

# SUPM

Stand Up Paddle Mag UK

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# Changing of the seasons



**2022, more than any other year, has had very defined seasons – certainly based on my view (which I appreciate is often local). Although talking to others, it's been similar in other areas of the country. Spring did what spring should do. It was (mostly) bright, a tad breezy, with the odd shower and air temperatures on the up but not baking. In years gone by, we've had early heatwaves, which is always welcome often though it's been lacklustre through summer. Well, not this year!**

As summer roared into life, Mother Nature saw fit to serve up day upon day of heat, sunshine and perfect paddling conditions.

You couldn't get more on point for those of a fair weather bent. With recreational SUP being the biggest participation area, summer 2022 defied all odds and let us enjoy some Mediterranean-like conditions the whole way through. With spring being a slower start for paddle boarding in the UK, the high season turned the volume up and then some!

With September suddenly on the cards, it did make me chuckle as suddenly it was as if Mother Nature said, "Nope, you've had your fun, we're done, here's autumn!" And just like that, the weather changed, and we've now had weeks of much cooler thermometer readings, rain, and wind with short periods of respite. Not quite Indian summer conditions, and not in all areas. But some pockets have had a few days of late summer/early autumn sun. As I say, I don't recall any year being as seasonally on point as 2022.

It will be an interesting topic once all the dust's settled on 2022 to reflect on how paddle boarding has fared this year. We all know how booming the sport was through COVID. But with ever-changeable UK weather in the mix and a variety of other factors (not least being able to travel again), the year that's nearly done will no doubt be a hot talking point.

With autumn just about to break into winter, there's a tendency to think it's hang up your paddle time. I appreciate off-season weather isn't motivational for many. Yet, time it right, pick your window of opportunity and SUP through the darker months can be more rewarding than at other times. Wear the right clothing, pick the most appropriate SUP spot, observe SUP safety, and you'll enjoy a fulfilling winter of paddling that many seasoned riders already experience, I'm sure. If you've nailed SUP's fundamentals, you don't need to stop just because summer's done.

And so to this issue of SUPM – the last of 2022. It's been another good one from our point of view. We hope you've enjoyed the mags and will continue to do so. For now, though, that's Anne, Pete and myself signing off for the year. We'll be back for NY 2023, so stay tuned for that. Happy winter SUPing!

**Tez Plavenieks, October 2022.**

## Thanks

Big thanks and praise to everyone who's contributed this year. Whether scribing text, snapping pics, getting test kit to us or being a lending ear to chat (which we all sometimes need), we thank you. SUP Mag UK wouldn't exist without all our wonderful support, so long may it continue. If you would like to contribute, get in touch – the door's always open. Big up once again to everyone that helps make SUPM happen! See you on the other side.



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**Cover photo:** A coaching session at the Wild Women SUP Symposium, Scotland with Vicki Birch a 2021/2022 #shepaddle ambassador  
**Photo:** SUP Inverness - Claire Scott

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# GBSUP REPORTING:



## GBSUP DIRECTORS REPORT

**Words:** Scott Warren - GBSUP Events Director

**Photos:** Amanda Roberts - P3T Photography

### 2022 – Season review

Earlier this year, we explained how the 2022 National Series was very much on edge. With brand new ownership, new company formation and starting from a relatively blank sheet of paper, this year's series was almost a no-go. So to be sitting here, looking back across a successful National Series and Championships, is quite remarkable and something the GBSUP team is incredibly proud of. We look forward to 2023 and continuing to build on solid foundations.



## Events roundup

### Tech Series – Viking Bay Classic

After a successful first year, we once again returned to the home of the Viking Bay Classic in Kent. Broadstairs offers a stunning location with a natural amphitheatre surrounding the bay. Spectators and passers-by get a stunning view of the competition close to the shoreline. In the run-up to the event, an ever-changing forecast and a concerning storm front came through on Friday, but thankfully the promising forecast for Saturday came through and brought us calmer seas.

For 2023 the Viking Bay Classic played host to the South East Regional and GBSUP National Tech series finals, with the WSA Junior clinic and racing also taking place to make it an action-packed day.

### South East Regional Race

Kicking the day off was the final of the South East Regional Series. Scheduled for a Hybrid Tech format combining elements of Distance and Technical racing on the sea, using the new Division system, paddlers compete directly with others of similar ability regardless of board type and size. With a strong offshore wind ever present, paddlers had to face constantly paddling on one side on the outward legs to the furthest turn, with a strong tide bringing the competitors flying back to the Technical section within the bay. The race was an excellent opportunity for everyone to get their sea legs ahead of the afternoons racing. Seeing the locals getting stuck in great performances from Adrian Hougham and David Grieve was great.

### GBSUP National Tech Race

On to the afternoon's race, and with the incoming tide came the usual chop and swell the Viking Bay locals are familiar with. After some adjustments to the course, we were ready to go with this one set to test our paddler's skill in moving and changing conditions. We even had a rogue buoy who wanted to head out to sea, throwing some dynamic race management into the mix.

With the wind coming diagonally offshore, there were legs and turns which required skill and an element of luck to navigate and stay dry. For our fleet racers, it was four laps in total, whilst our two challenge paddlers took on the same course but with a shorter two-lap option. Both Lisa Witherden and Daniel Dumbarton put on a cracking show managing the conditions and coming in strong with just a single dip between them. Other standouts came from paddlers who take on the racing and push their limits time after time. In the 14' Men's class, Kevin Jackson put in step-back turns when many others



played it safe. Lydia Clifton joined us from the southwest, and whenever she's raced this year takes on the challenge with a constant smile and keep-at-it attitude. No matter what came her way, Lydia kept going and deservedly walked away with an age category medal for her efforts.

### WSA Juniors

The show stars had to be our WSA Juniors, who looked the part in their race gear and jumped into their clinic and racing. Packed into a 40-min slot, the juniors ran through some skills, developing their turns and getting them ready for the following races. At each WSA Junior event, we have had a WSA ambassador leading the activities, with Emily King stepping in at the Viking Bay Classic, helped by Ollie Nawrat and Laird Dawson on the water. For their races, the juniors completed several variations of Sprint, Relays and Technical formats, eagerly watched by their parents and plenty of spectators. They all did amazingly well, and we look forward to seeing them progress through their SUP racing.

### National Championships - Holme Pierrepont Nottingham

2022 offered our paddlers the opportunity to compete for the first overall National Champion status by combining our Sprint or Distance events. The Distance race took our paddlers right through the heart of Nottingham with a 10km course on the River Trent, whilst our Sprints were part of the National Regatta over at Holme Pierrepont.

Some of our paddlers were tempted overseas by other championships and European events, opening up a real opportunity for other paddlers to shine. The racing showcased the dedication, training and commitment our paddlers make throughout the year.

### Distance Championship Race

The Ladies' 14' class was taken by Natalie Cant, who put her training to good use, paddling a consistent race and bringing the fleet home after taking the lead at 1km. The top five ladies were covered in just four minutes showing how close it's been all year in the fleet. Our digital media manager Lauren was the early leader in the race, showing her excellent form from the South East Regional Series by setting the pace for the first km. Lauren's effort reminded us of the challenges each of our women faces through their training and the timings of races. After settling into second place to the 3km mark, Lauren eased off and turned for home, knowing that this one wasn't her day.



Scott Warren - race director



Our commitment to paddler safety





One area we have tried to tighten up on this year is our handling of rules to ensure our racing is fair and any infringement is dealt with consistently. Four paddlers received a two-minute penalty for cutting corners along the course at this year's event. With such close racing across our fleets, these penalties can significantly affect the results. Another area we are working on is the judgement of incidents when paddlers have taken avoiding or support action. It's tough to judge, but through clear communication and evidence from tracking devices, we were able to amend one paddler's time after an unfortunate close call with a passing boat.

### Sprint Championships

Being part of the British Canoeing National Regatta always offers a great opportunity to showcase SUP as a competitive sport to a broader audience. 2022 didn't disappoint with some very exciting races and photo finish reviews by the judges. In the Men's, the final went to Hector Jessel with Bruce Smith making it a photo finish as they battled for the lead in the final 50m. They had a little scare as yours truly decided to brush off the old sprint technique and give the inform guys a run up to halfway. In the end, the top four had just two seconds between them.

In the ladies' fleet, Natalie Cant was looking for top overall honours in our combined championship, but she had her work cut out as in came Ashley Allen and Verity Thomas, especially for the sprints. Natalie had to settle for fourth in the end as Ashley and Verity took the top spots, with local sprint specialist Lisa Grzeskowiak putting down a top performance to take third. The whole fleet was closely matched, with all the ladies finishing strong with just ten seconds covering second down to ninth, showing how close it was.

### 2023 Competition plans

2022 has allowed us to review firsthand the positives and negatives of the current model and where a modern approach can benefit the UK. For us, it's a bigger picture, including grassroots events, Regionals and National levels of competition.

2023 will see us streamline our offering across our series disciplines and race fleets within our National Series and Championships. Please visit our website for details on our 2023 plans and season calendar.



Natalie Cant



Verity Thomas



Hector Jessel



Al Hughes

### 2022 Series Champions (Overall)

#### Distance Series

##### Prone

- Female - Kezia Elliott
- Male - Mark Norton

##### NISCO

- Female - Helen Russell
- Male - Simon Day

##### 12'6 Race

- Female - Natalie Cant
- Male - Alistair Huges

##### 14' Race

- Female - Holly Pye
- Male - Blue Ewer

#### Technical Series

##### Prone

- Male - Dave Bennett

##### NISCO

- Female - Rayne Easter-Robinson
- Male - Simon Day

##### 12'6 Race

- Female - Emily King
- Male - Alistair Huges

##### 14' Race

- Female - Ashley Allen
- Male - Blue Ewer

The Distance and Technical Series results are available on The GBSUP website.

### 2022 National Championships

#### Distance Series

- Female - Natalie Cant
- Male - Hector Jessel

#### Sprint Champions

- Female - Ashley Allen
- Male - Hector Jessel

#### Overall National Champions

- Female - Natalie Cant
- Male - Hector Jessel





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The International magazine for recreational paddlers  
Issue 67 Late Summer 2022

magazine

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By Corran Addison

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# The great green PADDLE

**Words & pics:** David Haze

As I walk to the end of my road in Bournemouth these days and look across the rolling waters of the Solent to the Isle of Wight, there is a tingling deep within me, knowing that I left part of myself over on that diamond-shaped island.



When I look at the 'polar bear' standing proud and tall over the needles, it's a view that will never feel the same as a few weeks earlier. I embarked on a five-day solo circumference of the island, which saw me attempt the world's first carbon-neutral, environmentally friendly expedition by SUP board.

The mission was to attempt this world first by having all my equipment through to my food be ethically sourced, carbon neutral, environmentally friendly, preferably 100% recycled, recyclable or leaves no footprint.

## The Iceberg

'The Iceberg' (ironically named), my paddle board was 100% recycled; every bit of material that 'Conrad Manning Racing' used to create this piece of genius engineering was found in a skip destined for landfill. The spine of the board was made from a scaffolding plank. To help keep the board buoyant, house insulation was placed around the board, and wood from voting ballots was inserted between the insulation

to keep them secure. All of this was wrapped in a discarded plastic sheet used to transport yachts off the water. To keep my equipment attached to my board, anchoring points were placed using melted-down milk cartons.

I wanted to work with brands that shared the same vision as myself and are dedicated to protecting our oceans, waves, beaches and wildlife, as, without any of these elements, we would not have a place to call home. With that in mind, I couldn't think of a better charity to support than 'Surfers Against Sewage'.

1st August 2022, Cowes week, I commenced 'The Great Green Paddle', a journey of 100km on a board made of rubbish! Despite the long hours of training and all the preparation I put in place, a wave of doubt hit me after stroke one, had I taken on too much? Paddling the Isle of Wight is no easy feat at the best of times, but what I was trying to achieve was a whole different







Myself with Matt from Rapanui with a new leash



ball game. I wanted to take five days to prove that I could survive on all this eco equipment and encourage others to think about their habits!

### Hurst Castle

As I left Cowes, I put my head down and dug deep paddle after paddle heading to my first major obstacle, 'Hurst Castle', known for its deadly tides screaming through its narrow channel. However, I did not expect the fight to get me there. With a strong tidal flow behind me, against 20km winds created steep breaking waves throwing me off the board at any given opportunity. Despite being attached to my board, I was at the mercy of the tide hurtling through the shipping lanes towards Yarmouth, the crossing point of the passenger ferry.

Despite my best efforts, I had to take to my knees for my safety, ensuring I kept my board under control and with two magnificent forces fighting against each, my board flowed through the water and towards the dreaded Hurst Castle.

I passed by Yarmouth, but a moment of panic overcame me as the RNLI shot out of the harbour in my direction. I knew I had everything under control, but for a layperson, it may have looked like I was struggling. With much relief, the boat sped on by, and I paddled through the castle unscathed and came ashore at Colwell Bay, where I intended to stay the night.

I paddled further on day one than expected, as the wind the following day was going to be turning up a notch and making it impassable by SUP, so I wanted to get as close to the needles as possible. That evening I set up my eco tent, cooked up a green Thai curry from Tent Meals and watched the sun melt into water laid out in front, creating a visual masterpiece in the sky.

In the moment, I was overcome with emotions; I had time to reflect on how far I have come in life going from a former prisoner to a man holding seven world records and now attempting a world

“Despite being attached to my board, I was at the mercy of the tide hurtling through the shipping lanes towards Yarmouth.”



The final walk with my board



Completion of the challenge



first. My life has been transformed through adventure and the outdoors, and I knew I had a duty to protect the things that saved my life; failing The Great Green Paddle was not going to be an option, but despite the difficulties of day one and had no idea of what was yet to come.

The following morning, I was up at 05:00, and despite the winds coming in early, I tried my best to get closer to the needles, but there was no chance. I managed 3km in two hours, came to the shore, and took shelter. Despite my disheartening attempt, it turned out that my spot on the beach gave me plenty of opportunities to talk with people passing by, enticing more donations and spreading the message of the challenge. While sitting there, I realised how environmentally aware the residents of the Isle of Wight are, proud community members trying to do their bit. With that awareness and the wind clearing, I gave it my best effort to edge closer to the needles.



I had just paddled around the needles

Me with the board the morning after losing my fin



That evening I made it to a beach 1km short of the needles only accessible by SUP, which resembled a sense from the movie 'Castaway' and yet being so remote, it was disappointing to see how much rubbish had washed ashore, as usual, a plastic coke bottle.

### Thread the Needles

The following morning I was up at the crack of dawn, prepared to 'thread the Needles'. As I paddled closer, the cliffs running up to them were towering above me, making me feel so insignificant and remote, but there was no turning back, and with each stroke, the wind grew stronger. I struggled to hold my nerve, but with success, I passed by and continued my journey along the Isle of Wight's 'wild west' coastline.

I still had 5km of cliff front to pass, and with the water rolling four feet all around me, I could feel the unease sitting uncomfortably inside me. If anything were to go wrong, I had no safe evacuation point and would be at the mercy of the cliffs staring down at me as they have been for millions of years. I was at such awe of the power of nature that surrounded me.

Eventually, I passed by the cliffs and could relax ever so slightly as I paddled to my next destination and out of nowhere, a rough wave wiped me out. Suddenly my fears and worries had all come true, and to escalate the problem; I felt something ping from my leash. As I resurfaced, I looked to the shoreline and saw my board, equipment, and everything I had hurtling towards the beach, leaving me stranded about 700 metres out. All I had was my Yak buoyancy aid, my paddle and my radio around my neck.

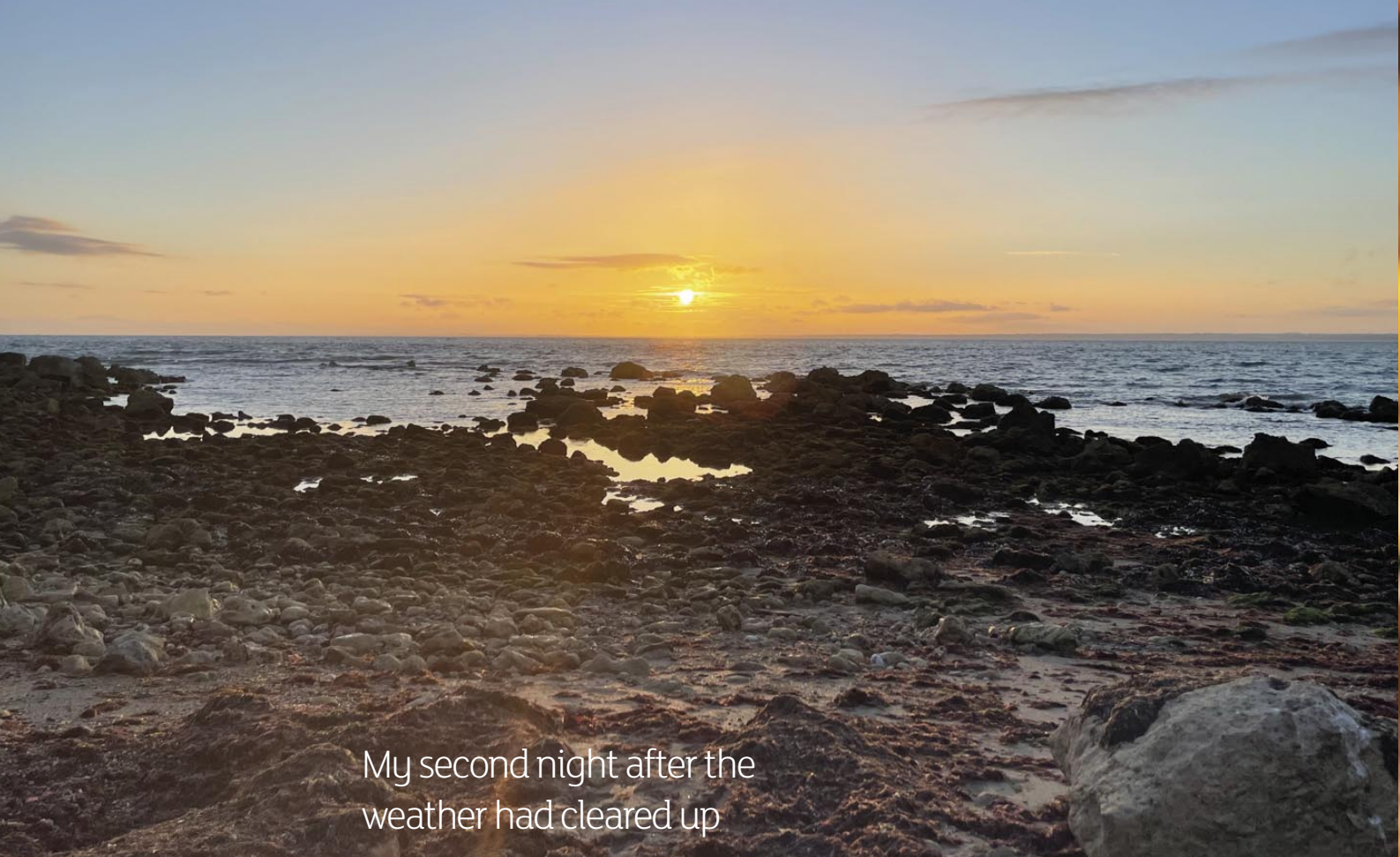
I was in trouble! This stretch of water is notoriously known for its rip tides, undercurrents and strong winds. With every ounce of my being, I fought hard to swim back to shore and retrieve my board. As I dragged myself out of the water, I was shocked and disappointed that on a busy beach during the summer, not one person came to see if I was alright. It was clear that something had occurred, and thankfully I was ok, but now the challenge was in jeopardy!

### Donating a leash

Fortunately for me, the legends at Rapauni came to my rescue and donated a leash to continue this challenge, and after a good rest that evening, I knew I had to put in a big slog if I was going to complete this challenge in time.

