

SUPM

Stand Up Paddle Mag UK

THE ENIGMATIC:

Charlie Head in conversation

STAYING INJURY FREE

By Leanne Bird

CORRAN ADDISON'S

strange world of WW SUP

JERSEY SUP GROMS

By Verity Thomas

ADRIAN ANGELL

paddles 100 miles and 13 lakes!

REDUCING SUP'S IMPACT

on seals by Steph Barnicoat

BEHIND THE BRAND

Mad Water Sports Steve Kirk

TROPICAL SUP

By Tez Plavenieks

CENTRAL LOCKDOWN

By Chris Kenyon



WW conversations finale part 4

Emma Love speaks to Louise Royle & Joyce Johnston
Stateside SUP chat with Kristin Thomas;
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Cover photo: Charlie Head on Islay August 2021

Photo: Julie Stitchell of Idyllic Islay

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Not all contributors are professional writers and photographers, so don't be put off writing because you have no experience! **Next issue is March 2022 with a deadline of submissions on Feb 5th 2022.** Technical Information: Contributions preferably as a Microsoft Word file with 800-1200 words, emailed to tez@supmaguk.co.uk. Images should be hi-resolution and emailed with the Word file or if preferred, a Dropbox folder will be created for you. SUP Mag UK encourages contributions of any nature but reserves the right to edit to the space available. Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publishing parent company, 2b Graphic Design Ltd. The publishing of an advertisement in SUP Mag UK does not necessarily mean that the parent company, 2b Graphic Design Ltd, endorses the company, item or service advertised. All material in SUP Mag UK is strictly copyright and all rights are reserved. Reproduction without prior permission from the publisher is forbidden.



Brendon Prince **Photo:** Will Reddaway

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Summer, supply and SUP in 2022

It's not been the best summer on record, that's for sure. Nonetheless, a few windows have opened for a spot of enjoyable paddling. Even on the cloudiest, rainiest and breeziest of days, there's an opportunity if you really want it (and know where to head). Spotting those times is half the battle with SUP in the UK, especially if you're looking for specific conditions, like flat water (which most are). The key to scoring is knowledge. Learning and applying all that essential stand up paddle boarding info is the route to success. Understanding and knowing more will elevate your paddling experience to no end. And from a safety standpoint, it's actually essential. As more paddlers enter the fold, it's imperative to have this information on lock and put it to good use. As well as getting more out of your paddling sessions, it could save your life or somebody else's.

The supply of goods across many sectors (not just watersports) continues to be tricky. You may have experience of this first hand, perhaps having ordered SUP gear that's required a wait. From what I see and hear, patience on the part of consumers has been extensive, with everyone in the same boat, so understanding is a given. From a retailer/brand point of view, there's been considerable work to fulfil orders and satisfy demand. The issue isn't going away any time soon, as most will already know. Waiting for your gear, though, will be worth it. So bear with it as it'll all come good in the end. With a board underfoot and paddle in hand, your freedom to have adventures will make it extremely worthwhile. You'll be thankful you held out.

If you scan this issue's reviews/test section, you'll spot a bunch of 2022 stand up paddle boarding kit. Whilst this year's spangly new kit might not have landed properly in the UK, my point is the industry is already looking towards next spring and a continuation of what's gone before. Out of the huge numbers of new paddlers, a percentage will be looking to progress and push on. It could be that an addition to existing quivers will make this happen more fluidly, or you may be looking to swap out what you already own for a more specialist tool. Whatever your situation, there's an arm of SUP for you (with gear to match) or simply stick as an all-rounder – it's all good. The main thing is to aim for more paddling in 2022. You could be planning on taking your stand up paddling through the off season, in which case good on ya! Whatever your scenario, you can bet your bottom dollar SUP '22 will be here in the blink of an eye. The question is will you be ready for it and set to take another rung up the ladder? Preparation begins now...

