

DUOTONE D/LAB GLIDE 2.0

Wind sport behemoth Duotone's foil range has come to maturity in the last 18 months, with some steps forward in design and performance to align itself more with the smaller, more agile players of the industry. The more recent Whizz was quite an outlandish design with great roll characteristics at lower speeds, now the Glide gets a rework for the second version and ramps up the potential speed range significantly per size. The smaller sizes, including the 750 we tested are available in the more luxurious D/LAB construction. It's a true high-aspect front wing with 88cm of span and an actual AR of 10.3.

Out of the box, we were impressed with the level of detail and labeling. It's all exceptionally organized with every bolt and corresponding aperture stated on each component. This even extends to a torque specification in Nm and which fuselage and tail are compatible, which should satisfy even the most pedantic of foilers. All the hardware is M8. The D/LAB version we tested has a smoothly fused front wing running into the mast connection which is locked down by three sturdy 50mm M8 bolts. The fuselage connection has a secret M6 bolt which runs in at 45 degrees to keep the plane set conveniently as one - this is a sneaky hidden feature. Once it's all together it's an undeniably slick and drag-free looking system, and our rudimentary stiffness tests showed zero movement at the component junctions.

The plan shape of the foil is quite interesting, shape wise they've retained plenty of chord and thickness in the mid-section, promoting early lift. There's quite a pronounced taper as the outline works its way out into the tips, this is clearly to reduce the paddle effect of a squarer wingtip and free up the roll, all the more important on a high-aspect foil. Looking from the front, there's a gentle downturn over the entire span which again is slightly more amplified in the last fifth into the tip.

The D/LAB Aero Slim mast is a thing of beauty, being a thinner and faster profile made from a higher grade of carbon. Sensibly, Duotone state it's only good for front wings up to 100cm span to prevent it getting too stressed, so that's worth bearing in mind at purchase point if you're into big foils. The sturdy baseplate is a carbon sleeve design where it meets the mast profile which has an unusual, smoothed X shape where it meets the board. The 165 stabilizer is an unfussy mid-aspect top mount affair that balanced well with the 750 front wing, you can tell the R&D team have been thorough before signing off. It gave the 750 plenty of mobility as you'd expect from that front wing size and personally, I wouldn't want anything much larger with it. There is, of course, a handy matrix to show which fuse and tail combo best match each front wing in the range, and we suggest you take heed of it.

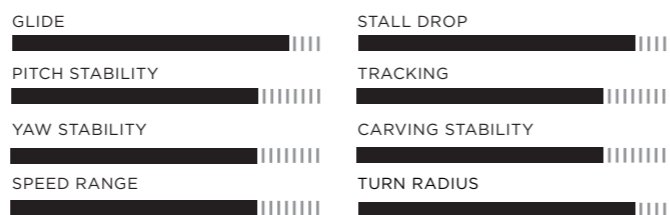
As a retail package, we're going to stick our necks out and say the cover system is among the best on the market. The integrated pockets for bolts and tools, the Velcro and the fit are beautifully tailored and thick enough to offer decent protection. As a bonus it's all made from recycled materials, so top marks to Duotone there.

Performance wise, whilst slightly higher aspect than the previous Glide series, the foil retains the easy-to-use nature and extends the amount of carry round the corners when jibing or tacking. It has oodles of travel, and quite a high level of pitch stability considering the dimensions, the 750 sizing probably bang in the middle of lift and speed range comparatively with other brands across the wider market. It's not a foil that performs under or over its stated size. Its riding characteristics are friendly, balanced and reassuring.

Whilst the system definitely has a bias for wind sports, the pump and roll characteristics of the Glide 2.0 make it a comfortable surf foil. We also tested with an assist system and here the stability of the system will really help with novice riders learning to control their thrust, and offers a much more forgiving performance than similar high-aspect contemporaries.

Overall it's a case of Glide by name, glide by nature. It's a confidence inspiring foil for intermediates upwards, and also slides into more performance riding in the smaller sizes, where the support and stability is going to help you tackle more challenging waves and water states.

