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Introduction



The new canal's finish area, see below for more Pictures and Video, and visit the [Photo Gallery](#)

As a good friend of mine (Mark Kerrigan) put it :

"It's like surveying a secret military base.....somewhere in the desert of southern Africa some strange craft have been spotted cruising at speeds of over 100km/h ...with NO engines.....absolute proof that the government is keeping secrets away from us and is in cahoots with some alien technology, I would advise against drinking the water there in case its been chemically altered by the guys in black suites and funny sunglasses ".

Yes, there's strange things going on in the Namib indeed, and it involves digging the ultimate speed trench to extend the boundaries of speed sailing.

The new canal certainly looks the part and should yield some massive speeds over the next few weeks. It's been built a few hundred meters upwind of Second Lagoon to take it beyond the inter-tidal zone; this is mutually beneficial to the sailors and environment.

Only spring high tide will reach the canal, so mother nature will top her up twice a month. The canal is a few degrees broader than it's predecessor, and will need 40+ knots to make records possible. It's also deeper and wider than before making it suitable for windsurfers too.

A real plus is that the canal is more of a constant, and will allow sailors to dial it in with each successive run.

Safety is naturally a concern going over 100kph with no water downwind, but water becomes like concrete at these speeds anyway.

The hazard is the abrasive surface and the odd stone; all the poles have been removed and relocated upwind.

Going for world records has always been a dangerous pursuit, and this is no exception. The sailors know the risks and take them willingly in their quest for personal growth and records. We each have our own goals and motivators, mine is to exceed 100 kph, and Seb's is to be the first to 60 knots (he was the 1st to 50 & 55, and Alex was 1st to 100 kph with 54.1kts).

With each successive increment in speed, we are testing the limits of physics and learning in the process
we have to evolve to stay in the game.

Latest News

Anders Bringdal in action on 31 Oct when he clocked a 50.72 Vmax

13 NOVEMBER 2011 :

Evening Report :

Mother nature had the final say today, and it only blew 30 knots with occasional gusts a bit more.

Seb clocked the best speed of day with 51.36 knots (there's that number again); he was the only one over 50 knots.

There were 4 decent wind days over the official timed period (31 Oct, 1/10/11 Nov); but the first 2 were prior to the canal improvements so they couldn't be capitalized on, and the sudden drop in the wind today caught everyone by surprise, as it was forecast to be the strongest.

I'm sure one more big wind day would have done it, but that's how it goes. There's so many variables at play that it's rarity when they all come together.

A lot of lessons were learnt from this regardless, and the new canal has proven to be an A-grade speed venue for windsurfers, there's no doubt that they can break the 50 knot

barrier here.

Although the flag was not firmly planted from the kites' perspective, we've seen enough to know that on the right day this site is capable of rewriting the record books.

Afternoon Report :

The Luderitz airport have not reported the wind strength for 6 hours which is unusual, so hopefully this means it's too windy for flights to take off and land.

The last reported wind was 20 knots at 8am, but that's too early to tell much.

It sure is windy in Johannesburg for a change and it's blowing over 30 knots at Sterkies, so hopefully it reciprocates there. I would be on the water for sure if it weren't my son's birthday.

Morning Report :

It's my youngest son's 11th Birthday today, so we're having family and friends over at our house (Johannesburg).

1300km to the West lies Luderitz where riders will try make the most of the last day of decent wind during official timing.

They have it dialed in by now, so everything depends on how strong it blows.

The Windguru forecast has weakened somewhat, but GFS pressure charts still show a tight gradient in that region (35 knots of ambient wind).

12 NOVEMBER 2011 :

The wind was lighter today, but still good enough for some to reach 50; Taro had a 50.88 500m average and 55 knot peak. The forecast for tomorrow has dropped slightly, but it should still

be stronger than today.

By virtue of it being the last day of strong wind before it's over, I'm sure all the riders will go for broke.

Breaking the 60 knot barrier will be a tall order for Seb tomorrow (as it's unlikely to be nuclear), but the current outright record of Rob Douglas (55.65) is definitely reachable.

I sincerely hope it blows like mad so Anders can break the 50 knot barrier, and Seb can show us the true potential of the new canal.

