

An excerpt from:

'North American Fighter Kites' a book on CD by Bruce Lambert
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This 'Winning at Line Touch Competitions' excerpt is numbered based on the
chapter topic numbers in the original 'North American Fighter Kites' book on CD.

Make no mistake, this is not intended to be a complete manual about how to win
every line touch point. It is simply a description of line touch competition flying
based on my personal experiences and observations.....just one person's
perspective, mine.

I hope this information is useful and helpful in your line touch competing, but
mostly I hope you can add pages and pages to this beginning discussion of line
touch competition flying.....please email me br8080@gmail.com with anything
you'd like to add and I'll include it.

Biglinetouchgrins,

bruce

Line-Touch Winning 'Secrets'

Since 1997, I have competed in at least 75 line-touch competitions and have won many, placed in almost all of them and lost very few. Because I have won or placed in far more line-touch competitions than I've lost, many fighter kite flyers think I have some 'winning secrets'. They often ask me to share my 'secret' line-touch maneuvers and strategies with them so they can improve their success in competitions.

There are FIVE TRUTHS I've learned about line-touch competitive flying that many flyers would classify as 'WINNING SECRETS'. The FIVE TRUTHS are simply teachings from the fighter kites themselves. A fighter kite has an effective way of teaching the flyer exactly what works and what doesn't in every given flying situation, ESPECIALLY during a competition.

LINE-TOUCH SECRET ONE

I overheard this 'TRUTH' well stated a few years ago from Jeff MacInnis when he was asked "When flying in line-touch competitions, what is the 'secret' that separates a winning flyer from an average flyer?"

Jeff answered 'FLYING THE KITE'. You may be saying to yourself, of course you must fly the kite, so what's secret about that.

What Jeff was talking about when he said 'flying the kite' is to focus and concentrate. Pay very close attention to every minute detail regarding the way you manipulate the flying line, how your kite responds and the feeling of the kite's actions transmitted through the line to your fingers. Think about and concentrate on flying your kite, not winning the point.

The better you direct your attention to flying your kite, and minimize being distracted by other things going on around you, the better chance you'll be a winning flyer.

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LINE-TOUCH SECRET TWO

I learned this 'TRUTH' the hard way. Regardless of how much solo practicing you do, it only provides you a limited understanding

of your true flying skill.

To learn how to win in a line-touch competition, you must practice flying 'points' against a competitor.

Unlike practicing solo, when flying in a line-touch competition your opponent's kite speed, kite position and kite maneuverability creates situations that DEMAND when and in what direction your kite MUST move. To be successful flying in a situation you didn't create, or in a surprise situation, YOU must have complete control of your kite's direction, speed, position and maneuverability at that exact moment.

In solo practice you don't have any 'pressure' or 'surprise situation' determining or forcing your kite's next move or position.

That's the difference; in solo practice you don't have any 'pressure' or 'surprise situation' determining or forcing your kite's next move or position.

What's worse is when you're flying solo, you may DECEIVE yourself into believing you actually control your kite and that YOU ALONE decided when and in what direction to make a specific maneuver. The truth is, USUALLY the wind and kite itself had as much to do with the precise timing of when and in what direction the kite flies as you.

Once you understand this difference and apply it to your solo practice, your solo practice can take on a different attitude and provide you more of the skills needed to win points consistently in line-touch competitions.

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LINE-TOUCH SECRET THREE

The third 'TRUTH' is to have lots of patience. Patience is the one quality common to all winning flyers. If you exercise patience and don't rush your flying, you will avoid getting your kite into many losing situations, including frequent grounding.

But, what about the situations where your opponent is instantly on the attack? Of course you must immediately respond, but calmly. Being patient doesn't mean being passive.

LINE-TOUCH SECRET FOUR

In virtually all competitions I have participated in, more competitors give points away because of grounding their kite than are earned by their opponent.

The reason most of the kite groundings occur is the result of flyers being excited, nervous, and anxious. They rush to get their kite to perform a particular maneuver when the kite isn't in the correct position to accomplish it.

Let your opponents rush and ground their kites, you keep cool, be patient, **CONCENTRATE** on your kite and your line manipulation.

REMEMBER, the ground, will earn more points from each competitor than most opponents will!

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LINE-TOUCH SECRET FIVE

This 'TRUTH' is invisible yet contributes as much to winning as it does to losing. It's the flyer's attitude during competition.

The overall attitude competitors have when competing will make a major difference in the outcome of their line-touch matches. Attitude alone won't make a flyer a winner, but it can usually push the luck in your favor. Focus your attitude on the positives of your flying and not on the mistakes you will inevitably make.

Every flyer makes mistakes and every flyer loses points. The flyers that most often win use their mistakes to learn from, not to get angry or upset about.

You just read the five 'secrets', or as I call them 'TRUTHS', fighter kites have taught me about successful flying in line-touch competitions. I hope they are of some benefit for you in your competitive flying.

Although this is a 'TRUTH', it is one I assume all competitors already know.

NEVER GIVE UP!

No matter how bleak things

look, NEVER GIVE UP!