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2XS WING FLIGHT BAG BUILT WITH PAUA® PRO

Legendary UK waterman Sir Simon Bassett, of 2XS fame, has collaborated with a friend of his, Pete Symms, who happens to have a business called Puaa that specializes in tough impact resistant woven materials across a huge range of cross industry uses, including medical and even tactical military. Luckily for us, they've branched into sports bags, supplying none other than Kelly Slater with his travel bags to ensure the GOAT's surfboards arrive at their destination undamaged. Simon and Pete got their heads together and co-designed a bag specifically for wingfoiling, which is 5'10 and 300L. Sizing is an important factor with airlines increasingly putting the squeeze on sports luggage, and to get anything over 190cm on a plane these days usually involves remortgaging, trickery or extreme charm at the check-in desk. Coming in at 180cm negates any awkward conversations and starts the trip on a less stressful footing.

The first thing you'll notice is that the bag comes flat packed and you have to build it. This is a simple and ingenious process, two sturdy YKK zips attach the top and bottom surfaces to the side wall, which takes all of thirty seconds. Internally two internal tie down straps, and eight internal brace straps are provided to secure the board and internal dividers; these are important to install as the board helps give the bag structure across its length if you intend on loading it up with some weight, and avoid any sag in the middle when it's on wheels. Internally there's some deployable leaves with various pockets to separate and secure boards and foils, and even a nifty space to clip your pump. Extra bumpers are present on the nose and tail areas which traditionally get the most abuse.

Once assembled, the bag is best described as semi rigid. It has a lightweight boxy coffin-like structure. We easily loaded it with 32kg of foiling goods, two wings and two different foil sets. Wheels wise, two fully bearing rollerblade wheels Velcro onto the rear section of the bag allowing it to glide seamlessly over a polished airport floor. We removed these and tucked them in for flight once we got to the outside desk. The Puaa Pro material is tough and futuristic - think of it as a bulletproof vest for your foiling gear and you're not far off. It's also remarkably lightweight, scuff and impact resistant. They've strategically placed carry handles at both ends as well as centrally, to make the bag easy to drag and lift.



Our test involved a classic quick winter trip to Fuerteventura, with the bag in the capable but occasionally flamboyant hands of EasyJet's baggage handlers. On arrival, two and a half men with far too much equipment then quickly realized that the car hire company neglected to provide us with the specified roof rack for our shiny Berlingo. We were seriously over volume in a diminutive vehicle and our escape of the car park in a timely fashion was looking perilous. Luckily the flat pack nature of the 2XS bag saved our bacon. In the scorching Canarian sun, we disassembled and compacted the bag and redistributed the boards and foils like an expensive game of carbon Tetris, much to the intrigue of the car rental staff. Five minutes later, we cruised out of the barriers with (relative) dignity. Once at the accommodation, you can tuck the bag flat pack under your bed, so it isn't taking up half your hotel room. Practical and tough would be underselling it.

The Puaa Pro material is made from composite Polypropylene and is 100% recyclable, minimizing the environmental impact. Just when you thought that board bags had topped out development wise, someone has flipped the whole game on its head. It's lighter, more versatile and far more protective than a standard board bag, and with foiling equipment as expensive as it is, you could easily have £10k of equipment in there that doesn't need unplanned airline modification. It's a bag that will potentially last a lifetime and is well worth the investment.

FREEWING AIR V5

I recently had the opportunity to test the all-new FreeWing Air V5 in Cape Town. I tested the 4.5m size of the wing in flatwater on my familiar board and foil setup. The FreeWing Air is a high-performance wing offering a versatile and user-friendly experience for riders of all levels. The FreeWing brand is a collaborative development between Starboard and Airush.

The FreeWing Air is ideal for various conditions making it an all-round performer, from beginner-friendly flatwater cruising to high-performance wave riding and freestyle maneuvers. The latest version emphasizes improved efficiency, increased rigidity, and better handling. Key design features include a stiffer frame, enhanced leading-edge geometry for better lift and control, and refined window placement for improved visibility. These updates ensure smoother power delivery and greater stability in gusty conditions.