The next day I took to the beach at Compton Bay with a good wind behind me and a strong tide, my spirits were high, and I was an unstoppable force! Stroke after stroke, I was cutting through the water with such ease, and St Catherine's point was fast approaching, an area of water I had not mentally prepared myself for. In the distance, I could see the white waters of two tides crashing in together, and the roar of the water was like nothing I'd ever heard; there was no way I was getting around this, so





## My second night after the weather had cleared up

through it, I had to go. I straddled my board to get through the water, and the undercurrent was immense; without it, there was no way I would survive this water.

After being spit out on the other side of St Catherine's point, the adrenaline was pumping throughout my body, that was by far the most petrifying thing I had ever done on the water, and I felt so alive. This whole challenge had become such a bigger adventure than I had envisioned, and I was embracing every moment.

### The easy ride was now over

From here, I headed to Bembridge with victory edging closer with each passing kilometre. When I came around Bembridge, the wind changed direction and hit me like a bag of bricks. The easy ride I had since Compton Bay was now over, and I was in for some challenging paddling to make Cowes and have a warm shower.

The closer I got to Cowes, the stronger the winds became, and I could feel myself getting wearier. I passed Ryde, having paddled 57km, and with 5km to go, I nearly had it in the bag, but the winds were defeated, and my window of opportunity closed as the tide had changed, meaning I was done for the day.

By now, I was hungry, tired, and emotional, and as I pulled my board out of the water, I was dealt a final blow. My fin and mount had vanished, I did think something wasn't right with the board, but I put it down to the wind and tides.

So there I was, 5km short and on my first ever incomplete adventure. It was disheartening, but I achieved what I set out to do, to raise awareness

and money for charity and highlight the great work brands are doing to protect our environment.

As my on-land support vehicle was electric, it didn't have enough power to come to my rescue I spent my final night on the beach. In a way this was a blessing because it gave me time to think and something adventure has taught me is that no matter what, always give your everything and until you have tried your best, only then can you take a step down.

### Completing the challenge

I had one more option – to walk through the water with the board attached, and that is precisely what I did. I was not letting the Isle of Wight beat me, I was completing this challenge one way or another, and for 5km, I walked through chest-deep water, pulling my board behind and stubbing my toes on what felt like every rock in the Solent.

Five days from when I set off I have successfully completed the world's first carbon neutral environmentally expedition and probably one of my proudest achievements. I learned a lot on this challenge, that it is possible to take a net-zero approach to life. There are so many great companies doing great things, but we as consumers are not aware of this, and it really doesn't take much to make little changes to help protect our planet. With this said, all my challenges going forward are going to be net-zero; in October, I fly to Iceland to attempt my 8th world record in their longest lake and to offset my footprint from the flight, I will be planting 100 trees within a prison also to help inspire growth, rehabilitation and connecting with nature.







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# Behind the GROUP

East of England Paddlesports

## Oli Jordan

**Interview:** Peter Tranter

**Pics:** EoEPS, Oli Jordan, James Crisp/Crisp Photography

Oli started the East of England Paddlesports (EOEPS) group in 2017 and now has three other admin help run the group. Andy Large, Jessica Ashley and Matt Payne.. We had a natter with Oli to find out how to start what is now the largest Facebook group to be affiliated with British Canoeing, what it entails and what the future holds. And, to find out a little about the man himself. Over to you Oli...

### **Before we start, Oli – just let our readers know a little about yourself, background, family, etc.**

Hi everyone, I started working in the outdoors from the age of 18; long story short, I travelled, lived away for around 12 years teaching outdoor education, moved back to the UK and decided to leave the outdoor industry. In 2015, I started working as a patient transport driver for the NHS in East London, with plans to become a paramedic; this lasted about a year before I found myself back freelancing in the outdoors again. Throw in a bit of Royal Mail, working as a postie for a bit, then chancing my luck full-time with East of England Paddlesports!









## Where/how did you discover SUP?

Whilst living in New Zealand, I had a few lessons; it was relatively new back then; I struggled a bit with my balance, (until the instructor took out a camera, apparently when posing for a picture I found my balance!) I didn't think I'd be back on a board anytime soon so I enjoyed the water! Fast forward a few years, living in the United Arab Emirates, a centre we often worked at had a few boards, so we took them out at every opportunity – Sunrises before climbing sessions and evenings before campfires etc.

## Talk us through how the group started.

I often joke, "I started the group to find friends, and now I have over 11k of them." However, there is some truth behind that. I moved back to my family home when I left working in the outdoors and didn't know that many people here since my childhood friends had mostly moved away or settled down. So, yeah, I wanted to find some new people to paddle with. It was also a small chance for me to keep my coaching qualifications up and eventually, after purchase of some second-hand boards, keep instructing.

## Talk a little about your role within EOEPS and what it entails.

I started the group in 2017, and all the trips, socials, etc., were my creation. I figured if I wanted to do something or thought something would be fun, surely others would too. In the early stages, I managed the group alone, checking posts, answering questions etc. I now share the platform with several other admins, who help manage the day-to-day running of the group; we also share ideas and create new trips and socials, charity events etc. together, which has freed up

my time away from Facebook, meaning I can coach, organize other trips and create a range of branded merchandise (all available on [www.eoeps.co.uk/shop](http://www.eoeps.co.uk/shop) ;) )

## Can you explain how it's been building a UK SUP group?

We often say the members make the group, which is true. Without the genuine word of mouth and invites to friends and family, we probably wouldn't have such a big, friendly and successful group. There have been times, which aren't always enjoyable, when people try to cause upset amongst the group, but for every negative person or comment, there seem to be about a hundred positives to take over. We seem to be growing daily and achieving pretty amazing things, which tells us we must be doing something right!

## The following three questions are answered by Andy Large, who joined me as admin in the early days when we had less than 1000 members. The group is as much his as it is mine!

### Are you the only FB group affiliated with British Canoeing (BC), and how did that happen?

BC has told us that we are the first Facebook group and the single largest group to be affiliated – though a few smaller groups have come forward and said they are the first online group etc., so we aren't sure. However, we are definitely the biggest! Other similar platforms have now started discussing our affiliation with BC and how it can work for themselves. We had



"We have never been just about SUP, though our group could probably be split 60% SUP, 35% kayak and 5% canoe."







A group paddle around Osea Island in Heybridge Basin, Essex. Photo: James Crisp/Crisp Photography

been talking to BC for some time about how we operate and how we could work together and were asked to speak at their AGM about the success of East of England Paddlesports. While we were there, we started to discuss affiliation in a little more detail and soon realized the process had to be very different for us; for example, we are not a club that takes membership fees, nor do we have a treasurer or chair or hold AGMs. So we took the documents and their process, adapted them to our operating model and worked it through over a few Zoom meetings!

**SUPM came into contact with you because of your SUP activities. Are you at some point looking to expand activities into sea kayaking, canoeing, etc.?**

We have never been just about SUP, though our group could probably be split 60% SUP, 35% kayak and 5% canoe! We are a Paddlesports group and encourage all forms of safe, responsible grassroots paddling in kayak, canoe and SUP. All our events are for multi-craft, as long as they have a paddle. We have occasionally created kayak-only events due to the conditions, distances, etc.

**Which has been your most successful event run through the group, and why?**

We organize various activities, from small short paddles to camping trips to adventures overseas. Our biggest single-trip event was a paddle around Osea Island in Heybridge Basin in Essex. We worked with Stone Sailing Club and the Essex Police Marine Unit, and the event was attended by almost 100 paddlers, SUP and kayak – big thanks to James Crisp/Crisp Photography for the amazing drone shot! We find that our easy-going and safe, responsible style makes people feel comfortable joining. Mix this in with different and new locations, friendly word-of-mouth comments and good weather, and we're winning!







Oli Jordan, Jessica Ashley, Andy Large, Hannah Johns  
— on their award night when EOEPS won the Active  
Essex Club of the Year award 2021



## Questions answered by Oli once again!

### How do you see SUP development? Do you think even more growth, for instance?

I think with SUP, people are looking at upgrading equipment, mainly to be able to paddle further and for longer. We often discuss what might come next; if I knew that, I'm sure I'd be a wealthy man, though what I see happening is people will travel further to explore new areas. Groups like ours offer that familiarity for people visiting or relocating etc.

### And what about EOEPS's general evolution – any ideas you can reveal?

We hope to keep growing; we can't yet see any reason why our membership (Free membership, it's a Facebook group!) won't keep going up. We have lulls over winter, but each spring/summer, it picks up again. We are planning our more extensive trips for 2023 already, primarily due to demand; people want to know where we're going and when earlier and earlier each year, so they can get the time booked off etc. There are some small personal goals I would like to reach with the group, but I'm keeping those close at the moment. We never expected to win the Active Essex Club of the Year award in 2021 nor become British Canoeing affiliated, so who knows where we might be next year!

### Got any personal SUP goals for the next 12 months?

I enjoy taking the boards abroad, so more holidays sound good.

### What's your personal SUP kit of choice, and why?

If this means brand, I highly rate the Quroc 13ft. This is my go-to board; it glides through the water easily and is lightweight and strong. For a single piece of kit, it would be my new (East of England Paddlesports) Red Kevlar SUP one-piece paddle. Every time I lend it out and hold other people's paddles, I quickly remember the joy of my first paddle using a lighter paddle! The difference it can make is immense.

### I'm into SUP and going on holiday; where would you recommend?

Slovenia is beautiful. A few from the group went in March 2020. It was cold and snowy, and the lakes looked incredible. Lake Bled, paddling around Bled Castle with snowy scenes is a must!

### When you're not SUPing, what else do you do to relax?

I love to travel and enjoy music, and live concerts of any genre, especially post covid lockdown; there's something amazing about sharing an atmosphere. Elbow at Audley End was the latest; it was beautiful! (My team would probably want me to say, watching Bargain Hunt, I'll own it, who doesn't love profit!)



### Who inspires you to SUP?

Everyone. That's the most fantastic part of SUP; it's so accessible by all. We have all ages and abilities in the group, and every time someone posts, seeing the pictures and reading the stories and comments from others is inspiring.

### Tell us one interesting, none SUP related fact that we might not know about you.

I like Bargain Hunt. Joking aside, travel has been a huge part of my life, and I think the country count so far is about 56 now! I've also broken about 18 bones; hopefully, the travel part continues!

### Is there any issue that stops you from sleeping at night?

I often worry that I'm not doing enough with the platform I've created. We try and have ideas coming out soon to hopefully be better and engage more people with specific areas, environmental etc.

### Name just one thing we can do as paddlers to improve our environment.

Leave only footprints; being correctly licensed will also improve your local area; the money goes back into the sport and will provide clearings, bins, pontoons etc.

### What's your most embarrassing moment?

I won the chance to paddle with Michaela Strachan years ago in Reading. Who do you reckon fell in? 😊

### Any final thoughts on SUP?

Keep going, everyone – support one another. As our group says, 'Be Kind, Be Careful and Stay Safe'.







## To find out more information:

[www.facebook.com/groups/eoeps](http://www.facebook.com/groups/eoeps) & @e.o.e.p.s on Instagram

## Web:

[www.eoeps.co.uk](http://www.eoeps.co.uk)

### Quickie questions

#### Who would it be if you could paddle with anyone in the world, dead or alive?

Ken Dodd. What a hero he was. We'd be paddling and laughing constantly. (Bet you never thought you'd hear that answer!)

#### Pick two celebrities to be your parents...

Will Smith pre-slap & Matt Hancock post-slap.

#### Which famous person would you like to see play you in a film?

Ricky Gervais.

#### An ideal night out for you is?

Drinks and meal with my girlfriend and friends, laughing about nothing and telling stories.

#### What one luxury item would you take with you on a desert island?

Speaker and a music streaming service.

#### What would I find in your fridge?

Orangina bought back from our two-week French adventure!

#### What would you prepare for us if we came to your house for dinner?

Chili Nachos.

#### What's the most boring question you are often asked?

Is Andy your dad? Is Andy your partner? ☹

#### Who are your SUP buddies?

Too many to list. Massive shoutout to all members of the group!

#### If you could be a superhero for one day, what superpower would you choose?

Fly. I miss my buddies in New Zealand and Australia. Plus, the waters over there are clearer!

#### Any final shoutouts?

Massive shout out to my parents, when deciding whether or not to leave my full-time employment to run EOEPS full time or sell all my paddling kit/potentially leave to travel again, they built me an office in the garden! They're super supportive and proud of what we have achieved and are constantly excited to see what comes next!

The group wouldn't have gotten to where it is without Andy Large, who joined forces with me in the early days; he's been a rock for me, within the group's growth and personally as a friend. And our newest additions to the team are Jessica Ashley and Matt Payne. Both have a real passion for what we do as a group and come with heaps of ideas and enthusiasm, we're a close team, and it works because we get on as friends and enjoy each other's company, on and off the water. And finally, a big hello to past admin members Nick Devenney and Hannah Johns, who massively helped the group grow since they stepped down but have remained close friends.



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# Wild Women

## SUP symposium







**Words:** Helen Trehoret

**Photos:** SUP Inverness - Claire Scott, Barrachou Paddle, Leanne Bird & Emy Mcleod

September saw the first ever Women SUP Symposium organised in Scotland for women and led by women. The event was organised by myself, Helen Trehoret from Barrachou Paddle, Finistere, France.

Why did I organise this event? This project was born out of an addiction to paddling in Scotland. A place that I have paddled in for the best part of ten years. After years of showing a good friend around Scotland, I decided it was time to encourage other women to explore the wilds. But why open this to women only? I decided that a women-only event would provide a supportive community that would help challenge and develop the skills of the women paddlers. Also, in my experience, women are more likely to share their lack of confidence and fears in a supportive group, and more often, this is found amongst other women.

Thirdly seeing men often led 'wild' SUP holidays targeted at women groups, I felt that this was the opportunity to empower women to take on leadership roles when paddling in more 'wilder' locations.

Basing the even in Cannich offered paddlers conditions that were quintessential Scottish, but at the same time providing a sheltered location for the groups, which is why it was based out of Cannich, Scotland. A beautiful village at the start of the Glen Affric.





## So the project was born;

For more information on the Wild Women SUP Symposium 2023, head over to [www.barrachoupaddle.com](http://www.barrachoupaddle.com)

we need to fast forward a few years! The weekend had arrived, and 30 ladies signed up. We were ready to charge up the Scottish lochs armed with our t-shirts provided by our chief supporter, the ASI academy of surfing instructors.

I reached out to five instructors with slightly different themes and areas of paddle expertise. The wonderful thing about instructing is that most instructors have something a little different to add that can improve one's paddling.

The instructor roster was comprised of Leanne Bird, who took the SUP fitness and mobility sessions; Samantha Rutt, running paddling turns and techniques; Emy Mcleod running the SUP confidence sessions; Jess Philips, who ran the river SUP session; and finally, that gave workshops on SUP expeditions.

### Weekend's Programme

After the Friday night meet and greet, we were all ready to go. All the sessions were based at Loch Beinn a'Mheadhoin, a Loch that runs West to East, with a few in-Loch Peninsulas scattered around that help give a bit of protection from the furious Scottish wind, except the River SUP.

The first session was with recent world record holder Samantha Rutt, fresh off her Irish Sea crossing. The theme for her workshops was to break down the paddle technique and turns for the paddler, going into the bio-mechanical processes that hinder or help our turns. Once the theory was nailed, paddlers moved to the water and, before long, were nailing their step-back turns; as the session moved on, the improvement level improved, with paddlers spinning their paddleboards around like heroes!

Emy Mcleod's sessions centred on gaining confidence on the water; the weekend was based on multiple skill levels, from beginners to those who had a few miles under their belt. This session allowed those new to the sport to gain confidence in their paddling, getting their body position correct and their weight evenly distributed, aspects of paddling often bypassed with the eagerness to get onto the water. At the end of both sessions, very few ladies fell in or remained on their knees! A testament to the success of the sessions!

Hidden around the corner in a serene and protected bay was the Leanne Bird; her sessions focus on fitness and mobility in SUP paddling. The session proved successful, judging from the level of laughs and the general sounds of ladies pushing themselves to the next level. We sometimes forget that SUP paddling is a sport; to get the most out of it, you need a level of fitness, especially in paddling in the conditions Scotland throws at you!











The fourth instructor, Jess Philips, was on River SUP duty. This beginner session aims to give the paddlers a taster into a different SUP paradigm. The ladies were packed off for the day to explore the River Glass, a grade 1 / 2 river that weaves its way down from Glen Affric. The ladies armed with river fins, helmets and quick-release belts were introduced to rapid running. They all returned with smiles, a few bruises and addiction to rapids.

My sessions were land-based and focused on planning your next expedition, the main goal for the weekend. I felt I wanted to arm paddlers with the skills to plan their expeditions, emphasising that expeditions don't need to be multi-day events. An expedition could be just across a sea, lake, loch or down a river, 500m, maybe four miles, or 50 miles; it all doesn't matter, as long as the ladies are getting out there! My session focused on navigation, reading the tides, and planning for the expedition. I talked about my successes and errors in the trips I organised. At the end of the session, I hope to have planted a seed!

And, of course, you can not have an event with a social. The Saturday night, we shared a bbq and drinks and listened to a discussion about Samantha Rutt's epic paddle from Northern Ireland to Scotland. We were hopefully inspiring other paddlers to set themselves challenges.

## Expedition

To conclude the weekend, we added a SUP expedition bolt-on trip. Organised to implement the skills the paddlers had learnt over the weekend. Everyone dreams of paddling and staying the night in the wilds, but doing it alone is sometimes daunting. After morning preparation and briefing, we set off to paddle across the other side of Glen Affric. Each paddler carried their tent and belongings. Heading up the glen with high spirits and a headwind, we paddled past the Glen Affric Lodge and made it to the other side. After an evening around a fire, started by a very able South African, Caryn Foster, we settled for the night. We headed back the next day after a brew, breakfast, and rapid bathing in the loch. The conditions back up the glen were captivating and provided the perfect send-off for the paddlers on the trip!



## Conclusion

The weekend was a resounding success; great friendships were made, stories and experiences swapped, and more importantly, we all left promising to do it again next year. The weekend was successful due to the support of the ASI academy of instructors, and the instructors present gave a YES as soon as I asked. More importantly, the success was down to the ladies who came to Scotland, from far and from not so far; they came with their positivity and paddle vibes. A special thanks and mention to Pat Macdonald and Claire Scott for assisting during the weekend! See you again next year!

The plan is to roll out three more Symposiums with a slightly different theme. SUP racing in Norfolk, ASI SUP Surfing in Ireland and French Symposium based in Finistere!



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# A beginner's guide to wingsurfing & wingfoiling

**Words:** Tez Plavenieks

**Pics:** Oli Lane-Pearce, Mike Pringuer & Tez Plavenieks

Wingsurfing and foiling continue to grab headlines and attention. Being the new kid on the watersports block, but one with unique dynamism and visuals makes this so. Wonder, bewilderment and interest ensure winging pricks interests every time it's seen. Initially, SUPers may struggle to spot the synergy between holding a wing and swinging a paddle. Yet there's plenty. So with that in mind, here's the SUPM beginner guide to wingsurfing and foiling.

## Why wing?

Any recreational paddler will probably tell you they have zero interest in inflating a wing and using wind for propulsion. Seasoned paddle boarders, however, used to milking and using the elements to their advantage, will perhaps recite a different story.

Wind plays a massive part in SUP. Understand and use it correctly to enjoy blowy sessions when other paddlers might struggle. Get it wrong, and the breeze can cause all sorts of issues. Not least getting back to shore if the direction's offshore.

Flip this to riders who have downwind SUP experience, SUP surfing know-how and utilising Mother Nature to the best effect and the draw to winging is tangible. A wing can be an additional tool to enjoy even more time afloat, not just the extension of a paddle. Suppose Mother Nature's not playing SUP ball and blowing dogs off chains. In that case, a wing (easily inflated and set up, plus intuitive to use) will get riders amongst it.

Wingsurfing can be done aboard any SUP with the addition of a central fin or drift stopper. This stops downwind glide and keeps the board on a straight and narrow. The additional gear isn't as big an outlay with wingsurfing. One wing, a drift stopper (or similar), and you're good on your usual sled.

