

The end of an era?

Ask a cross section of centres for a list of the teaching equipment currently being used to teach beginners and improvers, and there would be a recurring theme. Ask many instructors today what equipment they learnt to sail on, and the answer would be the same... Hifly!



Hifly

So why are Hifly so popular?

To the untrained eye they might seem heavy, less inspirational and certainly far less aesthetically pleasing than many other designs on the market. But they are an icon in windsurfing, both for training centres and for those who have been in the sport since the beginning.

Hifly is a design that has kept pace with the rapid development of kit over the years by sticking to simple yet effective construction and long

lasting values. They are extremely well established within the industry, providing products that have withstood our often unpredictable and harsh teaching environments for many years. The boards provide a robust and durable construction with plenty of volume in the right areas for a stable platform for all beginners. They are a faithful old friend to most instructors.

But all this is about to change. The factory that, until recently, has been the producer of Hifly's Primo, Mambo and Motion boards has changed direction, with no intention of producing the blow mould polyurethane board any more. This production method used is an expensive, long term investment to anyone who would wish to continue the process.

Total Option Ltd, the importers of Hifly to the UK, still has a small stock of Hifly boards. Once the remaining stock has been sold, they will continue to carry spares and accessories.

How will this impact on windsurfing within our Training Centres?

Recent years have seen huge investment in the beginners and improvers end of the windsurfing market, for both boards and sails. Feedback has been drawn from

instructors' and beginners' experiences and taken back to the drawing boards, producing new materials and designs that have made the sport increasingly accessible in a wider range of environments and conditions.

With most manufacturers now producing boards to perform in such a large range of conditions, there is more choice. For example, the Tuffskin sandwich construction, used by manufacturers such as Starboard, provides a good blend of durability with manageable weight. This is a product that will stand up to plenty of scraping up the beaches, but will still need a little more care around rocks and concrete!

Similar constructions are also used by Naish, Fanatic, Mistral and RRD, with most also now stocking replacement EVA materials (used in the soft decking) helping to prolong a board's life.

Perhaps, with all this in mind, this should be seen as a positive move forward rather than a time to mourn the end of some of windsurfing's most longstanding and faithful boards. Out with the old and in with the new, but with the necessity to educate our instructors on care of the new equipment.



In fact, the competition to provide suitable equipment for the beginner and improver end of the windsurfing market means that we will have an even larger choice of suitable boards at competitive rates. An exciting time in windsurfing, especially considering the gloomy economic forecast!

More details on the equipment produced can be found by visiting the manufacturers' websites or the RYA website, where a crib sheet has been put together helping you through the minefield of available products.

Why not give us feedback? Does your centre currently use a wide range of equipment, or have you have tried different boards during this year's Regional Instructor Conference? Send us an email with your thoughts on their performance. Email: amanda.vansanten@rya.org.uk.