Thanks and praise

We're aware of how tricky things have been in the last 18 months, so big thanks to everyone who's supported SUPM and continue to do so. The brand's that get kit to us for testing, those of you who contribute the written word, all you photographers and anyone that lends a helping hand in ways unseen. Big up and cheers as always!

Tez Plavenieks – October 2021

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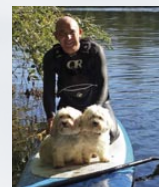
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STATESIDE CHAT

With Kristin Thomas



One of the recurring themes in our paddling community worldwide is generosity and caring towards all types of causes. Big-hearted Stand Up Paddlers – through individual expeditions and group events – are often raising awareness and funds. Here are just a sampling of people and events that made a difference this summer.



Mike Shoreman The Crossing - the USA to Canada across Lake Ontario

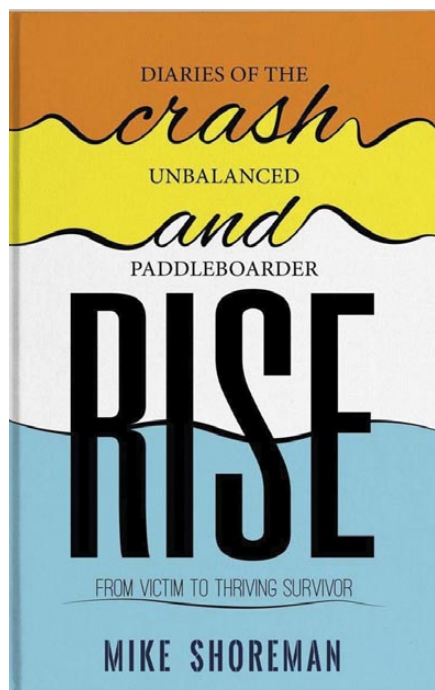
Mike is an amazing young man actively paddling as an instructor in Toronto, Canada, when he was struck by a debilitating condition later diagnosed as a neurological condition called Ramsey Hunt Syndrome (RHS) in 2018.

Besides the many physical effects of the chronic syndrome – the right side of his face collapsed, hearing was impaired, and his speech and sense of balance seriously affected – the grief, anger, and sadness impacted his mental health. He was told he could never paddleboard again.

He documented his journey through physical and mental struggles in an excellent book 'Diaries of the Unbalanced Paddleboarder, Crash & Rise'. Known by many for his 'paddles up' enthusiasm and contagious, positive energy, Mike has become a force. His preparation was arduous to get in shape for the goal of being the first person with a disability to make an international crossing.

Although he had to call off his first attempt before reaching his goal in late summer, he could still raise almost 50,000 to raise awareness for mental health through www.Jack.org and challenge the stereotypes of people with disabilities. *"It didn't turn out the way that I hoped. But it's a first shot, and I'm going to do it again!"* Your community loves you Mike, and is behind you all the way!

