

Horses for courses

Deciphering the world of beginner equipment

Buying boats and boards for centres used to be a relatively simple affair, with a small and steady range of products and uses to which they were put. The questions are: are we still teaching the same sessions as ten years ago, and what is the best kit for the job? The simple answers are, NO and there are many options!

We tasked Sam Ross, RYA Windsurfing Trainer and OnBoard Officer, and Simon Winkley, RYA Coach/Assessor with taking a look at the current demands and opportunities for teaching windsurfing and dinghy sailing, and what equipment is available.

First, Sam looks at windsurfing kit.

Boards

Board design has changed considerably in the last ten years, especially at the entry level. Boards have become shorter and wider, and cover a larger ability range, enabling more people than ever before to give the sport a go.

Sails

With lighter modern rigs, we are now teaching people to windsurf from a much younger age, as well as a wider range of adults. It is possible, with the right kit, to see incredibly rapid improvement into the intermediate stages.

Both sail and sailor sizes are the main two factors when selecting entry level equipment. We now have access to great small sails for young sailors and small adults, but they won't work with some boards.

Volume

In terms of the sailor's size, we should relate this to board volume and width. With width, the wider the board the more stable it will be. But remember, a very short board that is very wide won't go upwind very well!

A rough, but good starting guide on volume for the different levels of adult is:

- » Beginner: 210 litres plus
- » Intermediate: 170 litres plus

Youth sailing is slightly harder to have a guide as it is very size and age dependent.

So, how have the manufacturers dealt with this? Most have gone for training boards that fit into three rough categories:

SMALL - Suitable for youth and very small adult beginners, as well as being a good progression board for most adult intermediates. They tend to be around 150-180 litres in volume and 70-80cm in width.

MEDIUM - Designed for some adult beginners and larger youths, but also makes a great board for intermediate use. Around 180-205 litres in volume and 75-85cm wide.

LARGE - Suitable for most adult beginners and those looking for more stability. They tend to be up to about 235 litres and over 80cm in width.

Construction

The Primo's biggest asset was its durability. Due to running a wider range of sessions at most centres, the need for durable boards is as important as ever. The words Sport, HRS, AST, ASA are used to explain a resistant skinned board which offers good durability. Tuffskin, EVA and soft deck packages offer the same construction but with a softer deck underfoot and impact protection for the sailor. A couple



level, you can see that a variety of equipment is crucial to a centre's success. With the generally shorter, lighter and more manoeuvrable boards, hardcore durability may be less of a concern than it was originally. But for those centres with incredible durability challenges there are now great boards available in super tough constructions.

Remember...even a couple of different size boards at your centre will add to your flexibility and the ongoing success of your students' windsurfing careers.

Dinghies

And now Simon Winkley takes a look at the current range of dinghies.

Bray Lake Watersports is a commercial operation located on a small lake in Berkshire. Here the Topaz Omega is used for beginner courses as they find the boat to be very durable, being roto-moulded, with an open cockpit for an instructor plus three adults. They use the smaller Dacron training sails as a less powerful option to the original Mylar sails. As students

of manufacturers offer something that goes up against the Primo for durability, with Armourtech from Starboard and Bic's polyethylene board.

Here are some suggested boards to take a look at, in no particular order: Starboard RIO, Fanatic Viper, BIC Beach, Goya Surf, Tabou Coolrider, AHD Zen.

From the boards above and given the current range of sessions we deliver, even at low



progress, this boat is used to introduce more advanced skills on a Seamanship Skills or Sailing with Spinnakers course. Their choice of single hander is the Topaz Uno which is used for children and adults. They would like a bigger version of this type of boat to become available for larger adults or those with limited agility.

Loch Venachar Sailing Club in central Scotland is a busy volunteer-run training centre. The club recently used a grant to purchase two new Hartley Wayfarers, a boat that they find to be robust, stable and forgiving. They recently obtained two used Laser IIs for very little money which they use for their junior programme. Their fleet choice today reflects their move away from traditional wooden boats to reduce maintenance time.

Other dinghies such as the RS Vision, Laser 2000, Bahia, Topaz Magno, Bosun, Laser Vago and Comet double handers are found across a range of centres as beginner and progression boats – also suited to hire and ‘pay and play’ schemes. The RS Feva and Tera, Topper, Topaz Vibe, Laser Bug and training Optimist are commonly used for youth delivery. The classic Laser, with three rig options, is found just about everywhere.

So what should we look for in a boat? Factors such as cost, size, construction, robustness, appearance, cockpit layout, sail plan, performance and suitability for location need to be carefully considered. The sensible approach is to get your team together to discuss what you want from the boat. Then investigate what other clubs and centres are using and see what the manufacturers can offer in terms of equipment, pricing and support. Demo boats may be available to try before you buy.

A final consideration may be to decide upon an on-going programme of replacement to prevent the fleet from getting too tired. This approach enables a RYA centres to stay ahead of the game, to make fleet changes from time to time and to provide the best possible boats for their training.

Videos up for grabs

- » Research shows that 86% of web users prefer to watch video than read text.
- » Videos are 50 times more likely to rank in page 1 on Google.
- » Videos help viewers engage with a subject on an emotional level.
- » Videos are proven to reduce abandonment and increase dwell time on a page.

Want to liven up your website with some video?

We have used some of our own footage and clips from the ilovesailing Facebook competition to produce a range of very short, fun promotional videos which can carry a promotional banner for your centre.

How can your centre and club use these?

Use one or more of these videos to reach new customers/members and enthuse existing ones and their friends to go sailing. Use the video on:

- » your centre’s website/YouTube Channel/Facebook page
- » links through E-newsletters/



- » electronic media channels
- » communications with potential clients/businesses.

It is free to the first one hundred RYA dinghy and windsurfing centres. All you need to do is:

1. Pick the video(s) you would like to use out of the following list (maximum three per centre).
 - » Video A. Start Windsurfing.
 - » Video B. Intermediate Windsurfing.
 - » Video C. Intermediate Windsurfing.
 - » Video D. Start Dinghy Sailing.
 - » Video E. Intermediate Dinghy Sailing.
2. Email your video choice (A – G) and your centre’s logo to go on the opening credit and the text for the final credit (maximum of twenty words) to ben.reid@rya.org.uk

It’s as easy as that!

RYA Volvo Dinghy Show 2012

A great success

8,500 people attended this year’s RYA Volvo Dinghy Show, in association with Yachts and Yachting and Suzuki. Dinghy enthusiasts came from across the country and as far away as Alaska.

Being the only show in the world dedicated to dinghy sailing, the weekend offered visitors a chance to check out new boats, redesigned boats, kit, gear and books, as well as pick up some top tips from some of the very best dinghy sailing experts around.

Visitors mingled with some of the sport’s elite sailors including Olympic gold medallist Paul Goodison and Team GB 2012 sailors Hannah Mills, Saskia Clark, Stuart Bithell and Luke Patience, as well as a host of past Olympians and Paralympians.

From hard core racers to cruisers, families and youngsters the show had something for

everyone. Main stage talks attracted big crowds, as did the hands on coaching sessions where visitors got to experience everything from rolling around on a fitness ball to improve core stability

to the always popular rig tuning session. Younger visitors were involved in a Treasure Hunt and posted good luck messages to our Olympic hopefuls.

The show was a great success for the exhibiting sailing clubs, associations and retailers.

To view photos from the show see www.facebook.com/RYAVolvoDinghyShow

See you there next year, 2-3 March 2013.