Especially when it looks like there could be no way you could escape from losing a point, that's the time to give an extra spurt of intense concentration and resolve to your flying. You will surprise yourself more often than you realize by either escaping from getting touched, or by turning around the situation and scoring. And you never know when your opponent may ground his/her kite, it happens often. Don't ever give up!

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ALMOST A SECRET;

BE PREPARED

BEFORE

THE COMPETITION

Preparing for competition

When preparing to fly in a line-touch competition try following these three rules:

1. It's essential each kite you MAY POSSIBLY fly in the competition be perfectly tuned. Perfectly tuned for the way you fly; the kites are not even slightly or barely out of tune.
2. Select a kite to fly in a line-touch competition that is optimized for the wind speed you will be flying in at the time when you are competing.
3. Select a flying line that's most appropriate for the wind and weather conditions.

Before the competition, spend as much time as it takes to precisely tune each kite you think you may use in a competition. Become VERY familiar with how each kite behaves in

a variety of wind ranges, not just the wind range the kite was designed for. Winds aren't always so considerate to remain in a given speed range during a competition. It's very likely you may be forced to fly your kite in wind speeds beyond the kite's designed wind range, either above or below it. During a competition, don't allow yourself to be surprised by the behavior of your kites in any wind condition.

When you are learning about each kite's behavior in a wide range of conditions, include your flying lines in the process. Try at least three different flying lines with each kite. It may surprise you what a difference a flying line will have on the performance of your kite. It surely surprised me! Choosing the correct flying line is a vital element in a flyer's success. The correct flying line is based on your preferences, no one else's.

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WHEN IT'S TIME TO COMPETE

Determine which kite and flying line combination is most controllable for you in each of the wind ranges you are likely to encounter during the competition. When you are called to compete, select the kite and flying line based on the wind speed at the time of **your** match.

STEPPING INTO THE RING

Before stepping into the flying area to compete, double check that you have selected the correct precisely tuned kite and the best line for the wind conditions you will be flying in. Attach the line to the kite's bridle and step into the flying area.

Next, check the ground around your flying area for any sticks, debris, etc. that can tangle in your line. Be sure to check the area downwind of your flying area, that's where your flying line will land. Remove all debris.

Remember, there is no need to rush to get your kite in the air just because you are in the flying area. It's much more important to rid the area of debris that could cause line snarls.

GETTING POSITIONED IN YOUR FLYING AREA

Don't rush to be the first to position yourself in your flying area. If you can, wait until your opponent is positioned. The position of your opponent may tell you where the most advantageous position for you will be.

For example, being upwind of your opponent, especially when flying top points, is an advantage. If you are near the back of your flying area and your opponent is more forward, unless your opponent moves during the point, you will have a slight advantage, especially for the top points. Some flyers believe the reverse is true for bottom points, but I find being as far back in my flying area works great for both top and bottom points.

Place your spool, in front of where you will be standing. I usually select a place near the back of the flying area to stand; my reel is about 2-3' in front of me. When I'm flying I try to position myself so my hands are directly above my flying spool. This allows the line to freely flow off the spool without the slightest hesitation. If I need to kneel down during a point, I don't want to kneel on my reel.

Sometimes I will place the reel closer to the front of the flying area and spool off more line

than I think I will need and spread it untangled around the flying area. This allows me to have free flowing line and the freedom to move around the flying area. You will find the combination that best suits your flying style.

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I like to have the back boundary of my flying area no more than 2' behind me. Enough room for me to step back one small step without going out of bounds.

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR OPPONENT'S KITE

Let your opponent launch first, if you can. You are in no hurry, you are patient, so don't let anything make you hurry. Patience pays. Before launching your kite, look at your opponent's kite position.

By watching your opponent's kite before you launch, you will know the line length your opponent is using. This can tell you quite a bit about your opponent's understanding of the game or their initial intentions.

If the opponent has much more flying line out than needed to reach your extreme side of the wind window, your opponent's line handling may require them to retrieve that amount line in order to reach you. Or, more likely, your opponent may not know how to determine the most efficient beginning line length.

DETERMINE THE MOST EFFICIENT LINE LENGTH

When beginning a point, you want your starting line length to be the most efficient length. By efficient, I mean the shortest length needed to fly your kite to the extreme outside of your opponent's flying area. This is about where you think the opponent's kite line will be when she or he is being extremely defensive. You want to be certain your line length is sufficient to reach that far with some extra to spare, but not much extra.

Your efficient line length must include the amount of line you'll need to retrieve in order to fly your kite to the opponent's edge of the wind window. Your line pulling technique will play a role in estimating the amount of line to allow for retrieving.

You want your line to be as short as possible to do the job.

The shorter your flying line, the shorter the distance to your opponent and the faster your kite will fly. Shorter line allows you to reach your opponent's line quicker and score a point.

This line length preparation applies equally to top and bottom points and in all wind conditions. As low drag and light weight as flying line is, it still is weight the kite has to pull through the air. It's easy to see why the smaller diameter and shorter flying line add to the kite's speed.