Photo left: Darius Bashar Photography



Adrian Angell Annual expeditions for Diabetes UK

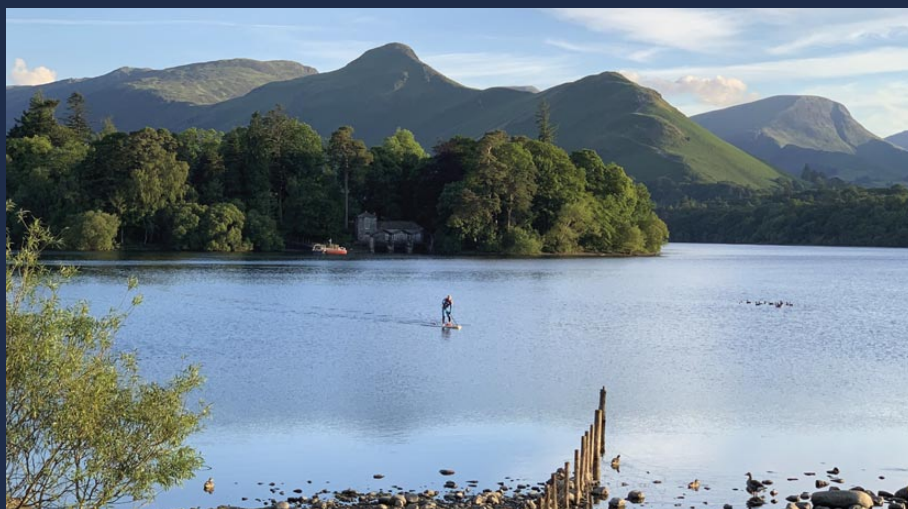
Ohio River Paddlefest

Most of us know Adrian Angell best for his active participation in the SUP racing scene in the Midwest, especially with his role in one of the biggest races in the area, the Ohio River Paddlefest. Before becoming the race director seven years ago, the Ohio River Quest had special significance as Adrian's very first SUP race.

Raising money for Diabetes UK

Although a US resident since 1995, Adrian is originally from Cumbria and wanted to give back in his home country. On his niece's suggestion with Type 1 Diabetes, Adrian's first challenge fundraising paddle was crossing the English Channel. Next came the Great Glen Race in Scotland, and then most of the lakes in the Lake District (see page xx. Because of COVID, his most recent expedition was 50 miles on the Ohio River here in the US, but he is already making plans for his next UK paddle.

Photo below: Stephen Angell



Ohio River Paddlefest

Photo: Victoria Vidal

<https://standuppaddlemag.co.uk/adrian-angell/>



Stand Up for the Cure Building awareness and raising funds for breast cancer early detection, treatment and education.

Since 2012, they have been holding events in multiple locations around the US. While the events have been traditionally in person, director and co-founder Dan Van Dyke was able to pivot and continue the tradition with virtual events in 2020 and then micro-events over a late summer to early fall all over the US. They have raised over \$1.3 million through their efforts and still going strong. www.suftp.org



Fall Highlights 2021

Like much of the UK and northern Europe, most of Canada and the US are heading into the 'off season' for paddling. But throughout the southern part of the US and Hawaii, paddling goes on year round. Here are just a few of our 'big events' coming up in the remainder of 2021.

Key West Paddle Classic

Key West, Florida: October 2

Off Da Couch

Newport Beach, California (NAC): October 9

Chattajack

Chattanooga, Tennessee: October 23

Harbor Hoot

Dana Point, California: October 30

Carolina Cup

Wrightsville Beach, N. Carolina: Nov 6-7

Carolina Pro-Am

Wrightsville Beach, N. Carolina: Nov 13-14

King & Queen of the Bay

St. Petersburg, Florida: December 6

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SUPJUNKIE REPORTING:



THE GBSUP NATIONAL RACE SERIES 2021

Words: Sarah Thornely

Photos: Antony Thornely & Jonathan Greatrex for Supjunkie

THE RACE SERIES CONTINUES and with it, we have champions crowned and news of some incredible fundraising for the RNLI.



SPRINT CHAMPIONSHIPS – NOTTINGHAM

But first, let's talk sprints! This event was not always set in stone for 2021. Still, with the help of some good dialogue with British Canoeing, GBSUP were delighted to be invited back to the National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont, for a day of super-fast racing. Racing here brings out some interesting thoughts and emotions from the paddlers; an uncontrollable fear of those buckets, will I be able to paddle straight, will I fall off, how fast will I go, will I get through to the final? Until you've had a go, your biggest focus is that yellow start line bucket. Popping the board nose in it whilst you try and keep straight is a challenge in itself, and don't even think about jump-starting the race. You also get to experience watching great racing from some of the best British Canoeing members in other crafts, and the timing of the heats here is a thing of beauty – these guys know their stuff!

So, 40 paddlers attended, having confirmed that they could paddle at a certain speed over 200 metres even to be allowed to enter. Twenty men, 20 women! All paddlers would get the chance to sprint twice over 200 metres, and then the fastest nine men and women would qualify for the final.