Adding a foil is the next step. A foil and foil board are arguably the most efficient ways to use a wing. Foil boards can be a hybrid mix of paddling and foil platform, which further cuts costs and aids versatility (more on boards in a mo). And with already nailed down wing handling (born of wingsurfing), you're already steps ahead.





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## Wings

Wingsurfing is the first port of call to learn how to handle a wing. Taking things one step at a time is the best approach. With either an inflatable or hard SUP, you're free to begin your winging journey. Starting in mellow breeze strengths, it's a case of ramping things up incrementally. And all within a few short sessions. It doesn't take that long for experienced paddlers to get to grips with a wing. Wings aren't as critical to sheeting angles as windsurf sails. And they're much lighter and freer to use without not being attached to your board.

Wings come in various shapes and sizes and with different features. It was once thought a 4m wing is all you need. Yet this has proved to be incorrect. Wings, being inflatable 'engines', are low power. Therefore



As a general rule of thumb, wing sizes and weight could look something like this (note: this is just a rule of thumb):

Kids to young teen riders – 1.5m

Teens to 60kg riders – 4m

60 to 80kg riders – 5m

80kg to 100kg+ - 6m

bigger riders will need around 6m to deliver the right amount of oomph. Lighter riders will get away with smaller sizes.

There's a thought that bigger wings of 6m will see the tips caught on the water. This may happen. But it's super easy to correct the wing's angle, which is good to learn. Plus, when you get to the point of wanting to foil, a bigger wing will stand you in good stead for those first flights.

It's worth considering your overall height when choosing a wing – and then looking at the design more closely. For instance, a more compact wing shape with pulled-in tips will benefit if you're shorter in stature, and this should mean less wing tip clipping.

There are wings with material handles, wings with hard handles and wings with booms. It's worth demoing (if you can) these different styles to get an idea of what you like and don't.

### Wing skating

Wing skating is another way to dial in your wing technique and enjoy land-based fun. This mightn't be for everyone, but I'm a big advocate. Rolling round on a longboard skateboard or land paddle board with a wing in hand is good to practise and great fun. It's also a way to fill the void when conditions may be too cold (particularly in winter) or just not right. Wear a helmet and pads, and you should be fine.



## Foil boards

As mentioned, wingsurfing boards can be your standard SUP with a drift stopper attached. Or you may own one with a central fin. There are some multi-discipline SUPs on the market created with winging and paddling in mind. Old-school windsurfing longboards with daggerboards can also work well.

Foil boards are an evolution of previously popular compact, parallel rail surf SUP shapes. They have a few modifications that make them applicable to flying above the water.

Compact in length, you're looking at between 6' and 7' for your first wing foiling sled. Higher volume and more width are good, to begin with too. This could be something like 6'2" x 140L x 29". Those dimensions shouldn't put any experienced paddler off. I say it often in my reviews, but dimensions aren't the be-all and end-all. Foil boards are designed to be stable yet nimble. They'll take a bit of getting used to initially, but a board like the one quoted above will feel big in a short amount of time.

It's possible to get hold of hybrid foil boards that accommodate more than one foiling discipline. You could also plump for something that can be SUP foiled (sans wing). Some hybrid shapes can also be ridden in standard fin mode, ala SUP surfing, giving even more bang for your buck.

A big tip with boards is don't go too small too soon. There's a lot of 'white noise' surrounding wing foil boards and going low volume, and you can do this too quickly. A bigger platform is your friend at first, and it'll help you learn all those foiling subtleties and have you up and flying quicker than something requiring a more dialled-in technique.

Also, inflatable foil boards are an option. They're not quite as good as hard, but not far off. And they'll suit any rider wanting an even easier time with storage and transport. Inflatable foil boards are really good for anyone travelling overseas to wing.







## Foils

The hydrofoil part of your wing foiling set-up is THE most important bit. Choosing the wrong type will see your progression stall. Foils come in two styles these days (mostly) – high and low aspect foils. Avoid high aspect, to begin with, even though they're the on-trend foil. And just as with board and wings, go bigger with your foil.

A front foil wing with around 2000cm<sup>2</sup> will get most 80kg-100kg flying in 18-20 knots with a 5m/6m wing. With practice, perseverance and time on the water. Bigger is best, to begin with – be under no illusion. As I always say, if you want to learn how to foil but aren't foiling because your kit isn't suitable, then you're not going to learn how to foil.

As well as front foil wings, you can choose foil mast length. Many choose to start on something shorter, around 70cm. This is fine but won't cut it as you get better. As soon as you're sustaining flight, you'll want a mast closer to 85cm. With a longer mast, you have more leeway and won't run the

risk of the front foil wing breaching as often. Breaching (or over foiling) is where the front foil wing breaks the water's surface, becomes aerated, and the power switches off. Instantly. Which results in a crash. Everyone goes through this. It's par for the course while learning. A longer foil mast reduces the chances of this happening. Then, your clearance is better as you start to ride in windier conditions with choppier water states. And when foil gybing, a longer foil mast helps here.

Fuselages should be a tad longer when starting your wing foil journey. A longer fuse will give better pitch control (nose to tail) and feel more stable. As you improve, you may go for shorter to loosen up the ride.

Tail wings, as with front foil wings, should be bigger to start, and this will give more stability and help when levering the foil up into flight mode. As with all component parts, you can start to experiment and change bits once you've dialled in your skills.







## Summing up

When asked how easy wingfoiling is, I tell the person in question, easier than you think. If you have prior SUP, windsurf, kitesurf, sailing or a combination of experience, it's not that difficult. As long as you abide by these three simple rules:

### The right equipment –

go big, as I've already mentioned.

### The right place –

sheltered, flat water will help no end.

### The right time –

go out when it's windy. Not when it's light.

Like with everything, you'll still need to put in the time and effort. But as with many existing SUP/wingfoilers winging could be the perfect complimentary sport for when it's too windy to SUP.

## Wind and conditions

When starting your wing foiling journey, conditions play as much a part as the equipment you'll use. The general rule of thumb is more wind and flatter water, the better. Choppy, wavier locations won't do you any favours initially. Everyone loves the idea of winging in waves, but it's tricky to start. Lakes, estuaries or sheltered beaches with the limited chop, tide and current will help your progression massively.

As well as wind, again, riders love the idea of foiling in the lightest air possible. But sub-18 knot foiling is more technical than heading out in a blow. So don't be put off. One beauty of wings is their depower. If it gets too much, you simply sheet out and calm returns. Unlike windsurf sails, wings depower so well that there's a minimal time when you feel overpowered. And should you still not be inspired, jump back on your SUP for some high wind wingsurfing fun. The versatility of wings knows no bounds!

## Safety

There's no question you need to be mindful when learning how to wing foil, and a helmet and impact vest will see your confidence boost. As with SUP, it may also be wise to carry a means of communication – such as a mobile phone – tucked away in a waterproof pouch and stored on your person.

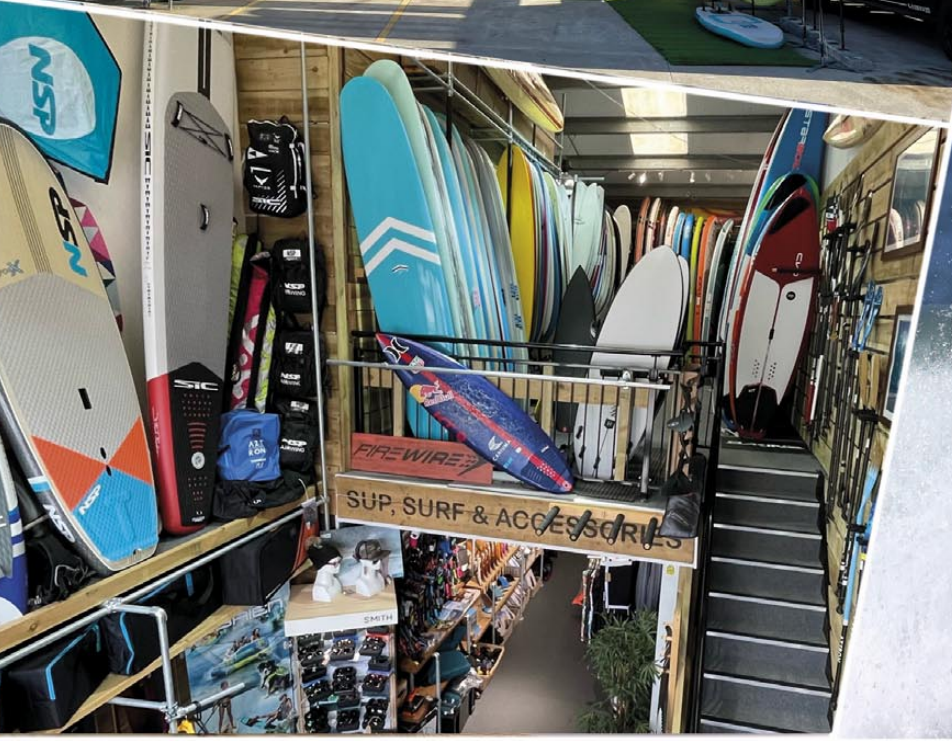
Leashes keep wing riders in contact with their boards and power source. A coiled waist leash can be the best choice for boards. I find these keep from getting snagged up on the foil and feel much better raised off the board's deck.

In terms of which wing leash you go for is a personal preference. Some riders prefer coiled, while others prefer straight. Some also prefer attaching the wing leash to their waist belt, freeing up hands in the process. Whatever your choice of leashes, they should be fit for purpose and able to put up with the stresses and strains of wingfoiling.

Learning to wingfoil requires space. So a location without other water users nearby is ideal. Before going it alone, the best course of action is to get some lessons. There are plenty of providers who deliver coaching courses. It's an excellent way to fast-track the learning process and be on your way to wingfoiling nirvana.







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# Paddling through PREGNANCY (and back again!)

**Words:** Alexandra Tyrer

**Pics:** Marcus Ginns, Adrian Lomas, Ilostawavein79 & Vern Hill

We all have our personal stories of 2020; for me, it was about giving SUP racing my best shot. The year got off to an unexpectedly good start - in January, I finished eighth lady in the bucket list SUP event, the 'GlaGla' on Lake Annecy, France. I returned home ready for more race action, but the year quickly got turned on its head as the Covid pandemic hit; however, the other thing I hadn't accounted for was getting pregnant.

Over the following pages, I'll share my experience and insight of my pre and post-natal journeys and how I paddled through pregnancy and back again, not once but twice!

## Paddling & purpose

We'd been trying to get pregnant for a few years, but with no success, we'd resigned ourselves to the fact that it just wasn't going to happen, and we were cool with that. So when I took a pregnancy test in early May 2020, I was gobsmacked to read 'pregnant' - being a single-minded character, one of my first thoughts was, *"But what about my training and racing plans?"*

I had concerns that being a parent would change who I was; I was concerned that it would limit what I could do and dilute my identity. On reflection, this is so far from the truth, and if anything, it strengthened my identity and reinforced my purpose to paddle and generally live an active life.

## Pre-baby prep

As we lapsed in and out of lockdowns during 2020, with varying degrees of restrictions, I seized the opportunity to get out on the water when permitted. I found paddling granted me freedom as the movement pattern of SUP allowed me to work around bump.

I also used our home gym to follow a self-prescribed strength and conditioning programme that I did a couple of times each week to help maintain functional strength and flexibility. With a set of weights, a medicine ball, resistance bands and a broomstick, I could do a comprehensive all-body workout that I adapted as I progressed through my trimesters.

Pregnant or not, I had to adapt and modify my training due to the lockdown. This is an excellent lesson as it's too easy to stick to the old routine, which stifles progress. I mixed things up, which physically helped me to maintain my general fitness but mentally kept me hungry and focused on my return postpartum.

I paddled on the lake consistently once or twice a week until I was around eight months pregnant. I progressively became slower as Bump became more prominent, plus there were other things that required my attention, like a major home renovation (extreme nesting) project! The final month of pregnancy was about keeping moving and doing what I could; after all, my body was working hard, carrying around an extra 10kg, so walking and continuing my home routine with bodyweight-only exercises was the order of the day.











## D-Day

Our baby girl, Grace, was born on 30th November 2020. It was a relatively speedy and straightforward process, and I was in active labour for only seven hours. She was placed on my chest, and I was hit with a wave of emotions – it was instant love.

I'll save you the gory details, but I lost more than two litres of blood during delivery and was rushed to surgery. The long and short of this meant that my recovery took longer than hoped, but there was no rush to return to training; after all, I'd just spent the past nine months expanding, which concluded with a monumental endurance event.

I stepped back on my board on a chilly January morning around four weeks after Grace's arrival but not for long as we were then faced with lockdown #2. So instead, I remained active with Grace – doing long wintery walks and following CARiFiT, a baby wearing workout, which just so happens to work the major muscle groups used for paddleboarding. Think of it as a HITT session wearing a weighted vest that gets heavier over time!

Between nappy changes and feeding, I populated my diary with SUP races, which in some ways was like trying to pin jelly on the wall as no one had visibility as to when restrictions would be lifted, regardless it was important to set a direction of travel.

## Motivation

My motivation to return to racing never really went away. I had three aims:

- 1) To maintain my strength and fitness prenatally as best as possible;
- 2) To be as strong as possible for the birth; and,
- 3) To progressively regain my paddling form and fitness to enable me to return to racing postnatally.

With early season staple races such as Head of the Dart (HoTD) and the Cardiff International White Water Paddlefest (CIWW) postponed, the first race back was Battle of The Thames (BoTT) 2021. At this point, I was six months postpartum. I'd never been as nervous about being on the start line – I guess we were all a little anxious as there hadn't been any racing for over a year. However, my sweaty palms and butterflies were more to do with the apprehension of my new status as a mummy – was I as strong as before having Grace? Did I still have it in me to race?

The race went well. I placed second behind the marvellous Marie Buchanan and was ecstatic with my result; I gave the race all I could. I stepped onto the podium with Grace feeling exceptionally proud – my achievement was sweeter and more meaningful as a parent.

## Post-natal but not for long

The BoTT was a great confidence and motivational boost and was a good marker for knowing my form and fitness were

heading in the right direction. With that first race under my belt, I had the confidence to sign-up for 'The Norfolk Ultra' (72km) in mid-July as a non-stop event. This helped me to focus my training and justified the need to do some longer paddles within the limits of the time available. To achieve the training effect of a long-distance paddle, I trained fatigued, which meant consecutive training days of 2-3 hours per session, with some bursts thrown in for good measure.

I had a great race. My focused training paid off, and my nutrition plan worked well – I maintained a good pace for the race, and I rolled in the first lady at 9 hours and 19 minutes, which put me in second place overall. Not bad, considering I was unaware that I was pregnant for the SECOND time!

Yes, you read that right. Yet again, another phase of mental and physical adjustment was ahead, but the situation felt less daunting this time. I knew that the return to form and fitness was possible; it was more a question of how the logistics would work – after all, with two-under-two, it would inevitably be a juggling act.

With my second baby due in March 2022, I was now in a mode of making the most of my freedom. I was determined to get as much paddling time racked up, especially as the third trimester would be in the chillier months of the year, which in the end, forced me off the water for safety reasons.





### Reframing expectations

I'd entered the GB SUP National Sprint Championships in early September, but with bags packed and ready for an early start, I had a niggling feeling that it wasn't the right thing to do. My body wasn't used to high-intensity bursts, and being circa four months pregnant, now was not the time to try.

Instead, I set my sights on what was within my scope: the CIWW festival that was rescheduled to late September. This was my last GB SUP race before the baby's



arrival – I placed a strong fourth, despite paddling with caution, as I was intent on not falling into the murky waters of the river Taff with a baby on board. Post-race, I made it my goal for Cardiff to be my first back on May 1st, 2022.

I did the odd club race to help me remain connected to the SUP community and keep my hand in with racing, and with my growing bump, I had to race more tactically and paddle within my limits; by doing this, I podiumed at 7.5 months pregnant, proving that being pregnant requires a different approach.

### Proud to be back

Millie arrived safely on 15th March 2022. Six weeks later, on the 1st May 2022, I achieved my goal to be on the start line at Cardiff and placed sixth lady against some talented paddlers. I was off the pace, but for me, it

“I knew that the return to form and fitness was possible; it was more a question of how the logistics would work – after all, with two-under-two, it would inevitably be a juggling act.”





“Heading to an event is no longer simply a case of getting myself sorted, board on the roof, and off we go.”

was about being in the mix and proving to myself that I could still perform even as a member of the elusive ‘two under two’ club; for me, that was a WIN. A massive WIN.

I hadn’t anticipated being selected to represent England at the European Championships, ‘EuroSUP 2022’, in Denmark. This wasn’t on the radar, but we threw caution to the wind and took the girls on their first road trip and what a fantastic experience we had. As for the racing, well, it certainly took me beyond my paddling comfort zone.

Heading to an event is no longer simply a case of getting myself sorted, board on the roof, and off we go. It now requires significant preparation and planning to ensure that Grace & Millie have their needs covered, so add to the mix feeding bottles, steriliser, nappy changing bags, snacks, wet wipes, spare clothes, toys, etc. In short, it becomes more akin to a small-scale military operation.

Then there’s the logistical conundrum of getting myself and my board to an early morning race briefing - this is very challenging with two little people to get ready. In such instances, it’s the kindness of others which has helped me get to the start and enabled me to race.

### Train to gain

My recovery post-Millie was much easier as I thankfully didn’t have the trauma as I did with the arrival of Grace only 15.5 months earlier. This meant that I was able to get back on the board sooner. However, training intensity and duration were kept low as I focused on the long term.

Getting out for training takes coordination between my fiancé and me, and sessions tend to be shorter but having the time limitation gives me more purposeful and productive sessions. As Grace and Millie grow and I better handle my ‘mummy guilt’,



# Inspired insights

Here are my key insights to returning to racing physically strong and mentally ready:

- 1. Training through the trimesters** – I switched my head into 'maintenance' mode instead of 'training' mode. Pregnancy is not the time to smash PBs and push beyond your physical limits. When I had concerns or doubts, I sought guidance from my Midwife or GP. I followed an exercise programme that adapted to my needs and capabilities as I progressed through the trimesters. The advantages of exercise through pregnancy include lowered risk of gestational diabetes, increased stamina for labour and delivery, boost in energy levels and improved mood, avoids excessive weight gain and help to maintain range of motion.
- 2. Steady and gradual return postpartum** – the fable of the Hare & Tortoise is a good one to reference. I listened to my body, re-started slowly and stepped things up day-by-day and week-by-week, this leads to long-term gains but let's be clear that progress isn't linear, so you have to roll with the ups and downs. As with any training, consistency is key. It takes nine months for the body to grow a human, so be kind, respect your body and allow your body the time it deserves to recover, especially during what's dubbed as the fourth trimester, which is the first three months after a baby's arrival.
- 3. Stay safe** – being pregnant puts an increased spotlight on safety; after all, there's more than just yourself to consider with a baby on board. I worked well within my limitations of myself and the environment; during the later stages of my pregnancy, I switched to using a wider and more stable board. The key thing to remember is 'don't bump the bump'. As always, I carried a whistle, a fully charged phone with a tracker in a waterproof pouch and let my fiancé know my route with a live tracker and how long I'd expect to be out. I'd dress appropriate to the weather, only venture out if the river conditions and weather were within my capabilities, and wear a personal flotation device (PFD) and quick-release waist leash.
- 4. Mix it up** – this isn't so much to the adage of 'do the same thing and get the same results' but more of a case of taking the pressure off the situation and trying something different. Postnatally I did loads of walking, got into doing CARiFiT baby wearing workouts and got back on my bike. I also started to retrain as a PT, so I spent lots of time studying. A change is as good as a break.
- 5. Desire to inspire** – I believe that if I can be happy and healthy, I will be a better mummy to my girls, a better fiancé to my partner and hopefully an inspiration to others – not only parents but anyone looking to improve their fitness after a period of absence or injury.
- 6. Embrace the change** – with two little people to look after, life is a little chaotic but embrace the chaos and go with the flow if it all goes pear-shaped. The ability to accept and adapt will help you ride the wave of the unknown. This has been and continues to be the most challenging aspect of becoming a parent.
- 7. Reframe your expectations** – try to relax and remove your expectations, as these can be counterproductive to success. Instead, recognise the challenge and appreciate its significance; this way, you can celebrate the small wins specific to you and the situation. And accept that pregnancy and rehab, for that matter, is a progressive journey that ebbs and flows, both prenatally and postnatally.
- 8. Team effort** – and what I consider the most important point, without the love, support and encouragement of first and foremost my fiancé and secondly my paddling friends, getting back on my board would be extremely challenging, in fact, close to impossible. Surround yourself with people who believe in what you do and respect their effort, input and motivation.







