

GPS and Racing.

Hello Everyone,

This is a letter surrounding a new idea for Formula racing that I'm trying to get going. Right now I'm asking everyone to please take some time to read this over and give any input that you might have that could help it. Also forward this on to anyone else that you think could be interested in it. If you have any ideas to add to this list for possibilities then please send them back to me and I can add them to the list. As some of you have already heard about and possibly seen at the PWA AGM in Sylt I have been exploring the idea GPS racing for Formula windsurfing which could also move on to Slalom and Speed as well. I think it is an excellent idea which if set up and marketed properly could bring a whole new level of spectators and sponsorships to our sport for all racing disciplines, but I think it would have the biggest impact for Formula racing. As we all know that Formula is very difficult for spectators to watch, and has been declining lately, (I would say mainly due to this fact,) then this might be just what we need to stop that and make the sport that we love so much a more world renowned sport and give a lot more of us a better chance to actually earn a living doing it.

I have been doing a lot of sailing in San Diego lately and one of the local racers Robert Van came up with the idea to have some of us wear a Garmin Foretrex 201 GPS unit during some of the local races. And then after racing each day to download the tracks off of each GPS unit and then post them on the web so anyone could go home and watch each of our races. When I got home one day and checked it out I thought it was pretty cool to watch.

Go to www.sandiegowindsurfing.homestead.com/ and click on one of the GPS races at the bottom of the page. Now keep in mind when you are watching this, that this is just a very basic simple idea. He didn't spend a lot of time or money on it either. Also imagine when you are watching it that there are 30-100+ different guys instead of just 3 or 4. Keep in mind also that the races in a bay area with green land surrounding us is in a very small bay that the conditions are extremely gusty and there is a lot of slogging then planning and back again.

Now check out all the different things that you can do on this basic version. Here are just a couple of the main points.

-You can speed it up or slow it down to any speed.

-You can instantly zoom in and out.

-You can select to see all the footprints to see all the tracks behind and in front, or without.

-You can select any racer and center the screen on him to always follow that racer.

-By colored tracks you can see the speed that each one is going at any different point.

If you explore it a bit you can see that there really are a lot of basic ideas on it.

I think this is something that could be greatly improved upon.

This is an idea that can be started and then constantly evolve with new ideas and upgraded graphics and designs.

Here are some ideas below just to get the ball rolling.

Some of the ideas below might be a little too much for now or might not be the properly written idea and could be modified, but technology constantly evolves and over time nothing is impossible. And with any new ideas that anyone else can add we could make this into a great thing.

Possible ideas to have on the GPS website while racing

-If there are 100+ racers in a race there could be a lot of confusion. So you need to be able to zoom in very close so that every board becomes an individual.

-When zoomed in close enough right below each board it shows their sail number and possibly their main sponsors under that.

-If a person sitting at home wants to keep an eye on their particular favorites, they can select one, two, three, etc. so that those ones are always highlighted to be able to watch them more closely.

-When a board is selected, there could be a page on the right side of the screen that gives all the details of each racer on what equipment he is using, his sponsors, his website, and any other information about him that could be interesting to people on the web.

-Another thing that could be under each racer or on another window when he is selected is a speedometer and maybe even VMG so that viewers can see exactly how fast he is going at any given point. Now this speedometer could be digital or like a car speedometer. This way a viewer can select two or three guys next to each other and watch and compare their speeds.

-At the end of each individual race there could be highlights for that race listed say for example who hit the top speed upwind! Who hit the top speed downwind! Who had the best upwind VMG! Who had the best downwind VMG! Who had the fastest tacks and jibes! There could be any list of highlights for each individual race and even each day, and then maybe for the overall competition. I'm sure that there are tons of technical amateur racers out there that would love to look all sorts of different stats whenever they have the chance.

Possible ideas for graphics

-Each individual racer can be shown as a little windsurfer that is being looked straight down upon showing which side the sail is on.

-Obviously with 100 racers on the course showing all the tracks would be a mess. So viewers could select to show only certain racers tracks.

-If we are racing close to the beach, it can show a clear picture of the beach and land and other possible obstructions that we are sailing near to.

-Show the wind direction and maybe even the current and wave direction.

What this could do for our sport

-Bring every windsurf race to a whole world of viewers. So that anyone in the world can watch every race either live or at the end of the day when they come home from work and are interested to watch that days racing.

-Making it much more exciting to viewers and even ourselves as all of us could go home at the end of the day and watch our own races and see what the other guys did compared to us and what we might have done wrong or right during each race maybe even getting each of us even more excited and motivated about going out there and racing.

-Give event sponsors and individual racers sponsors much more coverage to a world wide market.

-Bring in new major sponsors that are looking to impact a world wide market like for tour sponsors especially. Event sponsors and tour sponsors would get lots of coverage on the website.

-As this is marketed to more viewers' world wide, it can start to impact people that aren't windsurfers at all, but might start to enjoy watching it. This in turn could get more people interested in windsurfing bringing new people into our sport, and making windsurfing a more popular sport to the general public.

-When this happens there are more end consumers bringing more money into racing and windsurfing in general!

What needs to be done

-The formula windsurfing industry needs to work together Formula Windsurfing, IWA, Euro Cup, ISAF, PWA etc...and who ever else can have an impact! I know that PWA is not going the route of Formula racing right now and is more focused on slalom but this is something that can be used for slalom as well and who knows, maybe if this does bring Formula to a new level and big organizers are interested in putting on big formula events then I'm sure that the PWA would definitely do this again.

-We need to find someone who knows how to set it up and who can have all the equipment together that an organizer would pay an extra fee for him to come to each event to run the whole thing, whether it is a PWA event, Euro Cup event, Grand Prix event or even a national event.

-Or find a company like a GPS company that is interested in being paid to set it up or even sponsoring it per event.

-If a GPS company is found that would sponsor it like this Navman thing in Maui, then they could provide all the GPS units at each competition that they are working at. Or if not then each racer that wants to be seen on this website racing can buy themselves a personal unit. It would just need to be established which particular unit they need to have. This isn't very expensive for each racer as say for example the Garmin Foretrex 201 unit that we are using here in San Diego costs only 120-130 usd's on EBay. And getting everyone to purchase one would not be a problem as I know that all the top guys would immediately get one for sure. And then any other racer that didn't buy one, as soon as they see the racing at the end of the day for sure they would want to get themselves on there.

-Hopefully organizations will start working together on this ASAP but if need be I will propose this in the AGM at the worlds in Australia with any new ideas that have been added by then. I will also make the proposal with the backing of the US Windsurfing Association for Championship rule # 22 to be modified to allow electronic GPS units to be able to be used during Championship racing.

I am looking forward to any input that any of you might have.

Thank you all very much for your time in reading this.

Best Regards
Devon Boulon
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