All the heats were incredibly exciting, no one could let up at any stage in either heat for fear of missing out in that top nine, and the finals were on fire with some record-breaking times. In the end, Ben Pye retained his crown as the National Sprint Series Champion. For the women, Holly Pye saved something in the bank to beat the incredibly fast Emily Evans. Brother and sister Ben and Holly celebrated their wins together on the water. The fastest time of the day came from Ben at 1:01.09 for 200 metres – the sprinters are getting faster, and we know the one-minute barrier will be broken next year. Ben was delighted in retaining his title, and the win from Holly set her up for competing in the ICF World Championships in Hungary later that week. Beautiful trophies made by the very talented Jade Rogers were awarded to first, second and third.

I was lucky enough to be invited to join the British Canoeing official live feed on the Sprint Racing Committee YouTube Channel. There was some excellent camera work and drone footage throughout their coverage so if you missed it live, check it out! Hopefully, I gave them some insight into our wonderful world of SUP. Once again, we feel we brought something slightly different to their party, and we are sure they will want us back next year.

GBSUP were lucky enough to secure some great prize sponsors for this event, so decided to hold a

raffle in aid of the RNLI – a beautiful carbon paddle given by Ocean Specific and other great prizes encouraged people to get involved, and a total of £300 was raised just with the raffle. GBSUP would like to thank all those who helped raise that money.

Inspired by what she saw at the sprints with the RNLI fundraising, one of our regular racers, Anna Little, wanted to help raise more funds. She was paddling in the epic Great Glen Challenge a few weeks later, and with the help of GBSUP Director Adrian, a GoFundMe page was set within a few days. Anna and her team managed to raise over £2,300 – we like to say a big thank you to Anna, Claire Watson-Armstrong and Daniel Godridge. They all successfully completed The Great Glen and raised this incredible amount of money.

If anyone else would like to do their own fundraising or need help or encouragement, please do get in touch with the GBSUP team, and they can give you some guidance and help.

CARDIFF FLATWATER RACE 3 and SERIES FINALE

On to another of our favourite locations but with a slight change of venue, 2021 saw us hosted quite wonderfully by the Cardiff Bay Yacht Club – just a few hundred metres from the Cardiff White Water Centre – big thanks must go to Ben Longhurst, who made this possible. The viewing and launch area worked well this year for the larger field of 120 entries. During the morning, there was a relaxed vibe as the main event was going off at 13.00, so plenty of time for fun sprints and the Red Bull DJ and team mixing it up with some cracking tunes. Registration ran smoothly, and the support for the raffle in aid of the RNLI was just incredible, with £538 being raised at this event alone – huge thanks must go to all those who donated prizes and bought tickets too!

So, down to the business end of the flatwater series finale. Some of the champions had been decided already, but a few left led to some exciting battles and scores to settle. Sixty paddlers in the 14' fleet alone - a long way from a few years ago when it was all about the 12'6. There were a few fallers on such a busy start line, but in the men's 14' it was Blue Ewer who paddled off fast and was soon some 50 metres away from his closest rival this year, Ben Pye. Once again, Blue led from the start and finished first, truly cementing his talent by winning all three out of three flatwater races.





We love watching the N1SCO fleet racing, and Karen Greener won the hotly contested women's field and, therefore, the series win. Simon Nash won for the men, thereby taking out the series win too. Great consistent racing over the flatwater series for Karen and Simon.

This year, there was a very small prone fleet at Cardiff with James Fletcher winning and taking the series and Ellie McCloy winning Cardiff, thereby becoming joint overall champion with Kezia Elliott.

Twenty-three paddlers entered the Challenge Tour, which is the GBSUP 'all the gain, none of the pain' fleet. Mike Ridsdill Smith guided those who needed the company, and we think there are definitely some conversions to the race fleet for next time! As always, a big thank you to Big Mike for his support.