**BIO**  
**Alexandra is a paddleboard performance coach at 'Up Your SUP' and is passionate about supporting SUPers to reach their paddling potential by increasing their fitness, skills and knowledge. She is currently training as a PT and strength and conditioning coach, specialising in pre and postnatal exercise. Alex has been paddleboard racing since 2018 and brings a unique perspective to training from her background as a road cyclist, triathlete and rower.**



it's easier to break away and invest in more lengthy training sessions to build my endurance. I've also treated races such as 'The Paddle Skedaddle' and the 'The Norfolk Broads Ultra' two-day event as long training sessions - as this removed the self-imposed pressure to perform and, in turn, enabled me to embrace the experience.

**The long game**

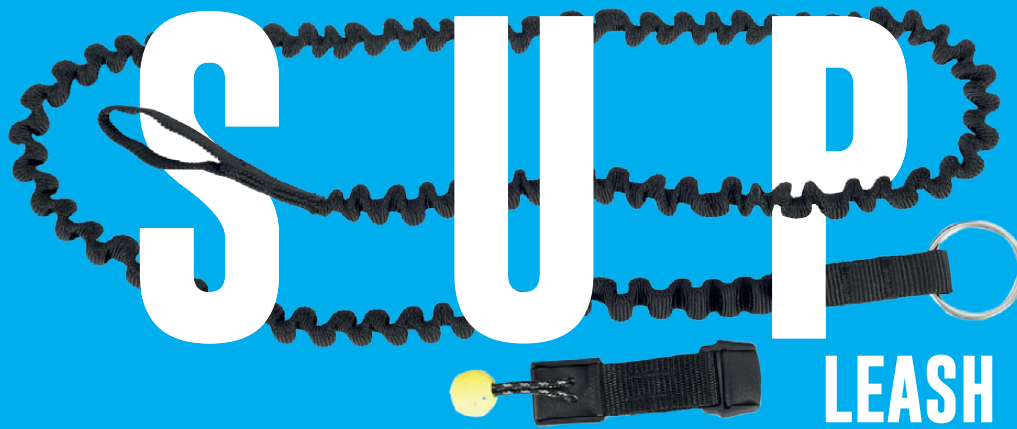
I've experienced long periods of rehab, which helped me mentally with my pregnancy journey. Instead of feeling limited, I pivoted my thoughts to take advantage of new opportunities, which is how I got into SUPing in the first place.

Pregnancy is very similar to rehab in that if you have a passion and focus, it can help you maintain a positive mindset and help you return to activity after that. Looking beyond the pregnancy, it's essential to consider what you want to do once the baby has arrived; after all, happy Mum, happy baby.

Becoming a parent hasn't stopped me from training and racing; it's given me more focus and drive to push that little bit harder. My thoughts around my identity becoming diluted on becoming a parent were unfounded, but it's an absolute that parenting comes first and paddling second.







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# Paddling in ROUGH WATER

**Words:** Scott Warren

**Pics:** P3T Photography

For many paddlers, flatwater is home. The smooth, tranquil waters of inland lakes, sheltered estuaries and rivers may occasionally experience wind chop but rarely become what we can call rough water. Through this article, I hope to give inland and coastal paddlers some insight into paddling when things get rougher so you can extend your window of getting out and do more than just chasing the feeling of survival.

## So what is rough water?



Firstly let's define rough water. Water experiencing several influences at once, perhaps creating a chaotic look and feel through a combination of wind, tide and swell. Rough water will challenge you, but with skill and time can be harnessed, and with so much energy within the water, you can take advantage of it.

### A note on safety

Whilst this article will hopefully open up another opportunity for you to paddle, build your skills and challenge your perceptions of what's possible, understand your limits, and ensure you have the proper equipment for the environment you're paddling in. Arrange a session with a coach to take you out for the first time, and always paddle in a group whilst you get comfortable in rough water. Remember – if in doubt, don't go out!

## Taking your time

Time is one of the biggest differences between someone comfortable in rough water and those new to it. Or, more precisely, the ability to process more information within a timeframe. An experienced rough water paddler will look at the bigger picture and the detail, giving them a greater understanding of the conditions and how to handle them. In some ways, it's a sixth sense they have.

So how do you get there? Give yourself time. When you first get to your paddling location, take at least 10 minutes to watch what's going on. Try to spot patterns in the water, understand the direction of the wind, swell and tidal movement and use apps such as Windy, Paddle Logger and Magicseaweed to check the conditions against what you see. Over time you will see shapes in the water and patterns, and then suddenly, you will start to notice areas that would be easier or more challenging.









## The Static Brace



### The Static Brace

Based on a kayaking or canoe high brace, the static stroke is a way to offset your balance and centre of gravity by placing your paddle out to the side so you look like a tripod. This position will allow you to pull against the paddle to help stabilise the board and is a great way to brace over passing waves. The key here is to keep your top arm high and use your bottom hand to apply power when needed.

### The Dynamic Brace

As the name suggests, this brace is performed under movement, often during the recovery phase of your stroke. As you recover, the paddle blade remains low to the surface and often skims to provide a connection with the water. A little pressure with the lower hand will offer added stability and allow you to let the board move around whilst you stay upright. This is a great choice when paddling across the chop or waves or going through strong tidal movements (main photo on previous page).

With practice, you can easily switch between dynamics and static braces; in some cases, combining both will keep you up and dry.

### The Brace Stroke

Without a doubt, the number one tool in your arsenal is the Brace Stroke. This stroke will save you time and time when out in rough water and is something you should practise until it becomes second nature. You can use two brace strokes, the Static and Dynamics strokes.

### Stances

Being comfortable with moving your feet and paddling in different stances will allow you to maximise the conditions by keeping your board in trim. I've covered the exact details on footwork and stances in previous articles, so head over to the SUP Mag UK or Haywood Sports websites to check these out.

Simon Nash uses a 'Ready' stance to stay balanced in choppy conditions



To cover stances for building your rough water skills, you should practise using the Split, Ready and Open stances and use them in different locations on the board. These will help you handle the chop, paddling through swell or catching bumps. Over time intuition will help you react or even preempt what's about to happen and which stance to use.

### Staying upright

One of the biggest misconceptions I see when paddlers take on rough water for the first time is thinking they must stay low to stay balanced. Whilst it's true that a low, wide base offers you lots of static stability, rough water is very dynamic and so a different approach is needed. On rough water, staying upright will work better as it allows your hips and legs to stay loose and react to the board's movements on an ever-changing water surface. The key here is to think about having your hips underneath you and keeping your legs loose. At first, you will try and fight the conditions, but it's



amazing what you can deal with by letting go and going with it.

As for paddling, the fundamentals work the same, so don't try to do something different. Trust your instincts and paddle normally but in a more upright stance. If you watch a good open water paddler, you will see they look effortless and going with it is key to that.

### Knowing when to go low

Whilst staying upright will keep you balanced when paddling in rough water, there are times when getting low will be needed. In rough water, staying loose will often work best, so going low should also be a dynamic movement, not just bending and locking your legs in a squat position. You will react naturally to bumps or when you need to stall the board, and your legs will change direction and position as needed. Trust your instincts again and combine going low with a brace stroke to help your stability.

### Stalling the board

You will often need to slow the board down in rough water, especially if you're approaching the shore or a bigger wave comes through. In these situations moving towards the tail and putting pressure on your back foot will stall the board and stop your forward momentum. Getting into a low crouch position at the end of the stall will allow you to regain your balance, transition back to a standing position, and move forward on your board. Again your paddle is a vital tool, so keep it engaged with the water through brace or paddling strokes.

### Timing your paddle strokes

Paddling in rough water will also mean being dynamic in timing your paddle strokes. A rhythmic cadence that you might use on flatwater will often put you in sync with what's happening on rough water. Instead, match your paddle strokes with what's happening around you, and you will find more stability and the ability to generate speed by using the conditions.

### Paddle in the troughs

A simple way to know when to time your paddle strokes are by paddling in the trough of waves and chop. This will allow you to generate speed for the upcoming wave and be in your recovery phase as the bump passes you. Especially when paddling through bumps, you will then be able to brace as you go over a wave and then be ready to paddle as you transition into the next trough.



Lauren Newman-Warren and Simon Nash look comfortable in choppy conditions



Sara Maxey dealt with the waves by getting low and getting ready to use a brace stroke.

P3T photography



Stalling the board through pressure on the back foot – in this case, to turn off a wave in control





“If you can, take the opportunity to try or hire different kit options, as it will help you understand what’s possible and what your limitations might be on your kit.”

### **Padding with the swell or downwind**

Similarly, if you’re going with the swell or bumps, you want to be paddling in the trough or just as the following wave catches you. You will feel the back of your board lifted slightly; this is the perfect time to apply power. With luck, you may even start to ride that bump. If it passes you, be ready to brace as it flows underneath you and avoid paddling uphill into the back of a wave. This will cause the nose to bury and put you in an unstable position.

### **Let the nose bury**

This technique is counterintuitive, and much like the other skills we have looked at, understanding when to let this happen will become instinctive over time. Most boards have lots of volume in the nose, either through a specific shape in hardboards or general width with iSUPs. As you’re paddling along, especially downwind, the nose might dip underwater with the first foot or so covered. If you’re trimming your board correctly, your board’s design will keep it stable, and in time, the nose will pop back out again. You just have to manage your position and allow it to happen.

### **Leaning back**

Before running to the back of your board, try leaning slightly back first, shifting your centre of gravity towards the board’s tail

while keeping you stable. The key here is to feel like you’re still putting pressure through your toes and your legs and knees are forwards whilst your upper body leans back through arching your back.

### **Small steps**

Smaller, quicker steps will give you better control if you need to move back as the wave gets steeper or you feel the board’s nose want to dive and stall your momentum. That is all about keeping your board in trim, so practice moving your feet quickly but in small steps in what I call remaining in your box. This means you can only stand in a small square around your body, so imagine standing in a small box where you cannot move your feet outside. If you want to move back or forward, you can only take small steps to keep yourself stable.

### **A note on kit choices**

There is a whole world out there of specially designed open water boards, fins and paddle choices to help you deal with rough conditions. That said, your day-to-day kit is more capable than you might think, with some skill and time to learn how they deal with different conditions. If you can, take the opportunity to try or hire different kit options, as it will help you understand what’s possible and what your limitations might be on your kit.



Al Hughes stays in his box and works in harmony with his board







## Haywood Sports

Here at Haywood Sports, we are always happy to help. We cover all areas of SUP through our coaching, and our home is at the coast in Kent. We are also always happy to answer any questions on paddling from locations to conditions, kit and safety. Please get in touch about anything by phone, email or social media.

Check out [www.haywoodsports.com](http://www.haywoodsports.com) for details on Scott's SUP coaching, events and training business, and you can follow him on Facebook and Instagram @SUPScotty.



## Leash choice

One of the most critical kit choices in ocean environments is the leash. Choosing the wrong leash can increase the risk factor more than having the wrong board. Whilst you're getting comfortable and exploring rough water for the first time, it is worth moving your leash to the tail of your board. If you fall off, your board will likely be out of the way. It would be best if you also considered a surf leash which again will offer an opportunity for the board to move well out the way. Once you are more comfortable, then your normal coil leash is a great option. Always check your leash's condition and replace it if damaged.

## Waist leashes and quick release belts

Sometimes, a waist leash might cause you more harm than good. If you consistently fall in whilst you build your skills, a waist leash can keep the board next to you as you fall, increasing the risk of injury. Also, if the board gets pulled by a wave, the leash can wrap around you easily. A calf or ankle attachment is likely a better choice in open water until you are confident in your abilities. In estuaries, a quick release belt is a must for protection against entrapment around objects, buoys and lines. However, if



you're paddling in salt water, you should use a Velcro strap belt or plastic clip attachment over a cheaper webbing and clamp alternative. In saltwater, webbing clamps are susceptible to coming loose easily due to the salt becoming a lubricant as it penetrates the webbing, causing it to slip through the plastic clamp. We recommend the ION SUP Core Safety Leash and Hip Belt for estuary and ocean paddling.

## A final word

**At first, paddling in rough water will feel extremely hard, offering one of the biggest challenges you face in your paddling. Remember that you will already use 90% of the techniques required for rough water paddling. The final 10% comes from applying the skills and knowledge above to manage what's happening in rough conditions. Take your time. Not only in your first session, but as you build your skills, slow everything down, and you will soon find yourself becoming at one with the rhythm of rough water. And finally, watch. You will learn much more by standing back and taking in the bigger picture before focusing on the smaller details. Learn to preempt what's about to happen by reading the conditions as they are in the moment before. Watch videos and read articles about wave formation, swell patterns and wind effects on water. You will soon see more detail and, more importantly, think about how you can use all this energy to have fun in rough water.**



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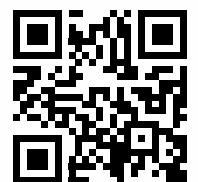
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Emma coaching



Photographer: Graham Woollven

# #ShePaddles INTERVIEWS

**Interview:** Emma Love

After receiving over 150 applications from around the country, British Canoeing, Canoe Wales and the Scottish Canoe Association were excited to announce the #ShePaddles Ambassadors for 2022. Sixteen inspirational women chosen to promote paddling and encourage more women and girls to get on the water. In this series of interviews, Emma Love chats with seven of the ambassadors about all things SUP!

[www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk](http://www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk)

@WotbikiniSUP





# Shilpa Rasaiah

Homecoming celebrations.  
Photo: @supcoach\_belle Belle Yates



Shilpa's paddling journey can only be described as inspirational! At nearly 60 years old, she decided to set herself the challenge of SUP'ing the Grand Union Canal. In this interview, Shilpa describes why she decided to paddle nearly 165 miles in fourteen days. And how this not only developed her confidence but also became about celebrating family, friendships and community.

**Photos:** Gehan Rasaiah, Belle Yates @supcoach\_belle, Dan @littlewolf, Gisela (Gee) Derrick and Simon Higginson

## @SUP.Loving.Shilpa

### How did you discover paddling?

My husband and I had just married and thought it'd be nice to try and find a hobby to do together. We enrolled on a short kayaking course at the Leicester Outdoor Pursuit Centre and then paddled when on holiday in places like Cornwall. In 2010 I joined Soar Boat Club and found I loved the longer river trips they organised, including paddling on the River Wye and the Thames.

### When and why did you decide to try paddleboarding?

The club had purchased two boards, but nobody used them. In late summer (2021), I decided I would give it a go and told everyone to clear out of my way. Nobody was allowed to make any ripples on the water! I remember thinking, 'I can do this if I persevere'. That first time, I was hunched over, my legs were like jelly, but I knew it felt good. The second time I got better, and by the third, I was happily paddling down the river.

### Do you think already being water confident helped with SUP?

Definitely! There are a lot of Indian ladies of my generation who were not brought up near the water. Consequently, they have either not learnt to swim or are not confident in the water. In those days, it was not part of our upbringing or our culture, plus we lacked access. For example, growing up, I lived in the inner city. I didn't have access to transport, and there were no opportunities then to do outdoor activities. Girls were implicitly expected to do 'housy' things. I have since realised that I am born to be outside! I have missed out, and I now have a lot of catching up to do!

Leicester. Photo: Simon Higginson



SUP the Grand Union – finished at Trent Lock with the team.  
Photo: Gehan Rasaiah



## Huge congratulations on completing paddling the Grand Union Canal!

Thank you. It was an amazing trip on what was once one of the key transport arteries in Britain. Nearly 165 miles in two weeks! I would have completed it sooner, but my boat club wanted me to arrive on the Friday so we could all celebrate together, which was lovely.

## What was the inspiration behind this decision to complete this trip?

The Grand Union has been on my doorstep wherever I have lived, and I thought it would be lovely to get to know the whole of it. I planned to use this trip to raise awareness of the amount of litter around and in this canal. But it evolved into a very different story. I thought I would be 60 years old next year; I am a ShePaddles Ambassador and want to do something amazing once in my life! This journey developed into my building confidence. It became about celebrating friendships and community. It has inspired more women to paddle, including those from the Asian community.

## Did you have a support team?

I had a great support team. Four women I met initially via social media and got to know over the six months of my training. And Dan from my club. We all had this fantastic send-off from the Pirate Castle on the Regents Canal, Camden. They then took turns, and I had one person paddling with me each day. On the days when they could not join me, my husband or my daughter stepped in. A few days, I asked to be left to paddle alone because I just needed to breathe and take it all in.

## Can you describe the route you took?

After leaving the Regent Canal, Camden, we joined the Grand Union Canal near Paddington Basin and paddled through London and near Heathrow Airport. We then turned right and headed north, past Uxbridge, over the Chilton hills, under the M25, passed Milton Keynes and up to Stoke Bruerne (Northamptonshire). We continued past Northampton, Watford Gap, Foxton and then to my boat club in Normanton On Soar (Leicestershire). The final stretch was through Leicester and finished at Trent Lock, Nottinghamshire. This is where the Old Grand Union Canal originally first started and merged with the River Trent.



Taking a break after a long portage Photo: Simon Higginson

Photo: Dan @littlewolf



2021 beginner days

Photo: Gisela (Gee) Derrick



## How many miles did you paddle each day?

Originally when I was planning this trip, I decided on the miles I would do each day. But in reality, we had to base it on where my accommodation was for the night and how many portages I had to do that day. So, it did vary, with the most being 16 miles and the least, eight miles. I think we had about 22 locks to portage around on the day we did eight miles.

## What training did you have to do to prepare for this?

My fitness level was admittedly not great. I am just an ordinary woman who doesn't do much, and suddenly I had just six months to train! I soon attended the gym (almost) daily, focusing on my core, arms and legs. I ate healthier and increased my protein. And slowly increased the total distances I could paddle from 5 miles to 12 miles.

## You must have experienced so many emotions along the way.

So many but a high point was with my mum (who lives in Leicester). She had never seen me paddleboarding, so I arranged to stop and meet her en route. My husband went and fetched my mum and neighbours! They were all excited. My

mum even brought these sweet treats called Penda, which we give on special occasions. It was touching and just such a lovely moment.

Shilpa would like to thank Gehan Rasaiah, Belle Yates, Deborah Vogwell, Daniel Lloyd, Niki Truebridge, Carys Owen, Richard & Hillary Whitby, Shane Morgan, Sabrina Rasaiah, Andy Oughton, Dave Morris, Mikk Bradley, Serla Dodhia, Anju & Arvind Shah, Juliet Fitz Patrick, Monika Higgins, the team at Pirate Castle and the fantastic Soar Boating Club.

“I am a ShePaddles Ambassador and want to do something amazing once in my life! This journey developed into my building confidence.”





Nearly there – SUP the Grand Union.  
Photo: Gehan Rasaiah



SUP the Grand Union launch.  
Photo: Gehan Rasaiah



SUP nic time – after back injury.  
Photo: Gehan Rasaiah



My mum meeting us for lunch on route via Leicester.  
Photo: Simon Higginson



# Gemma Palmer-Dighton

From her first SUP taster session in 2015 to becoming an approachable champion for women and a voice for the global ethnic minority on the water. I caught up with Gemma to discuss her paddling journey and the high points over the past year.

