in the

evolutionary chain – from Levi to Kauli Seadi. Kauli is *totally* new-skool. The world only really found out that he could ride waves a couple of years ago; before that we had him down as a freestyler. Which he was indeed damn good at – like, World Cup event winning good. But waves are basically all he does now. He wavesails, he surfs, he tow-in surfs. He's making a career out of it, that's for sure (the youngest Wave World Champion in the last twenty years or so), but with a refreshing lack of 'professionalism'. It's something we haven't seen in a long time, in fact. For the last decade or so in the waves, the meticulously prepared professional with a fully-developed gameplan has been the man who won the events. Raw talent alone was simply not enough, as new generations of young turks found out the hard way, despite arriving on the World Tour bursting with ability and enthusiasm. It took the likes of Francisco Goya and Scott McKercher *10 years* of hard slog to win their titles. But Kauli? He's just out there having fun! Indeed, in his own words: *"To me, in these waves it's more about*





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Above Victor Fernandez

Left Kauli gets barrelled



improvising and letting the rides flow than tactics." And when he wins, it's because he's the best out there, not because he's tactically outsailed anyone. I watched him screaming down-the-line on a big, smooth, nearly vertical section – and he slipped in one of those sliding board-and-sail-360 things; so fast, so perfect, blink-and-you-missed-it, he didn't miss a beat, didn't lose an ounce of speed. OK you purists, sit down; it might not be 'real waveriding', but anyone who casually throws in a sliding 360 on a mast-high wall of water is emphatically **in control**. I mean, how relaxed do you have to be to even *think* of doing something like that? But there was a moment in one of the early heats that absolutely, utterly typified his attitude: He sets up on a really big one. He's waaaay deep. A 30 yard section is already lipping over before he eventually commits to the bottom turn. He cranks it, looks up, and sees this blue curtain coming down. He instantly levels out and runs for the exit door, but he's all out of shape, his rig's still behind him, the lip of the wave is over him, he's being tubed by this monster. A situation that most – well, pretty much *all* – normal people would find fairly alarming. Nik Baker was sailing out and in a perfect position to witness it. He too was thinking "*ohmigod Kauli you're in deep shit mate,*" but no – he could see Kauli, *and the man was grinning from ear to ear. Loving it.* This is living, Kauli Seadi style. He got his rig sorted out, accelerated out of the cave just as the entire section crashed down behind him, and instantly cranked his next turn back to the lip... Unbelievable.

When you're out there just cruising, just having fun, in waves that every other sailor on the planet was finding challenging to say the least,

you do have something of an advantage. Not that Kauli has had any more experience of utterly perfect waves like this than anyone else, he's just spiritually more at home out there. His life isn't cluttered up with business, with being professional, with *stuff*, the baggage that all the other sailors have to deal with. And that purity of purpose just allows him to do what he does, be what he is. The ultimate wavesailor. He has the complete repertoire of moves, cutbacks, slashes, hooks, floaters, gouges, aerals, the odd taka or goita when required. There's nothing he can't do. But he also has a unique flowing style which is instantly recognisable out there – he's turning, turning, always turning. After each off-the-top, he S-turns straight back to the white water, really *surfing* the wave, his twin-fin set-up helping his flowing, linking lines. Indeed, he's so new-skool that – in the classic what-goes-around-comes-around that always seems to be there in windsurfing – he actually reminded me in many ways of an early Robby Naish; the epitome of old-school. However, Kauli's doing it all at new-skool speed – on a heavily concaved tiny twinser; short but, amazingly, 55cm wide. You wouldn't think it could hold in on such steep perfect faces, but it sure does. It's got about three foot of tail rocker, which must help I guess. But it certainly didn't plane early. Indeed, there was some debate about whether it actually planed at all (other than on the waveface, of course!) Although his tiny sails would have had something to do with that too.