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PAY ATTENTION TO OPPONENT'S KITE ELEVATION

The next aspect to pay attention to is the elevation of your opponent's kite before the start of the point. In most line-touch competitions, the direction of the point, either top or

bottom, is determined randomly. The competitors aren't aware ahead of time whether the point will be a top or bottom. You and your opponent find out simultaneously when it's announced by the starter or judge, which marks the beginning of the point. Generally you want your kite positioned either at a similar elevation to your opponent's kite, or at an elevation you feel gives you the best advantage for either a top or bottom point based on your flying skills

THE START OF THE POINT

The moment the point begins is the moment of truth regarding your preparations. For me, at the start of a point, if it's clear my kite's position has a distinct advantage, I attack. If my kite's position doesn't give me a clear advantage but I estimate the risk is low, I may try attacking anyway.

More often, my kite isn't in an advantageous position and I will take an initial defensive position and wait for my opponent to begin an attack. My hope is in the process and excitement of attacking, my opponent will make a mistake. This may give me the advantage or the point. I win as many or more points being defensive, waiting for the opponent's kite to become vulnerable, than I win by initially being on the attack.

RACING TO SCORE

From the start of a point, most competitors I have watched are in a race to score. You definitely don't want to miss any opportunity to score, whether it is in the first second of the point or 5 minutes into it. But you also must be able to recognize the true opportunities and be able to assess the risk.

Unless you get a thrill from attacking in high risk situations, be patient and wait for less risky scoring opportunities. This usually means you must be effectively defensive.

Many competitors miss scoring opportunities because they are reluctant to purposely be defensive. Beginning a match defensively is not an indicator of fear or lack of skill; it is a successful strategy for winning.

The bottom line: scoring can occur equally often from a defensive position as from an offensive one. This is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

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line-touch strategies

and

competition tips

Photo courtesy of Karen Gustavson.

Line-touch competition during the 2002 Fighter Kite Line-Touch World Cup Championships at the Washington State International Kite Festival in Longbeach, Washington. August 2002. From left to right, Chuck Lund, Steve Childers, Bruce Lambert.

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Strategies that

WORK

in line-touch competition

When I've flown in competitions, I have used all the following strategies to score points. I know each of them works. Some of these strategies I'm explaining for the first time. This is not to say other flyers don't already use these, it's just that I haven't discussed them before.

A couple of these strategies require some 'set-up' of the opponent, some require you make 'fake' or 'false attacks', some require correct and precise timing and others are very straightforward. *They all work and are successful at scoring points, but they don't all work all the time!*

My suggestion is to practice and learn one or two, try them in competition several times to see how they work for you. You may find better success by modifying the strategies.

Then move to another couple and repeat the process. Collectively these are meant to be a starting point or guide for creating your own successful winning techniques.

One of the most exciting aspects of line-touch competition is the constant instantaneous shifting of being on the attack and then being forced into a defensive position, and in less than a blink being back on the attack. Knowing and understanding this aspect of line-touch is part of the success of some of the following strategies.

Before we discuss the various line-touch maneuvers it may be a good idea to review the issue of strategic offense and defense in line-touch competitions. The strategies are about recognizing what the risks are by attacking at a particular time and how to use defensive actions to lower your risks and increase your scoring.

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Some thoughts about Offense and Defense

in Line Touch Competitions

In line-touch competition, always being the aggressor or attacker is not the most successful tactic. Of course, when you are successful it's exciting and fun. However, the risks are often high in many of the situations of attacking and as a result you may lose more points than you win.

Being on the offense means you will be flying your kite on your opponent's side of the wind window most of the time. That's the nature of attacking; chasing your opponent to their edge of the wind window.

This is a position where your kite is vulnerable. There is less wind acting on the kite. Your kite's predictability is diminished. Your flying line is much longer than your opponent's line length. Your control of your kite is more difficult and tricky. Your kite is in a position to easily ground. These are the risks of being the aggressor. This is one reason it isn't always the best tactic to attack.

Learning to lure your opponent to your side of the wind window will reduce your risks substantially. When you're flying on your side of the wind window, your kite is enjoying the benefit of shorter line length, stronger winds acting on the kite and your opponent's kite is vulnerable on your side of the wind window. That's a combination for winning a point with much lower risk.

There are situations where you may win the point, but weren't the one making the touch. I'm talking about points earned from a touch, not from grounding. For example, if your opponent were to fly his or her kite so their line touched your line, but from the wrong side of your line compared with the called point. You win the point but did not directly earn the point. Your opponent made an error. You won the point indirectly.

A point is a point. How it is earned is irrelevant as long as it was earned following the rules of the game. It doesn't matter whether you were on the offense or defense when you won the point, it is your point.

In that same example above, the error your opponent made was made during what the opponent thought was an attack to win the point. The opponent misjudged or did not see where your line was positioned, or the kite was not controllable. Nonetheless, your oppo-

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ment was on the attack and while attacking, lost the point. Your opponent's kite was in a higher risk situation than your kite.

It's rare that a competitor can have the offensive position all the time during the flying of a

point. In line-touch, each competitor is constantly shifting from defense to offense, back and forth. The shift can occur in a millisecond. Because of the rapid offense/defense change, sometimes the shift occurs before you realize it happened. In those cases it's usually too late to take advantage of the situation. This is an example of the pace of the game.