**Photos:** Nick Dighton unless stated.



## Follow my SUP journey @GetGemma

### What sparked your interest in paddleboarding?

First, anyone who knows me knows I love to try new things and develop new skills. So in 2015, when my local district council advertised SUP as one of the healthy lifestyle taster sessions with the help of Google, I found out more and was intrigued. Not one to miss a great opportunity, I signed up then and there for a paddleboarding and kayaking session with the Grafham Water Centre, which is dedicated to watersports. I enjoyed both experiences and went away particularly excited about SUP.

**Photo:** Claire Barber



### What was the decider for you to switch from competing in triathlons to focusing on paddleboarding and, in particular, the race scene?

I've struggled with a reoccurring ankle injury and had to sit out running. I was missing getting out through the seasons to explore my local neighbourhood, nature reserves, reservoir trails and woodlands. I knew I had to develop a creative way to train which would support my return to running. Having got my first iSUP the day before the first lockdown in 2021, I found that paddleboarding offered me everything I needed, including health, fitness, the opportunity to master a skill and look after my well-being. SUP has been an unexpected joy, and I have been able to transfer my learnings from competing in multi-sport events to SUP racing. Why compete? It is about pushing my comfort zones, exploring how that feels and seeing where I can improve. SUP racing is where I can compete not only with the clock and with other competitors but with myself. I thrive on this and love it!



## Which race did you first compete in?

My first competitive race was The Paddle Skedaddle in May 2021, a 26km race run by Norfolk Outdoor Adventures. I was thrilled to complete the race and finished 5/15 (women) and 42/58 (overall). Especially as I took a dunk on the Broads. This race takes place on the Norfolk Broads, an environment that should not be underestimated. Paddling on this type of water can be demanding because you are racing in exposed sections of rivers and broads, changing water flows and wind. You're amongst other leisure users, including pleasure cruisers and sailboats tacking cross river. As racers, we were exposed to the elements, whether it was the wind, the rain or the heat. And, having competed several times in this particular

environment, I have had all those experiences on the same day! Taking part in The Paddle Skedaddle will always hold a special place in my heart as my first race. It made me decide that I wanted to compete and leisurely paddle. The next natural step for me was to invest in a 14ft hardboard so that I could train to paddle further for longer, more efficiently and faster).

## And, have there been other races that have been notable for you?

In 2021, as well as The Paddle Skedaddle, I took part in the East Anglia SUP Initiative (8km) on Hickling Broad, which is when I first met the welcoming race community. Since the racing bug hit me, I planned that in 2022 I'd give myself a chance to experience as many

different types of races in distance, disciplines, series and locations. I've paddled Medway River Raid, Loch Awesome, Paddle Skedaddle, Battle of the Thames, the Norfolk Broads Ultra and finally, a SUP Bike Run, which I like to call a SUPathlon. Next year I'll focus on a few key races in the GBSUP calendar and those that I couldn't fit into my diary this year, including The National Championships, Trent100, and the Great Glen Challenge. For me, Paddle Skedaddle is my favourite race and distance, but my biggest achievement was the Norfolk Broads Ultra which is 72km paddled over two days. What made this race so notable was my overcoming both the distance and the weather conditions resulting in my ranking third out of the eleven women competitors!



Local fete promoting SUP awareness



NBU PaddledItMatters met great friends



Emy, another ambassador and I catch up at Loch Awe



Photo: Bob Smith





Photo: Claire Barber



## What advice would you give to those wanting to try SUP racing?

I think what can hold people back from trying racing is the question, can I physically do it? My answer is yes! But you must do it your way; it is your journey. For longer races, of course, physically, you have to give yourself time to plan, prepare and understand how your body responds in the weeks and days leading up to the race and on the day. I also suggest seeking the advice and input of an experienced instructor initially and then a SUP race coach. There aren't many coaches and SUP racers inland in Cambridgeshire, where I mainly paddle on rivers. Because I am self-taught, I benefited from race clinics but mainly from one-to-one video analysis with Martin Rendle, owner of Norfolk Outdoor Adventures, aka NOA. Having his feedback about my paddle stroke was

an absolute game-changer. The result was a much-improved paddle stroke, instantly taking minutes off 5k time trial times! But it is not just the physical but also the psychological that needs to be trained. I believe that racing is a case of mind over body. A huge part of the psychology is not comparing yourself to others unless it's positive, which I realise is difficult. It is instead about focusing on what you can personally achieve in the environment you are competing in because, in an instant, anything can change on the water. You need to be resilient enough to pivot.

## What have been the high points over the last year with your racing and in your role as a ShePaddles Ambassador?

So many high points! Mainly contributing through being a visible and approachable champion for women and a voice for the global ethnic minority on

the water. From meeting and getting to know the fantastic people on the water, the racing community here in the UK and paddlers in the USA, to becoming an ambassador for Turtle Bay Paddlesports & Panda Board Sports and supporting British Canoeing with the promotion of the newly released SUP Safer course. I'm actively looking at ways to inspire and support, starting locally with my paddlers in SUP Huntingdon, a Facebook community to take to the water and achieve their goals. To do this, I'm qualifying as a British Canoeing Paddlesports Leader and starting my SUP race coach course qualifications. People often stop me with questions about the sport and my equipment; there's a real appetite to give it a go. But, I have to admit, the one that gave me a real buzz was receiving a message from SUP World Rankings with the news that I'd made it onto the long distance list. Not only that, I was midway, ranking 122 out of 280! I remember thinking, this is amazing! To receive this kudos is like seeing your name in lights.

Thanks and acknowledgements to my husband, Nick, family and friends who support me with my paddle adventures. SUP Huntingdon and OG's; Lucy Small from SUPaholic; Adrian Warren, Phil Jobling & Stephen Humphrey's. Graeme Williams at Turtle Bay Paddlesports for the opportunity to join the family as an ambassador. Martin Rendall at Norfolk Outdoors Adventure and the welcoming NOA race team. Sam Rutt at Barefoot Ocean Athlete and the community, Grant Barlett especially for his encouragement to get into racing and Anna Nadolna at SUPer Whale for putting on epic SUP clinics with paddler aficionados like Grant Barlett and Blue Ewer.

## Meeting like-minded inspirational people at shows with Sabrina Pace-Humphreys





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Start of distance race/Poland



Anni Ridsdill Smith in Poland

# SUPJUNKIE REPORTS

# GBVS



**Photos:** SUPJunkie unless stated

The last couple of weeks have seen some great paddling from our UK paddlers who have travelled to Denmark, Poland and the UK with some of the biggest International events happening at the end of our season.

Let's focus on Poland and London as we travelled and got stuck in to both independently and self-funded as always. From the beginning, we have found the best way is just to pitch up and get stuck in as it's more about building up relationships with paddlers and organisers and holding firm on the front line!

## POLAND

Team selection for events this year has been frustrating for those volunteers and paddlers alike. Still, four paddlers were selected by British Canoeing to attend the ICF SUP World Championships in Gdynia, Poland. Sonya Brotherton, Felicity Hurst, Emily Evans and Holly Pye were the 'team within a team' with Marie Buchanan, Sarah Perkins, Blue Ewer, Will Keetley, Verity Thomas, Anni Ridsdill Smith, Ben Moreham, Steve Lynn, Molly McKibben and Iain McCarthy also attending. This event is incredibly inclusive with junior, open, 40+ and 50+ classes and over 500 entrants.

Conditions were mixed on the coast, whipping wind for the sprints in the marina, insanely challenging and big conditions on the ocean for the distance and wind and chop for the tech. It was certainly exciting to watch the athletes trying to contend, but hey, the Brits are used to conditions like this and some embrace it. Some of our best paddlers live on the coast, which stood them in good stead for the event.

The sprints were so exciting, with heat after heat and finals A, B and C for some classes. The course was narrow with uneven lanes, and with the wind, it was tricky! Our paddlers are some of the best in the world now, and they put up a good show, with Blue and Emily coming in ninth (Open), Sarah sixth (50+), Marie sixth (40+) and Holly, Will and Molly all getting through to the finals. Lots to celebrate, but the week was only going to get better.



Sarah Perkins in Poland. Photo: Planet Canoe



Felicity Hurst in Poland





Ben Moreham in Poland

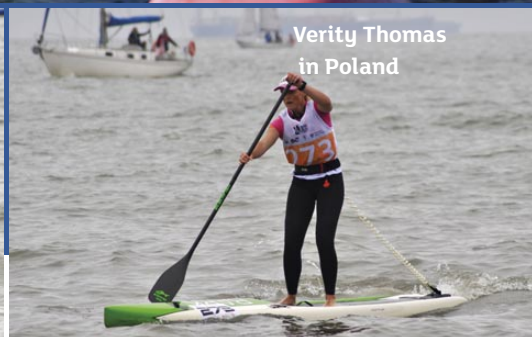
# THE WORLD



Emily Evans in Poland



Sonya Brotherton in Poland



Verity Thomas in Poland





Holly Pye - APP London



Blue Ewer in Poland

FB: @supjunkie.uk – IG: supjunkie.UK

The distance was delayed on the day due to the conditions, but finally, it was called. Many decided not to go out, and many did not finish, but again, we had some incredible results from the team. Paddling through the shore break and straight out 2km with a huge swell and washing machine conditions was not for the faint-hearted. The results could not have been more exciting with a GOLD for Marie, SILVER for Sarah and top 20 finishes for our other paddlers. Big up to young Molly McKibben, who was 13th in the juniors. For the ladies in the team who got on the water, but especially Holly, who finished and came 13th, it meant a third-place podium in the Team Distance. Even if you have a DNF, just getting on the water means points for the team – happy days!

With over 100 heats in the Tech racing, a cheeky dip and sandbar at the start meant many faceplants in the heat of the moment. A 1km course with seven buoy turns, again won and lost with falls on the course and tight, tight racing in the last 10 metres in the water and sprint up the beach. Team members, families and supporters were there to cheer on the UK paddlers and again, we had a cracker. SILVER for Marie, BRONZE for Sarah, Holly thirteenth, Emily 15th, Will third in the B final, Molly 8th in the B and a superb second place for the women in the Team Tech!

We loved our first ICF event; super organised and friendly, and SO many paddlers from across the world to meet and chat about all things SUP racing.

### LONDON SUP OPEN

A completely different event due to a date and venue change and less than 500 paddlers. Two paddlers invited by the APP World Tour organisers to participate had to pull out at the last moment, which was incredibly sad for Sonya Brotherton and Emily Evans. Excellent representation, though, from Blue Ewer, Hector Jessel, Holly Pye and Molly McKibben.

The Sprints were held at Docklands Sailing & Watersports Centre on the Isle of Dogs, and with four buoys over a 300-metre course, it was more of a sprint tech race. A sitting start created more drama and stacked heats with the likes of Connor Baxter, Itzel Delgado, Arthur Arutkin, Daniel Hasulyo, April Zilg, Espe Barreras and younger guns Rai Taguchi, Christian Anderson, Shuri Araki, Juliette Duhaime and Caroline Kuntzel.

Lung-busting, fast and furious racing, with most paddlers completing at least three heats, and the nearer the finals got, the more intense the racing. This event has separate podiums for the sprints and distance, with overall champions crowned on combined scores – so much to play for.



Marie Buchanan in Poland





Molly McKibben in Poland







Will Keetley - APP London



Iain McCarthy - in Poland by Claire McKibben

# YouTube: Supjunkie paddleboarding

After many exciting heats and finals, with board and paddle clashes, falls, and a couple of race reviews, the winners were; Connor, Rai Taguchi, Tom Auber, Clement Colmas and Daniel Hasulyo and for the women; April Zilg, Espe Barreras, Caroline Kuntzel, Juliette Duhaime and Choi Ji Won. Blue finished a credible 13th, with Will and Hector advancing well in their heats.

## Distance race down the Thames

The start was narrow, with all the competitors going off at once, upstream for a kilometre, a sharp turn around a bridge stanchion and relatively flat waters for 4km or so. So those with flat water boards had the advantage then but not for long, with the rest of the course becoming like the sea with waves and wake causing a few spills. Four paddlers in the men's category led the pack. As they passed under the beautiful Tower Bridge, Clement Colmas took the title, closely followed by Arthur Arutkin, Connor Baxter, Daniel Hasulyo and Tom Abur.

Blue finished just outside the top ten in 11th, with Hector and Will enjoying and learning from the challenging conditions and experience.

The tables were turned for the ladies' race, with Espe taking the win, followed by April, Juliette, Holly and Choi – a fabulous fourth place for Holly Pye!

Directly after the distance race and as a mark of respect for the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, there was a ceremonial paddle out with the laying of flowers.

So overall, champions were crowned, with Connor and Espe gaining those honours – Holly did us proud with a fifth overall and Molly came seventh. Blue was fourteenth overall, Hector seventeenth and Will nineteenth – all learning so, so much from this international racing – congratulations to them all.

BIG shout outs to the other UK paddlers who came and got stuck into the Open class (open to all), with special mention to Bruce Ironsmith, who WON the sprints and Karen Greener, who came third in the distance.

Both events provided terrific opportunities for all our UK paddlers with some notable results from the likes of Marie, who is still winning medals all these years down the line. Sarah Perkins came of age quite literally to bring home two medals from Poland – congratulations to all the paddlers. However, I think the overriding feeling was the joy of being in a team or family of like-minded SUP racers – we applaud you all and very much look forward to watching you in 2023!

Sonya Brotherton and Steve Lynn in Poland



Hector Jessel - APP London







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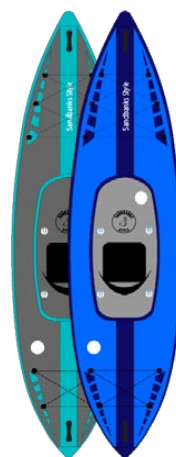
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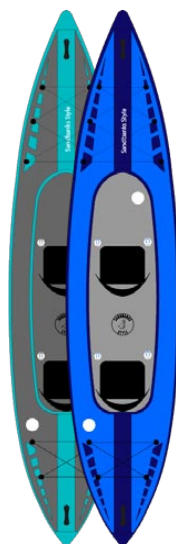
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# Going with the flow

## but paddling hard in the quiet bits

**Words & pics:** David Partridge

The summer of 2022 has been a great summer for SUP. Paddlers have discovered events and competitions and been drawn along by the defining currents of the SUP movement. David Partridge, a Shropshire-based SUP enthusiast, has created some of these currents and jumped on others. We asked him to track his SUP journey.

My paddling started when there was no wind to sail. I had canoed the Severn and Wye, windsurfed and started to mess about on boards. I was self-taught, enthusiastic, but hopeless. I loved it, and so did lots of others.

In 2018 I wrote a Development Plan for Chelmarsh Sailing Club. Membership was falling; sailing members were older, male and racing enthusiasts. We needed to do something to keep the club based on a fantastic reservoir near Bridgnorth Shropshire alive.

Fast forward to winter 2018, and I'm running, swimming and paddling in a fitness test, not quite what I had in mind for club development or me! I met Chris Kenyon (coach and instructor) and John McFadzean, a fellow course member on the ASI Instructor course. The SUP world is all about the fantastic people drawn together in the flow – Serendipity in every sense of the word.









## Fantastic framework

Chris completely disassembled my paddling (it's still awful, but at least I know how to teach properly!). He provided a fantastic framework to develop standard operating procedures, safety and risk registers and a proposal to take to our landlords. My fellow paddlers provided great inspiration and helped explore how we could build a great club.

2019 Chelmarsh SUP was born with permissions, lottery grants for equipment, SUP containers and lessons starting. Linda Harrison trained as an instructor and introduced SUP Yoga. The timing was perfect; in the first year, we delivered nearly 200 courses and gained 50 members. The sailing club would survive, but more importantly, we had more local, younger people and women discovering a love for the water and the club.

Social media was our only advertisement, and people sharing their experiences increased demand. Safety is always a key driver. The club is on flat water with excellent facilities, including hot showers and a bar, but sailors were nervous about risks and conflict. The answer was simple rules, mandatory PFD, leash, buddy paddling and a simple closed Facebook group system to log paddler's use.

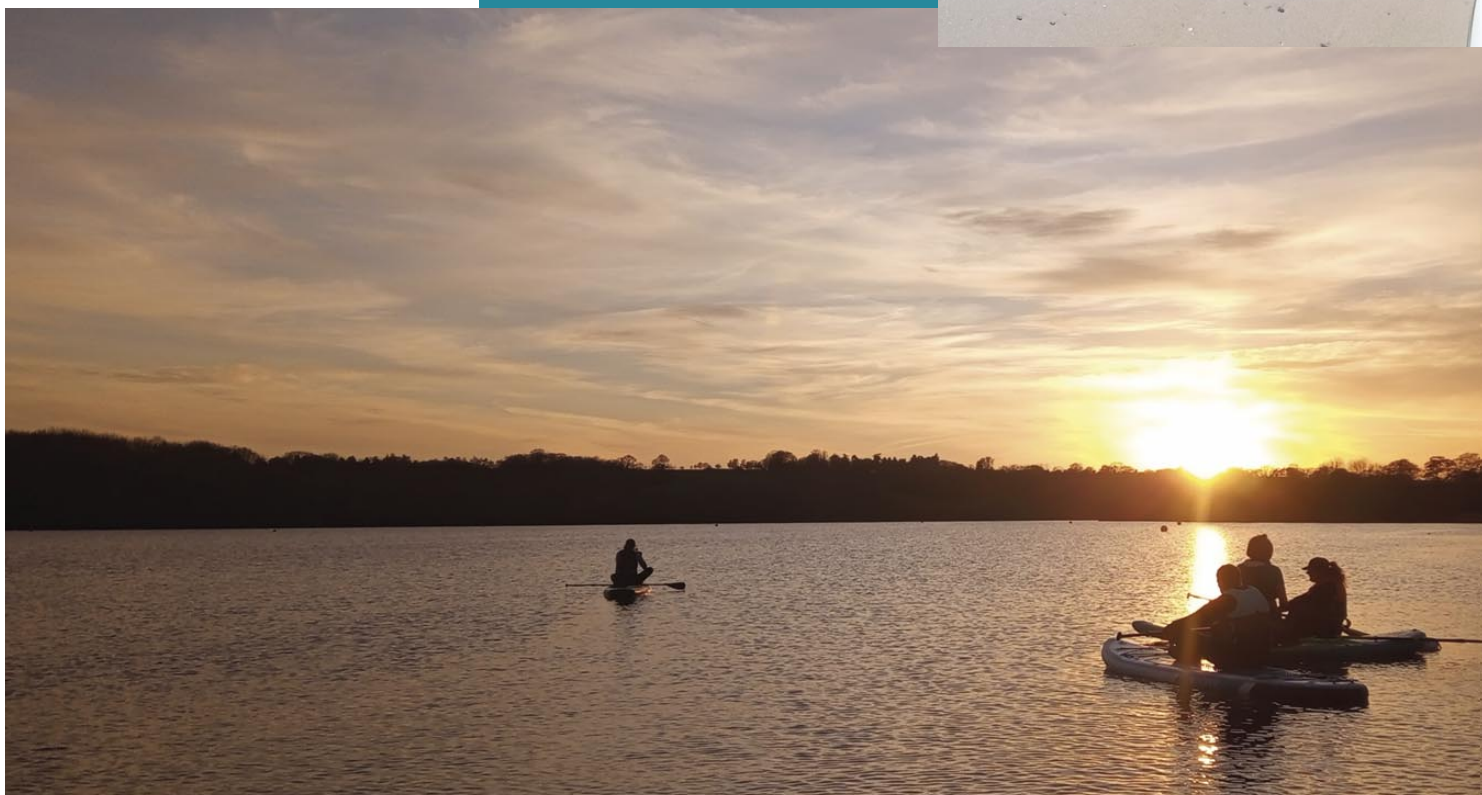
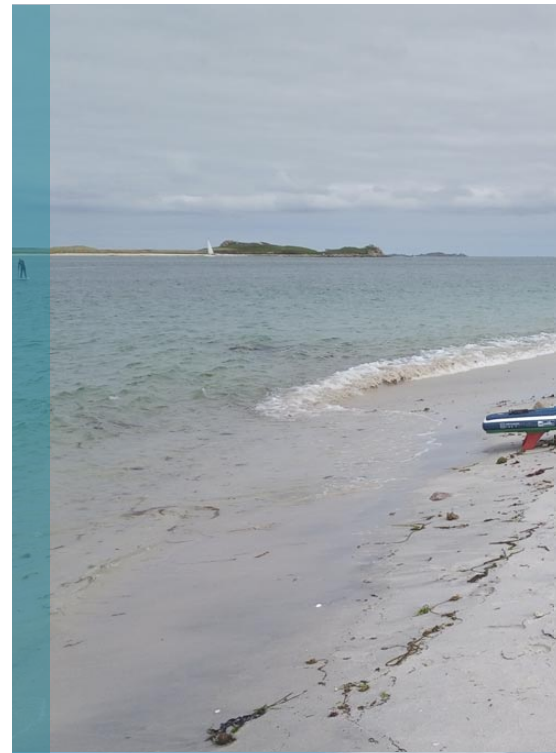
## Expansion and diversification

The sailors embraced paddle boarding. Chelmarsh was nominated twice in a row as the RYA club of the year based on its

expansion and diversification. We also developed open water swimming with the SUP club providing rescue support.

