

## Kona Racing, Report from the Worlds in Islamorada Florida, 2014



(Kona Fleet, with different sail sizes differentiated by color, at the start line)

Although I have participated in a number of Kona races, including the Worlds in Miami a few years ago, we had never gotten 100 plus Konas together in one place before....this was certainly a unique experience. The question you have to ask is, when WAS the last time we had a 100 person One Design Windsurfing Race of any description in the US? A bunch of the kids we teach at the Miami Yacht Club were at all the huge Techno events in Europe this past summer, including the Worlds with 350+.....but it has been a LONG TIME in the United States.

What was fascinating about this event was the even level of the racing....everyone was going the same speed. Of course the winner seemed to have a little extra squirt....but the winners in all sports do. Although I was only there for one day, every race was the same....wind shifts were a huge deal, getting a good start was a huge deal, mark roundings and positioning on the legs was a huge deal. Hitting laylines correctly was a huge deal. But speed was not such a huge deal because everyone was going the same speed. Normally OD windsurfing events are very weight sensitive....light guys going fast in light wind, heavier guys dominating when it is hammering. Kona is unique this way in that they have the weight breaks for the different sail sizes....smallest people on 6.6, next smallest on 7.4, 8.2, 9.0 and even 9.8 for the bigger guys (see below chart). **What is interesting is that it actually works:** You see every size up at the front, and every size in the back and everywhere in between. It has completely eliminated the weight penalties that have plagued the sport since OD windsurf racing began.....and made for the most even windsurfing racing I have ever been a part of.

The other thing that has changed is younger sailors are quite competitive with their older parents and vice versa. This is unique in windsurfing....Raz Sayre, who won the event, was battling straight up with his dad, Nevin, a longtime windsurfing legend. At 53 years old, I was battling with a couple of the kids I teach at MYC, duking it out in multiple races....even though I am close to 200 and they are 85-120 lbs. The sail size differences, proportional to the weights of the sailors, make it really even. In the lighter winds, they would have crushed me with the same size sail.....and I would have had a huge advantage if I was there on the windier days. But In Kona, everyone is underpowered the same and overpowered the same. And don't forget about the women....they won multiple races OVERALL in the gold fleet and had 3 finishers in the top 11.....because they don't have to be in a pumping contest and can just use their

skill and knowledge. You cannot pump in Kona....you just sail. There is a little gray area currently in the rules but that looks to be getting cleaned up....but for the most part, you just sail. And this lets a really wide range of sailors compete against each other on a very fair basis. Skill, technique and smarts instead of hyperactive aerobic activity masquerading as windsurfing. Everyone likes it too.



Steven Cramer, 14 years old, 95 lbs, 6.6 in 25 knots, first day of racing

The other aspect of it is the simplicity. You have one board, one fin, one rig.....and you are totally even with everyone else. Not "Oh, I hope it's windy so I can be competitive" or "I hope it is light wind so I can plane off before everyone else".....none of this exists in Kona, it's totally even, all the time. The board, while very low tech, works in all conditions very nicely and you can still teach new people on it. Light winds, 1-5, it sails great....no cambers, just full battens.....and it will sail upwind with the dagger up when it is windy like an RS-X, Techno or Prodigy. And for fully lit beam reaching, it is actually pretty fun and easy to gybe due to the round rails. It's not fancy at all.....but it works pretty good all the time. Simplicity is good.....you should not need a giant van full of gear to be a windsurf racer.

The Kona Class solves a lot of problems in windsurf racing.....I know there will be a lot of people who poopoo it because it is kind of low tech (no carbon!)(no cambers!)(no 1500 dollar fins!)(it's got a rubber deck?) But if you want to see more grass roots racing.....it's the way to go. I think most of the people who were at the event would agree that it was the most evenly raced windsurf regatta they had ever attended....more even than any Mistral OD Regatta, more even than any RSX regatta, more even than any Windsurfer or Superlight regatta back in the day. Anyone can join, compete, win AND just have a

board that works for fun sailing and messing around the rest of the time. And they cost less than most Optimists.

**To see it growing like it is, and happening like this, young and old, men and women , all racing together.....what a huge positive for windsurf racing.** 13 countries and 105 competitors in the Florida Keys.....that IS just like the good old days that many remember....but it is here, right now....and growing.

Kona IS the right Formula for expanding windsurf racing to everyone.

### C.2.3 AGE/GENDER/WEIGHT DIVISIONS

#### (a) Men

Weight of the sailor	Sail Size as per G1	Sail Colour
Less than 65 Kg (Light Weight)	6.6 m2	Blue top and trims
65 Kg or more to less than 75 Kg (Light Medium Weight)	7.4 m2	Yellow top and trims
75 Kg or more to less than 85 Kg (Medium Weight)	8.2 m2	Green top and trims
85 Kg to less than 98 Kg (Light-Heavy Weight)	9.0 m2	Red top and trims
98 Kg or more (Heavy Weight)	9.8 m2	Orange top and trims

#### (b) Women

Weight of the sailor	Sail Size as per G1	Sail Colour
Less than 75 Kg	7.4 m2 or smaller	Optional
75 Kg or more to less than 85 Kg (Medium Weight)	8.2 m2	Green top and trims
85 Kg to less than 98 Kg (Light Heavy Weight)	9.0 m2	Red top and trims
98 Kg or more (Heavy Weight)	9.8 m2	Orange top and trims

#### (c) Cadets. Under the age of 15 years old on 31st December of the current year.

Weight of the sailor	Sail Size as per G1	Sail Colour
Any	5.8 m2 or smaller	As per sail



Kona World Champion 2014, Rasmus Sayre of MA, son of Nevin Sayre.

Kona Worlds Action Video by Dasher below

The screenshot shows a Facebook video player interface. The video content is a windsurfing race with many colorful sails on the water. The video player has a progress bar at 0:05 / 1:47 and a comment section on the right. The comment section shows the video title 'Kona ONE Windsurfing' and a description: 'What does a bird see flying over the Kona Worlds 2014 in The Florida Keys? Lighter winds allowed for some aerial imagery.' Below the description are 3,714 views, like/comment/share buttons, and a list of 51 shares. The top comments include:

- Tina Dornelles Dasher great job as usual
- Elena Marotti Way cool video!
- Peggy Genserschlag Interesting perspective!
- Andy Fraden nice Dasher! I have to make it next year!
- Laura Lilyoff It just needs that Irish guy commentating!
- Chris Knudley The opening scene is the best. Beautifully and tantalizingly colorful!

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=824931040897920&set=vb.165556806835350&type=2&theater>

--Jim DeSilva