

I have just returned from competing in the South American Formula Windsurfing Championships. The regatta was held on a Fernando de Noronha- a marine sanctuary located 300 miles off the furthest eastern tip of Brazil in the Atlantic ocean. It is probably one of the most beautiful places I have ever visited. The island is undeveloped and host only 400 visitors at time in addition to less than a few thousand residents. Eco tourism is the main industry there with visitors exploring the natural beauty of the island, off and in the water. We managed to see an unbelievable amounts of new birds- all a strange evolution of sorts; sea turtles dropping their eggs on the beach on the full moon; hundreds of amazing colorful fish in secluded bays while snorkeling; schools of playful dolphins swimming in front of our bow wake; and lizards abound on the land. We raced in the late morning from 11am- 1:30 pm and had the rest of the day to make siestas on the beach and explore the island. Alex, and I made the trip from San Francisco where we met Fernando, Eduardo and Ron from Miami. The rest of the south American fleet was very competitive and a challenge and joy to sail among. There was an opening ceremony where I thought I would faint when I saw the buffet spread of at least 20 different fishes, paiai, fresh vegetables and fruits, fish stew, sushi, and an equal yet just as amazing desert spread with fruits, ice cream, chocolates, cakes, coffees and liquors. The race committee as did a great job as well, running 3 races a day 5-10 min off shore. Below is a race report from the regatta. Accompanying photos can be found at www.stevebodner.com under regatta reports.

Day1- 2 practice races today as all of the competitors equipment has not arrived yet from charter flight to island. At skippers meeting, everyone agreed to wait a day to start regatta....a really nice thing to see especially with a competitive fleet. The true spirit of windsurfing.

I got out and find seas swell and 12-16k light breeze. 11.0 and R13 68 feels good in the conditions! Finish mid fleet. Happy with speed and angle. We are racing on the lee side of the island but the wind accelerates down the slope of the terrain and is quite gusty. Near the right shore, there is a big right light from the land but the air is unstable. The swell is also very particular making it so that on port tack you need to really ride the wave, get speed and climb back up. A lot of the guys aren't climbing back up and it's a chance to climb after the leeward mark at the bottom of the course. The upwind mark is set pretty close and the races are about 17-25 min with 2 laps.

Day 2-

Race 1: Having some trouble getting my bottom cam on my f2005 sail to stay on while rigging on the beach so I decide to sail last years 11.9 at last min. I am the last to go out from the beach and get to the starting line 30 sec before gun. I started with 10 others on port ducking most of fleet. Wind is light. Fleet is anxious. General recall! Next start, I manage a decent spot $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down and sail the first beat with clear air towards the left side. I tack over but am already at the layline. Boards on right look to have gained a lot. Downwind, it's a parade to the right side. My speed doesn't feel great but I pick up a few boards gybing early and working the puffs down to round inside at the leeward mark. Back upwind, I keep good angle on port and sail to right side with a light breeze. Slow to accelerate of tack and loose 2 boards. I round in around 15th. Downwind,

things are light again and I get stuck gybing to early and have to double gybe while those who took it wide come in with speed and walk away on the rounding. Last upwind to the finish, I tack sail with a group to the right and tack, thinking start finish line is same but realize it's set to the right of start line. I cross on port but lose 8 boards who came in strong on the layline. First big lesson- look at course diagram before going out!

Race 2: Cant remember much details about the race except that I got the right sooner and that paid off. 68 fin seems a bit draggy off the breeze. Finish better no big mistakes.

Race 3: Wind had gone right more and lighter. My plan was to go right as soon as possible so I started my line up a bit slower as to start at boat side. Unfortunately, the left over chop from the fleet going by with the wind shadow of the RC boat made accelerating off the line harder to do. A late port tacker decided to try to cross but didn't make it and we got tangled up. Now ever slower death on the line! Second big lesson: Avoid collisions at all cost! I now had 2 choices: Try to get my head back in the game and pass one boat at a time or think negative thoughts and not see the big picture. I managed to pick off a few boards each leg with some smart choices and avoided any more big mistakes. Keeping speed up was key to passing people as well as seeing what was happening in front of me. All the fleet was sailing into a right hole so I decided to stay in the breeze up the middle of the course but got stuck in several holes and stayed buried to the finish in the back of the fleet. Overall, I was happy with performance but think that with less makes I can move up in fleet as there is a big middle pack of 20-30 boards. Finishes are 18, 23, 35 (which I think I have been scored wrong for and file an inquiry)

Day 3- Lighter winds but I decide to switch to r13 64cm fin for better speed. I still missed the downwind layline and a few boards get by. I managed better starts today and get off the line clean and room to tack over to the right side early. Key is to watch for puffs coming down course. Quite a few boards get stuck in the light wind near the shore. Last upwind, I overstand by letting a guy just behind and to windward sail me to the corner and 3-4 boards get me.

Race 2: Fleet is early to the pin and congestion making me tack back and fight trough the fleet on port in bad air and water. A few boards collide at the pin end. Clear air is king and I get stuffed, rounding top mark deep

Race 3: light winds, finish mid pack. No big mistakes.

Overall, getting my head in game...still need to find better place on line and call downwind laylines better and not relay on other boards to gybe.

My best start have been getting around boat around 1:30 and sailing down the line just below the fleet looking for a spot on the line, usually near the mid to pin end. Holding my spot on the line and trying to accelerate hasn't worked well. Acceleration is key. Pinch off the guys around you early and punch out!

