

# Freestyle

## PART 3

By Naomi Adam

### Freestyle “how to”: Layouts

Layout loops have to be one of the most fun moves in freestyle and they are an essential part of the skill base for any aspiring freestyler. Once you've got yourself into a vertical orientation, you'll find it's not too hard to initiate a loop (or 10!). But making a loop a layout – clean, controlled, on heading and with nice form – is the challenge. Here's a few tips to get you started...

#### Setting Up

Before starting to learn layouts, you need to have the stand-up position mastered. You should be able to fall straight down, with feet together, legs straight and in line with the body. Ideally (or eventually) the stand-up position will be flown with toes pointed down into the wind, but initially you will find it much easier to 'stand' on the air with flat feet.

Prepare for the loop(s) by locking in your core muscles and focusing on a heading. Don't use your cameraflyer as a heading because they might move. Instead, pick something really obvious like a mountain on the horizon. Another good heading check, if you're directly overhead the DZ, is the runway: glance down at it before and after your layouts to see if you've stayed on heading.

You need to have a certain amount of muscle tension in your body for a clean layout – if you are rag-dolling around, the loop will lose its momentum and stall. Try this little exercise: tense the core muscles in the trunk of your body as hard as you can, then relax back to about 25% of full capacity. That 25% mark is about the right level of tension for a layout. I find breathing also helps a lot. Take a big breath in as you lock in to your heading and tense the core muscles, then with each loop force a little air out of your lungs (similar to the breathing technique in Pilates).

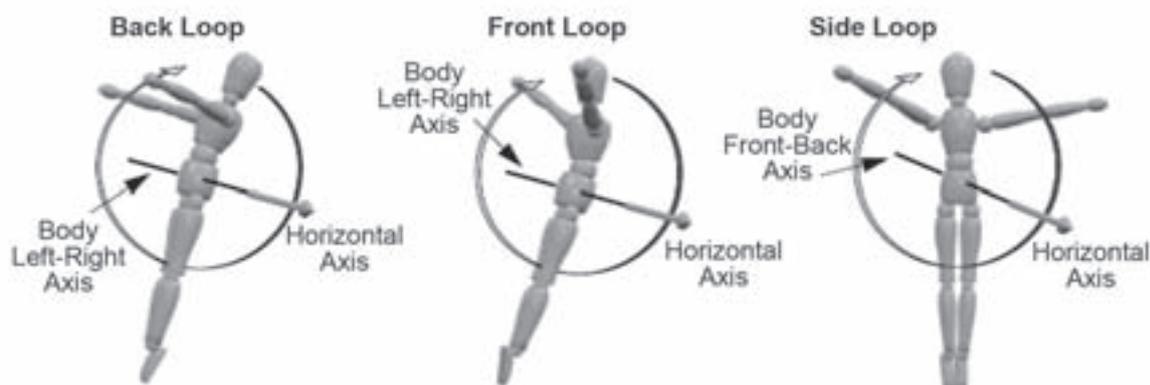
#### The Loop

Layouts can be done on any axis – backwards, forwards and sideways. Most people find the back layout easiest to learn first, but if the front layout works better for you, start with that instead. Definitely leave the side layouts till later... (much harder to do!)

So, for a back layout, you initiate by throwing your weight backwards and pushing your feet forwards. Arch ever so slightly just before returning to the vertical point to stop in a head-up orientation. Try to get a sense of where your point of rotation is. Ideally, you want to be turning around your hips, as if someone has stuck a giant skewer through your pelvis and is spinning you around it. It should feel like the looping motion travels at an even speed all the way through the loop (i.e. constant angular momentum). If the loop feels like it goes slowly at the start, fast through the middle and slow again at the end, you are probably rotating around your chest and doing a lot of sliding back and forward too. A little bit more tension in the body (and perhaps a more definite start to the loop) will probably fix the problem.