It's important you are always aware of the location of your own kite and line plus the kite and line of your opponent. Often competitors are so busy flying their own kite and preventing grounding or some other mishap that they aren't as aware of their opponent as they need to be. Another reason competitors aren't aware of the location of their opponent's kite and line is the sun. Being blinded by the sun, even momentarily, can easily cause errors for seconds after the blinding. This is especially true if you didn't know where your opponent's kite was before you were momentarily blinded.

MORE ON DEFENSE

A good case could be made for avoiding being on the offense and developing defensive skills as your primary weapons. Because most competitors are concentrating on attacking, they often underestimate the value of their opponent's boring defensive tactics.

Purposely and strategically being defensive is one of the most successful tactics in linetouch competition. Being defensive means keeping your kite on your side of the wind window. Sometimes close to the edge of your side of the wind window, sometimes nearer the center of the wind window.

You are able to shorten your flying line. You force your opponent who is attacking, to fly into your territory. This is where your kite has more control, is faster and more predictable. This is where you want your opponent. Luring your opponent there is the trick.

Of course when the scoring opportunity occurs you immediately go into offense and attack. But you have the conditions in your favor, reducing your risks.

Here are some of the flying skills you need to be good at planned defense:

A. You must have keen observation skills to accurately determine how your opponent's kite is performing relative to yours.

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B. You must be able to accurately judge the speed of your opponent's kite relative to your kite's speed.

C. You need the ability to fly your kite well beyond your edge of the wind window; certainly farther beyond your edge of the the wind window than your opponent's kite can fly.

D. Patience, you must have lots of patience.

E. And you must recognize when the risk is low enough and it's time to attack and score.

Competition Flying Tips

POWDERED CHALK

Steve Bateman of San Diego was the first person I saw use chalk when flying fighter kites. It's powdered chalk, like rock climbers use. You coat your hands with it before flying. You

can also get a chalk bag to attach to your belt, the chalk bag sits above your butt, like a fanny pack, out of the way of flying. With the chalk bag you can dip your hands into it during flying.

Chalk allows you to have more subtle control over the flying line. This is especially true in damp weather. Using chalk minimizes the jerkiness or inconsistency in the flow of the line as it moves through your fingers. This can make all the difference in a close competitive match. It also allows you to grip the line more securely. The way I figure it, anything you can do to reduce difficulties with handling flying line, the better. Give chalk a try.

PUMPING LINE

Using hand-over-hand line pulling allows you to apply line tension and to control the maneuvers of your kite, but shortens your line in the process. Pumping line is a flying technique used by few flyers, but is one of the most effective to lengthen or maintain your flying line length while continuing to control your line tension and maneuver your kite.

There are a couple of methods for pumping line I am familiar with; one method you use one hand and repeatedly pull and release the line controlling the kite and at the same time you are maintaining or releasing small amounts of line, the other method is the one I most often use which requires both hands.

To pump the line, using both hands, you pull and release your flying line with one hand

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while your other hand is used as a line tension controller. The motion is similar to having both hands together in the center of your body about belt height, then quickly flinging open your arms as wide as possible.

Here's the way I do it. Turn your body so your shoulders are almost aimed at the kite. For this example we'll say the kite is in the left side of the wind window, on your left. So you'll be turned with your left shoulder generally aimed toward the kite. Your left hand is closest to the kite.

Your right hand, the hand farthest away from the kite is the hand gripping the flying line. As you fling open your arms, the hand gripping the line is moving away from the kite. Your left hand is palm up with fingers cupped lightly around the line but open. This hand, which is the hand closest to the kite, slides along under the line. The line is sliding and rubbing across the fingers and/or palm of this hand. The degree of pressure you feel in you left hand is from the left hand pushing against the line.

When you fling open your arms, the left hand moves toward the kite and is pushing up on the bottom of the line creating pressure and tension. The left hand's sliding motion combined with the pulling and releasing of the line with the right hand allows you to control the amount of tension in the line. You can maneuver your kite virtually as if you were hand over hand pulling line.

The critical part of this technique is the timing of the flinging and releasing. It requires a precisely tuned kite, practice and keen observation of the actions of the kite during the pumping. To test the tuning of your kite, try this. When the nose of your kite is pointed up, quickly in rapid succession, pump your line several times to increase your kite's elevation. Use just one hand for the pumping. By pumping, I mean tugging hard on the line. The kite will fly fast and straight with each hard tug. The trick is to time the next tug

so the kite doesn't lose momentum or turn between tugs. If your kite always turns or veers to one side, it needs to be adjusted.

To maintain your line length while controlling your kite's maneuvers, you fly the kite using a length of line equal to the distance of both of your arms totally extended.

Contracting one or both arms quickly to your body provides the length of line you can pull or retrieve during your pumping. This extension/contraction action of your arms is the distance of line you have to work with. The distance of the span of your open arms together with the action of your left hand controlling the line tension will allow you to control and maneuver your kite without shortening your flying line.

