

## Jerome Bila

Written by Basil Cambanis  
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Jerome Bila is one special guy, he's a champion snowboarder, one of the fastest kites in the world and remains friendly and humble. He had an unfortunate and avoidable accident on the last day of the 2009 Luderitz speed event, in which he broke his lower back (L1). His kite did a half loop and drove him into the sand while in shallow water; this was caused by another kiter hovering his kite across the run. Jerome tried to stop in time, but just got snagged in the other kiter's lines.

Jerome had a long painful wait before they could move him, as the local ambulance apparently had a flat battery and when it did arrive, they got stuck in the wet sand. He spend the night in the Luderitz hospital before being taken by a mercy flight to Sunninghill Hospital in Johannesburg the next day. The surgeon had to wait for the swelling to subside before operating, and inserted cross brace titanium plates and screws to support the damaged L1 vertebrata. After the operation Jerome felt much better as the pain had subsided, partly because it was secured and thanks to the morphine. He worked hard at his rehabilitation each day and was very determined to walk soonest. His father (Alaine) was by his side daily and helped in every way imaginable, so one can see why Jerome turned out the way he did.

Jerome returned to Toulouse France with his father and continued his hard work to make a full recovery a few months later. Jerome's wife and daughter had tears of joy when they were finally reunited. Thanks to all his effort, he is kiting again and even competed in the Port Saint Louis speed event in March 2010.

All the best my good friend, we wish you well for the future and I look forward to seeing you break 50 at Luderitz later this year.



Jerome a few days after his surgery. Left to right : me (Basil), Jerome and his father (Alaine)

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Jerome made quick progress after his surgery, and was so happy to be able to sit upright after being flat on his back for weeks.



Top view of the plates supporting the damaged vertebra



Side view of the titanium screws in the adjacent vertebrae