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**Editorial**

### **WINDSURFING AND KITEBOARDING WORLD CUP 2008: FUERTEVENTURA (SPAIN)**

José A. Pérez Turpin 

#### **Background analysis: Fuerteventura 2008**

Nowadays, there's no doubt that Fuerteventura and sea-based sports are inextricably linked. Since 1985, the Fuerteventura Windsurfing and Kiteboarding World Cup has been held off the Playas de Sotavento beaches in Pájara. The event includes the presence of leading figures from the world of windsurfing and kitesurfing.

Although it's true that the event is held in Fuerteventura for a combination of historical, geographical and sporting reasons, we'd like to begin to understand this world-class sporting phenomenon through the words of Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), exiled to Fuerteventura during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera:

*This unfortunate island of Fuerteventura, where beneath the peaceful sky and the calm sea we are writing these comments on life that passes and life that remains, measures one hundred kilometres from north to south and twenty five kilometres at its widest point. In the far southwest there is an almost uninhabited peninsula, with a few shepherds wandering in naked loneliness through the bare landscape. This peninsula is known as Jandía or De la Pared (Of the Wall). The wall, or rather the rampart, that gave its name to Jandía Peninsula and of which a few stretches still remain was built by the Guanches to separate the two kingdoms in which the Majorata island, that of the majoreros, this being Fuerteventura, was divided, and to prevent them raiding each other. That's why, historically speaking, this little piece of Africa lost in the Atlantic allowed itself the luxury of having a peninsula with a Wall like the Great Wall of China.*



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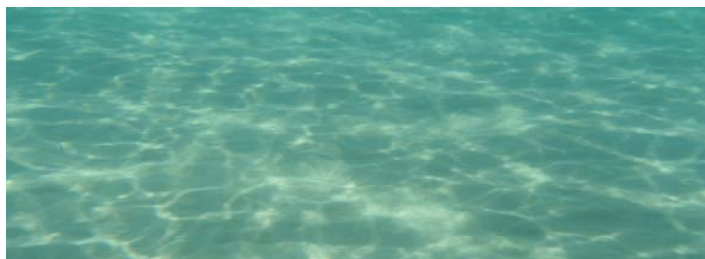
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Re-reading the writer's description, we can see how the charm of this land rising out of the Atlantic Ocean has become a paradise for sea sports. However, the description would not make sense if we did not know something of the history of the place.

The origin of the first explorers who visited Fuerteventura is still a mystery, although recent research indicates that Berbers living in North Africa were the first to arrive. The island was conquered by Bethencourt and De la Salle in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Fuerteventura was a domain of the King of Castile, to become part of the Spanish province of the Canary Islands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Continuing with our description, we should underline the incredibly mild climate, as the temperatures remain almost constant throughout the year (20.4 °C average temperature). There is little rain and it is one of the driest islands in the Canary Archipelago. The fact that it is low-lying means that the island does not hold back humid air masses like the other islands in the archipelago. In addition, the nearby Azores high-pressure region has a determining effect on Fuerteventura's climate. The prevailing winds come from the northeast or north.

The Competition site is one of the most incredible places in the world, in a natural setting on the Playas de Jandía beaches (fig.1). Here we have a unique local meteorological phenomenon, where the wind is channelled by a kind of natural funnel that makes the air mass accelerate headlong towards the beaches. This phenomenon guarantees constant wind conditions that ensure a headache-free event for the organisers.



**Figure. 1** Seabed off the Playas de Jandía

To finish our look at the setting for the event, we should mention the wildlife, such as the Barbary Ground Squirrel (fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** *Barbary Ground Squirrel*

### **The event**

With a budget of 700,000 Euros, provided by public and private bodies, the event has developed an almost faultless organisation based on activities stretching back for 23 years, involving the whole town and employing 2,000 staff, while offering prize money of 18,000 Euros. As well as the above, the media impact of the event is evidenced by the fact that it is followed by some 500 million viewers.

The World Cup Fuerteventura 2008 (Windsurfing and Kiteboarding) took place off Playa de Sotavento beach in Jandía (fig. 3) from July 19<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008 and attracted over 380 specialists from all over the world, who took part in the different events: Speed, Freestyle and Racing.



**Figure 3.** *Playa de Sotavento beach in Jandía*

The World Cup started with the Windsurfing PWA (Professional Windsurfers Association) Slalom 42 Grand Slam events. The event consisted of regattas where the competitors were allowed a maximum of four sails and two boards to show off their windsurfing skills and tactics. The courses generally depended on the wind and competitors raced around a figure eight slalom course. The other event included in the World Cup was the PKRA (Professional Kiteboard Riders Association) Speed Kiteboarding Grand Slam and, as with windsurfing, the top kiteboarders in the world competed alongside amateurs to be the fastest over 500 metres. The heats took place from July 19<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2008.

The second stage of the World Cup took place from July 24<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup> and consisted of the PWA Windsurfing Freestyle event. Here the programme could be chosen freely by the participants and the judges awarded points for the most creative manoeuvres and jumps. July 26<sup>th</sup>-August 2<sup>nd</sup> saw the ISWC (The International Speed Windsurfing Class) Speed Windsurfing World Championship. As with Kiteboarding, the event was held over 500 metres

The final events were the Racing Grand Slam, this being the “Formula 1” kiteboarding event and consisted of a virtual triangle that had to be covered as fast as possible. As with the PKRA Freestyle Kiteboarding event, the participants had to use the wind to perform jumps up to 15 metres high and 70 metres long to be marked by the judges.

As for the organisation, we should highlight the safety measures implanted for the Championships, with over 100 individuals from the Pájara Local Police Force, the Civil Guard, Civil Defence, the Red Cross, the Pájara Fire-fighters and the municipal emergency services. A doctor, two ambulances and a permanent health care team were on the beach the whole time the competition was in progress.

As well as the above, we should also mention the numerous games, musical performances and festivals that complemented the World Cup. Especially enjoyable were the concerts, raffles and the great number of gifts received by the visitors.

### **Windsurfing and Kiteboarding World Cup. Epilogue**

Fuerteventura was chosen by the gods to provide an idyllic spot, with crystal-clear turquoise waters and constant winds, inviting the world’s top windsurfers and kiteboarders to carry on choosing this paradise on earth for their competitions.

Bearing in mind all the above, the University of Alicante and especially the Physical Activities and Sports Sciences Research Group wanted to play their part in this fantastic sporting event. Two members of the research team were sent to the island to gather data for a pioneering research study at world level that studied the injuries produced by windsurfing and kiteboarding. It was clear that these two sports are a permanent source of information that will continue to surprise the world of science.

If we are to summarise the work carried out for Fuerteventura 2008, we would like to highlight the tremendous warmth of the organisers and the sportsmen and women who supported our initiative with enormous respect and friendliness. We would like to take the opportunity to send our special thanks to José M. Fernández Marcote and his team, who made our data gathering an extremely pleasant experience.

It goes without saying that our research team hopes to attend future events in order to establish new parameters that will allow us to understand these sports better.