

# RACE NOTICE AND RULES

## STERKIES SPEED EVENT

### EVENT OBJECTIVE

The event provides a platform to introduce kites to the thrill of speed and unify us in the process, regardless of province or experience. Some competitors have been bitten by the speed bug and go all out, while others get a thrill from just participating and kiting in some serious wind with boat support and help on hand.

The 1<sup>st</sup> event took place on 10-11 May 2008 and the strongest wind occurred at the May 2009 event when it blew up to 60 knots ! It's a bi-annual event held in Autumn (late April-May) and Spring (late August-September) each year, which fall within the windy season inland. I hope this gives rise to friendly competition throughout the year, and results in a speed league when enough sailors have a GPS. An inter-provincial contest kicked off in September 2008 and has been a closely contested affair.

### LOCATION

I have chosen **Sterkfontein Dam** near Harrismith (Free State Province) as the event location, as it's an equal distance between Johannesburg and Durban, and it gets strong wind frequently between May and September. The Vaalies and KZN crew will also gladly collect Cape competitors from the airport. So it's a 2 hour flight and 3 hour drive for them. There is a curved shoreline forming the Northern bay which perfect for speed and spectators alike. The event also has the full backing from the resort and the head of tourism in the Free State province.

The reason Sterkies dam gets more wind than the rest of the inland regions is that it sits on the edge of the escarpment, this means there's a dramatic altitude change nearby creating a thermal effect variance and pressure gradient. NW is the prevailing wind, which typically starts in the morning as a light Northerly and swings to the West and strengthens throughout the day. Besides the strong wind experienced here between Autumn and Spring, it also has clean water and wonderful views of the berg.

The headland forming the Northern bay provides shelter from the swell and chop when the wind has a West component which makes it ideal for speed, as it's flat and fast on the inside. The run is too short to record good averages by world standards (10 seconds & 500m), measuring around 250 meters depending on your line. To compensate for this and make it safer, we base our results on the average speed over 8 seconds.

### PRIZES

Trophies are awarded to the first 3 places in each division, namely **Speed board** (custom asymmetrical board) and **Twintip** (freestyle board >35cm in width).

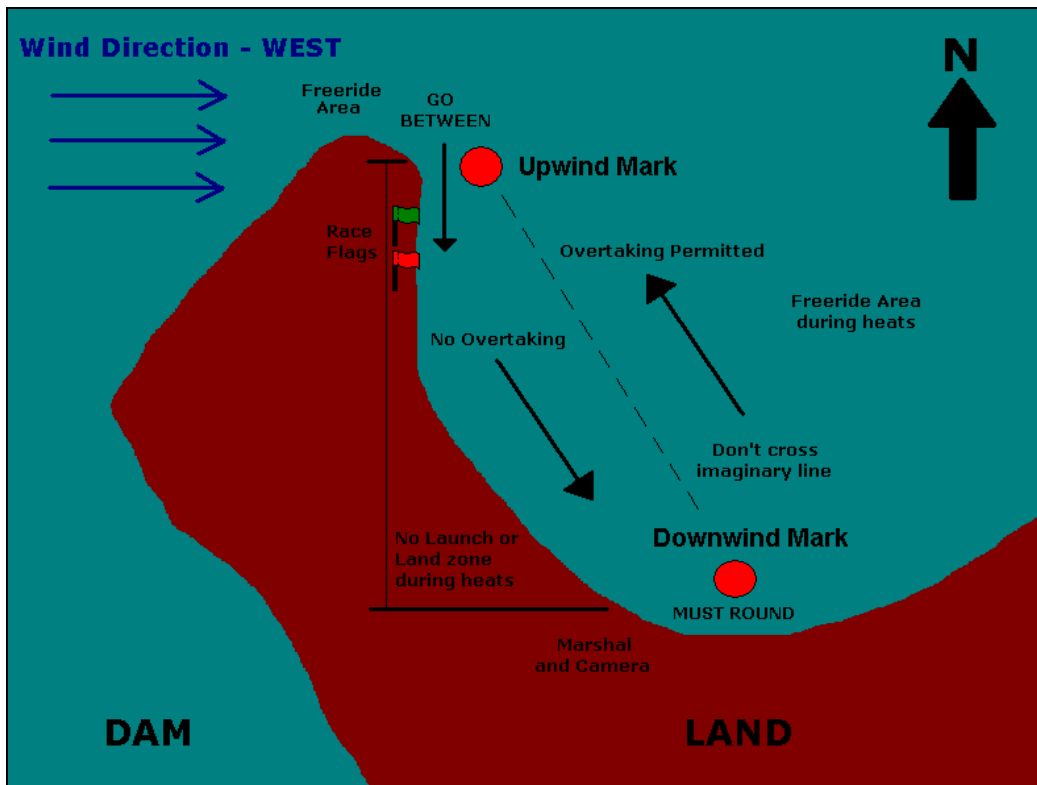
The **Overall Winner's** trophy (floating) is awarded to the person with the fastest average speed over **8 seconds**, which equates to 185m at 45kt.

The **Inter-Provincial** trophy (floating) is awarded to the province with the fastest combined average of the 3 fastest riders per province.

The rider names, their max and ave speeds are engraved for the overall and inter-provincial trophies.

The prizes vary per event depending on sponsors, but lucky draw prizes, R3000 for fastest competitor overall, and R1000 runner-up prize have been awarded in the past. It's a fun event, so the emphasis is on fun and thrills, not prizes.

## SPEED COURSE LAYOUT



## DATE OF EVENT

We've sometimes had a long wait to get decent wind over a weekend, especially for the Spring event.