If you want to increase line length while flying, then do the following. Either during or at

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the end of an arm fling or line tug; release a small amount of line. You will notice the kite will continue to fly straight and have momentum even when you release a small amount of line. This is because of the sliding action of your left hand on the line, which provides control of the line tension. Your left hand sliding under the line applying pressure to the line is very important to successful pumping. In a way, the left hand acts like a fulcrum, it is what allows the technique to work. This technique takes practice to get the timing of it. This pumping technique will allow you to fly and control your kite almost like you were hand-over-hand pulling. The one thing I haven't been able to do with line pumping is to maintain the same maximum forward speed of my kite over a long distance compared with the forward speed of hand over hand pulling.

But with pumping you can increase your line length while flying instead of shortening it as in normal pulling. This is an extremely valuable skill in line-touch competitions especially with 'Top' points. I use this technique all the time during a match. Without thinking about it, I alternate between hand over hand pulling and pumping, depending on what my objective is at the moment.

When you begin practicing this technique, do it in wind speeds lower than 6 mph and have 60' of line or more out. Also position your kite near the edge of the wind window or at the top of it. With less wind force acting on the kite, it may be easier for you to get the feel and timing of line pumping and how it works. Once you get it, you can use this technique in any wind speed. It really works well.

QUICKEN YOUR KITE'S RESPONSE TIME

One of the other more important tips when flying in line touch competition is to maximize your kite's quickness. Your kite's quickness in moving from one position to another, especially when it is in close proximity to your opponent's kite, usually equals winning. For example, if you can maneuver your kite with a flick or two of your wrist or hand, instead of releasing or pulling line primarily using your arms, you have substantially quickened your kite's response time. This is partially controlled by the way you tune your kite and partially by your flying technique.

THREE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- A. *Don't ground your kite; make your opponent earn every point he/she wins.*
- B. *Minimize the time it takes for your kite to get from one position to another.*
- C. *Be patient; don't rush.*

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line-touch maneuvers

that win points

Line-touch competition during the 2002 Fighter Kite Line-Touch World Cup Championships at the Washington State International Kite Festival in Longbeach, Washington., August 2002. From left to right, Brian Johnsen, 'Woody' Woods, Scott Bogue, Paul Peters.

Photo courtesy of Karen Gustavson.

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Line-Touch Maneuvers

The following line touch maneuvers and strategies work. I have used each of them many times with continual scoring success. However, not all of the maneuvers or strategies work every time or for every flyer.

Practice a couple of these, try them in line-touch flying to determine whether they work for you. Then try a couple more until you've tried all of them. Usually what happens is you will discover variations of these that work better for you than what is described here.

LURE AND DIVE FOR SCORING A BOTTOM POINT

This is a fun maneuver to watch work! It is used to score a bottom point. For it to be successful you must be able to accurately judge the relative speed of your kite compared with your opponent's kite. Usually you will learn this from a previous point or from flying with your opponent during practice.

You want to lure your opponent to your side of the wind window. Position your kite relatively high and near your side of the wind window, this is not what most opponents would expect on a bottom point. Use a shorter line length compared with your opponent.

Most opponents will begin an immediate attack by trying to fly under your elevated line; they'll see it as an automatic 'easy' point. That's exactly what you want them to do.

Your kite's elevation is high enough so that even if your opponent's line is under your line, your line is still quite high off the ground, about 8'.

As your opponent's kite gets close to your line and at the point where you know your kite

can beat your opponent's kite in a race, you dive your kite straight down toward the ground at a high speed so your kite passes just in front of the nose of your opponent's kite. Your kite continues downward getting below your opponent's kite and line. Your opponent's kite will have flown beyond your kite and line.

At the end of your dive, immediately turn your kite's nose up and fly into your opponent's line scoring the point. Most opponents don't have quick enough reaction time to make any significant defense against this ploy. Obviously, correct precise timing is very important in this maneuver as is knowing the relative speeds of your kite compared with your opponent's kite.

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FAKE AN ATTACK FOR SCORING A BOTTOM POINT

Actually this strategy works for both bottom and top points. However, it's especially effective to lure a flyer's kite out of otherwise successful defensive positions such as a constant low spin or a cobra. Some skilled flyers hover, or spin their kite just inches above the ground; some flyers can do this for what seems like hours. It's a very good defensive tactic; it doesn't give a competitor much of a chance to fly a kite under the opponent's flying line when the line is only a couple of inches above the ground or lying on the ground.

Use the 'fake attack' to lure the opponent's kite out of the low spin or cobra.

In order to be successful with this maneuver, you need to know the relative speed of your kite compared with your opponent's kite. If you know from flying in practice or in flying previous points with your opponent, great, if not, you'll need to determine it during this point.

For faking an attack, what you do is fly your kite at an angle starting from a relatively high position on your side of the wind window down toward your opponent's flying line.

Usually your kite will be aimed toward the ground near the center of the wind window.

You want your opponent to believe you are going to try to get your kite to go under their line. Your plan is not that at all. Before your kite gets close enough to your opponent's flying line to be in trouble, you quickly turn your kite and fly in the opposite direction. Fly at an upward angle back toward your side of the wind window.

If your kite gets close enough to your opponent's kite, so your opponent's kite can accelerate and over take you; you have gotten too close.