There was a special guest racing and donating prizes for the raffle and helping at the end of the day with the prizegiving. Congratulations and thanks to Brendon Prince in what GBSUP hopes was his first foray into mid-length racing rather than his ultra-distance challenge recently with The Long Paddle 2021. It was great to have him there, and many people were delighted to meet him, having followed his adventures over the last four months.

The afternoon saw races and clinics for the junior hosted by Holly Pye, Blue Ewer and James Little. Junior racing has been tricky to get organised, so GBSUP hopes that this event will kick start the younger paddlers to get involved. Thanks also to Ben Julian for assisting with the junior clinic.

Once again, a great event and series finale – Cardiff is already on the calendar for next season, and we can't wait.

SUP PRONE CHALLENGE TOUR	
Distance Series	Technical Series
CWV Paddfest Cardiff - 1st May	Beadnell Belts Northumberland - 21st May
Battle of the Thames London - 18th June	Celtic Cup Carbis Bay - 10th July
Battle of the Bay Bournemouth - 25th June	Barefoot Wells SUP Norfolk - 18th October
	British Championships Nottingham 3rd/4th Sept

2022 SERIES DATES AND VENUES

Due to the many, many races and potential clash of dates for 2022, the GBSUP team thought it prudent to get their dates out early doors. On the 1st October, the dates were released – all information can be found on their website. Entries for each race will be announced on their social media channels beforehand, and you can also subscribe to their email for all the latest news and announcements.

Once again, GBSUP and Supjunkie would like to thank you for all your support throughout 2021 and beyond. The GBSUP survey was put out earlier this year, and we'd like to thank you all for your input – it can only make the series that much better. Results and stats can also be found on the website.

Setting the record straight – in the last issue of SUPM, we reported that Amy Fuller had won the 12'6 iSUP class at the Battle of the Thames – in fact, it was Emma Adams. Many apologies to her for our error – above is Emma crossing through the BOTT winner's arch on that day – well done!

For the ladies, local lass Emily Evans celebrated her first GBSUP race win some way ahead of the other ladies, and this will not be her last. Though, it was not enough for the series win as this was already set in stone by the incredibly consistent Marie Buchanan. Marie could not be at Cardiff to collect her trophy, but hopefully, she will be at the next race in Viking Bay.

For the 12'6 women's class, once again, it was three out of three wins giving Emily King the series trophy. For the men, there was the most exciting battle between Dave Scott and Al Hughes. Both had the potential to take the title and, on the day, it was Al who won with Dave a very close second place. It was so exciting to see the respectful and friendly rivalry between the two.



PHOTOGRAPHERS

Thank you as always to Geoff Mather, Jade Rogers, Antony Thornely and Jonathan Greatrex for taking so many cracking photos throughout 2021.

VIKING BAY CLASSIC, BROADSTAIRS

The announcement of the third and final of the Ocean Tech Series caused some excitement – GBSUP has not held a race in Kent before, and if they are lucky, there could be some waves! It will be held on the 16th October in Broadstairs and will be a busy day. Racing in the morning and a downwinder challenge in the afternoon, just for fun! It will be the last race of 2021 with the series finale prizegiving, and they would love you to all get involved and support this new venue.



WHAT'S HAPPENED TO GBSUP THIS YEAR?

It's been a fun year for GBSUP, both on and off the water. We have had some exciting races at some epic locations and seen some significant changes behind the scenes.

Earlier in the year, we had to sadly say goodbye to Mark Price, who took a tough decision in stepping down from the helm of GBSUP due to personal reasons. Mark took on the GBSUP series back in 2017 and made it what it is today, so we can't thank him enough for his efforts in shaping GBSUP. Adrian Soper and Sarah Thornely stepped in temporarily to ensure delivery of the 2021 season could be completed and remain the successful series it has become known for.

