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Review : **Montana Prototype**
 Size : **9.5m Prototype**
 Company : **HQ**
 Author : [Skyhooked](#)

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HQ is a familiar brand to many, thanks to the hugely popular Beamer series, and more recently, the Crossfire. While these two kites are surely competent and serve the recreational and buggy market very well, HQ needed a kite to boost their profile as a dedicated power kite manufacturer, and announce their arrival to the booming freestyle kiteboarding scene.

The depowerable Montana is HQ's response to this challenge – a kite for board riders on land or snow. The depowerable kite market is a sophisticated one, and expectations on new kites are higher than they have ever been. There are some very well established and capable depower kites out there today, kites with history and pedigree that have been refined over several seasons.

Can HQ, the newcomers to the depower scene, mix it up with the big guns and not go down in flames?

Recently I was given the unique opportunity to test the prototypes of the HQ Montana at the Fano Kite Festival in Denmark. There are four sizes in the range -5m, 7.5m, 9.5, and 12.5m. The kite I used the most, and have the greatest insight into, is the 9.5m – depower kites of this size suit the mid wind ranges, this is the 'standard' size that would suit most peoples needs.

I can't go into the specifics of bag design, bar graphics, technical data, and the overall package as being a prototype, these detail are not finalised yet. This review will concentrate squarely on the flying characteristics of the 9.5m Montana.

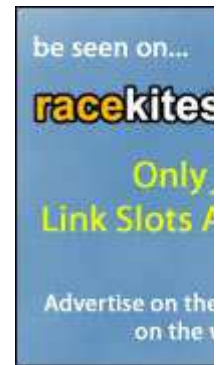
A quick word about the Montana safety system - it is a spinning bar leashless safety, it proved very easy to activate in emergencies. The safety is activated by releasing the center lines, thereby leaving the kite to fly on the rear lines only. There is very little pull once the safety is released, and the rear lindes have loops fitted so you can hook them over the bar ends and recover your center lines. Simple and it works.

Conditions for the day were around 15-20knots, onshore and sunny. Perfect boarding conditions. I had already been warming up with a 10m 05 Frenzy and a 15m Phantom, and was ken to see if the Montana could rise to the challenge...

Launching

With the bar pushed forward, the kite launches cleanly off the ground, and climbs smoothly to the zenith. It takes shape quite quickly, and it was good to see the wing tips weren't

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tucking and flapping. Once at the zenith, you notice very quickly, that the Montana is impressively stable. It sits like a rock in the sky, totally solid, even without touching the bar – well done HQ. Flying the kite gently round the edges of the window reveals the same quality – the kite holds its shape so well, no luffing or collapsing tips here.

Even when fully depowered, the prototype Montana had a good amount of rear line tension – this gives a very direct feel to the kite. The bar pressure on the Montana is greater than on an 05 Frenzy or a newer ARC, and was something that I welcomed. It's still easy to sheet in and out with little effort, but the sensory feedback from the bar and the stability of the kite at rest does inspire confidence and I felt that I was already tuning into the kite.

Turning was predictable and smooth, but I understand that the Montana's designer, Alex Hesse, has since sped up the turn rate. As it was, the kite was easy enough to throw about, although I think I will prefer the faster turning version that will be released.

Static flying wont reveal the potential of a depower kite however. After a minute or so flying on foot, I was ready to hop on my board and find out what the Montana could really do.

I had initially wondered if the Montana might be a bit tame to be a hardcore board rider's kite, maybe lacking in speed or lift, so I wasn't going to hold back with the kite.

The first thing that struck me was how totally powerful the kite is once the board is moving. It accelerates quickly, then pulls and pulls. Round to the edge of the window, the kite still drives hard, and this helped get me upwind in fine style. Just power sliding around and throwing up clouds of dust with the kite is entertainment enough. The raw grunt and firm bar pressure is very engaging, some of the newer depower kites have a detached, muted feel, flying with power steering and traction control like on a Japanese sports car. With that comparison, the Montana is a more of a Dodge Viper – a shameless celebration of raw power - there is a very direct link between the power source and the rider.

That's not to say the kite is erratic, the Montana's energy is constant and predictable, it exhilarates but reassures in equal measure. And during the huge wipe outs that I endured (from riding far too fast over potholes and soft sand) the kite remained stable at the edge of the window, waiting for me to dust off and strap back in. The whole time, the kite didn't luff or fold at the tips once. Even cruising downwind, the shape remained solid. Plenty of times I looped the Montana through the power zone when turning, and the power delivery was intense, but came on very smooth – no spikes.

After a good session just blasting up and down the huge, windy, beach and grinning like a loon, I was keen to take to the skies. I had quickly reassessed my view that the Montana might be a bit tame – I truly hadn't had so much fun just sliding and carving around since I first started boarding.