Your objective is to lure your opponent into chasing you. When your kite turns to retreat, your kite's elevation is purposely high relative to your opponent's kite. Hopefully your opponent believes your kite is an easy mark. That's exactly what you want.

You will probably need to make a few of these fake attacks to get the opponent to actually move out of the low spin or cobra. Each time you fake an attack, as you're kite is retreating, you must be prepared to instantly turn your kite and attack your opponent. You don't know which time your fake attack will lure your opponent into an attack.

When your opponent makes the move to chase your kite; you go into action.

When your opponent's kite begins chasing your kite, as it's approaching, remember your

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opponent's kite is climbing to touch your line. When your opponent is as close as you can allow and still speed past the nose of your opponent's kite, you dive in front of and below your opponent's kite and line. You immediately turn your kite's nose up and fly into your opponent's line to score the point.

In addition to knowing the relative speed of your kite compared with your opponent's kite, precise timing is essential in this maneuver. Several practice runs during practice flying will tune up your timing.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS STRATEGY

It doesn't really matter if your opponent escapes your strategic attack. You accomplished the main objective; to get your opponent's kite to a higher elevation, giving you a much better chance of scoring.

FAKE AN ATTACK FOR SCORING A TOP POINT

The object in faking an attack is to lure the opponent into believing they can get an easy point because your kite and line are positioned relatively low in elevation. Your kite is on your side of the wind window and is lower in elevation than your opponent's kite.

When you begin your fake attack, your opponent doesn't know your intention is to retreat. They are most likely going to be eager to attack, thinking you are making an error in trying an attack when in such a poor position.

Fly your kite up toward your opponent's line and before your kite is close enough to get you into trouble, quickly turn your kite and fly back to a lower position on your side of the wind window. Keep a close eye on your opponent's kite position. Your goal is to lure your opponent's kite into chasing you. When that happens, just before your opponent's kite is at your line, you quickly turn your kite nose upward and accelerate in front of and above your opponent's kite and line. Then either turn the kite nose down and dive onto your opponent's line, or completely release your flying line allowing it to drop onto your opponent's line. The decision of which action to use to make the score will largely depend on your kite's elevation at the time, wind conditions and the amount of control you have of your kite.

Part of the reason the fake attack works well is a shift in the opponent's focus when they become the attacker. When a flyer, including your opponent hopefully, is on the attack, often they don't expect you to change the direction of your kite and escape, let alone

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reverse the kite's direction and score a point. Typically they are focused on scoring the point. Again, precise timing is very important in this maneuver's success.

If your opponent is effective at pumping line, this strategy will not be as effective. If you are effective at pumping line you will have an easier time making the score.

LOW SPIN

If you can spin your kite close to the ground for long periods of time without difficulty, this maneuver may be a very effective one for you as a defensive as well as an offensive maneuver. As a defensive maneuver, the low spin positions your flying line close to the ground, making it difficult to touch from the bottom and also from the top. As an offensive maneuver, it positions your kite and line so it's in the ideal position for scoring a bottom point.

As a defensive strategy against an attack during a top point, a low spin is most effective when it occurs near your edge of the wind window. This is where your opponent's kite becomes the most vulnerable. When you are near your edge of the wind window and your opponent's kite is above your line and tries to get his or her flying line low enough to touch your line, you keep your kite low and watch your kite's nose carefully. When your kite's nose is pointed toward your edge of the wind window, pull line like mad to propel your kite further beyond your edge of the wind window than your opponent's kite. When your kite is out from under your opponent's kite and line, rotate the nose up and fly over your opponent's line for a score.

As a strategy for a bottom point, the low spin can be effective as both a defensive maneuver and as an offensive one. Because the low spin keeps your flying line close to the ground, it is difficult for an opponent to fly under your line. And, because you are positioned close to the ground, when you see an opportunity to score, you can easily fly out of the low spin and under your opponent's line to score.

When using a low spin or any other maneuver low to the ground, you can increase your effectiveness by having the hand controlling the line be on or very near the ground. This means you must squat or kneel. Having your hand near the ground helps insure against an opponent flying under your line close to your body. Otherwise your kite may be low, but the height of your hands are probably about belt level and easy to fly under.

A very important element of low spinning is knowing the most advantageous direction for the kite to spin. Usually you get the most advantage when the kite is spinning in the direction where the kite can exit the low spin at the low point of its spin with the kite's

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nose pointed toward your opponent's kite. This allows you to exit the low spin at the lowest elevation and more easily score a bottom point.

You will notice when two experienced flyers each have their kites in a low spin, the kites will be spinning in opposite directions. Each spinning so it can exit the spin at the low point of the spin with the kite's nose aimed at the opponent, hopefully below the opponent's kite and line.

HOVER HIGH FOR WINNING A TOP POINT

If the wind is very strong, flyers often have difficulty controlling their kites. This is a good time for you to use an overhead hover as a strategy for winning a top point.

Your opponent may not be using this ploy, and if that's the case, you probably have an easy point. The most critical aspect of this strategy is to race your kite to the top of the wind window at the start of the point. You want to be there before your opponent is.