SailRocket2 are hell bent on claiming the outright record and is a likely contender this year; so regardless of what the kites do tomorrow, we might be chasing down the record set by a boat within a few weeks time.

I think this will be healthy for the sport and generate more interest. It'll also unify the kites with a common goal; and a lot more will be achieved this way.

11 NOVEMBER 2011 :

Results :

Sebastien Cattelan improved to 52.6; I expect him to climb until Sunday, then WHAM-O !

Stefan Metzger set a **new Namibian record of 51.36 knots** which equals Hydroptere's record, Anthony Chaffron improved to 42.92 despite being injured, and

Humberto Torrinha

improved the

Angola

record to

41.21

Anders Bringdal had yet another 50 peak (50.1) and improved his Swedish record to **47.44 knots**. This should land him first place on the windsurfing GPS rankings.

The wind blew stronger in the late afternoon and was a good strength (40 to 50+ knots). It was slightly squarer and the course less choppy.

Morning Report :☐

Another day of strong wind lies ahead, so it'll be interesting to see if the speeds climb.

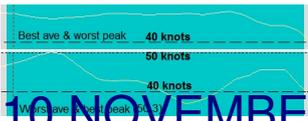
Apparently the water level of the canal was not topped up and there was still a fair bit of chop present yesterday, so the exposed bank means riders had to run the gauntlet to post good speeds.

Here is an interesting graph of Anders Bringdal's fastest and slowest 500m runs yesterday. The blue area is the timed run (start on left and finish on right).

His fastest run had the lowest peak speed (47.5) out of the 9 runs he did, and the run with the highest peak speed (50.3) peak was his worst average which is unusual.

A pattern I've seen among all riders is the best speeds are recorded at the start and end of the run, with a pronounced dip in speed towards the middle of the run. I'm not sure if this is due to a wind shadow or momentum being lost after the slingshot start.

I still reckon they should take averaged wind readings along the course to know for sure.



10 NOVEMBER 2011 :

Results :☐

Taro Niehaus set a **new South African record of 51.64 knots**, and Seb had 51.2. I'm not sure what Anders's 500m average was, but he had another 50+ peak today (50.3 kts).

This is a phenomenal effort and well deserved; Taro didn't hold back, which takes a lot of guts and confidence in your equipment and ability. It was not easy going out there, and despite this he came out unscathed and clocked the best speed so far.

Well done Lighty, I salute your achievement !!!

Strong wind is forecast until Sunday, so I'm sure the speeds will climb further.

Seb took a break over the past week and I have not doubt that he will dial it in before Sunday, which is forecast to be the strongest day.

Morning Report :☐

The big day has finally arrived, and we eagerly await the outcome.

Today will be the first proper acid test of the revised canal; these changes coupled with the strong wind means we should see some really fast speeds.

The water level in the canal was also topped up last night by means of a water pump, so it'll be safer and there should be a nice laminar flow across the canal.

Most of the riders have been resting in preparation for today. I'm really excited to hear the outcome.

PS. I've been asked what speeds have been achieved thus far. They have not been great compared to last year; peak speeds around 55 knots and averages just over 50 knots. But, this was prior to canal changes.

8 NOVEMBER 2011 :

The next wind cycle starts on Wednesday and lasts for several days; it will be their last chance during the official timing period. Michael Ellison (WSSRC Commissioner) moves on to Walvis Bay from 17 November to preside over SailRocket2's outright record attempt.

It's going to be windy for sure, but probably not be as strong as what they had last Monday (31 Oct); so it'll to be interesting to see how efficient they can be in less wind with the improved water state.

My guess is they'll record faster speeds in less wind for the following reasons :

1. They won't be holding anything back, as this is the last windy spell before home time.
2. The canal improvements will allow for a much faster start which is crucial for better averages.
3. The flatter water state and safer leeward bank (beveled) will give them greater control and instill confidence to go for it.
4. The course is being moved further down the canal as there's cleaner and stronger wind towards the finish (channels along the rock ridge). This means a longer run-up and faster finish.

Further tweaks that can be done to improve the water state are (these can be considered for 2012) :

I also suggest that the wind direction, and average (over 5 mins) and peak wind readings be taken simultaneously at different points along the canal to determine the wind profile along the canal.