The technique for launching airs with the Montana is easy. Cruise along, bar out, send kite up, pull bar in and then float! Some kites require precise placement of the kite at the zenith to give lift, but the Montana proved more versatile than that. Just sending the kite up anywhere near the zenith would have me floating through the air. Redirecting the kite in the air was easy, and even on sloppy landings the kite wouldn't flinch and kept its shape.

Riders today place a big emphasis on the lift of a kite, and this can often be the biggest factor in how we judge the performance of a kite. How does the Montana stand up? Well, it has a lot of lift. Really a lot. Ten foot airs were no problem, and the hang time was similarly impressive too. A couple of times I really went up, and even got a bit nervous. The way the lift comes on with this kite is different to say, a Phantom or a Psycho, but the overall height isn't that much different. The Montana has a progressive, steady upwards pull and floaty descent, so it will take you downwind a bit further than the dedicated lift machines.

My session ended when I was too exhausted and battered to carry on. That I feel is a testament to how much fun the 9.5m Montana seriously is. I hogged the kite for as long as I could, keeping it away from other riders so that I could have it just for myself. The feeling I was left with was of discovering power kiting for the first time, being continually surprised with what a kite can do.

The Montana I think has the potential to appeal to many people. The stability, steady bar pressure, smooth power delivery and easy flying characteristics make it the kite I would recommend if you are looking to get your first depower kite and progress quickly and safely. I



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showed the Montana to a kiter who had never ridden with a depower kite before, only to watch them hop on a board after a minute or so and cruise off into the distance.

At the other end of the scale, if you are feeling a little jaded with your sessions and think you have seen it all, the Montana could be the catalyst you need. The kite is so direct, imagine flying a two line high performance kite but with depower, and more stability. The big lift, float and raw speed will help you push yourself harder than with other, less engaging kites.

The Montana breathed life back into my sessions. I can't wait to fly the kite again, and given the choice, I would use this over my current depower kites. It has a real personality and vitality that is missing from so many kites today. HQ have pulled off something special here, they have created a very complete, intuitive and addictive kite. Its quite hard to articulate how the kite feels to fly, but you know when you watch Top Gear and the car they like the best they call a 'drivers car', with the Montana, HQ have got a true 'kiter's kite'.

The Montana is due for release this autumn, in time for the European snowkite season. The first chance you get, check this kite out - it really could be quite massive.

Author : [Skyhooked](#)

- [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)
- [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#)
- [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#)
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.: Comments by others.

[Jerry](#) said : 16:32:37 : 22 June 2005

So, it isn't just me then :-)

[offshore](#) said : 17:25:20 : 22 June 2005

fantastic abnd you can see the vid here
<http://www.powerkites.de/modules/Downloads/videos/montana2.wmv>

[Wildcard](#) said : 19:46:50 : 22 June 2005

Top class review, looking forward to getting a fly of one....

[trebor](#) said : 22:24:47 : 22 June 2005

Like the man say - this kite has got potential - bags of it! :) Well written Dom !!!

[Musical_Box](#) said : 23:27:53 : 22 June 2005

I think I'm in love with this beuty. Better start saving some money this summer, I don't think this is going to be a budget kite. HQ rocks.

[Ranoch](#) said : 11:11:42 : 23 June 2005

Great review skyhooked. Already a Beamer and Crossfire owner so the Montana is a must.

Jock

.....
+ [jellyellie](#) said : 15:51:13 : 23 June 2005

Absolutely fantastic review skyhooked, I really congratulate you on it. I'll definitely be keeping an eye out for the Montana, I think it'll be a hot one to watch out for!

.....
+ [Skyboy](#) said : 21:18:11 : 23 June 2005

One of the best reviews i've read for a long time, and by the sounds of it were all gonna be salivating over this kite when it comes out!! Itching to see what the cost will come out at - especially the 9.5m version.

.....
+ [Skyhooked](#) said : 19:47:28 : 24 June 2005

guys thanks for all the feedback! luckily its not hard to knock out a review when you're totally stoked on the kite! hats off to alex hesse - the monatan designer - i think he'll get a lot of credit when this kite comes on to the market

.....
+ [Packman](#) said : 03:50:10 : 10 July 2005

Great Review. I've been looking to buy a crossfire but now i'm thinking about waiting for this. Any estimates on prices yet?

.....
+ [Jerry](#) said : 12:34:12 : 10 July 2005

Got to fly this very kite myself yesterday at the Sky Park, the stability thing is freaky, the HQ guy demonstrated this by pulling in the depower strap and ran around under the kite just holding on to the chicken loop, even when he was down wind of the kite it still stayed in shape"

.....
+ [atukawcy](#) said : 10:09:51 : 22 August 2005

kite sounds fantastic, this has found its way onto my wanted list already ! awful name though !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! whats next the hq nebraska ?

.....
.: Add your comment on this review.

HQ Kites USA, your point of view is important here at **racekites.com**. Do **you** agree with what is being said? Please add **your** comments by using the form below.

If you have a **Montana Prototype** yourself, please leave **your own review**.

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