So that's Kauli. Undoubtedly one of the stand-out sailors in a stand-out fleet. The general consensus was that it would almost certainly end up being a showdown between him and Josh Angulo for the title. And sure enough, both these sailors made it to the final, along with Kevin Pritchard – and Nik Baker! Nik is really excelling himself here in this company. He's never the stand-out sailor in the heat, indeed, he's the antithesis of what we've just been

talking about with Kauli. Like KP, Nik's the epitome of the professional competitor. He has the talent, but what he's so good at is racking up the points, giving the judges what they want.

Single Elimination Final

About a minute before the final, the biggest set of the day so far came through. Ironically, utterly unridden. But it was fully double-mast-high out the back, and it just sent shivers of anticipation through us all. We were surely in for a wave final like nothing seen before...

The set leaves the ocean flat though, so the first few minutes after the green flag is raised are completely devoid of action. Just four sailors tacking and gybing out the back, waiting, watching, waiting. The tension's as high as it can be.

Two minutes in and KP decides to commit. He pulls into a nice solid mast-high ramp, hits the bottom, cranks a nice big roundhouse turn off-the-lip – that's the final officially under way – but the wave then peters out into nothing, rather frustratingly. Josh is next into action, on a smaller (i.e. logo-high!) ramp, gets some good turns and comes right in on it, punching a nice little floater along the top, to huge cheers from the beach. The audience here is predominantly Cape Verdean, and they know who their man is.

So, three minutes in, and no real significant scoring as yet.

OK – now it's Josh, setting up on a beautiful wave. He comes in fast from very deep, watching, watching, backs off a little then hits the accelerator again, powers through his bottom turn, up and SMACK into a lovely aerial. He lands back just ahead of the white water, up to the top again and *another aerial...* He really tucks in tight, sheets in and just flies along above the breaking section of the wave, to re-engage effortlessly in exactly the right position just in front of the curl. It's the perfect →





technique for these seriously offshore conditions, and I guess it's not surprising that he's so damn good at it. The crowds can't get enough of it, and he milks both them and the wave right on through to the inside; four, five more turns.

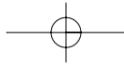
Next up it's KP; he sets it up nicely, hits the top, throws a nice big arc of spray, but *again*,

it's a one-hit wonder. Frustration! Kauli next, and he makes no mistake with his wave. He starts with an awesomely long floaty aerial, not the highest but just *loooooong*, floating above the section. Lots more turns, those distinctive Kauli cuts back into the shoulder. It's not the greatest wave of the contest but it's lovely to watch, and certainly has more