One of my greatest pleasures was creating Chelmarsh SUPFest showcasing the club bringing in top WSA coach Ben Julian and inviting speakers including John McFadzean, Caz Dawson, Sarah Blues (plus size paddler), Clare Rutz Rutter and others. The event developed SUP polo and consolidated the great volunteer atmosphere as people cooked up great meals or ran clinics or talks.

Chelmarsh SUP club has continued to grow as an entire volunteer-led and managed club. I have delivered more than 600 lessons and still get enormous pleasure in seeing people Walk on Water for the first time. As membership hit 170 and with 12 new Instructors in place and my time as Commodore finishing, it was time for me to stop writing 'What'SUP' each week, stop teaching every weekend, and start enjoying my year of being a SUP veteran.







we chatted online and looked at each other's training records on the Trent pages, but it was weird setting out onto the loch with people I had never met or paddled with! What a fantastic team though; Steve Humphrey, Gemma Palmer Deighton and Lucy Small. Words can't describe the fantastic team dynamics involved. It's not a race, but I was delighted as we came in fourth place. We were well-matched and stretched and still speaking to each other at the end.

### Personal ambition, looking for the flow

I celebrated my birthday in February by paddling the Basingstoke Canal, coinciding with a water sports show at Farnborough. I signed up for The Norfolk Broads Ultra and pencilled the Loch Awesome challenge. I met Emma Hepplethwaite and added the Great Glen. Scoped the bucket list: Scillies, paddling more Welsh estuaries and having a little more paddling time on local canals and rivers

The exposed Scilly Islands sit off the Cornish Coast with big tides and Atlantic swell. Good conditions and tide and wind planning allowed us to circumnavigate St Marys and paddle across to Tresco, Bryher and St Martins. The water was cold (12 degrees), and the Atlantic swell created fascinating (seasickness-inducing) conditions even on calm days, but we found many empty beaches.

Loch Awesome lived up to its name. I was honoured to be placed with Team Supaholic,

### Ultra events

The Norfolk Broads Ultra provided more brutal headwinds. Still, I loved the monotony of miles of reed and searching for wind shelter. I also enjoyed the solo challenge, a completely new experience for me. You get to know people quickly, chasing them down or being chased. Ultra events suit my paddling (not pretty, not super fast) and the mindfulness and mind games nature plays with you over seven hours on the water is very much a meditative experience.

The third formal challenge was the Trent 100. Not a race, but Will Worthington, James Sutherland and I wanted a respectable time. As the Chelmarsh Chimps finished second, we pushed on a little (James did ask if there were any checkpoints and is still waiting for a banana stop!). The Trent is a great challenge event with a legendary party. It was brilliant to see four Chelmarsh teams who had trained together over the year competing.



**Info:**  
<http://chelmarshsailing.org.uk/sup.html>

[www.facebook.com/ChelmarshSailingClub](http://www.facebook.com/ChelmarshSailingClub)

At the time of writing, the last 2022 challenge lies ahead, The Great Glen, the fourth big paddle of the year. I am post-COVID and far from fit, but we will see.

### Lessons

Go with the flow and meet some fantastic people.

Paddling is about mindset: challenges are achievable irrespective of age and, to a certain extent, ability. You need to train a little, work with your teams and your inner game. Most of all, harness your enthusiasm when the going gets challenging, paddle harder.

Volunteering is fantastic, and I have as much pleasure teaching someone to stand for the first time as I do from crossing a finishing line. Starting a SUP club has been a great privilege, and nothing could be better than a sundowner paddle with new and old members.

There are great opportunities everywhere. Training for the Trent or Broads has seen me paddle new stretches of canal in Wales and Shropshire that I never knew existed!

### Ahead?

I have only paddled on inflatable SUPs and feel slightly envious of hard boards.

Maybe with proper coaching to improve my stroke, at my age, with a podium place, and some respectable times, I will continue as I am.

I would love to explore Ireland, some of the inland waterways and Loughs, and the west coast.

Ultra Challenge overseas, maybe the 11 cities?

I am teaching more beginners. I am passionate about opening up SUP to all. I look forward to teaching more people (especially those less naturally inclined to give it a go) to walk on water.

Here's to what's been and what's coming.





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Behind the

# BRAND

with Indiana SUP & Danny  
McCullagh of Lyon Watersports

**Words:** SUPM

**Pics:** Indiana SUP

For this issue's Behind the Brand, we talk to Danny McCullagh from Lyon Watersports, who import and distribute Indiana SUP and foil equipment. New to the UK this year, the Swiss company have been turning heads with their range of SUP boards, paddles and accessories.

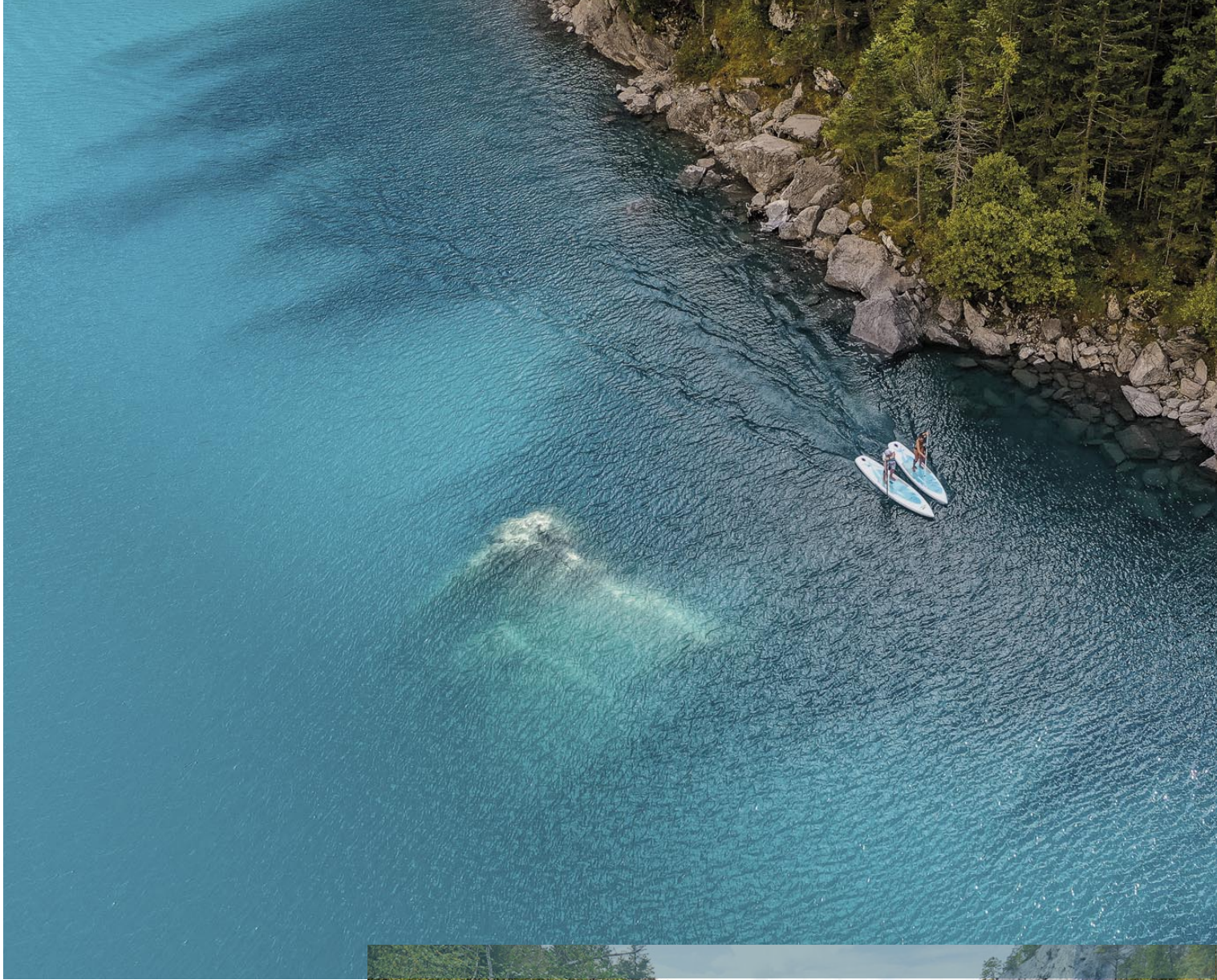
**Tell us a little of Lyon's history first. How did the company come about?**

Way back in 1965, Ben Lyon, aided by engineer brother Graham, started making caving ladders. After a caving trip to France and a meeting with Fernand Petzl, Lyon became the first overseas distributor of Petzl. The next move was to change our name to Lyon Equipment. Today, with an even wider scope to our activities, you may find yourself talking under the banner of Lyon Equipment Limited, to Outdoors, Cycle, Watersports, Work & Rescue, Training or the Petzl UK Agency – and after all this time we still make caving ladders! We will be celebrating 50 years of Lyon in 2023.









### **And what's your role at Lyon?**

Between the two of us, Alex (Mallalieu) and I represent the watersports side of the business. Alex is the point of contact for those in the south, and I'm the contact for the north.

### **How did working with Indiana come about?**

We met the guys from Indiana at The Paddlesport Show in Lyon 2021. We were hugely impressed, but I won't say more as I see I'm delving into the next question.

### **What makes Indiana SUP equipment stand out?**

When we met the guys from Indiana at the show, they exuded enthusiasm for the sport and had a commitment to good design. They ran us through a few of their SUP designs and talked us through the constructions. On the surface, their boards included some unique, well-thought-out features (split US fin boxes, smart bolt systems, fibreglass foot plates etc.). When we delved further into the SUP constructions (Woven pre-laminated double layer technology etc.), we were convinced Indiana was up to the premium standard Lyon looks for in all the brands they work with, and we went from there.







### **Which Indiana products had the most interest, and why?**

The Tourer SUP range has been very well received. Everyone I've shown a Tourer to is drawn in by the fibreglass footplate – it is such a clever addition to the board. The Feather boards are also a key piece in the range. There aren't many other boards with the same construction, weighing only 7kg.

### **What's the biggest draw to Indiana for new paddlers looking to purchase a SUP or paddle from you?**

The boards and paddles have been designed by paddlers who've taken the best construction technology and added some clever, well-thought-out design features. That, combined with a three-year warranty period and the support of a well-established UK distributor, means new and existing paddlers can be sure of quality, design, and support.

### **In terms of change, how's the sport moved on? Is it easier to sell SUP gear nowadays post-COVID madness?**

During the 'Covid madness', the already booming sport boomed even further. In many cases, demand for kit outstripped supply. Post-Covid madness, we see the paddlers committed to the sport being







pickier about the boards they choose. As with everything, those premium brands that were always committed to best practices, in this case, innovative designs and premium constructions, will continue to be popular.

### **Do you see as much growth for the sport and Indiana brand next year?**

Don't get me wrong, I've no crystal ball, but as I see it, I think we've come through the 'fad' stage of the sport and increases in the number of people participating are likely to be less dramatic. That said, I believe there is still more growth, particularly in the more niche parts of SUP. Over the next couple of seasons, I think the race scene will grow in popularity. We could see more multi-day expeditions/adventures undertaken and courses being offered. I think more specialist, advanced courses will be offered like down winding, SUP foiling and more. Regarding Indiana, in line with the above, I think we're likely to see an increase in sales in the products that up until now have been more niche, such as full carbon race boards and such up until now.

### **What's the plan for the rest of 2022 and 2023? Which areas will you focus on the most?**

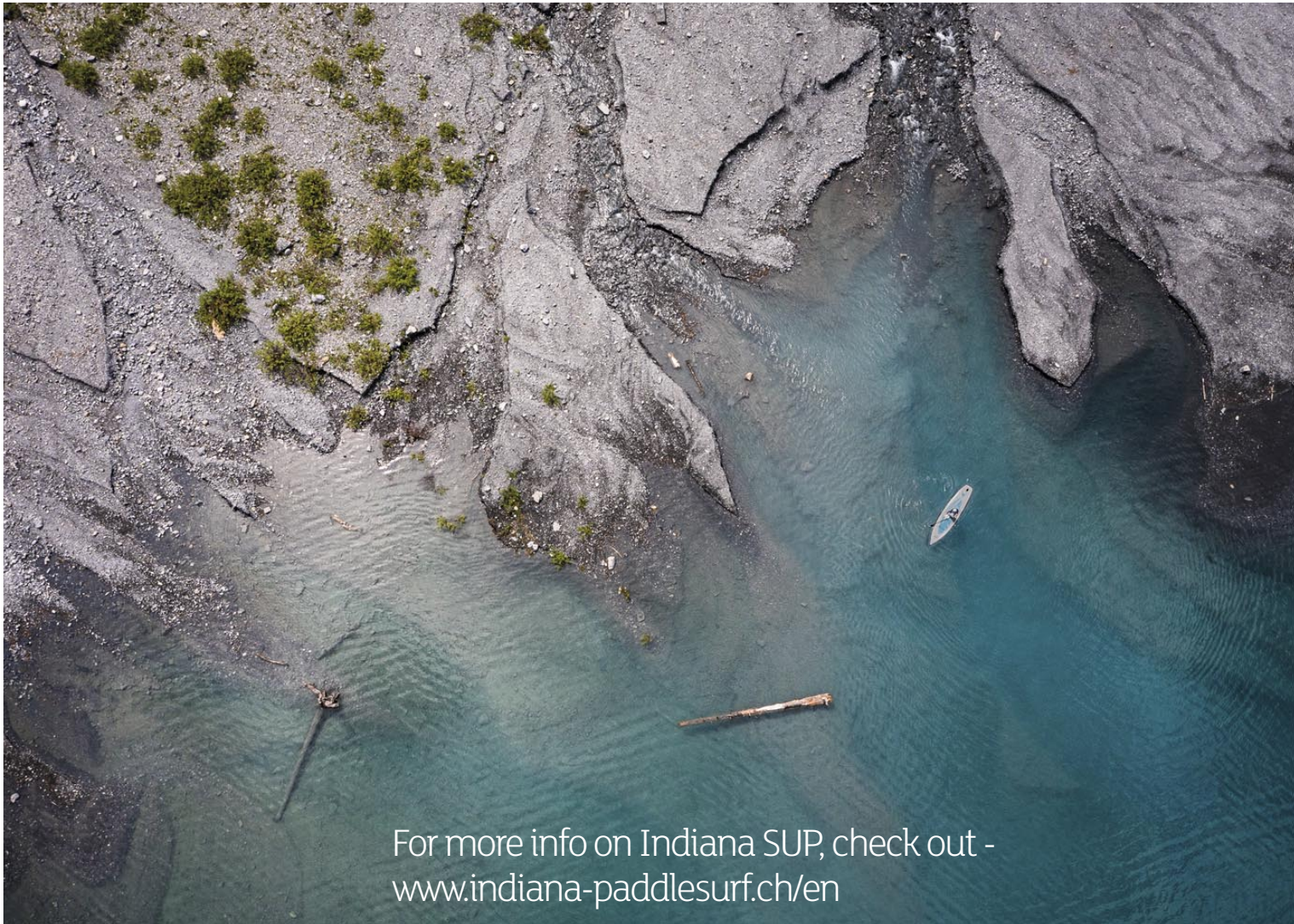
We're going to keep focusing on the products that we see as best fit within the UK market, while also exploring how we can diversify our range further to include the more specialist products from the Indiana range.

### **Got anything special in the pipeline for next season with Indiana?**

Nothing to share now but keep your eyes peeled!

### **Shouts and thanks?**

I've worked in the outdoor industry for some time. Generally, I've found others working in the industry to be friendly, welcoming, kind, and generous. So, thanks to the instructors, centres, shop owners, fellow distributors and everyone else that makes up the industry and the enthusiasts that keep us all employed!



For more info on Indiana SUP, check out - [www.indiana-paddlesurf.ch/en](http://www.indiana-paddlesurf.ch/en)



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# MIND

# the Channel

with Joe Cartwright, AKA  
'the\_paddling\_paramedic'



**Words:** Joe Cartwright

**Pics:** Will Chetwode

My name is Joe Cartwright, AKA 'the\_paddling\_paramedic'; I'm 47 years old and couldn't live much further away from the sea in Bedfordshire. I have worked for the Ambulance Service for over 21 years and slowly worked my way up to commander level.

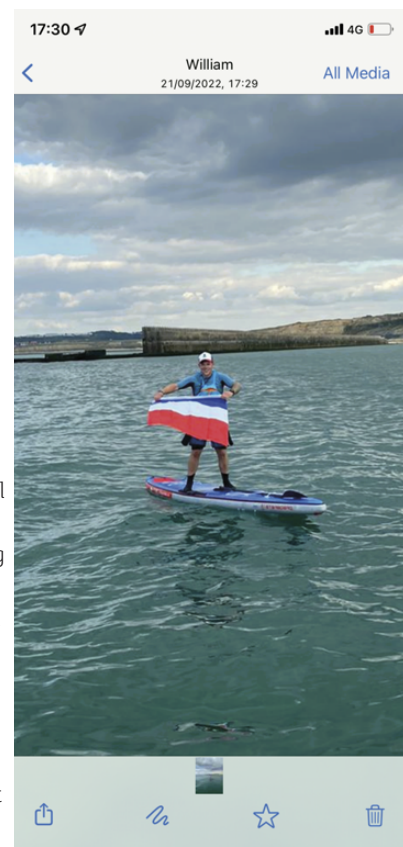
As you can imagine, my line of work is very different to most. I deal with people's emergencies daily, and I get to see the very best and worst of people.

I could be at the scene of a fatal road traffic collision one minute, a suicide after break, and delivering a baby before the end of shift. It's a rollercoaster of emotions and adrenaline spikes.

Over the years, suicides are the one job that has always adversely affected me, the brutality of some cases, and the sad stories behind many more. The first ever suicide I attended was back in 2001; we were called to a male hanging in the woods. I remember my heart beating out of my chest as we rushed to him with blues and twos blaring. I will never forget the one part of this incident was what I found in his abandoned van, a note and his dog. My heart melted.

Since then, sadly, I have attended hundreds of suicides of all ages. One of the stigmas around suicide is that people who end their life have mental health problems, which is so untrue; in some cases, absolutely yes, but not in all. I have attended young children that have been bullied, people in a small amount of debt, people who've had a picture shared that they sent someone in confidence, lonely people, and persons struggling with addiction.

As a health care professional, I can't find any evidence to say any of these true stories are classifications of mental health issues; they are just people that couldn't cope on that particular day.







  
hatha

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## PTSD and me

In 2020 after 21 years in the service, I was diagnosed with PTSD, and ironically, my diagnosis wasn't down to one of the thousand distressing scenes I had attended; it was down to a suicide of a colleague.

