



U-Turn, a new name in powerkites, has been on the market since the beginning of the year. With the Oxigen, we put the first of the three-model range under the magnifying glass. This intermediate kite sits between the Helium and the Nitro in an interesting market where more and more flyers are looking for something between a beginner kite and a full-on race machine. Ernst Strobl, the in-house designer of U-Turn, is responsible for the development of the Oxigen as well as the successful paraglider range and as the designer of the AiREA Bronto and Raptor he is not new to the kite market.

Thanks to this, we can expect the Oxigen to have a modern, smooth profile and the quality of workmanship normally seen on paragliders is obvious as soon as you take it out of the bag. Not only are the seams well stitched and the reinforcements well placed, but there is also extraordinary attention to detail. There is a mesh panel at the end of each rib so that sand and water can pass along to the wingtip, from where it can be emptied out through Dirt-Outs (exhaust valves with a Velcro enclosure). Another feature is COS (Curve Optimisation System) where the outer line of the brake bridle passes through a ring to tension the trailing edge and the main bridle has a row of D-lines to support the profile better. The high-tech origin of the design also becomes clear when you look inside the cells, with Mylar reinforcement at the bridle attachment points and strapping across the cross-vent holes in the ribs. Double stitching, even on the top surface graphic, makes the

kite very strong and kite flyers very happy.

For our test we had four different sizes from the small 2.0m through the 3.2m and 5.0m to the large 7.8m. We needed all of them when testing in the buggy at St. Peter-Ording when we had storms inland and whilst Snowkiting at 1700m. When attaching the lines you see that the brakes are led through a power-ring on the main bridle and the standard trim settings on our test kites were accurate, no re-trimming was necessary. Whilst the Oxigen is a stable kite, a little brake should be used as it nears the top of the window. Also in gusty winds it needs brake input to stop it from over-flying, giving a taste of the skills needed to fly a race kite. When launching the Oxigen likes to be moved to get it flying, this can either be a gentle turning or a strong sweep through the window. Once the kite is flying everything else is automatic and it is easy to handle.



The Distinctive U-Turn claw

Going upwind is no problem for the Oxigen, especially on hard ground it goes easily into the wind, but on soft or muddy ground you have to get it moving because the Oxigen is not a crawler, it loves wind and speed. This kite loves to go fast and where better to show this than on a wide-open beach, with gentle movements and subtle braking it accelerates more and more. Intermediate? When it comes to high speed the Oxigen pilot has no need to hide from the top performers, because despite the moderate aspect ratio, this kite likes to get going and if it gets too much it's easy to scrub off speed with the buggy.



The Oxigen let loose on the snow

So, is it a kite for speed junkies, or for those looking to progress in Buggy, Landboarding or Snowkiting? The Oxigen does it all, the secret is in how it is used. In order to tame the kite, U-Turn recommends a minimum line length of 25m. When used with longer lines the kite behaves better and is more forgiving, especially important when Landboarding or Snowkiting. Also the Oxigen on long lines has a greater range that the pilot can exploit, and in gusty winds lines of 25-30m would be a good recommendation. On the other hand with shorter lines of 18-20m the Oxigen becomes more agile and it's party time, you can explore the upper wind limits and make some high performance pilots green with envy. Especially in the smaller sizes 2.0m and 2.5m the Oxigen could be a race weapon when other high performance kites become uncontrollable.

A good point about the U-turn intermediate is the safety backup of how the kite behaves when pulling both brakes fully, the kite flies backwards and

lands on it's trailing edge, useful when pushing the limits.



Dirt-Out and Curve Optimisation System (COS) are two of the Oxigen details

To make the Oxigen even more attractive, U-turn sales manager Pascal Whitthoff has decided to offer the kite in two quality levels, something new in the highly competitive kite market. The Basic version is made from 44gsm ripstop nylon and a dyneema bridle, alternatively the higher quality Oxigen Pro has water repellent material and a kevlar bridle like the Nitro. It's hard to believe that the Basic model, recognised by the white undersurface, is 25% cheaper than the Pro model because the construction details and manufacturing quality are absolutely identical.



The U-Turn intermediate shows its full potential in the buggy

Conclusion:

We have learned that there doesn't have to be a conflict between a high-speed wing and an intermediate kite and with the two quality levels the Oxigen has a wide appeal. The Dirt-Out system and the durable construction make it very user friendly, however the performance potential allows the average pilot to improve and grow with it.