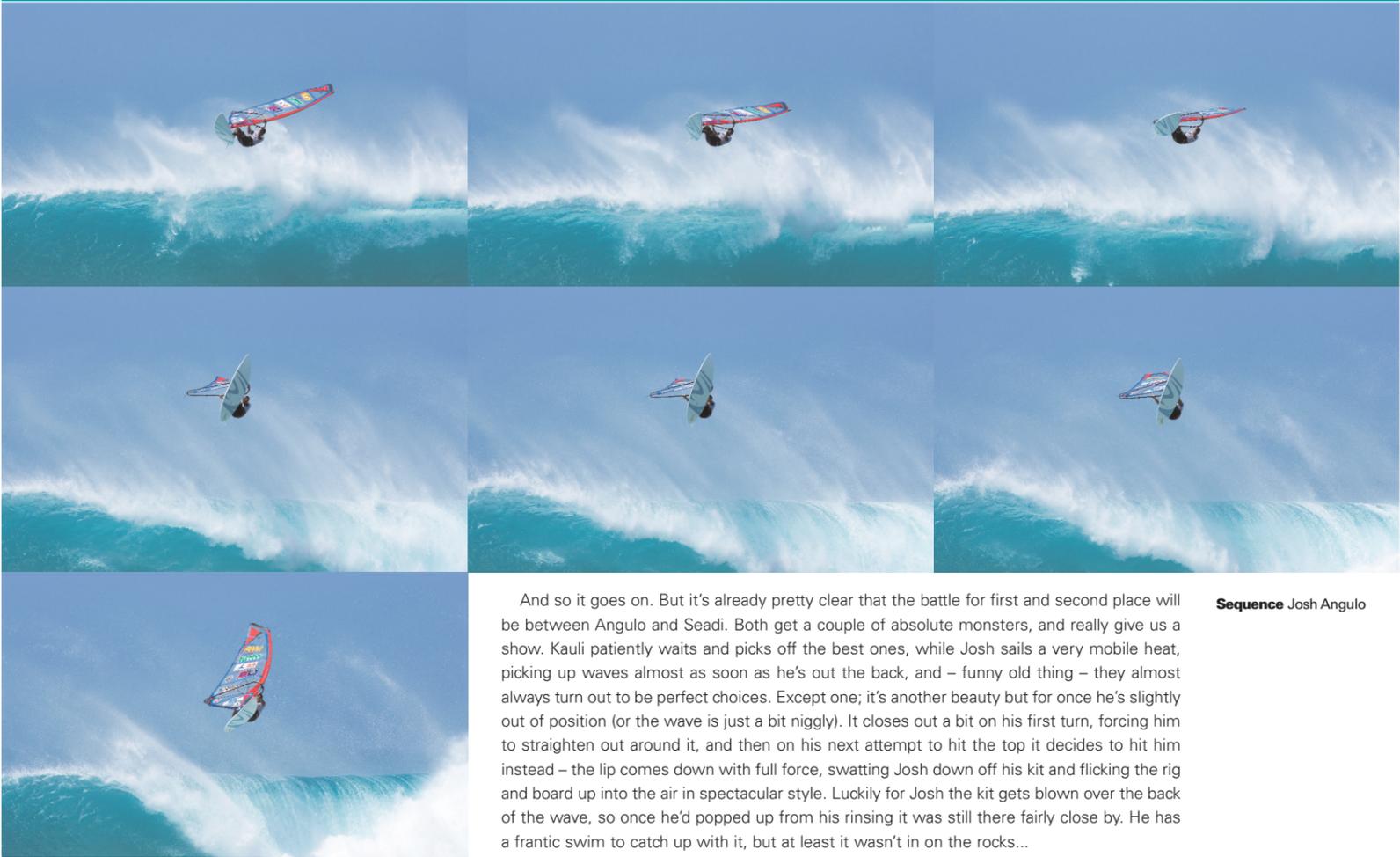
variety of moves than Josh's.

But Josh is straight back to the outside again on his 5.8, while Kauli's on a 4.0 ... and a Naish Boxer at that, with its short mast length making it look even tinier. It's a great way of making the wave look bigger, but – coupled with that super-heavily rockered board – Kauli's not even close to planing on the way out.





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Eventually Kauli does get out and almost immediately goes for another wave, which walls up absolutely beautifully but again doesn't last, so he kicks out after just one turn. And then it's Nik's turn again. We've all been willing Nik to do more aerials as it's clearly the crowd-pleaser here (even if the judges have a more balanced view of life) yet he's hardly done one all day. But this is the final Nik, we know you can do nice top turns, we just want to see some big air too. And sure enough, he cranks some lovely air off his first turn, and fired up by that, goes for it on his second hit too, but this time it all goes horribly out of shape and he crashes down behind the wave. A few seconds later, KP takes off on the wave behind, punches a big air too but loses it big-time and crashes really heavily too. *This is great*, the action's really coming thick and fast now, and it keeps coming with Josh on the next wave; it's not the biggest of the set but it looks like it's going to hold together all the way through – that superior local knowledge at play again – and sure enough he milks it, coming flying through just feet away from the rocks (and us!), cranking his distinctive trademark power turns and aerials. And then it's Kauli, who clearly did right to leave that last wave so quickly because this one's so much better – maybe not quite as high but it's going to go the distance, and this is what Kauli needs. He really sets to work and opens up his armoury. First turn; big smack. Second turn; gouge, throw some spray. Third turn; aerial, tweaks it a bit – nice! Reconnects. Fourth turn; big lipslide... Just total quality.