Our brains are incredible organs; they can process thoughts and memories and create disturbing images. My brain tied me up, threw me around and spat me out; that's how it felt. I started to develop images of this particular colleague wherever I went. I'd wake up, and he was next to me; he would be in shops with me, in the car. Everywhere I went, he was there.

Alcohol was the only thing that stopped the images, so no points for guessing what



happened next. My alcohol intake went up. The problem with alcohol is it makes you brave; I found the more I drank, the more irrational my thought process became. I started to convince myself that the only way I would stop having the images was to end my own life.

Looking back now, I was probably only days away from doing it. Just thinking about it now scares the hell out of me.

## A paddleboard experience day at Willen Lake

My family were becoming worried about me; I wasn't leaving the house, I wasn't talking to anyone, and they had lost their father/husband/ brother/ friend and son.

They decided to book me in for a paddleboard lesson at Willen Lake; it was something I had spoken about for years, and I kept putting it off until, one day, I caved in and went along. It was me and about ten kids, an instructor half my age and a rack of wet wetsuits.

After putting the wetsuit on the wrong way for the entertainment of everyone bar me, we walked out to the side of the lake. We were told to lie on the board, and the instructor slid us in one by one.

The second I touched the water, I started to smile; I felt free. We were shown how to stand up, and after many failed attempts, I was up. Like Bambi on ice, I was up and down, laughing alongside everyone in my group.

The session only lasted 30 mins, after I sat on the side of the lake having a coffee and started reflecting. It was the first time in years I hadn't thought about work, life stressors, incidents I had attended and the main one, the image of this particular person.

I had found something that cleared the demons out of my head and made me feel free and alive. I had found something, on looking back, that not only saved my life but also brought Joe back to the people I mentioned before. That night I went online and brought everything I needed to go paddleboarding. My first SUP was an iRocker, bright orange, something I have now passed down to my son.

## What next

In 2021 I must have paddled hundreds of miles leisurely, raising thousands for MIND and setting personal goals. In 2021 I decided I needed to spread the word about suicide prevention to stop others from being affected like I was. This is where I met the OLLIE Foundation (One Life Lost Is Enough); please check them out.

I decided I wanted to incorporate the sport that saved my life with a charity that means so much by doing something big!! This is where the English Channel crossing idea came alive.





## The mission

To Paddleboard from Dungeness on the southeast coast to Boulogne in France. Crossing the world's busiest shipping lanes, joined by 24 species of shark, a guy called Will from (Full Throttle in Rye Harbour), and a rib with the biggest engines I've ever seen.

I knew the iRocker wasn't up to the job, so I went for a Starboard 14ft Tourer; I wish I went for a solid board, but one day, maybe. My paddleboarding experience was all on still slow-moving water; I thought the sea would be the same; how wrong was I!

The sea is a beast not to be messed with, and my training included four crossings to the Isle of Wight from Calshot. Coastline paddling around Bournemouth, Brighton and Devon and many miles up and down the River Ouse.

In Bournemouth, I bumped into a familiar face of the SUP scene who was out running, Mr David Haze. My wife thinks I have a man crush on him but don't worry, David, I haven't. I am utterly inspired by you and grateful to be in touch. David and I have some exciting plans ahead, which is so cool.

## The crossing

The crossing was supposed to go on September 5th this year, but the weather stopped it, unfortunately. My next date was September 21st, 09:00, at Rye Harbour. I was taxied around to Dungeness, about a 15-minute spin in the boat. They plonked me on the water and told me to go.

I gave myself 10 hours to complete the 26 nautical miles; I was lucky, though; the sea was on my side, as was the weather. I

completed it in 5hr:45m. This was the hardest thing I have ever done, both physically and mentally it was tough, even in calmer waters. Along the route, I was met by sea lions guiding me through the world's busiest shipping lanes.

There were ships everywhere, and one container ship had 1200 containers on board, which was 400m in length. That beast travelled at 25 nautical miles per hour; I paddled at five.

The sea looked beautiful, with enormous jellyfish bobbing in the water and my reflection shining from the sun. It was sad to see the amount of pollution, too, though, birthday balloons, drink cups, crisp bags etc. The saddest thing I witnessed was four separate boats loaded with families trying to escape France to better their lives in England; I can see why so many don't make the crossing.

## A channel crosser SUP style

As we finished in Boulogne harbour, we enjoyed a pint in the first pub we found. We made it! I'm officially a channel crosser SUP style. More people have climbed Everest than crossed the channel, and I'm told I'm now one of a few that have done it on a SUP.

To conquer an adventure like this, you need good people around you; I could never mention everyone, but I would like to mention a few. The OLLIE Foundation, iMAB, Tesco, 3 Stooges campers, HATHA, Starboard UK, Cliff at EPIC Life and my safety team, Full Throttle Boat Charters. More importantly, though, are my loving family and friends.

Thank you.





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# Homegrown DESIGN

## with Tom Partington

**Interview:** Tez Plavenieks

**Pics:** Steve West, Tom Partington

Tom Partington is a designer and maker of all things watersports. He's been known to knock out a 14' race SUP, high-performance dinghy sailing products and, more recently, hydrofoils. Being a homegrown designer in a niche often occupied by larger, overseas brands, we were keen to find out more.

### **Tell us about your watersports background**

I started sailing when I was 15, having spent much of my childhood in and around boats. I have successfully sailed high-performance twin trapeze dinghy, winning National, European and World Titles in the International 14 class and European championships in the RS800 class.

### **How did you get into designing and making stuff?**

I studied Naval Architecture at University, and as a dissertation project, I designed a rudder-mounted hydrofoil for an International 14. After completing the project, I set about learning how to make composite parts to bring the theory to life. Safe to say, I have been building things ever since!

### **And when did foils and foiling come on your radar? What appealed?**

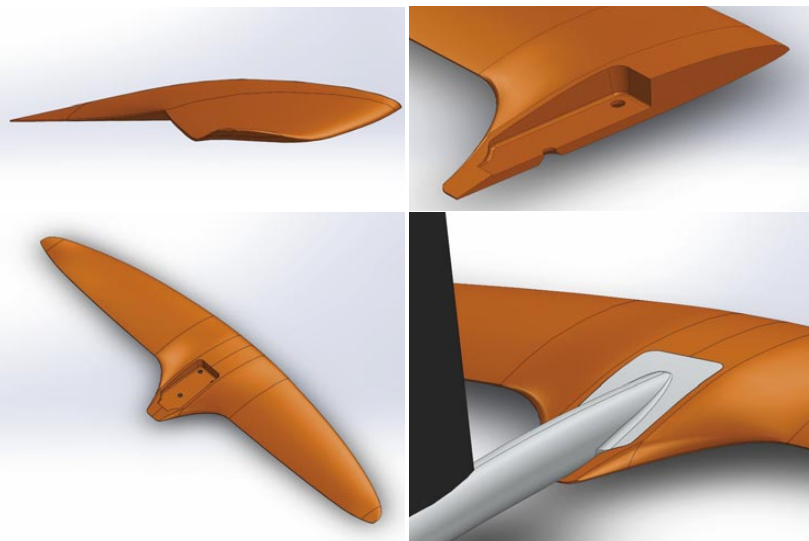
Foils have been on my radar since probably 2007/2008 through my experience in the International 14 class. I think the appeal for me was that for something that can potentially look very simple, it is an incredibly complex design process with many, many variables to consider.

### **How long did it take to get a handle on what makes a good foil?**

It is a very good question; I am still learning every time I go out on the water. So much of making a good foil is choosing the right aerofoil section for the chosen design specification. For example, an aerofoil section for a race kitefoil going 35knots would likely be very different to that for a first timers wing foil set-up.

The aerofoil section choice is very time-consuming; for the last wingfoil range I designed, I analysed over 50 commercially available aerofoils and designed 20 custom sections to get the correct performance characteristics.

I don't think it is that hard to make a good foil, but making a great one, is quite difficult. For example, designing a high aspect ratio, large span, and large area foil that is still playful and manoeuvrable is very tricky; likewise, designing the fastest possible race foil.











**How much time do you spend researching the market?**

More and more, actually. The developments around foiling, and more specifically, wing foiling, are coming thick and fast. All brands are trying to work on unique selling points to help them stand out from the crowd so that it can end up as more of a marketing war than a design one!

I like to see what is being released and understand why a particular brand has done what they have done.

I have an ever-growing database of what hydrofoils are coming to market and their key design parameters. This helps me see where the market is going regarding its target market.

**How long does it take from conceptualisation to the finished article?**

This can sometimes be how long is a piece of string! Taking a winging foil, for example, from initial thoughts to being on the water, testing could be as little as three weeks. Here is a little overview of the process.

Firstly I sit down a try to understand the problem through maths or computer



simulation. Once I am happy, theoretically, the problem is solved, I will start sketching the solution into a 3D design programme. Once the 3D design is finalised, I use specialist software to generate the cutting files for the CNC machine, machine the moulds, calculate how much carbon fibre material is

required, laminate the wing, and spend lots of time sanding, then hit the water!

**Where does the physical magic happen in bringing to life your designs?**

I'm fortunate to have built my workshop adjacent to my house. As part of the workshop, I built a CNC (computer





numerical controlled) router, which allows me to machine mould accurately to make composite parts. I have all the associated equipment to make high-quality carbon fibre products, including 3D printers. This year I have been lucky enough to make some cool stuff, from 14ft Race SUPs to carbon-flax cross country skis.

**What are the next steps in terms of bringing a product to market?**

Once the prototyping phase of the product has been completed and the design has been finalised, the designs are typically sent to the chosen production factory, where they produce high-quality aluminium or steel tooling moulds to produce some pre-production samples. This is the most exciting bit of the process as you finally see a production finished item. Typically, prototype builds are only finished to a functional level without paint, graphics, logos, etc.

The marketing material is generated through the studio and on the water photoshoots at this stage.

**Who does the testing of these designs to see how they perform?**

During the initial prototyping phase, I tend to do the testing, and then once I am happy with the concepts, I have a few local riders that I look to for some constructive feedback.

**Do you make other products? If so, what?**

Yes, I like to keep things varied!

I have produced various custom alpine skis over the past few years, which I tend to make on a word-of-mouth basis. They are built with modern composite materials, locally sourced wood and then finished with a wooden veneer, so they look very traditional.

On a day-to-day basis, I produce various parts for campervan conversions, predominantly VW Transporters.

**Tell us what it takes for someone to end up in your position.**

Honestly, I feel privileged that part of my job is designing and building foils, SUPs and other watersports equipment. I had spent ten years designing, building, breaking, rebuilding, and trying new ideas before getting an opportunity to get paid for what I do. I think you have to love the process and not be put off your failures because you will have them along the learning process.

**There are very few foil designers in the UK. Do you think that'll change?**

This is quite hard to say. Foiling is becoming more prominent in the watersports industry, but it is very capital-heavy to enter the market.

The cost of designing, prototyping and production tooling is high compared to designing and building a wingfoil board, making it harder for small companies to compete with the big players.

**How do you see the market evolving?**

This is a question many people are trying to work out. From a global perspective, we will see equipment being more developed explicitly for race, freestyle and surf disciplines.

I feel the inflatable wings are where the most development and improvements will be made over the coming couple of years. I feel that there are still a lot of efficiencies to be gained, hopefully meaning you can use smaller wings with less breeze allowing for longer sessions on the water.

**Got anything you're working on currently you can let us know about?**

Yes, I have a few exciting R&D projects running.

I am currently waiting for the delivery of some pre-production samples for a new 2023 wing foil board range, which I'm excited to get on the water.

We are nearing the finalisation of the 2023 foil offering for a well-known international brand, and lastly, we are producing foil moulds for a two-person foiling dinghy – which looks crazy.

**What are your plans for the rest of 2022 as far as work goes?**

Hopefully, get the time to spend on the water putting the 2023 pre-production gear through its paces in the Autumn storms.

I will start working on some racey wing foils to hopefully start doing some of the UK Slalom events next year.

**Any shouts and thanks or final thoughts?**

Thank you, SUPM, for letting me share my thoughts and experiences. It's great to be a part of this exciting foiling revolution we are going through. Also, thanks to Steve West (Mistral) for allowing me to put my experience to the test in the watersports arena.





# Gear shed

SUP Mag UK's test station. If you want your product reviewed and think it will be of interest to SUPers  
Email: tezwoz1@hotmail.co.uk

## Combination performance – O'Shea GTS HPx 12'6 x 32" x 310L

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

I've used O'Shea's GT 11'6 extensively in the passed. So it was with eager anticipation the the HPx constructed, Fusion Lite. 12'6 GTS version was inflated and readied for paddling. O'Shea state the GTS is a combination of race thoroughbred and destination iSUP. They also say that glide is improved with the HPx construction on glassy water. So with a glassy water forecast on the cards it was on with the testing.



### Price:

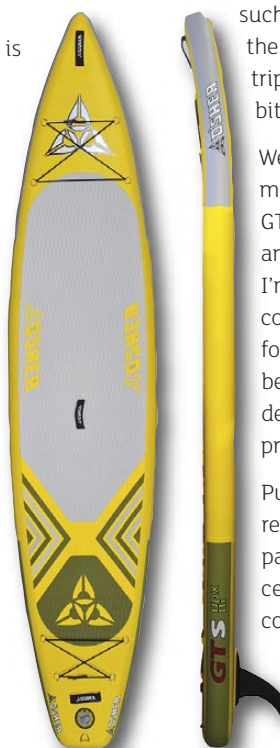
£899

### Info:

<https://osheasup.com/oshea-gts-hpx-inflatable-sup/>

As with all O'Shea iSUPs the manufacturing is tip top. Everything is just as it should be without a seam misaligned. Once inflated the GTS certainly feels feathery light. At 9kg it's a doddle to carry. This was most welcome as there was a little bit of walk to get to the put in - even with my helpers in tow!

Getting afloat the 12'6 feels lively. But the board's secondary stability is great and in no time paddlers will settle into the engaging ride. (You can see the stability in action with accompanying one footed pic). A few strokes and the GTS is up to speed. And vrooming across the flat I can confirm there's plenty of glide plus ease of tracking. It's simple to keep momentum going and not burn yourself out by smashing those paddle strokes. As



such, from a touring SUP point of view, the GTS would make a decent day tripping machine for those wanting a bit of a mellow journeying.

Weight carrying is great. I had both my kids clambering on and off the GTS during our touring SUP session and the board copes with this great. I'm therefore pretty confident you could load up a heap off essentials for a sojourn to your fave off the beaten track paddle boarding destination and not have any problems.

Putting the hammer down the GTS revs up with the best of 'em and paddlers can get a fair lick on. It's certainly a sled any budding racer could find their competitive feet with. For anyone looking to get into SUP racing the O'Shea GTS 12'6 would do a sterling job of starting you off.

### CONCLUSION

I love the O'Shea GT range of inflatable SUPs. The GTS 12'6 is another shining example of great performing iSUP that sits neatly in the line up. The weight saving HPx manufacturing is always going to be welcome. As is the on water performance which certainly does as the brand says by combining familiar qualities of both race and touring iSUP. Also, a big nod to the included manual triple action power pumps which makes inflation so much easier.





# Modern versatility – Indiana Family SUP 10'6 x 32" x 307L

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Indiana SUP's Family 10'6 iSUP pack is designed for a broad range of paddlers and to get them on the water whatever the conditions in as easy a manner as possible. Being described as 'Family' the board will take mum and dad to whatever stretch of water they choose whilst providing a platform for wee ones to have some fun on.



**Price:**

10'6: £750

11'6: £800

**Info:**

<https://shop.indianapaddlesurf.com/indiana-10-6-family-pack-blue.html>

Manufactured in pre-laminated double Dropstitch with a hard wearing PVC top layer the 10'6 is robust and durable. What did surprise me was its weight. I was sure it'd be on the heavier side. But nope! The board's weight is on the lighter side. Not the lightest but still very comfortable at 9kg to cart around.

Another interesting design trait is the included fin and its box. A very swept back, almost weed shedding race type fin is what's included. With the box being a split US box affair. Not sure why this board has that, although it's no bad thing and the box will accommodate a standard US box style fin as well. That means swapping it out, should you choose, is no problem.

On the water the Indiana 10'6 paddles great in chop. It's pulled out nose errs towards a touring SUP front. Many brands have done similar with their modern 10'6 iSUPs. The elongated nose delivers better tracking, glide and doesn't push water like older style round nose SUP designs.

So a big tick there! Indiana's 10'6 is also supremely stable. It's a very planted platform with no unwanted rogue personality traits. Therefore beginners will find favour and be able to develop their SUP skills from zero to hero aboard the Indiana.

Paddling through quite a lot of flotsam during testing it cuts a course pretty well and does a great job of staying on track. Beginners or fair weather paddlers wouldn't necessarily be using the 10'6 in these types of conditions but it's nice to know it works if you do.

One other thing I found was that it surfs and catches bumps great. As with choppy conditions recreational paddlers might be after lumps and surf. But for those who fancy testing their mettle in this kind of environment, it'll teach riders the basics and allow them to progress on. Bottom line is the Indiana 10'6 iSUP has a ton of versatility should you need it.

**CONCLUSION**

Indiana's Family 10'6 inflatable SUP is a quality, well made design that has lots of versatility. It'll do the fair weather, recreational paddling thing with no issues. And is a good platform for learning the ropes. For anyone wanting a bit more advanced performance, however, there's plenty to grow into. This ensures longevity of the board with no urgent rush to upgrade soon after the initial purchase. As an example of what a modern 10'6 iSUP should be this is a good one to consider.





# Breadth of possibilities – McConks Go X Wild 11' x 32" x 6"

**Words & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

This is the second incarnation of the McConks Go X Wild I've tested. Out of the whole McConks range it's probably one of the Cotswold brand's most versatile iSUPs. A design collaboration between McConks and Ant Ing (from Stand UP Paddle UK) the brief was to create a hybrid white water race and touring sled. A tall order but something that's certainly been achieved. As many will know, however, I don't usually test on white water due to not being anywhere close to such stretches. So how does the Go X Wild fair on tidal waters?



**Price:**  
£700

**Info:**  
<https://mcconks.com/shop/mcconkswhitewatergoxwild/windsurf-board/>

McConks have tweaked the Go X Wild's rocker over the seasons. Since V1 this version now features a slightly increased rocker. As such it's a very planted board once afloat. Any paddler just passed newbie stage will have no issue balancing atop the 11'. The 32" inches of width, wide tail and elongated shape give it plenty of poise. Secondary stability is also great so if a rider should roll it on a rail the Go X Wild aims to pop you back up and help avoid dunkings.

Paddling on the flat the board's nose shed's water and improves straight line



efficiency. You can put the hammer down, even in chop, and the GXW not deviate from its course. The included swept back fin works fine but if you want even more flat water, race SUP style performance a slightly longer type will work no issues. The notable point here is that McConks' Go X Wild could be your board of choice for flat water SUP races anywhere - not just moving river water!

All this talk of performance may suggest this iSUP isn't an every paddler sled. Yet it is! If touring and adventure SUP - wherever you choose to put in - are your thing the Go X Wild accommodates. You can load it up with essentials if you choose and head off on a paddle board sojourn of your choosing. Or alternatively use it for day tripping and mellow family touring. The Go X Wild's versatility knows no bounds.

Giving a nod to other Go X Wild design elements the tail mounted hard release rubber edge gives efficient water shedding from the rear. This can also help tracking. And the deck mounted additional padded carry handles are most welcome. Being able to grab the board from various angles is a great feature. I also liked the deckpad which is supremely comfortable underfoot. Yet it doesn't detract from 'feeling' what the board's up to.

## CONCLUSION

All in the McConks Go X Wild is more than it says on the tin. Its versatility will see the board finding favour with all manner of paddler. Whether you race in rivers, prefer meandering along coastal inlets or paddle with your kids and pets onboard the Go X Wild will serve your purpose well. Manufactured and finished to a high spec it looks great and should be on your radar if you're in the market for an upgrade or your first SUP touring board.





