



Kiwi Craig Chandler turned around a career misfortune, finding new time to focus on a personal obsession. The Gawa board consists of 59 individually CNC'd components. After machining all the components are laid out for a final quality check before being positioned for a three hour hand lay-up procedure with carbon fibre and epoxy. Here Craig is wetting out the final layer with epoxy before the board is placed in a Vacuum bag prior to heating  
Photo: Andrew Bunnag



such short order. Little about the Upeksha tale is ordinary – right down to its name. Pronounced "oo-pek-shaa", the Sanskrit word means equanimity and inner balance – qualities the founders believe are vital to overcome the challenges of racing; a sense of being fully present, acting with wisdom, allowing us to meet the most difficult situations with a warm, calm and balanced attitude. But its compliment of long, stiff and slender Gawa boards with the 'upsy-dozy' flip-tips to prevent nose-diving, are also unusual looking. The back-to-the-future 'tea-tray' boards would not look out of place in a kiteboarding video, circa 2000.

Looks, and even the brand's somewhat Zen name, can be deceiving. In back-to-back tests national teams found the Gawa boards between one percent and three percent quicker, even up to six percent faster than other registered twin-tips, depending on the conditions. The ambitious Italian team were among the earliest and most enthusiastic adopters after extensive evaluation. Team China was just as impressed as the Italians and felt it offered its sometimes inexperienced riders a vital edge.



No fast finishes. The final step is the sanding of the rails to provide the perfect release for water flow  
Photo: Andrew Bunnag

Veteran kiteboarder and racer, Simone Vannucci, who coached the Italian team for more than 18 months supported by the Italian Sailing Federation (FIV), guided Sofia Tomasoni to a YOG gold in Argentina. Vannucci quickly appreciated the advantages of the Gawa boards and encouraged his young charges to secure one in a bid to land the two qualification places – one boy, one

girl – available to each nation. "The Gawa was harder to control. It required a different body position and some of the kids had difficulty with that," said Vannucci. "But in racing conditions in many tests with GPS over kilometres it was always faster than other boards – sometimes a big difference, sometimes small. But it was never slower."