And so it goes on. But it's already pretty clear that the battle for first and second place will be between Angulo and Seadi. Both get a couple of absolute monsters, and really give us a show. Kauli patiently waits and picks off the best ones, while Josh sails a very mobile heat, picking up waves almost as soon as he's out the back, and – funny old thing – they almost always turn out to be perfect choices. Except one; it's another beauty but for once he's slightly out of position (or the wave is just a bit niggly). It closes out a bit on his first turn, forcing him to straighten out around it, and then on his next attempt to hit the top it decides to hit him instead – the lip comes down with full force, swatting Josh down off his kit and flicking the rig and board up into the air in spectacular style. Luckily for Josh the kit gets blown over the back of the wave, so once he'd popped up from his rinsing it was still there fairly close by. He has a frantic swim to catch up with it, but at least it wasn't in on the rocks...

Sequence Josh Angulo

Nik and KP both eventually find themselves a decent wave but spend most of the final out the back, looking for the perfect ramp but never really finding it. And that's how the heat finishes, Nik still out the back watching and waiting, when the red flag goes up.

The crowd surge up to the podium, where the four exhausted sailors are sitting waiting for the announcement. In fourth place it's Nik, third KP.. No real surprises there. What we wanted to know was whether the judges went for Josh's raw power style or Kauli's creativeness. And in second place, it's ... Josh!!! Yep, that seems right and proper. Kauli's delighted – and it's great that, as a native Portuguese speaker, he can make a speech to the assorted dignitaries and locals in their own language. Which they obviously enjoyed because there's a whole lot of laughing, hooting and hollering...

Double Elimination

Next day, and it's looking a lot smaller. Well, it's still mast-high on the outer bowl, but it's funny how quickly your perceptions of what's big change. Also, any wave that sets up well on the →

THE CAPE VERDE EXPERIENCE

It's 11 o'clock, the day after the event. The taxi driver turns the radio on just in time for the hourly news bulletin:

Pip. Pip. Pip. Pip. Piiiiiiip. Da-da-da-daaa-da-da-daaa.

"Bom Dia. Josh Angulo..."

Yep, it's still the headline story on the Cape Verde radio network. It's the biggest thing that's happened to these islands since the Portuguese first landed here in 1460. Not only has their little pile of mid-Atlantic rock, sand and salt been recognised to have World Cup potential, but the event was won by someone with CV on their sail. OK, Josh is about as authentic CV as Greg Ruzedski is a Brit, but who cares? Everything here is imported anyway, and Josh has at least been living here for the best part of a decade. And he's put these islands on the map, big-time. To the islanders he's totally the man. The whole town was buzzing on Saturday night; Josh came home from the event at the head of a hootin' hollerin' motorcavalcade; you could hear it approaching from miles away. Really, the event could not have been scripted better. Watch out for a generation of Cape Verdean babies called Josh. And rest assured that the contract has already been signed for next year's event – the local government would probably have been lynched had they not!





BOARDS MAGAZINE SUPER-SESSION



The evening after the first full day of competition, we were back in our apartment eulogising over the pix. The tragedy was that in 24 hours it would all be over – we've got the world's best sailors all in one place for the next 10 days with the world's best conditions, but PWA contest rules state that a wave event can only have one double elimination. Once that was finished ... nothing.

So it wasn't long before the idea of sponsoring our own Super-Session arose. I think, to be honest, we'd have paid for it out of our own pockets anyway, there was that much desire to really see these guys cut loose absolutely no-holds-

barred in these conditions. But the magazine bosses were quick to say an official yes, as indeed were the event organisers, and thus the BOARDS Magazine SuperSession was on. One hour on the water, everybody out together, and the biggest move wins. (Prizes also for 2nd and 3rd).

Oh boy, what an hour it was. Having all the sailors on the water together meant that the action was just non-stop; hardly a wave went unriden, whatever size it was. There was an almost continuous stream of sailors and kit coming in over the rocks – indeed, I must confess to some personal cringing at the sight of at least \$5000 worth of masts and sails trashed in pursuit of our paltry \$1000...

