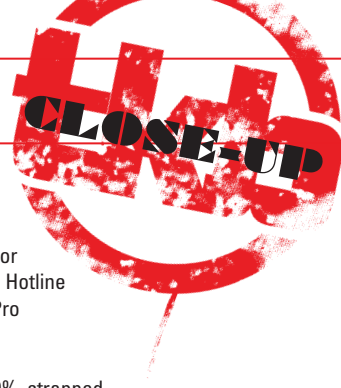




Although over 200 lbs., Grant's weapon of choice is the Caution Trespass 5'5". Photo Bill Rice

GRANT HASSELBACH



AGE: 26 **HEIGHT:** 6' 4" **WEIGHT:** 210 **YEARS KITING:** 3.5

FAVORITE SPOTS: Oceanside Harbor, Leo, many locations north of Point Conception **FAVORITE CONDITIONS:** Any kite size if powered, head high surf with side/side-on conditions **FAVORITE RIDING STYLE:** Strapless or strapped, perfecting my screwfoot wave riding **SPONSORS:** Caution Kites, Hotline Wetsuits, Firewire, Transcend Apparel, Freestyle Watches, H2O Audio, GoPro

GEAR SET-UP

BOARDS: 5' 5" Trespass, Firewire Quadraflex 6'0" **BINDINGS:** Strapless 100%, strapped only if conditions are 'victory at sea' **KITES:** 2010 Caution Zombie's - 6, 9, 12, and 15m **LINES:** Standard **HARNES:** Dakine Renegade

By Marina Chang

Raised in Northern California, Grant's life has always evolved around water, whether at the pool or in the ocean. Competitive swimming occupied much of his youth while he squeezed every last bit of free time in the ocean surfing the reefs north of Santa Cruz. Because his talents were in the water, he pursued a swimming career which eventually helped carry him through college where he swam and got his education. Grant currently resides in Oceanside, CA, and has been known to put 10 hours of driving into one day to get a wave session. That's dedication - or desperation!

When, where and why did you start kiteboarding? I started in the summer of 2006 in probably the hardest place to learn to kite, San Diego, the light wind capital of the US. I was so frustrated with blown out conditions growing up and had watched the kites rig up at the reefs north of Santa Cruz before I moved down south. I compliment John Cuchna at XDream Sportz for hooking me up with my first set of gear and supporting me to get me rolling out at Stinkies, San Diego's training ground for beginners!

Have any other sports or disciplines helped influence your kiteboarding? Definitely surfing, but more importantly my competitive swimming background and being so confident in the water in all situations. I feel I have an edge when kiting in the ocean because I understand the elements more and can adapt to all situations I get myself into.

What riders influence you the most/inspire you? Peter Schiebel, Brendan Richards, Cornfed, Kenny, and Roger. Every chance I get to go home and kite the North Coast, Peter and the rest of the Caution Crew are out killing it. Every Caution rider on the water is pushing the limits of the surfing aspect of the sport to new levels. Caution is stacked with some of the best kiting wave riders on the planet. The North Coast separates the men from the boys.

What do you do off the water to help you on the water? I still swim and spend time in the gym to keep myself healthy and strong. It is a part of me from the years of swimming and training that has engraved a certain mental mindset. I firmly believe in refraining from anything that could potentially damage my body and/or kiting future.



Grant smacks the lip at his home break in Santa Cruz. Photo Shal Jacobovitz

TIPS

1. If you're learning to kite, pay for a lesson. It is worth every last penny and just may save your life or someone else's.
2. Be respectful of local conditions and riders. Understand the local rules and all riding etiquette, especially how the surf rotation works!
3. Always lend a helping hand to fellow kites. If someone is in trouble, it is your duty to do what you can to mitigate the problem.
4. Don't be agro and lose the attitude! Get over yourself and just have fun. We have the whole ocean to play in.

What trick or style are you currently working on and what is the challenge? Backside strapless tabletops, strapless airs, and destroying a lip with style. Since I am a screwfoot (goofy), I spend 98% of my riding time backside. In my opinion, riding backside is much more technical and critical in the waves than frontside. When the south winds come up, it's on.

How do you think the current gear on the market can be improved in general? Gear is expensive. I think the best improvement any kite company can do is making their gear more bombproof with quality materials. My Caution kites have proven themselves to withstand a beating in nearly every situation. When you can have faith that your gear will save you in a sketchy situation, it is worth every penny spent. Your gear is your lifeline on the water.

What is your favorite style of riding and why? Strapless wave riding because of the insane sections you can make. Nothing feels better than destroying a wave into oblivion and coming out clean. I will only ride strapped if I am storm chasing 'victory at sea' conditions. Although the surf is my focus at this time, I always enjoy a buttery-flat freestyle session. The possibilities with this sport are endless, which is why no other sport compares.

Do you think directional kiteboards are a must for the surf, even if you have no paddle surf background? Of course! Riding a surfboard in surf is so much more technical, especially when losing the foot belts. If you have no paddle surfing background, get some knowledge of the ocean prior to entering. It is a very unforgiving environment if you don't have experience.

Do you have any plans to compete? If the opportunity arises, I am ready to represent Caution. Having a competitive swimming background, the races in San Francisco Bay sure have my interest. I am competitive by nature.

What is something about you that you do outside of kiteboarding that most people wouldn't know? I am a private pilot and have had a desire to fly ever since I can remember. In the future, I plan on flying myself to some remote kite spot - Baja anyone? My wife Sonrisa has put up with me for six years and I have a 2-1/2 year old daughter, Kalia.

What is your worst wipe out? The first day I went to kite in the ocean I set my lines up reversed. Once airborne, my kite death looped me right into the Cardiff Reef parking lot packed with moving cars! Luckily my fellow local kites reacted quickly and swiftly to put an end to the scene.

Where is your favorite place to kite and why? Nothing beats kiting at home in Santa Cruz - it is my roots from surfing. For now though, I would have to say all the epic downwinders in North San Diego when it is on.

What is your most memorable kiteboarding experience? Kiting a 10-mile downwinder through great white shark heaven from Gazo's, out to Ano Neuvo Island and then down to Waddell with Cornfed (Josh Nehf) in Northern California. It is a corner of the 'red triangle' and the scenery is what very few have seen from the water. I saw some of the biggest fish and seals I have laid two eyes on for sure.