Upon inflation, the first thing that caught my attention on the FreeWing Air V5 was the unique canopy cloth. The Ultra X canopy is an ultra-lightweight three-layer laminate resembling the famous Airush load frame, designed to distribute loads across the wing for increased responsiveness and durability. Featuring a total of four windows, two are located on each side of the strut to allow the rider to keep an eye on the water, and they worked well. The window nearest to the strut is placed horizontally, while the window closer to the wingtip is in a verti-

cal orientation. There are not a lot of scuff guards along the leading-edge of the FreeWing Air, so in that regard the wing seems to have minimalistic reinforcing placed only where critically needed. The trailing edge features three battens per side to increase the stability of the canopy. Other appealing features include a full-length boom handle and a waist leash.

If the FreeWing Air V5 existed in the animal kingdom, I would liken it to the humble honey badger, as it embodies the characteristics of adaptiveness, minimalist, and strength. My first session on this wing was down at my local watering hole with what I would typically call high-end conditions for the 4.5m wing with winds between the 20-30 knot range. However, I was most pleasantly surprised to find out that the 4.5m handled very well in the top end of the power range. I went back-to-back with my personal wing for a reference on power, which did indeed confirm that the wind was strong.

Inflating the wing, I noticed that the FreeWing does not make use of a one-point inflation system, so much like a first generation kite, you need to inflate the strut and the leading edge separately, which is unusual for me, but having only one strut, I suppose it is not that much additional effort, and I would add in that it likely contributes to a more even weight balance of this wing. This spills over into my second finding: this wing is seriously well balanced. Walking down to the water's edge, the wing was handling beautifully in the gusts. I was very pleased that this wing came with a waist leash, which is in my opinion the gold standard of how we should be connecting to wings. The boom handle is a much-welcomed feature too, although it did make packing the wing away a little bit of a challenge.

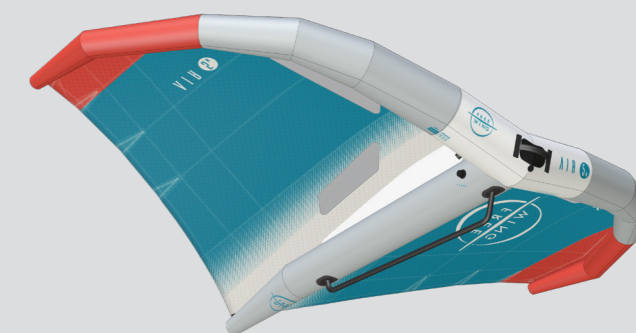
Getting into the water with the wing, I found flipping it over in the strong winds to prepare for my first water starts nice and easy, with the wing hardly as much as fluttering, which instills confidence when riding in slightly over-powered conditions. I was easily able to get onto foil with my first

attempts, it was very natural to adapt to the power delivery of this wing. Even though I was vel-powered, I did not feel like the wing was particularly heavy on the arms and depowering the wing worked well without any instabilities, such as wind hitting the top side of the canopy which can happen with some wings when over-powered.

Jumping and riding out of landing worked beautifully, I cannot fault the wing on its intuitive and adaptive performance. Flagging the wing out for some downwind pumping runs also worked like a charm, and re-engaging the wing after a flag out was an easy process. I cannot emphasize enough how beneficial the boom handle is. Being able to slide your hands over into position makes it so much easier to water start, tack, gybe, and of course do some one-handed riding.

I was able to test the FreeWing again later in the week at the same location, but this time the wind was light. I would typically have gone for my 5m, with wind around the 10-15 knot range. Walking the wing down to the water's edge was once again a treat, with the well-balanced design floating gracefully, with the wind keeping it hoisted. On the water I was impressed by this wing's light wind capabilities, water starts were effortless and the wing kept its shape very well, generating good power when pumping onto foil. Tacks and gybes were all consistently easy, which is noteworthy in light wind.

Overall, the lightweight, well-balanced, and stiff airframe of the FreeWing Air V5 delivers an exceptional blend of performance and versatility. Its unique Ultra X canopy ensures durability and responsiveness, while the boom handle enhances control and comfort. Whether tackling strong winds or light breezes, the FreeWing Air V5 delivers smooth power, responsive handling, and easy adaptability - making it a top contender for riders of all skill levels.



FREEWING AIR V5