With your kite hovering overhead, you are able to control your kite because it is at the top of the wind window where the intensity of wind acting on the kite is reduced. Your opponent,

on the other hand, may be trying to cope with the strong winds or may want to also be at the top of the wind window. Either way, you have the advantage and can probably make the score.

If your opponent actually flies her or his kite in the strong winds, it is a good strategy to patiently wait in the overhead hover position and carefully watch your opponent. Strike if there is an opportunity, but only if it is a clear winner.

You want to minimize getting your kite into an 'out of control' situation. In high winds it is easy to have your kite get out of control. Wait patiently and very likely your opponent will become vulnerable or will crash.

However, if your opponent can control their kite in high winds, you will have to do the same to have a chance of scoring. Even with this maneuver, you need to learn to fly effectively in high winds.

COBRA

A cobra is the name of a maneuver where a fighter kite is held in a vertical position, nose pointed up tail pointed toward the ground, without the kite spinning. What is required to make your kite cobra is to find the correct amount of wind pressure on the skin of the kite

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to cause the kite to stall, but remain upright. It takes some practice to find the 'feel' of how much pressure or tension the flying line needs to get the kite to cobra. It works easiest when the tow point of the kite's bridle is moved lower, toward the tail, than you normally position it. The tow point should allow the kite to fly forward, but very slowly until you pull on the line.

This maneuver has a couple of uses in a competition. It can be effective at scoring a bottom point against the low spinning opponent. What you do is cobra your kite using long enough line so the kite's far enough away from you that your flying line is dragging on the ground. Once in that position, you begin manipulating the line tension to make the kite start moving toward and beyond your opponent's kite, dragging your flying line under the opponents kite and line. Accelerate the kite upward for the score. It works best when your opponent is low spinning their kite near the center of the wind window. When that's the case, you can set up your kite to cobra on your side of the wind window and let the wind move the kite to the center and under the opponent's line.

As with maximizing the effect of the low spin, placing your hand that controls your flying line on or near the ground maximizes the cobra's effect.

This maneuver takes lots of practice to execute and is a very high risk move. However, it is beautiful and exciting when it works!

The other use for a cobra is as a defensive move during a bottom point. When your flying line is on the ground, it is a pretty safe bet your opponent won't get their line under yours as long as you stay in that position. The time to move out of a cobra is when you see an opportunity to score.

A low cobra position can also be effective against some flyers as a defense to an over point attack. Because your flying line is on the ground or virtually on the ground in a cobra, an opponent attacking on an over point will have difficulty getting their line to touch your line. They must completely release their line for a time in order for it to drop

on your line. In an effort to get their line to touch your line, they may crash or get their kite in a vulnerable position and easily scored upon.

Keeping your kite in a cobra isn't easy to maintain near your side of the wind window.

Generally, the wind will cause your kite to move toward the center of the wind window.

This means your kite will be eventually be near the center of the wind window. This position gives your opponent's kite a much stronger opportunity than if your kite was near your edge of the wind window.

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OUT AND OVER

This is a great way to score a top point if you have patience. You are being patient waiting for your opponent to fly their kite to your side of the wind window in an effort to score a top point. You have purposely positioned your kite lower in elevation than your opponent's kite. You are trying to lure your opponent into making an attack. Remember, the farther into your portion of the wind window the opponent flies their kite, the more vulnerable the opponent's kite becomes.

Here's the situation; your line is below your opponent's flying line. Your opponent has taken your bait and flown his or her kite into your portion of the wind window. And now your opponent's kite and line are above your kite and line.

You have been shortening your flying line from the moment you realized your opponent began the attack.

At this point, continue to keep your kite line low to the ground, the closer to the ground the better. Kneel on the ground and put the hand holding your flying line on or very near the ground. This is a position that assures your line is as close to the ground as possible.

As soon as your opponent's kite line is about as far into your side of the wind window as your opponent can get it, or when your opponent makes an effort to score, you make your move. You begin flying a low horizontal path with your kite's nose aimed toward your edge of the wind window. You fly beyond the edge of your side of the wind window.

As soon as your flying line is out from under the opponent's line, turn your kite's nose upward, fly up and in front of your opponent's kite. When your line is above your opponent's line, turn the nose of your kite and dive towards your opponent's line to score.

This 'up and over' movement happens very quickly, almost as one maneuver.

Your flying line may only be 10'-15' long at this point; it isn't always this way, but often.

Your shorter line is one element that allows this maneuver to work. It gives your kite far more speed and quickness than your opponent's. The shorter line also gives you more control of your kite. Your opponent's kite is actually in quite a vulnerable situation that far into your side of the wind window on a relatively long line.

FLY AROUND FLOAT

To accomplish this maneuver, the kite must be adjusted so it will fly away from you at the edge of the wind window when you pull very hard on your flying line followed by an immediate complete release of the flying line. Your kite will fly an outside loop. What you do is point the kite's nose toward the edge of the wind window and then, almost in one

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movement, you give an extra strong long pull on the line followed by an immediate and complete release of the line.

If your kite won't fly an outside loop with this line manipulation, slightly increase the amount of bend in the spine. It doesn't take very much increase in bend, so be gentle and careful when you increase the bend, spines can be broken by over bending.