Day 4: still light to medium breeze on the lee side of the island. I decide to go back to 68 cm fin and move mast track back to compensate. This tuning feels better as I have better speed off the wind with less wetted surface. 2004 11.9 feels good but I can tell the

difference between this years sails and last already. Next year, I will include a big sail in the quiver for international regattas.

Race1- slow to accelerate off line as only a few boards escape. I immediately tack and try to get a lane out. With a short upwind mark, there wasn't a lot of opportunity to catch up but one board at a time. Let the others make mistakes.

Race 2- Good start off the line and able to tack and clear a lot of the fleet to get to the right early where I find a good rightie to tack on and get me to the top mark in decent position. Off the wind, I am on the pace but hold out too long to gybe on the layline as 3 boards sneak in on a puff to the mark. Back upwind with the strong port swell, most of the fleet was footing for speed. I took every opportunity to stay up and although a bit slower, the extra angle helped at the end of the reach. Ron rounded just behind and climbed well above me tacking in front of me at the starboard layline. It was lighter up there so we really had to work. I had my sail bagged out all the way, hiking out on my toes, and shoulders fully extended. I kept this up for a few minutes and really pumped hard near the mark to get around clean while Ron and the other boards around had to double tack. Downwind, it was just as much of a work out, staying out of the harness and pumping whenever there was a lull. At the leeward mark I was looking well around 7th and kept the pace till the layline where I noticed Ron had climbed to the inside of me and had tacked just in front of me. We both pumped to get up on a plane and crossed the finish line with in a few seconds. The small lesson learned here was no matter if there are no boards around you, sail as if there were and always keep up the pace, finishing just a few seconds behind Ron for 8th place was my best finish but I could have gotten 1 more spot if I had just pumped a bit harder or gotten around a tack faster. Everything counts in this game!

Race 3- still light with lots of holes, 10-15k here seems much lighter than in the SF Bay. Speed was really important as well as clear air. I got off the line well and managed a 13th- another good performance putting me up a few positions for the day- ending the regatta in 19th place.

Although I would have liked to finished stronger, at the end of the day, you are racing against yourself and no one else. The other boards just provide obstacles for you around the course. You hope to learn a lesson in each race and ultimately not have to relearn the same lesson more than once. This was a great regatta and by the last few races, I had my head in the game and was sailing smart. Now if only I could start off this way and keep going strong throughout the regatta.

Day 5- Long distance race- top 30 finishers were invited to do the long distance race around the island but only 15 choose to do so. We had a safety meeting and were reassured that in a breakdown, other sailors should come and stay near the broken board so that the safety boat could make a rescue. On the windward side of the island there would be 10-20 ' swells making spotting a downed sailor hard to do from a boat. Other obstacles around the island were the reef on the windward side, the large cliff mountain at the far end of the island, making a good ½ mile wind shadow and the current running to across the ocean to Africa! No worries at all I thought contemplating the trip!

I decided to play it conservative and rigged the 10.0 as the 11.0 was out of commission and the 11.9 seemed too big in case it got windy for a 2 hour race. We started just outside the port with a large group of spectators on the rocks cheering us on. It was similar to a

slalom start were we took off on broad reach. From there it was navigating through the moored fishing and tour boats in the harbor. A lot of guys just behind me failed to clear the excess anchor lines floating on the surface and took an early spill. The top 4-5 boards took off and I was in the middle group fighting around the tip of the island. Once around the swell increased as well as some wind. I found myself moving my harness lines back to a comfortable position early on so I could stay sheeted in with equal pressure. There were a lot of flying fish around me, soaring a few hundred feet at a time just a few feet above the surface. They would hit a swell and either submerge in the ocean or rebound and shoot off another direction. Really cool to see! The swell was getting bigger as we turned the corner and started heading down the long side of the island. It was actually quite confused as it rebounded from the windward side of the island back at the incoming swell- something I know well from sailing on the city front and under the gate. This time though I was under powered with the 10.0. Better safe than sorry I said to myself as the middle group was slowly slipping away. We got a knock as we approached the reef and I really didn't want any close calls with the breaking ocean wave so I tacked early. I was still around a few boards so keeping the pace up was ok. The other boards tend to keep you motivated. It was then I went over the bars and in the light wind was slow to get going again and the fleet was gone. I was sailing the rest of the race with out anyone close and kind of fell into some lazy habits of going into the chicken strap for control instead of pushing it and staying outside for speed. I was enjoying the scenery of some amazingly rugged cliffs and inaccessible beaches on this side of the island. As I approached the far end of the island, I began to gybe back to get closer and saw Ron struggling near the shore as he had fallen on a gybe. I did a few extra gybes as not to separate myself from him in case he went down as I didn't see any rescue boats around. We were about to navigate around the tip of the island where there was a few hundred feet cliff making a big wind shadow. I saw a few boards stuck further out, not planning but decided to risk it and stay inside. Immediately I passed 3-4 boards and my head was back in the game. Never count yourself out no matter how far you think you are behind. I was $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around the island and back in the middle of the fleet. I amazingly planned past the group with my 10.0 and got a head of them and suddenly disaster struck. Well more so I struck disaster as I went flying off my board after colliding with what was something very solid that knocked my fin completely out the box. I reached underneath the board to find nothing there at all. I knelt on my board and waved my arms to draw the attention of the other boards around me. Fortunately Ron stopped and continued to sail around me drawing the attention of the rescue boat. I de rigged on the water knowing that my race was over but that me and my equipment were safe. It was a slow ride in on the rescue boat but I realized it's better safe than sorry and not on my way drifting across the Atlantic to Africa!