



GulfBreeze – Bird Island Basin Speed Windsurfing

For years the fastest non-motorized water craft was a sailboard and speed sailing continues to be a unique focus for several local amateur windsurfers. Bird Island Basin (BIB) is the favored location although speed sailors can be at a disadvantage because a weed fin is often required rather than a highly refined speed fin. Often thought of as a flat water location, BIB is often choppy when the wind is blowing the highest in contrast to a unique speed sailing location, the French Trench, with high wind and smooth water conditions.

Worldwide.....what's the fastest on the water

Since 1972 the World Sailing Speed Record Council (WSSRC) has confirmed speed records of sailing craft on water with one generally accepted measure being the highest average speed on a 500 meter straight one way course.

From 1986-1993 several windsurfers dominated the speed sailing record until an Australian trimaran, Yellow Pages Endeavour, set and held the record from 1993-2004 with a speed of 46.52 knots/hour (kph) or 53.5 miles/hour (mph). Windsurfers once again claimed the speed sailing record for the next five years with the last windsurfing speed sailing record set by Frenchman Anotine Albeau with a speed of 49.09 kph (56.6 mph) in 2008. All windsurfing speed records were at the Saintes Marie de la Mer canal (aka. French Trench) in southern France, a location built specifically for speed sailing.

In 2008, French kitesurfer Alex Caizergues broke years of windsurfer and sailboat records with a 50.57 kph (58.2 mph) run at Luderitz, Namibia, Africa. The most recent world speed sailing record was in 2009 when the French multihull hydrofoil l'Hydroptère hit 51.36 kph (59.1 mph).

Local.....keepin' up with the Jones'

Meg and Bill Jones are from Colorado, began making windsurfing trips here in 1991 and moved to the island in 1995. Meg started windsurfing in 1991, Bill started in 1986 and both enjoyed bay chop and Gulf wave sailing for years. Their curiosity about speed sailing developed and became more competitive along with GPS units. Their 11 year old son Billy's windsurfing is rapidly progressing and he is now using a GPS.

Meg's personal best speed was 38.8 mph at BIB to win the 1994 Worldwinds Speed Challenge. At one point Meg's personal best was also a woman's amateur record. Of course Meg generally satisfies her primary focus, just beat the guys, like placing third overall in the 2009 Worldwinds BBQ Winduro.

Bill has the highest local speed of 42.9 mph at BIB with 6" chop in 35+ mph wind. A few years back, Bill was edged out by Pro windsurfer Jimmy Diaz during the US Open and F-2 Speed Series competition in the CC marina because the Pro's were allowed to sail an hour later than scheduled. The Jones' both use Dennis Parton and F-2 Missile boards with Ezzy and North sails for their speed gear.

Local.....the one with the most toys wins

Bob Conace is from Nyack, New York, a retired long haul truck driver and has been based here on the island since 1994. One of the perks of Bob's truck driving days was getting to spend part of summer at the Columbia River Gorge in Oregon. Bob uses every opportunity to better his speed, computer analysis of GPS tracks, sometimes uses two GPS units and monitors speed results on the internet. He started windsurfing in 1982, and stands out locally because of his wide expanse of boards, sails and other speed gear. Bob currently uses 3 Fanatic and 2 Starboard boards with the latest Sailworks race/speed sails for a wind range of just about anything. Bob's personal best speed is 40.2 mph at BIB and he vows not to stop until he beats Bill Jones's best speed and hits at least 43 mph.

Local.....buy, sell and trade

Frank DeJennas, a retired home builder originally from Austin has lived on the island since 2007. He began windsurfing in 1987, at BIB since 1990 and changes equipment periodically. Currently he primarily uses Starboard and F2 boards with North and Neil Pryde sails. Frank's personal best peak speed is 40.2 mph, higher than his 4th place finish in the 1994 Worldwinds Speed Challenge. Winner of the 2009 Worldwinds BBQ Winduro, he notes that his style is not necessarily speed as much as slalom sailing.

Local.....vintage gear rocks

Robert McGonigle, originally from Abilene, Texas, retired as a shop teacher in San Antonio and has lived over the bridge in town almost forever. Robert first started sailing as a teenager and is one of the local windsurfing pioneers starting in 1980 primarily at BIB. He uses an assortment of gear, much of it considered older designs and manages to be very competitive with most of the other local speed sailors. During the Worldwinds Speed Challenge in 1994 Robert finished 3rd with his personal best 38.6 mph using a 20 year old BIC Rock board. Robert goes through boards, masts and sails fairly often rarely retiring gear until it breaks. He generally uses a newer Sailworks sail and an old and new Mistral Screamer which are used about 50% of the time.

Photos and captions:



Meg Jones blasting at BIB in April, 2006 (photo by Bill Jones)



Bill Jones carving a turn at the end of a speed run at BIB in 2000 (photo by Meg Jones)



Bob Conace at BIB during the Worldwinds annual BBQ July 4, 2009 (photo by ????????)



Frank DeJennas winner of the Worldwinds BBQ Winduro at BIB on July 4, 2009 (photo by Catherine DeJennas)



Robert McGonigle on newest gear at BIB in May, 2009 (photo by Tom Kirk)