

Strong Winds

There we went, taking things for granted, thinking that a lot of what we do was obvious to everyone, just because we have always done it that way. On the second day at Portsmouth this year we found that wind was quite strong and blustery, in fact a little too strong in our first slot - I misjudged the strength and we managed to break two kites (one in each of the music ballets).

By the time we got to the second arena demonstration the wind was even stronger and, as team leader, it is my responsibility to decide on which kites to fly and how to set them up.

We like to fly as a team of three as much as we can and Dougie was there to take over in the middle position.

We don't have that big a choice of kite to fly as a team and I usually worry about Marilyn getting pulled over when it really blows but then I noticed that Dougie was struggling as much, if not more!

Leaning In

We didn't have a set of three vented kites at Portsmouth so we had to adapt what we had. There are a couple of things that we can do. The first is to adjust the bridle so that the top of the kite is leaning more forward and 'in' to the wind thus presenting less of its-self full face. This will make the kite react differently, it will increase the speed slightly and we have to be more attentive with landings. Other flyers might also make this adjustment to enable certain tricks.

I was surprised at the number of people who asked us what we had attached to our kites - which is why I am writing this.

Nappy Brakes

Nappies - a device slung between the lines of the kite which collects the wind in the same way as a nappyno, perhaps I won't go there.

A strong wind obviously makes a kite pull harder away from the flier and, with a two line sport kite, it also increases the speed.

It is going to take a better educated person than me to explain the actual dynamics of why the faster the kite goes the more the pull increases but the way I see it is that the more wind there is flowing under the kite the more the speed increases and the more that the speed increases more wind flows under the kite therefore increasing the pull.

Because the nappy drags against the wind slowing the forward momentum, less pull is generated - How's that for an attempt?

Nappies are quite simple to make from gauze and Velcro fastenings. They should be about twice the distance of the measurement between the kite's towing points. I have to say we bought ours from Kite Related Designs (because I don't do fiddly) - They are one of the few places that actually advertise that they make them.

Different widths will have more (or less) effect - we use either 5cm or 15cm. When the wind is particularly troublesome we will use a 5cm strip attached to the stand-offs and flying out the back of the kite as well as a 15cm length at the front between the lines. You may have to make

extensions to the lines to avoid the brakes touching the kite when it is on the ground - it can be pretty annoying when a launch is attempted and the brake is caught under the spine of the kite.

There is another type of brake called a Wah Pad. This is a triangular, usually gauze, brake attached with Velcro at the wide end on the bottom spreader and bungee cord to the top spreader. The use of bungee allows the pad to flex as the wind blusters, increasing and decreasing its effect and making the flight smoother. I credit that idea to Peter Taylor of Air Dynamic Kites.



This photo (*taken by Marilyn*) shows an Air Dynamic T4 fitted with colour coded Wah Pads, a 15cm wide nappy between the lines and a 5cm wide nappy connected to the inner standoffs and trailing from the back of the kite.

A major problem of using brakes – particularly this many - would mean that it reduces the size of the wind window drastically.

There are other versions of brakes and you will probably notice more as you go.

Leaning Out

We had another conversation with some of the other fliers at Portsmouth after about technique. The way you stand and the way you hold the kite will also make a huge difference. I am not the best person to be looking at in this respect because I rely on my weight and strength. The lighter ones however can get more from the kite by keeping arms out straight in front and leaning back. I remember the old days before we had the designs of today seeing Jeanette from the then British world team champions also having to use studded football boots to gain extra purchase.

When we give lessons I often find that people hold their hands up in front of their face and point their index finger at the kite so I try having them pull me like that and then with their hands out front with arms straight - imagine like you had a piece of rope and you were trying to pull a car out of a ditch or, you were being pulled along on water skis!

There is, of course, no right way to fly a kite, it depends on what you want to do - we just try to show you what works best for us - the easy way to do the simple things and then go on from there.

I am pleased to say that we now have a vented HQ Infinity and you will see us flying team with those now when the winds are strong!