Try the 'fly around float' when you are at the edge of the wind window on your opponent's side trying to score a top point. Here's the situation.

Your kite is above your opponent's kite, but your opponent continues to position their flying line below yours far enough so you have high risk getting your line low enough to touch it. Being at the edge of your opponent's wind window, your kite isn't controllable enough to allow you to release very much line to drop onto your opponent's line without the high probability of your kite grounding.

Here's what to do; let's assume your opponent is on your right. You pull on the flying line with one especially hard pull, be sure the kite's nose is aimed to the right, aimed at the edge of your opponent's wind window. Immediately following the extra hard pull on the line, completely release the line allowing it to freely flow through your fingers and to become totally slack. What the kite will do is fly away from you and slowly circle in a wide path back toward the direction of the center of the wind window. This circular path takes quite a long time to complete. During the time of the kite's circling, your completely slack and flowing line is supposed to drop on top of the opponent's line to give you the score.

It works most of the time. Sometimes the wind will blow your line away from your opponent's line and prevent a score. If so, just try it again.

Then once you have scored, the trick is to gain control of the kite immediately after the score to prevent your kite from getting back-winded and grounding. As soon as the touch occurs, rapidly retrieve your flying line to regain some line tension and control.

Practice this at various positions around the wind window to get the feeling and timing of your kite's behavior.

FAKE AN ATTACK ON THE ATTACKER

This move works well for either top or bottom points. Use this move when your opponent is attacking and you have some time before their kite is in scoring position. This is a good approach when you can't get your kite into a scoring or advantageous position in time.

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DURING A CHASE, DIVE AND CUT BACK

For this maneuver, it helps to have your kite tuned so you can control which direction it spins or turns. You can also do this maneuver if you can not control the direction of spin of your kite.

During a bottom point, while you are being chased by your opponent, who is lower in

elevation than you are, you time your kite's turn downward so you can dive the kite and cut back against the direction of your opponent's flight, but at a lower elevation and score the point. If you can't get your kite to turn downward, let the kite spin in its normal direction about 3/4 of a turn so its nose is pointed down at about a 30 degree angle back toward your opponent.

Your objective is to make your opponent think you're attacking, hopefully causing them to retreat. This retreat will give you an opportunity to become the attacker or get better positioned.

In this move you charge at the opponent's kite line, but your plan is to either retreat as soon as you know your opponent is not going to retreat, or when your opponent retreats or hesitates, you can attack. When your opponent retreats or hesitates they may be vulnerable because of a slightly changed position of their kite, if so, you continue with your attack.

Most likely the opponent's retreat will give you time to fake a retreat. However, when you retreat, your retreat is only momentary. It only lasts long enough to lure your opponent into feeling safe in their retreat.

As soon as your opponent is committed to retreating you, you change your kite's direction, attacking again and score if possible. If it's not possible to score, retreat again, but again only for as long as it takes for your opponent to commit to retreating. Once your opponent commits, you attack again. If your opponent retreats too quickly escaping your attack, you retreat and figure out a more effective next move.

When you first fake the attack, if your opponent doesn't hesitate or retreat, but instead continues to charge, you may have miscalculated your opponent's flying skill and could become vulnerable. In that instance you will more than likely be running for your life, trying to escape.

For this maneuver, your kite must be adjusted so it will spin and turn as soon as a very small change in line tension occurs. Your success can be greatly enhanced if you can control your kite's change in direction with only a 180-degree rotation, avoiding a full spin in order to change direction. The small amount of extra time this gives you is often the edge that makes the difference.

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Practice making your kite spin downward when interrupted from its forward progress in a normal straight flight. Typically, when you ease or release line tension during a forward flight, the nose of the kite will turn upward. To make it turn downward, you must make a quick hard tug on the line either before or after the slight release of the line. Whether a tug is before or after the release will depend on the kite and its tuning.

WHERE YOUR KITE SHOULD BE POSITIONED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE START OF A POINT

Here is a description of what I do at the start of a point. However, I don't follow these guidelines every single time, but most of the time. The reason I do it this way, is it has

allowed me to score often.

BOTTOM POINTS - Generally, if the point is a bottom and I'm not in an advantageous position to attack immediately, I will fly my kite to a position about 6 feet above the ground, near the edge of the wind window on my side and carefully watch my opponent. This position or one about 8 feet above the ground will often lure the opponent to my side of the wind window. I carefully watch what the opponent's doing and make my decision about my next move based on where the opponent's kite is positioned and the direction the kite's nose is pointed. This is where I get my cue for my next move.

TOP POINTS - If the point is a top and I'm not in an advantageous position to attack, I will as quickly as possible, accelerate my kite to as high a position as I can and still have good control. I am on my side of the wind window, but high. From this position, I will watch my opponent carefully and decide what and when to make a move; either an attack or a defensive move to lure the opponent to me. I base my decision of what will be my next move on what the opponent's kite position and direction of its nose.

DEVELOP YOUR OWN UNIQUE STRATEGY - These guidelines are good as a starting place for you when developing your own unique style of competition strategies. Watch other flyers, and correlate how they position their kite and how they deal with each aspect of competition compared with how often they win a point. Then implement all the winning ideas into your unique strategy.