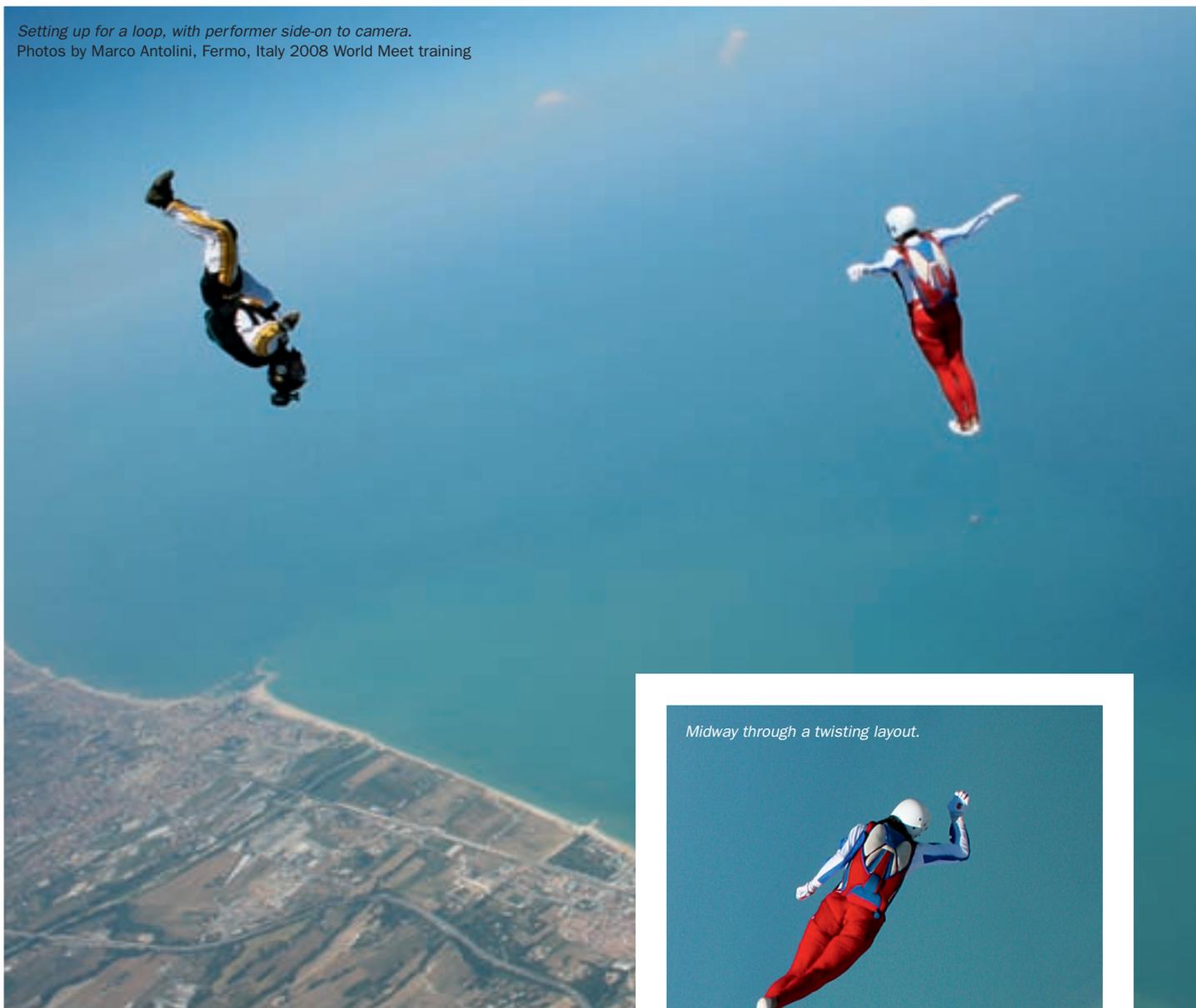
For a front layout, just do the reverse of the above (i.e. initiate by throwing forwards, pulling feet behind and stop by de-arching slightly). Try not to concentrate too much on pushing forward with your head and chest, as this will tend to put you in an ungraceful, hunched-shoulders body position. Instead, focus on pulling your feet out from under you to initiate the front loop.

**Once you can do back and front layouts, the next challenge is twisting layouts, which is too complicated a subject to go into here, but one I'd be happy to chat to anyone about if they are interested.**

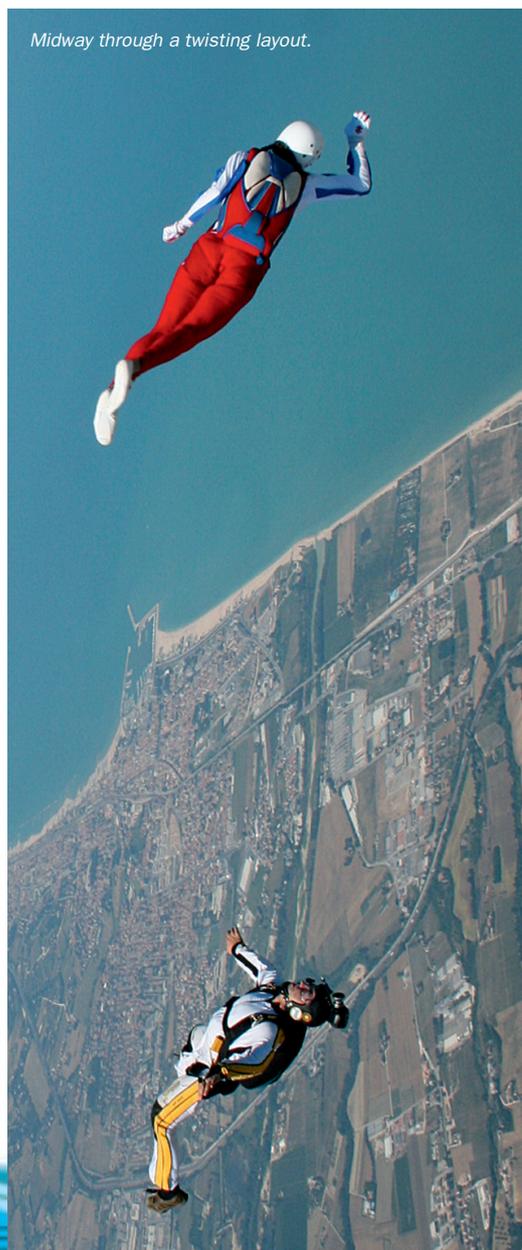


Source: Dale Stuart  
www.winddance.com

Setting up for a loop, with performer side-on to camera.  
Photos by Marco Antolini, Fermo, Italy 2008 World Meet training



Midway through a twisting layout.



## Working with a Cameraflyer

The side-on view is the clearest for layouts – you can see what's going on most easily from this angle. To set up, start by facing off with your cameraflyer in the stand-up position. Then, turn 90 degrees to show them your side and take a moment to lock in to your heading before starting the layout.

The cameraflyer needs to be ready for some big fall rate variations during the loop. At the  $\_$  and  $\_$  points of the loop, the body is flat to the relative wind and falling slowly. At the beginning, halfway point and end, the orientation is vertical and the fall rate at maximum. When working with a novice freestyler, the cameraflyer should also expect some sliding around. Typically, when a back loop goes wrong the performer will cork up and slide backwards, and for a front loop, up and forwards.

**Any questions? Always happy to hear from people interested in Freestyle Skydiving – please email me at [naomi.adam@bigpond.com](mailto:naomi.adam@bigpond.com)**