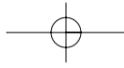
The wind was so offshore that it was seriously hard to do anything off-the-lip – but it wasn't stopping them trying. Several sailors were going for back loops but the updraft rushing off the waveface just kept denying them the chance to complete the rotation. Eventually Victor Fernandez got the closest, and took the 3rd prize, although at the price of three trips over the rocks. There were also plenty of forwards, pushies, 360s, Robby Swift going for goitas, and – *quelle surprise* – Ricardo Campello going for double-forwards off-the-lip. Damn near nailing them too. Ricardo's a naughty boy, it must be said. If he saw a wave he wanted, he'd get on it – whether or not anybody else was already there. It didn't always work for him, sometimes he'd basically get shut out for the whole way in, but other times he'd just simply ignore the other person and set up for his section, in what looked like an extremely irritating fashion. Not necessarily the way to win friends and influence people! But it was certainly a great hour of spectator sport. Loops, goitas, ponches, 360s, and some *huuuuuuuuge* aerials. The strength and focus required to land aerials at Ponta Preta is illustrated when even the master of the one-handed smack himself, Josh Angulo, didn't dare lift a finger from his boom during official competition. But in today's do-or-die spirit, Marcilio Browne from Brazil had the nerve to hang one off during a sizeable hit off a chunky peak (over water about 8 inches deep!) which was definitely the winning move. It was a really exciting, really enjoyable and really breathtaking hour of pretty much non-stop action.

outer bowl tends to be a bit of a one-hit wonder (but jeez are they getting some wondrous hits!?) Whereas it's the smaller waves that are actually holding together and walling right through to the inside. The swell is definitely in its final phase now – in-between the sets it's *really* flat out there. Flat like you could turn up and be tempted to go out for a bit of freeriding; you wouldn't even realise it was a wave location. (Although you'd get one helluva shock later.)

Ironically, although it's smaller, there's a lot more people going onto the rocks today because it's breaking closer in, and your chances of getting away from a wipe-out unscathed have dropped from about 5% to a big fat zero. If you fluff your top turn or aerial then two seconds later you are on the rocks, end of story. There's just a brutal inevitability about it.

And the crashes come thick and fast. It seems like there's nearly always at least one mangled rig drifting around just off the rocks, and often two or three people getting worked or doing the rock-ride. This is because people are going for it so much. The only way you're going to get through your heats is by pushing it to the absolute limit. And seeing as hardly any of these guys have ever sailed conditions like this before, it's a painfully kit-consuming procedure to find out where those limits are. I mean, we watch Alex Mussolini take a wave way too close in; there's no way he's got enough room to link through, he's just metres away from the rocks – so what does he do? Well, not what you or I would do, I feel pretty confident in saying. He digs in hard, punches it up really vertically and thumps a massive aerial off-the-lip. Came down almost directly on the beach – if the wind hadn't been so offshore he'd probably have landed in the audience. It was an absolutely *insane* idea – reminded me of Mr T (Robert Teriitehau) at his craziest in Bercy. At least it didn't take him long to get him and his (miraculously unscathed!) kit ashore. It must have been ankle-deep water where he crashed...

Talking of aerials... There had been some amazing ones yesterday, but two in particular stood out for me. In Scott McKercher's semi-final he set up perfectly at the bottom of a mast-and-a-half-high, absolutely sculpted, smooth face, turns and hits the mother of all aerials; I'd say definitely the highest I saw that day – figures of around 60' high were being bandied about. Sadly, he landed just fractionally too far back; onto the wave but with his weight behind the top, and he slipped off the back. If he'd just been able to project a few centimetres further forward, he'd have made it, and to my mind thus definitely reached the finals. Thus is a man's fate determined. (Not that Scotty looks that beat-up about it though. He's standing on the rocks beside me with a huge grin watching the action. "*Best ever, mate – best ever!*" he says about 30 times every minute.)



