



## Is Kai Lenny the Next Great Waterman?

THE 14-YEAR-OLD FROM MAUI IS LEARNING FAST. BY MARTIN KIRK

➔ Kai Lenny is a deeply tanned 14-year-old eighth-grader on Maui who hasn't hit his growth spurt yet and doesn't look a day over 13. That was especially apparent when I met him recently at a North Shore pizzeria. He was like any other kid, laughing with his parents and little brother while chowing down on pizza slices.

But as unassuming as he is on land, Kai, whose name means "water" in Hawaiian, is quite impressive to watch on the ocean. There hasn't been anyone since Pete Cabrinha or Robby Naish who has excelled so well in surfing, windsurfing and kiteboarding (oh, and Kai foilboards too). And with the likes of Naish, Laird Hamilton and Dave Kalama giving him hands-on training, he's only going to get better. He has already put together an impressive windsurfing resume and has become one of the youngest athletes that Red Bull sponsors. With all his skills, Kai could explode in kiteboarding too.

"My biggest goals now are to improve in all disciplines," he says. "My surfing has helped me understand how to stay on the wave when kiting, and windsurfing helps me set an upwind course. Foilboarding has really helped strengthen my legs so I can go kiting for longer sessions."

Kai was born on Maui to avid windsurfers and surfers Martin and Paula Lenny, so he was born to those sports. He first tried kiteboarding when he was only 8, during a family vacation on Mike Waltze's Fijian island, Namotu. Mike had been working with Manu Bertin and Laird Hamilton for several years to develop the new sport and saw Kai's potential. "Mike showed me how to fly a trainer kite and then he put me on a longboard and I got to ride out and even turned around and came back," Kai says.

Soon after Kai's initial kiteboarding experience, I met him during an annual kiting event for Big Brothers and Big Sisters that Kai's dad sponsored as the general manager at Mama's Fish House. Kai and 20 other kids were invited to Kite Beach to



Kai Lenny 'Hangs Loose' in Hawaii

learn how to fly trainer kites and do body dragging. Kai had caught on so quickly to kiteboarding that he ended up helping with that clinic - and the next four.

In past years, Kai has been competing in one of windsurfing's premier events, the Aloha Classic on Maui, as well as the summer Maui windsurfing race series. He has won countless surfing competitions, and he rode in the Red Bull King of the Air from 2003 to 2005. He absolutely loves wave riding. All of which has me thinking, what the heck have I been doing with all my time on Maui?

Kai of course realizes that he has much to learn from his elders. He's eager and determined to do just that, even as he develops new skills.

"I just got a new HD video camera and I really like making water-sports movies," he says. "This way I can improve my riding by comparing my stance and body position to those of other riders like Robby. I also like to design and hand-stitch small kites. When I make a really good design I take it to Don Montague at Naish and show him."

With so much going for him, waiting for that growth spurt certainly isn't holding Kai back from being a great waterman. Kai's current sponsors are Naish, Quiksilver, Red Bull, First Hawaiian Bank, Hi-Tech Surf Sports, Mama's Fish House and of course M&P. Martin Kirk is the owner of Kiteboarding School of Maui. [ksmaui.com](http://ksmaui.com)



Tow-in Foilboarding on Maui's North shore could be the wave of the future.

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TOP HEAD SHOT: JDPHOTOFAIRY; ABOVE: ERIK AEDER; LEFT: JDPHOTOFAIRY