Whilst you have all been racing, the team has been working on a new strategy and approach for how GBSUP could move forward. Given the fantastic SUP family and community spirit we all feel, we took the next logical step to form GBSUP into an official Community Interest Company. Adrian initially brought together two additional people to create the new social enterprise, welcoming Philip Mather and Scott Warren to the board of directors. Our next move will be to restructure GBSUP and form a complete steering board focusing on inclusivity, diversity, and growing the series.

Over the coming year, we will be working on several exciting new initiatives, including strengthening the Challenge Tour and junior participation, bringing them both into the series entirely. We also have a specific 'Race from the Box' project, focusing on a new regional feeder model to get new paddlers into racing and take GBSUP to more places than ever before.

We are certainly looking forward to 2022 and hope you can join us on the start line.



HALL OF FAME

Don't forget if you are an overall winner, even of an age category; you can get yourself listed on their website in the GBSUP Hall of Fame. You deserve to be there, and all you have to do is submit a short bio, your overall win and a photograph.



If you have any queries on the changes or want to get involved, please reach out to Adrian, Phil or Scott directly or email info@gsup.co.uk.





Photo by Harding Lee Media

After being approached by GBSUP to host their final Ocean Tech Race, they joined forces with Kent Sup Racing and created the aptly named 'Viking Bay Classic'. GBSUP ran their 6km national series race, with a 3km Challenger Tour and other races ran simultaneously. The kid's event in the afternoon was cheered on heartily by the finished competitors of the morning too!

The Broadstairs Sailing Club, local photographers, and many businesses and volunteers all offered their time to bring the event to life on what was a gloriously sunny morning in Thanet.

Kent Surf School have agreed to host another event next year, so be sure to keep an eye on all of the partner's socials @kentsurfschool @GBSup

And finally...

The sun has set on the GBSUP National Series of Races for 2021 with a fabulous new location in Broadstairs, Kent.

Those paddlers who wanted a challenge certainly got it with the Viking Bay Classic, the finale of this series – a good swell and choppy conditions with a stiff southerly breeze, saw falls aplenty. The start line had a hefty shore dump too for paddlers to negotiate.

Forty took to the waters with the biggest class being the 14' and the two young guns Will Keetley and Hector Jessel certainly looked like the favourites until Bruce Smith from the Northern SUP Race Team decided at the last minute to ride an inflatable, much to the delight of the Juniors mentioned above. Well, the powerhouse that is Bruce paddled his heart out as always and with Will and Hector, being so engrossed in their joint battle, making the mistake of paddling an extra lap, saw Bruce take the win! It was a great moment in the day and thoroughly

enjoyed by all, with Will and Hector taking their defeat and mistake brilliantly well – all great role models for our sport.

The ladies 14' was super exciting also with Emily Evans taking her second GBSUP win, Sarah Perkins coming a solid second and GBSUP's social media queen, Lauren Newman-Warren third.

Ashley Allen and Al Hughes won the 12'6 class, meaning an incredible three out of three in the Ocean Tech for both – a fantastic result. Great racing by two of the best paddlers in their class.

Louise Tomlinson and Dave Bennett from the local Broadstairs Surf Life Saving Club won in the prone paddleboarding division.

Just a few in the Challenge Class with locals Lee Dow and Andy from Kent Surf School, who hosted the event, having great fun in the swell and choppy surf.

Kent Surf School

Viking Bay Beach is the tourist designation of choice for those visiting Broadstairs. The local community has seen a boom in watersport activities, partly thanks to everyone's desperate need to escape the household after 18 months of lockdown!

Andy Webb of Kent Surf School has been an ambassador for the community and created a membership group of over 100 people and also leads in Kent SUP, kayaking and surfing lessons throughout the seasons that are open to all.