# Art in motion – Fatstick 10'6 x 32" x 210L

**Review & pics:** Tez Plavenieks

Having tested the Fatstick inflatable 14' Carbon Race a few issues ago it was time to dial things back with the brand's Pure Art 10'6. It should be noted that Fatstick's iSUP package includes a quick release leash waist belt. In light of the current drive surrounding SUP safety this is Fatstick's commitment to addressing one part of the problem and supplying QR belts as standard.



**Price:**  
£549

**Info:**  
<https://fatstickboards.com/shop/106-inflatable-paddle-board-2/>

Pure Art is named because of funky, bright graphics; the other noticeable trait, straight out the bag, is the 10'6" thickness. With Dropstitch inflatable technology and materials included being able to reduced an iSUP's thickness is now possible. And without being detrimental to rigidity and stability. Width also plays its part regarding the latter. As does overall shape. But with quality gear comes the ability to improve performance and feel. So the Pure Art's 4" thickness shouldn't alarm.

With an inflatable paddle board floating on top of the water it's more susceptible to chop and wind. Being able to get rid of thickness brings the board closer to the water and gets decreases material exposed to the elements. If a good design combines a few other things it should ensure as much stability as thicker iSUPs whilst increasing reactivity and rider feedback. An increase in rider feedback means more engagement and ultimately more fun.

The Fatstick Pure Art 10'6 achieves this for sure. It's a nimble sled but not to the detriment



of accessibility - even for early intermediates. A drawn out, slightly elongated nose and square tail further aid stability. Whilst the flat rocker profile ensures no unwanted pitch. The board's yaw is also reduced a tad thereby allowing paddlers who haven't quite dialed in their stroke to accurately pilot straight lines.

Additional benefits include decent glide (relative to this being a 10'6) and pretty good tracking. The board's quick slot fins also give on point directional stability. The only thing I noticed is the board's flat rocker doesn't like heavy chop. But that's no problem when the majority of riders will be using the Pure Art 10'6 in flat water anyway.

## CONCLUSION

I tested a Fatstick 10'6 iSUP a few years back. It was a good example of attention to detail and modern inflatable manufacturing. Fatstick's Pure Art 10'6 has evolved with the times and now incorporates many elements you'll find with bigger brand products. Therefore the Pure Art is worth a look if you want a 10'6 iSUP from a homegrown UK brand that won't break the bank. Much more versatile than previous year boards of similar type yet still worthy of beginner/early intermediate attention it might be a sled worth checking out.

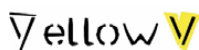




# V power – Yellow V Heartbeat 11' x 31" x 6"

**Words:** Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Yellow V

Yellow V are a Netherlands based iSUP and accessory company brand new to the UK. Instantly eye catching with their black and yellow graphics, the brand are appealing and intriguing. Eager to test something new I arranged a demo model which is the touring oriented Heartbeat 11'. Or 'the athlete' as the brand describe it.



### Price:

£575

Exclusive for readers of SUP Mag UK is a 15% discount. Use code SUPM15 at <https://yellowv.co.uk/discount/SUPM15>

### Info:

<https://yellowv.co.uk/products/heartbeat-11-sup-board-the-athlete>



Being a nearly all black, with yellow accented graphics, the heartbeat 11' iSUP certainly stands out. Testing was carried out during mid-summer on a very hot day. The black PVC does retain heat so it's worth keeping this in mind as the air inside your SUP will expand. Any inflatable not up to manufacturing spec might falter in conditions like this. But the Yellow V Heartbeat had no issues. That in itself shows quality manufacturing.

On the water the Heartbeat is stable yet engaging. There's decent secondary stability meaning you can roll it slightly onto a rail and paddle. But it's also perfectly fine being piloted flat.



The board's up-tuned rounded nose glides over chop without hassle as well as shedding water. It's an inflatable that doesn't so much knife through, like some, instead giving a hovering feel. Should riders encounter any steep troughs the nose design helps once again with recovery and avoidance of pearling. Even though I didn't get conditions I expect this would be a playful touring style SUP in small waves and bumps.

In fact, the Heartbeat's overall manoeuvrability makes it feel more like a shorter board but with the additional benefits of something longer.

Load carrying is great. I tested this having loaded it up on both the tail and nose. In all instances the Yellow V's composure remains intact. For anyone looking to cover moderate distance it'd therefore be a good choice of board.

The brand themselves mention paddling the Heartbeat with your dog (if you own one). You can see how this would work a treat.

### CONCLUSION

As a first test SUP from a new brand the Yellow V Heartbeat delivered enjoyable performance. Sitting somewhere between touring SUP and nimble all rounder there's a lot of scope to use the Heartbeat in various paddling scenarios. Load carrying capacity is good and the eye catching livery make it stand out. It's also not a bad price. If you're after something not run of the mill then it's definitely one to check out.





# Perfectly formed – AK Durable Supply Co Compact 5'2 x 29.5" x 105L

**Review:** Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Mike Pringuer

Having tested the AK Phazer 6' x 110L earlier in the year the brand's progressively shaped Compact 5'2 x 105L landed to much anticipation. Billed as freestyle orientated wing foil board I was frothing to get this wet. On paper it looked perfect as a light wind wing foil board that could possibly double as a SUP foil sled for agile riders.



**Price:**  
£1324

**Info:**  
<https://foilshop.co.uk/product/ak-compact-wing-foil-board-v1-2022-46-48-410-52/>



Unfortunately I never got the desired conditions to test the Compact in SUP foil mode. That said I did stand on it and paddle across flat water. I can confirm that if you're an experienced SUP surfer, or racer used to narrower boards, with dialled in paddle skills you may find it no hassle.

The AK Compact 5'2 is manufactured using ultra-lightweight fused EPS core and Reflex Carbon Innegra. It's tough as old boots and therefore has plenty of longevity. Designed to put up with the rigours of foiling the finish on the Compact is also top draw, with the materials shining through.

With its squared of nose and tail the Compact offers plenty of stability. Even if you're on the heavier end of the rider spectrum getting started is fuss free. AK's shaper has cleverly distributed the volume to make it extremely forgiving at rest yet inherently nimble once up and flying.



The Compact 5'2 takes off with ease. A few pumps and you're up and hovering. The Compact's hard release rails aid the process muchly. A concave deck helps keep riders super connected and allow pinpoint reactivity. Whilst high apex rails ensure minimal water clipping as you bank into carving moves. A kick tail also reduces touching the water when turning.

Simply put the 5'2 is a joy to foil on. Once riders have gone through those initial stages of learning dropping down to a board such as this would be a wise move. At 5'2 it's super short which is great in terms of reducing swing weight. The 5'2 may be a bigger board on paper but it doesn't feel it when flying.

One of the biggest plus points with the AK Compact 5'2 is its pitch control (nose to tail).

There's zero pitch. The board's design ensures foilers can stomp about the deck without shooting skyward from the tail or nose diving. It really is such a well balanced shape that allows all manner of foot change moves to be ticked off. And should you feel like chucking a few aerial contortions the Compact 5'2 will let you do just that. Rotations and carving moves, wave rides or just performance freeriding are all doable with the 5'2.

## CONCLUSION

AK's Compact 5'2 is a lovely foil board to ride. It flatters the user and instills lots of confidence. Whether you're keen on pushing the boundaries or just happy to race around it's a board that'll go wherever you fancy taking it. Bigger riders will enjoy it right through the wind bands whilst feather weights would enjoy the Compact 5'2 as their light wind sled.





## Athlete Agenda book review

[www.aprilzilg.com](http://www.aprilzilg.com)

By Sarah Thornely



**I am a big fan of paper and a physical book rather than digital – maybe it’s my age, but I love the feel and weight of a book, the cover shot and even the paper quality. A Kindle girl, I am not!**

Having had my eye on this publication, I was kindly gifted a copy of April Zilg’s Athlete Agenda in return for some taxi work when she was recently in the UK. A fair swap.

April has been developing her online coaching since becoming an absolute world-class stand-up paddleboarder, marginally missing out of the APP world title by points but almost dominating recent racing seasons. This is due to major changes in her training with a scientific slant, more of which can be heard in her recent chat with Simon on his SUPmpodcast. It’s very enlightening for anyone who loves ‘nerdy’ stuff.

She has learnt that physically writing points down, be they affirmations, training plans for the week or beliefs in your ability, can really help an athlete. It’s a bit like writing a list, I know that stuff will get done rather than just having it in my head, so this definitely appeals to me.

The Athlete Agenda has a lovely weight and feel, and wherever you order from, the book is printed in that country and not flown halfway around the world – very clever!

The chapters at the beginning are all about your journey, not someone else’s, and are personal as you complete the book like a diary, writing down how you feel daily. This being what you have achieved or not, milestones, weekly refocus sessions, daily reflections, and a whole lot more! I have seen a friend’s; hers is packed with all she does and feels – she has found it very useful.

This book would undoubtedly compliment your online training schedule or encourage you to start your own in this very journal.

April knows what it is like to be a ‘couch potato’ (her words, not mine), with little energy and unfocused. Here she is ten years later with a great story behind her, and she wants to encourage us all to write our book and find our ‘inner athlete’ – move, grow, reflect and reach our goals, be they a gold medal or running for one mile without stopping.

### CONCLUSION

**Like a diary, the Agenda is intended to last a year, and it would certainly be interesting to look back over it after the year is up – will you have found your inner athlete? I am certainly looking forward to getting stuck in – I guess it will make me more accountable, but only to me – I’ll let you know how I get on!**

## Pentire botanical spirits

<https://pentiredrinks.com>

By Tez Plavenieks



**In all honesty I’ve been quite sceptical and unfulfilled with regard to plant based, non-alcoholic drinks in the past. Oftentimes they just don’t live up to expectation, failing to meet up with their hype. Usually I’ll just revert to tried and tested soft drinks as you know what you’re getting.**

So it was with a furrowed brow I received Pentire Adrift and Seaward samples to try. (One instant big tick in the box, however, was the inclusion of Fever Tree tonic to mix, which I personally love).

Another harumph moment was when delving further into Pentire’s story and noting the use of surfing for marketing purposes and the brand’s image. Are Pentire just another band wagon jumping company or are they actually keeping it real? So to speak.

Turns out that Pentire are indeed bona fide. The team actually live a coastal life and are super enthusiastic about their botanicals. Pentire is genuinely a refreshing change from the usual mass marketing use of surfing. Another big tick in the box.

But what about taste? How does Pentire Adrift and Seaward stack up? Pretty good actually. I was pleasantly surprised how much I enjoyed both tipples. Mixed with the aforementioned Fever Tree tonic you have a refreshing mix of natural ingredients. Pentire Adrift is the harder hitting of the two with sage notes coming through loud and clear. And whilst Pentire Seaward does use grapefruit to good effect I found it to be the mellower of the pair. In both cases there was definite fulfilment and it was a joy to fill a glass with ice and enjoy a refreshing drink such as this without any negative side effects.

### CONCLUSION

**My initial scepticism was soon put aside having tasted Pentire’s Adrift and Seaward botanical spirits. You can taste the passion Pentire put into their products. And it’s nice to finally discover a brand that create tipples to fulfil. Plant based botanicals don’t always hit the mark. But, in this instance, Pentire does.**

**Price: Seaward 1X 70CL - £26.80 Adrift 1X 70CL - £26.80**



## ePropulsion UK Vaquita

<https://epropulsion.uk/vaquita>

By Tez Plavenieks



**I'm intrigued by new products that are innovative and offer something slightly unusual. Not many paddlers would instantly think of adding a propulsion unit to their SUP. But there are applications when something like this might work.**

Comprised of an electrically powered, guarded propeller, battery pack and paddle mounted wireless Bluetooth controller, the Vaquita is super simple to set up. It has two SUP fin box attachments that make it almost universal. There's also a universal kayak adaptor included as well if you wanted some sit on top propulsion fun. Once attached to the fin box it's a case of mounting the battery. This is best if your SUP has rear bungee that makes it easy. You could always fashion something out of webbing straps if not. I will say there's a fairly long waterproof cable which needs to be coiled and tucked away otherwise it'll trail in the water. Once installed, a quick throttle check and it's away you go.

Being honest I was skeptical as to how this would perform on the water. I've used similar products a few years back and was underwhelmed. I appreciate products like the Vaquita aren't meant to turn your SUP into a motorboat but there needs to be some engagement nonetheless.

I needn't have worried. At full throttle there's enough speed and shove to move riders along fairly rapidly. Not too quick but enough. This alone is smile inducing and fun in its own right. I had a slight hiccup after ploughing through a clump of floating seaweed. The Vaquita propeller did then require the removing of said weed. It's important to make sure everything is switched off if you need to do this as the prop will easily slice fingers!

To steer it's simply a case of putting your paddle blade in the water and angling it to create an arc. Alternatively you can actually paddle and gain additional oomph. Travelling at around 9km/hour you do feel as if you're getting a wriggle on. And should you fall the Vaquita has built in sensors which stop it after taking a dunking. You do need to be wary of other water users and keep well clear.

So the big question is what type of application would a product like this fit? SUP tourers may find it useful when paddling long miles. It can take the strain out of paddle strokes and allow longer sessions. If you're into SUP fishing, the extra power of the Vaquita will make getting to your chosen fishing ground a doddle. And getting back to shore, with a brisk headwind or strong tide in the mix, is where the Vaquita will help. You may have other scenarios in mind.

### CONCLUSION

**Vaquita's SUP motor is a highly polished and well made product. It's effortless to set up and begin using. The battery is pretty lightweight and doesn't add too much to your board. And once up and running the Vaquita is fun for a few powered rides, or more serious applications as suggested above. You just have to decide what you'd want a product like this for. But all in the Vaquita is an innovative accessory that could add even more to your stand up paddle boarding.**

Price: £695

## Sea Sense Flip Flops

[www.seasenseflipflops.com](http://www.seasenseflipflops.com)

By Dale Mears @Standuppaddleuk



**So flip flops aren't the first thing that springs to mind for kayaking, canoeing or SUP. However, the reality is we are probably all wearing flip-flops off the water.**

One of the big problems with flip flops is that they are made from plastics meaning each thrown-away pair ends up in a landfill or hopefully recycled, either using energy or having an environmental impact.

Sea Sense Flip Flops are a new brand of flipflops manufactured from natural rubber, meaning no plastics are used. Not only that, but it turns out natural rubber tapped from rubber tree harvests in Vietnam.

Natural rubber is exceptionally soft, durable and elastic, making these flip flops comfortable. They are a little heavier than a pair of Havaianas because the sole is denser, and this is a good sign that they will wear out less quickly. I've had a few pairs for the summer, and both are doing well and still wear like new.

Sea Sense are transparent about their story, so if you want to learn more, it's all on the website!

How much can you write about a flip flop? Probably not much; they are super comfortable, look good and have been hard-wearing. I've been taking these on the paddleboard as often as paddling barefoot in the summer months, and they have been great. They float, meaning you won't lose them, and you can even get a cool limited edition SUP version called the paddler blues.

The main reason I love these is the limited impact on our ever pressured environment; it's about small steps in the right direction, and this is one.

### CONCLUSION

**The main reason I love these is the limited impact on our ever pressured environment; it's about small steps in the right direction, and this is one.**

Price: £26



## Feuerhand Tamber Table Top Grill

<https://berryuseful.co.uk>

By Peter Tranter

**The Tamber Grill is a dinky must-have for anyone who enjoys the outdoors or simply a barbecue for two in the back garden that can be used directly in front of you at the table with that unmistakable barbecue aroma.**

The design is a neat package, where the lid does a 180-degree turn into a heat-resistant coaster between the bottom of the metal holder and the cooking surface. The lid has built-in grooves to prevent the grill from destabilising and sits safely. In that respect, the whole item works well and is an excellent safety point.

At only 20cms wide and 14cms tall, it's easily transportable and can be used in the smallest spaces, such as balconies and terraces.

It's a rapid and common-sense set-up ready for use, with four stages of the assembly, including the charcoal. The European hardwood charcoal has a quick tasteless ignition coating based on purely natural ingredients, so there is no need for barbecue lighters. Simply light with a match, and after 15 minutes, you're ready to start cooking with clean hands.

The cooking plate is a dishwasher-friendly enamelled grilling grate with drainage grooves that direct liquid and fat to the edge of the grill's body so that it does not smoke. The food is evenly cooked thanks to the ventilation openings at the base, providing a constant grill temperature.

The 140gm starter pack of charcoal that comes with the grill lasts for over an hour, and 1kg refills are available separately at £11.95.

### CONCLUSION

**All-in-all, a great little addition for the outdoors and a simple set-up that works exceptionally well in what could be minimal conditions for a barbecue – it looks good as well. More expensive than throwaway barbecues; however, the grill offers a more conscious and versatile barbecue experience for a small, relaxed gathering. Plus, the grill is much more environmentally friendly, cleaner, safer, and a pleasant experience that you can reuse so many times that you will soon make your money back. There are varied colours of Cobalt Blue, Jet Black, Light Green, Ruby Red and Telemagenta.**

Price: £89.95 at <https://berryuseful.co.uk/collections/fire-barrels-bowls/products/feuerhand-tamber-table-top-grill>



## Voited Cloudtouch blanket

<https://voited.co.uk>

By Dale Mears @Standuppaddleuk

**Changing robes are everywhere, and why not? They are great. We love a change robe because they keep us warm, and cover us when changing. However, other options have some other uses that may benefit many.**

Adventure blankets, basically big fleecy or insulated blankets, have taken a bit of a starring role on some Instagram pages. I got hold of a Voited Cloudtouch blanket, and here's why I love this as an alternative to a change robe.

It's an insulated, water-resistant blanket featuring a ripstop side covered in really cool designs, and the range is extensive. On the other side is a soft, cosy fleece similar to a change robe. You can use this off the water in a van, picnic etc., but you can wrap it around you to cover your modesty. What makes this particular blanket stand out is the multiple uses. If wearing as a change product, it's huge (double bed huge), and there's plenty to snuggle; it also features poppers around the edges that you can flip together, making a cape/little change area.

You can fasten all the poppers fully and turn this into a single-person sleeping bag. Or, if you own two blankets, pop them together, making a double sleeping bag.

It doesn't end there; the whole blanket stuffs into a zip-up pocket, making a pillow. If you don't want to leave it in pillow form, it comes with a funky stuff sack and karabiner similar to a sleeping bag set up. Tested to lows of 8°C/46°F to ensure warmth when wearing/using; however, I will say if using as a sleeping bag, it is popper fastened, so airflow out of edges exists.

These come in a little cheaper than a change robe or at a similar price point to some of the cheaper robes yet pack more practical uses. One product that does many, has its advantages over one with just a single use.

Ok, let's talk environment. This blanket is made of recycled plastics rather than virgin materials, including the outer ripstop and the fleece. It is also coated in Teflon EcoElite, a new environmentally friendly stain repellent and waterproof.

### CONCLUSION

**This is a superb product, especially if you want something warm to wrap around you when getting off the water, serving so many other uses, including sleeping and van life.**

Price: £125







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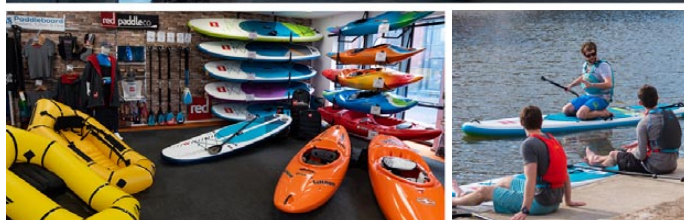
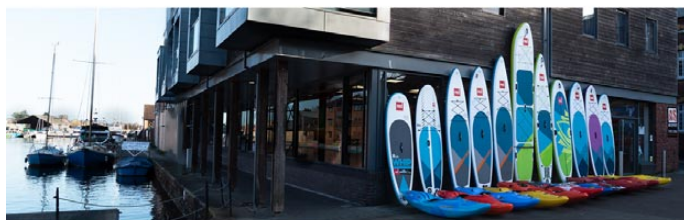
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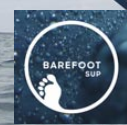


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