So to increase our chances, the event might include a Friday or Monday when necessary. But this will only be done when we're nearing the end of our waiting period, or a mega front is about to hit.

It's foolish to postpone the event because the timing of a front is out by a day, and run the risk of a non-event.

The event only goes ahead when strong wind is expected, and the timing has been spot on every time. There's been 30+ knots at every event except September 2009. But I knew it was a choice of either holding the event in 20-25 knots or not at all, as the pressure systems were out of place in 2009.

I watch the weather prospects from a long way off in a bid to give you as much warning as possible. Besides e-mail and website updates, I change the event status to denote the level of certainty of the event going ahead.

The event statuses are :

1. **On Hold** – no decent wind expected within a week or timing is mid-week.
2. **Stand-By** – when decent wind is on the cards and timing looks good. 5 days notice. We'll go back to "on hold" if the front veers off course, weakens or the timing is off.
3. **Go-Ahead** – forecast holding and timing good. 24 hours notice.

Official racing takes place when the wind averages over 20 knots and the direction is between West and North West.

If you're a new comer to the event, I suggest you opt to be in the first heat, as the wind usually strengthens to 30+ later. Rather cut your teeth in lighter wind. An air horn will be sounded 10 minutes prior to racing starting and ending, and when racing starts and stops.

Recreational sailors must move well clear of the speed course (between buoys and shoreline) or come ashore when the 10 minute horn is sounded before racing begins.

## **COMPETITION RULES**

1. Results are based on the average speed over **8 seconds**, the reason it's 8 seconds instead of the usual 10 is that the run is too short to complete 10 seconds safely.
2. Every competitor must wear a GPS (their own or hired); competitors without GPS's will not be allowed on the course during racing.
3. GPS units may NOT be taken off or changed until the data has been retrieved and cleared from the GPS. Report to the scorer immediately after your heat.
4. Competitors with their own GPS are responsible for their GPS settings being correct; report to the scorer well before your heat if you need help doing this. The most important settings are : under the **[MEMORY]** menu ensure [FIX-ON] is selected, and [SBN] at 1 second intervals [1SEC] is chosen under [NMEA]; ensure that the **[DATA LOGGER]** is set to [1SEC] intervals; [MIN SPEED] must be [0 KTS] for both menus to record everything. Ensure you're running the latest firmware. You can download more detailed setup instructions from here : [http://www.freight-focus.com/download/gt31\\_manual.pdf](http://www.freight-focus.com/download/gt31_manual.pdf)
5. Competitors may only compete using the type/category of board they've entered for, namely twintip or speed board. Competitors who compete in both categories MUST report to the scorer before they change boards else they will be disqualified. Your honesty and integrity will be relied upon for this since it's a fun event. It's not advisable to change equipment mid-heat as it's disruptive to the rest of the field.
6. An air horn will be sounded 5 minutes before the start and end of a heat. A GREEN flag will be displayed on the shore during the heat.
7. Competitors beating upwind after their run must keep well clear of the shoreline else it'll cause wake for those doing their speed run or might result in a collision, i.e. do not cross the imaginary line between the upwind and downwind marks.
- 8. Competitors MUST round the downwind mark unless they abort their run, in which case they must first ensure it's safe to do so. Competitors failing to do so will be disqualified on their 2<sup>nd</sup> offence. A marshal will be near the downwind mark to regulate this. The only exception to this rule is if the wind dies mid-heat, in which case the air horn will be sounded and the green flag dropped. Failing to do this makes it dangerous for others !**
9. No overtaking will be permitted during a speed run while sailing starboard (right hand leading) closest to the bank. Overtaking can take place on the upwind leg, but not within 100m of the upwind mark.
10. A gap of at least 100 meters must be kept between competitors on the downwind leg (in the lead up to the speed run). This is for safety reasons to ensure there's enough time to avoid someone should they fall or change direction ahead of you.
11. It is considered poor etiquette to cut in front of another competitor or overtake just before the upwind mark, and it will disrupt those approaching their speed run. Try keep sufficient following distance between you and the competitor in front of you during the upwind leg, as there will not be enough space or time to do this near the upwind mark.
12. No jumping or tricks are permitted on or near the speed course for safety reasons. At full speed competitors will not have enough time/control to take evasive action.
13. You may not launch or exit the water mid-heat along the NE facing bank as this will disrupt racing. Launch or exit the water either upwind on the shore facing North or deep inside the bay, near the reeds.

**Any competitor failing to comply with the above rules will be given a warning. You will be disqualified on the second offence and your speeds will be disregarded.**

An **ORANGE** flag will be pointed at a competitor and an air-horn sounded if they receive a warning.

The **GREEN** flag will be flown when a heat is underway. Competitors must come to shore if this flag is not flying.

Competitors are allowed to free sail up to 10 minutes prior to the first heat starting. The orange flag will be waved when a heat is about to start, leave the water promptly when you see this.

You can also enter online at [www.speedkiting.org](http://www.speedkiting.org) before the event. This site also hosts the Sterkies weather station data, speed spot and advice, GPS rankings, news and much more.

## DIRECTIONS

Sterkfontein Dam (affectionately known as "Sterkies") lies between Johannesburg and Durban and is 3 hours drive from these cities.

From Johannesburg :

- take the N3 to Durban up until Harrismith
- then take the road to Bethlehem (N5), either past the Spur restaurant or over the single lane bridge, then cross the 4-way stop
- turn left onto the R712. The sign says Qwa-Qwa.
- turn left again after several kilometres onto the R74, this is the alternate route to Durban via Oliviershoek Pass and Little Switzerland
- turn right into the Sterkfontein nature reserve. It is sign posted.