This will determine whether the course is optimally situated.

6 NOVEMBER 2011 :

Good on **Anders Bringdal** for taking the chance and coming on short notice when he saw the big wind forecast, and a few hours later was setting some blistering speeds on his windsurfer (21cm Assy fin, 2012 pre-production Mistral board and prototype 5 Assy sail).

There was a real mess with his GPS's on 31 Oct, so his GPS session posted was from the day after (1 Nov) when the wind was lighter.

Firstly his GPS was set to only read every 2 seconds and therefore did not record his historic peak speed, and he later exchanged his GPS for another which was set up even worse; Memory & Data Logger were switched off, so nothing was recorded; and his 5.7 sail had a small hole in it, so he used a 5 instead.

Despite this, his speeds were still good enough to land him second place on the [GPS ranking](#) (by a whisker).

Were Anders not so tired from his trip and wearing the correctly configured GPS's on the first day, his speeds would have been even more impressive.

It's far from over though, he might still record the first ever 50 knot 500m run as early as next week, as there a string of windy

days coming up, and the canal improvements should improve his peak and average.

The reason other windsurfers (and kites) were not invited is this year is intended as a test, approval to dig the canal took 8 months and was not a certainty, and hosting a fully fledged event on short notice would have added extra pressure on Seb and Sophie.

5 NOVEMBER 2011 :

I'm busy compiling the footage from Luderitz and will publish it over the next few days.

More digging was done on the canal yesterday to improve the start and end of the run, and the sand ramp on the windward bank has been removed. The sharp edges on the leeward bank have also been removed to make it safer.

These changes coupled with a full tide next week should improve the speeds and safety.

Trials will be done at Storm Vogel bay this afternoon, and racing will return to the canal later next week.

There's a string of decent wind days coming up soon.

3 NOVEMBER 2011 :

I left Luderitz yesterday afternoon, and have been in transit for 2 days.

Now that I'm back at home, I'll catch up on sleep and tell you what's been happening; it's exciting stuff.

1 NOVEMBER 2011 :

Evening Report :☐

The wind was not as strong as yesterday (as expected), but it made a good account of itself (35-45 knots) and allowed most riders to improve their speeds (better water state).

Humberto Torrinha became the first entry on the Angola

national record list with a respectable 33 knots; this was his first time in Luderitz and on the canal, and his first time on a speed board.

Morning Report :

The wind is building quickly this morning, so let's see what today holds.

We've had a taste of it in hectic wind, and it was a handful; but we might go faster today in less wind.

31 OCTOBER 2011 :

Evening Report :

The wind sure did blow today, apparently it reached up to 55 knots at times; but it was a tough day out there.

The wind was pretty gusty, and there was some nasty chop towards the end of the run.

There were no great speeds recorded from the kilters today, but Anders Bringdal made the most of it on a windsurfer and recorded a very respectable 47 knot 500m (new Swedish record - still to be ratified) and 50 knot peak, which is extremely rare in windsurfing.

Wolfram Reiners set a new German record of 46 knots (still to be ratified) on his very first run.

There were a few spills due to the chop and gusts/lulls; but luckily none were serious.

I also had a skirmish with the canal bank when I sailed into a bad lull and suddenly headed up.

The wind will be a bit lighter tomorrow which might improve the speeds if it's steadier, and there should be less chop.

Midday Report :

The big day has finally arrived; the timing equipment is set up, and ready for action.

I've returned to my room for an hour to wait for the wind to strengthen. It's blowing in the upper 20's at present, but building fast.

I'll try make a few tweets during the day (signal permitting) to keep you updated. The Twitter section is top-right on the home page.

30 OCTOBER 2011 :

The forecast for Monday hasn't budged, so we're still on track for a big day tomorrow.

The wind has been odd this year; there's been lots of moderate wind days, but no big blows until now. This might be our only chance, as the long range forecast doesn't look great. There might be more wind around 12 Nov, but that's too far off to attach any weight to it.

All the planning, preparation and waiting comes down to a single day; which distils further to one run lasting 16 seconds over 500 meters.

