Setting your Stance

Monday, 06 August 2007

Neil McNab was giving talks on snowboarding techniques at The Dail Mail Ski and Snowboard Show.

"How to work out the best stance angle and width for riding your board.?"

This is one of the most frequently asked questions and probably one of the most important things to get right on your board. If you get your stance wrong it will be forever holding you back, restricting your natural movements and holding you in the wrong posture.

Not a lot of people seem to know how to set up their stance properly, I even read in a recent UK magazine that there is no set way of doing it, just set up your board and get used to it which is the best advice! In fact there is a logical solution and it follows the simple bio-mechanics of the body. We look at how you bend and flex, how your joints are meant to bend and flex and the simple movements that you need to make when riding your board. It's pretty easy really so read on and get it right

Your stance and the way you set up your bindings is the key to riding with a relaxed and correct posture that allows great technique. It's pretty easy to get it right, so don't fear the change. First start with the width, begin without your board and stand relaxed, with all your joints comfortably flexed. Feel how you body is free from tension. Now widen your feet slowly, one foot at a time and feel for when the width feels just right. At a certain point your stance will feel to wide and too narrow.

When you have the correct width you will be able to easily stand with your weight on one foot or the other without having to move very much at all. If your feet are to wide apart you won't be able to do this very easily, too narrow and your hips will move past the foot you are trying to stand on making it difficult to get back to the other foot. Once you have the correct width, flex your knees and notice how they naturally spread apart as you bend. Line your feet up with your knees so that all your leg joints are flexing in a straight line from your hips to your toes.

Your knees on both feet should now be in line with your feet, kind of John Wayne style. This is how your body naturally flexes with a stance of this width, if you go wider your feet will point out more, any narrower and they will diverge less. Always look to keep your knees, both legs, over your toes. Remember how this stance feels and feel for the angles between your feet. There will normally be around 25/30Â° difference between your feet.

The next step is to grab your board and get the width right. Use the recommended stance on the board as a guide and go in or out same amount with both feet from the recommended setting, this will keep your stance centered on the board. Note where your bindings are going to go!.

For the angles, put your rear foot on at as close to zero as you can without having toe over hang. Your rear foot just goes from edge to edge, toe to heel as you ride so your toes and heel want to be pretty much straight across. Now you need to put the same angle as before back into your stance. Your front foot takes the angle and so will be pointing forwards at around 25/30Â°. When you flex, your knees should comfortably flex over your feet. Remember to keep your upper body relaxed and in line.

Whatever angles you put on your board you always need to have the angle that you found was right for you when you flexed without your board between your feet. For example if you felt like you had around 30Â° difference between your feet then what ever angles you have on your board you should always have thirty degrees difference between your feet, for example -5/+25, 0/30 or +5/35)

Many top riders for example ride with very side on stances with even minus angle on their rear binding. This gives them more control for steering with the rear foot, especially useful when riding backwards. It is important to note that, what ever angles you choose to ride your knees must always flex comfortably over your toes and you body must remain relaxed above, only you head turns to look in the direction that you are going.

The last thing to check is your straps and high backs. The straps are easy just adjust them so that you can crank them tight and get rid of any heel lift. The toe strap doesn't always need to be as tight as the heel strap when you ride! The high back needs to be supportive and strong. It needs to be angled forwards so that you can feel it behind your calve and easily push your board onto the heel edge without having to pull up on your toes to much or straighten your legs. If you find your it hard work to ride on your heel side edge then try putting more forward lean on your high back. If your high backs are old and bend as you lean on them, chuck em away!

That's it, now get out and ride using the natural movements of the body as your key to great technique.

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