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“ Kauli could have won it – from what we’d seen in previous heats, he was the more complete sailor... ”

And then there was the one by Jason Polakow, which must have been one of the longest hanging aerials I’ve ever seen. With these fast waves and such offshore winds, the uprush of air in front of the wave is just ridiculous so the sailor – if he gets it right – can just hang there forever, literally soaring on the draught. Polakow must have been suspended in space for a good three seconds; it was certainly long enough for the ripple of excitement to run right along the beach, and everyone to look round to see what the hooting was about, and get their own fix on it. He didn’t manage to land it back onto the wave either, but still, it was damn impressive.

However, today it’s a bit windier – and a bit more offshore too, so the waves are even smoother than yesterday, if that’s possible. It all comes together to make this *The Day of Big Aerials*. And the twelfth heat of the day was the ultimate aerial showdown. Levi Siver, Scott McKercher, Alex Mussolini and Ross Williams. (Ross has already advanced through two rounds today, and is looking good for the top 10. With his excellent performance in the Aloha Classic too, he’s now second only to Nik Baker in the *Britain’s Best Wavesailor* listings.)

Anyway, these guys are all firing. Alex Mussolini is really spectacular today. He’s perhaps a bit of a one-trick pony; his waveriding isn’t stand-out, but his aerials are definitely getting the crowd’s attention. He’s getting as much height as anyone and good forward projection too – *really* good projection. If you can make major height in this seriously

offshore environment **and** land in the flats out in front of the wave you’ve done pretty good! He’s had a few of these already in this heat and must be feeling pretty pleased with himself – but this place can make you and break you in the same minute. Perhaps just slightly overconfident now, he comes in real close and on a very critical section goes for a wave 360 – the wave’s having none of it though, it just swats the rig out of his hands and ejects him over the back, taking his kit straight in on to the rocks. In the blink of an eye, Mussolini goes from ripping it up with style to finding himself alone in the middle of the ocean while his kit is high and dry 100m away. This place really takes no prisoners. So Alex has to swim ashore, bodysurf in over the rocks, scramble up them and then endure the leg-sapping 300m stumble and sprint back to the launching area carrying some or all of his kit, fight his way back out over the shorebreak, and then an on-the-plane / off-the-plane wallow and wobble back through the impact zone, back to the line-up. The physical fitness required for this sort of competition is just unbelievable... The only good thing is that these guys are all so experienced at coming in over the especially sharpened rocks at Ho’okipa, that landing over these smooth rounded boulders is actually a doddle to them, even if it looks horrific to the uninitiated spectators. The fact that the worst injuries from the total of 50+ rock-rides during the event was a cut foot says it all.

But then the perfect set arrives: Four identical waves – and four riders poised to take them.

First up it’s Alex Mussolini. He takes the drop, cranks it up to the lip and knocks out yet another one of his trademark high floaty ones. Lands it cleanly in the flats. Carries on riding, but in complete unison everyone’s head has swivelled back around to the right, to pick up Levi Siver, who’s lining up on the next wave in the set. He bottom turns in exactly the same place as Mussolini, hits the lip and *flies* – it’s just as high as the previous aerial but he comes back down into the white water and for a second disappears completely; he really has to wrestle the rig back up into shape, for a heartstopping few moments it doesn’t look like he’s going to make it, but he does – *fantastic*. He carries on riding, but...

On the third wave, it’s Ross. His aerial is higher still, and it’s a really smooth landing back onto the wave face. *Veeeeery* nice. He carries on riding, but...

It’s Scott on the fourth wave, and his aerial is the biggest of them all, with the most *perfect* landing, rejoining right in the sweet spot on the waveface just in front of the lip at absolutely full speed – it’s just *insane*.

Four perfect waves, four perfect aerials, each in exactly the same place, at 15 second intervals. It’s almost too much to cope with – everyone’s laughing in disbelief at what they’ve seen, just looking at each other and uttering random swearwords. This is simply as good as it gets...