16 secs = 60 knots /111 km per hour, 18 secs = 54 knots/100 km per hour.

29 OCTOBER 2011 :

There's moderate wind today, but all eyes are on MONDAY ! The forecast is holding fast, and we expect epic conditions for speed within 48 hours.

28 OCTOBER 2011 :

It blew in the 20's again today, but I rather ploughed through work and rested physically. The forecast for Monday and Tuesday next week looks very promising. Records will surely tumble if it carries through. I reckon we need wind averaging in the 40's to make it possible. My nerves are already tingling in anticipation.

27 OCTOBER 2011 :

Today was a light wind day, and there was no training or racing. The wind will remain light until Sunday; thereafter it'll hopefully return with vengeance so we can see what speeds are possible in the canal with strong wind. The tides will be better next week too, as it's moving towards neap tide, and low tide will be around midday. So the canal won't get flooded and the water should be smoother. The only downside is that the walk back will be longer.

26 OCTOBER 2011 :

Similar wind to yesterday; there were pockets of stronger wind, but still not close to what we're hoping for. The wind will start to subside from tomorrow until Sunday; but Monday looks like the real deal if the forecast holds. No mistaking it, stones will fly. The wind's different to the way I recall it though; for the past 4 days it's peaked by midday and slowly subsided from there, whereas it used to peak around 3pm. It also seems much gustier; let's hope Monday blows itself back into shape.

25 OCTOBER 2011 :

The wind was steadier today and each day has increased slightly, but it's still not enough for going nuclear. A plan was put into effect today where 2 people are based near the upwind water mark to catch kites; as it's so difficult to walk upwind for 300m in the slippery mud. It's more tiring than the run itself. The wind hovered in the mid-20's with the odd spurt hitting 30

knots, so it was just a training day, and no official timing was done.

There'll be similar wind tomorrow before it subsides until early next week.

Next week is a mixed up affair; one minute the forecasts shows strong wind, and the next it looks dismal. So we'll have to wait until nearer the time to have a better idea.

[GPS Track for my 1st run today](#)

24 OCTOBER 2011 :

The wind blew slightly stronger today, but still nowhere near enough for the speeds we're after.

There was a strange mid-layer of cloud today which suppressed the wind and made it gusty.

These are not what I call typical Luderitz conditions, and the forecast for the rest of the week has dropped; the next decent blow shows on Monday at present.

We must just be patient and Luderitz will eventually do her thing.

23 OCTOBER 2011 :

Today marked the start of the wind cycle, it was gusty and hovered in the 20's; which I'm told is normal on the first day of wind.

It was a gentle introduction of the riders to the new canal. The best average was 45 knots with peaks just less than 50 knots, which is good going in these conditions.

What I found is there seems to be a lot more wind towards the end of the run, but time will tell when it blows stronger.

Getting back to the start was done by either beating back

upwind in the lagoon and walking the rest of the way, or catching a lift on the back of a bakkie.

The timing system worked flawlessly, so we're all set for the big day to see what speeds are possible.

Forecast

There was moderate wind this past week, but Monday and Tuesday next week look epic, so let's hope the forecast holds :

Mo	Mo	Mo	Mo	Tu	Tu	Tu	Tu
31.	31.	31.	31.	01.	01.	01.	01.
09h	12h	15h	18h	09h	12h	15h	18h
24	28	31	28	20	25	27	24
27	31	37	37	24	29	34	36

Click on the forecast above to get an update

Video Clips

My first cruise down the canal on the afternoon I arrived

I thought it would be neat to capture it from the air too, so I duct taped my camera onto a strut

Photos

Visit the [Photo Gallery](#) (updated often)



Close up of the canal

My apologies for not publishing this article sooner, but I was asked to not publicise the "event" by the organisers as this as a testing phase rather than an event, and they only want to showcase it in 2012 once they know it's

safe enough; then all the top riders will be invited.

They also only received approval to build the canal at a very late date and didn't have enough time to notify all the competitors or get organised in time.

My friend was closer to the truth than he knew; we've even had spy planes survey the canal.

Jokes aside, thanks for **Bernt Bruns** for the amazing

[Areal Footage of the Canal](#)

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Associated. Google Earth [HERE](#) view of the