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SO WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SET SPEED SAILING RECORDS?

THE NEED FOR SPEED You have to want to go between 40 and 70 mph while attached to a kite, be willing to sail very overpowered in 30 to 50 knots, not be afraid of sailing fast over very shallow water and be able to step out of your comfort zone.

YOU HAVE TO BE FAST You have to be the fastest sailor in your class (kitesurfing), the fastest sailor in the history of your country and finally the fastest sailor in the world.

TRAINING HARD You have to train hard... lungs and legs and ride your speed boards as much as possible. You have to be willing to rig a 13 metre kite when your buddies are riding on 8 metre kites. You have to learn how to crash and relax when you do. Cross training is important and you have to stay flexible by stretching. Yoga always helps. You also need to get yourself one or two GPS GT-31 units, the software to interpret your data and study your runs.

IT'S ALL ABOUT TUNING You have to build and develop many custom boards and constantly tune, test and adjust all your equipment: boards, strap, pads, fins, kites, bars and lines. You'll even have to wear a seat harness.

TRAVEL You have to be willing to go to remote windy places, like Lüderitz for an entire month or cold windy places like Port St. Louise Du Rhone, France in March. North American Speed Sailing coach and two-time Olympic medalist Mike Gebhardt says: "If you don't love the venue then you won't win at the venue."

SPONSORSHIP Travel costs, equipment and expenses associated with speed sailing can add up, especially when you are traveling to remote places for month-long events, so you have to find sponsors who are interested in setting speed sailing records that can help you get there.

FINALLY, you have to love the movie *Top Gun* and watch it at least once a day.

Rob Douglas and Melissa Gil are sponsored by Cabrinha, Dakine, NPX, The Black Dog, Lynch and Associates, Transcend



American speed record holders Rob Douglas and Melissa Gil.

THE LÜDERITZ SPEED CHALLENGE

WORDS BY ROB DOUGLAS AND MELISSA GIL / PHOTOS BY ROGER HISLOP

LÜDERITZ, NAMIBIA IS NOW RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF the fastest pieces of water in the world and the best speed sailing spot for kitesurfing. The conditions at the Second Lagoon allow speed sailors to go very fast. The wind can blow up to 55 knots from the south at 125 to 155 degrees offshore and the shallow flats allow for flatwater. The 2009 Lüderitz Speed Challenge is sanctioned by the International Sailing Federation (ISAF) and the World Sailing Speed Record Council (WSSRC). The world's best speed sailing kitesurfers attend this event to break National Records and the Speed Sailing World Record.

In 2008, at the Lüderitz Speed Challenge, kitesurfing became the fastest way of sailing on water for the first time when Rob Douglas, founder of the North American Speed Sailing Project reached 49.84 knots on September 19 riding a 7 metre Cabrinha Crossbow. Later in the same event the 50 knots barrier was broken for the first time by Seb Cattelan and again by Alex Caizergues and Rob. Sjoukje Bredenkamp became the fastest female by setting the Outright Speed Sailing Record for Women at 45 knots. Fifteen new national records were also established. In December, 2008 the WSSRC ratified all the new Speed Sailing World Records that were set in Lüderitz and

ISAF accepted them. Alex Caizergues (FRA) was officially the fastest sailor on the planet at 50.57 knots.

In 2009, Lüderitz Speed Challenge again proved to be very fast water and allowed for a new Kite Speed Sailing World Record and several national records to be set. The new Outright Kite Speed Sailing Record was again set by Frenchman Alex Caizergues (F One) at 50.98 knots. The Outright USA Speed Sailing Record for men and second fastest kite speed ever was set by Rob Douglas (Cabrinha) at 50.95 knots. The new Outright USA Speed Sailing Record for women was set by Melissa Gil (Cabrinha) at 38.00 knots. The second fastest overall

American record was set at 48.67 knots by Jaime Douglas (Cabrinha) followed by Mike Hall (Cabrinha) at 46.71 knots.

Currently the Outright Overall Speed Sailing World Record is held by the 65-foot long French trimaran Hydroptere (FRA) at 51.36 knots. Kite speed sailors are confident in breaking the Outright Speed Sailing World Record again. Alex, Rob and Seb have already recorded GPS speeds over the 500 metres in excess of 51.50 knots. It is just a matter of time before they sail this fast on a course to make it official. Plans are already being developed to make Lüderitz faster next year by building a better chop killer, making the water flatter and smoother.