There’s so much more to tell, but if I write too much there won’t be any room for the pix. So I’m going to sign off with two final tales from →

Caption ??? ??? ???
 ??? ??? ??? ??? ??? ???
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BRITAIN'S BEST WAVESAILOR





“ JP was putting everything into his sailing, and was taking plenty of punishment as a result... ”



Above Jason Polakow

today – the amazing comeback of Jason Polakow, and the issue of why didn't Kauli win overall... JP first. It's a long hard route to come back through the double elimination, but JP was definitely on a mission today. On fire, he worked his way up through four heats (the last two consecutive) to then go into the sail-off against Levi Siver for the right to challenge the top four places. Sadly, this is where a double elimination goes off the boil a bit for the spectators. It's down to two sailors on the water in each heat, with a near half-hour break in-between to allow the heat winner to rest before getting back out there for the next one. So there's an awful lot of waiting around. No real way around this, but it does defuse the tension rather. However, JP needed as much rest time as he could get. He was putting *everything* into his sailing, and was taking plenty of punishment as a result. He beat Levi, then Nik, and finally faltered against Kevin Pritchard – by which time (that's *seven* 25-minute heats) he could hardly stand. In his last few heats he was regularly having to stop and shake cramp out of his arms, he'd been over the rocks more times than we could remember and gone through his entire stash of sails plus a few from other team-mates (and, much to Neil Pryde's irritation, a few top secret 2008 prototypes as well). Six trashed rigs in all. I saw him just before his heat with Nik and he was frantically taking on water, he looked absolutely shattered; ten years older.

And Jason's reckoned by all to be one of the fittest guys on the Tour. But he was just desperate to get back out there, because *"it's the best day's sailing of my life..."*

Anyway, for the record, Pritchard's successful defence of his third place against Polakow's charge meant that he now got the chance to challenge Josh Angulo for second, but was comprehensively routed by an absolutely on-fire Josh, who got the best waves, hit the biggest sections and logged some amazing air-time, including one awesome arch-backed aerial. Not that KP was shabby by any means, but Josh was absolutely on it. So that meant Josh could challenge Kauli for first place. Which he did – and won, totally convincingly (primarily because Kauli spent most of the heat swimming, in particular after a major error of judgement when he took off so deep on the huge outside bowl that the entire section came down on his head, and absolutely mangled him). So then they had to sail again for the overall decider. Josh again ripped, showing us at last his famed one-handed top turn, but it was at least somewhat closer, in that Kauli did get two waves this time (as opposed to Josh's eight) and rode them really well. Well enough to cause a split decision amongst the judges – but it was in favour of Josh. Which is probably just as well, since there would have been a near riot if Kauli *had* won – from the understandably partisan crowd's point of view there was only ever one winner. The fans saw Josh rip half a dozen waves apart, loving

those trademark Angulo aerials just a few metres away from where they were sitting. The other bloke got two waves and did a lot of swimming. How could *he* possibly win? But I guess, when you saw what it meant to the island, the islanders, and let's not forget the future of this event too – the script-writers got it right. So Cape Verde's resident champion became the Cape Verde Champion, and the party really began in earnest...

Personally, I think it was a shame we didn't see Kauli at his best in the final. He could have won it – from what we'd seen in previous heats, he was the more complete sailor. But he simply didn't seem to be out there in event-winning mode today. As said earlier, his sailing is soul-powered. He wants to ride waves, and he selects his kit accordingly. So he was out there on the wrong kit – by his own choice. The right kit when he did finally get on the wave maybe, but not the right kit to win a contest. He was clearly under-gunned; we didn't see him planing once in either of the finals. It takes him a good 5 minutes to get back out into the line-up. In a 25 minute heat, that's a long time. More importantly, he didn't have the power to get out of trouble on the inside, hence all the swimming.

But he still almost pulled it off anyway. And he got tubed.

It was an event where pretty much everyone got what they wanted.

I'd suggest you book your tickets early for next year. ☺