Photo by Harding Lee Media



OCEAN TECH OVERALL SERIES RESULTS

Huge congratulations go to the following Champions:

Blue Ewer and Marie Buchanan: 14'
Al Hughes and Ashley Allen: 12'6
Mark Norton and Kezia Elliott: Prone
Will Keetley and Tegan Veale: Junior
Simon Nash and Raine Easter-Robinson: N1Sco

A whopping £378 was raised in the raffle with some very generous donations from the RNLI, the SHAC, Kent Surf School, Reactive Watersports, Naish, Water Skills Academy, Jordan Wylie, Saviour Watersports and Emily King. This makes the total raised in just the three raffles, over £1,200 – thank you to all who bought a ticket or two!

Huge thanks also to Kent Surf School for hosting in their beautiful location and to all those who made this day special – from the volunteers to all the paddlers!



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THE LONG

The world's first circumnavigation

The Long Paddle

Words: Brendon Prince **Pics:** Will Reddaway Photography

The mission was simple, leave Torbay and turn right! After 141 days and almost 4000km, I turned right for the last time. Humbled by all the well-wishers who either paddled out or waited on the beach to greet me, I still find it hard to put into words the moment I stepped off my board. Touching the rich red sands of Torquay will always have a very special place in my paddling heart. I'd wished to see this flat beach and calm water for four and a half months, and then, suddenly, I was home.

There are so many highlights from paddling an average of 10.5 hours a day. The wildlife & birdlife, scenery, water conditions, weather and the people of our coastal communities have all been fantastic. Being the first person to ever paddle around Scotland (46 days), Lands' End to John O'Groats via the coast (79 days), paddle the longest SUP journey (4000km) and circumnavigate mainland Britain (141 days). These world records and world firsts are essential to attract media interest and promotion, but for me knowing our constant water safety message may have helped someone from drowning is the real deal.

Since the finish, it has been a whirlwind of interviews, presentations, meet and greet sessions, and opportunities. The following six months are essential to continue The Long Paddle legacy of creating the world's first gamified water safety app. I'm grasping all opportunities to make this happen with both hands. We have also raised almost £20,000 for our seven chosen charities: Above Water, Andy's Man Club, Christian Surfers, RNLI, SLSCB, Surfers Against Sewage and Wave Project. We hope to continue raising sponsorship for the app and donations for the charities over the winter. If you are able, please support via our website: www.thelongpaddle.co.uk.

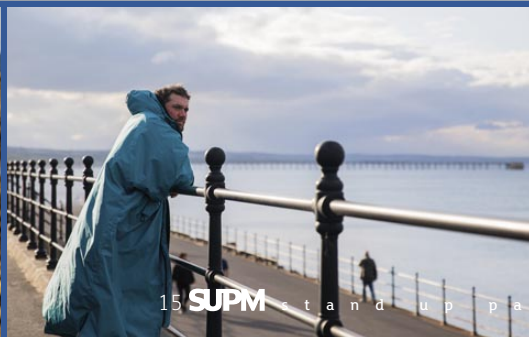
I have tremendous pride in The Long Paddle team (Will, Harry, Zoe, Lucy, Danny, Tracey, and Jonny-boy), our sponsors, The Long Paddle community and my wonderful family for helping unreservedly achieve this mammoth endurance challenge. All that's left for me to say is what challenge could match this for next year? (ideas on a postcard please).





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LOCKDOWN SUP

with Central SUP's Chris Kenyon

Words and pics: Central SUP

I distinctly remember the first time I heard about COVID-19 like everyone else. Some kind of flu in China that will never reach us and something I was not really taking much notice of. Little did I know it would change the world as we know it.

So how did that affect Central SUP? Well, we went into lockdown, as did the rest of the UK, to the best spring on record. That meant no SUP unless you were lucky enough to count it as your one-hour a days' worth of exercise. Even then, most of us played safe, so we didn't put the emergency services under any undue pressure. It was a waiting game, whilst we enjoyed some cracking, paddle perfect weather.





Strict guidelines

As the lockdown started to ease, the outdoor industry began to open its doors again, and we could operate under strict guidelines. The problem was for SUP; it was unclear what those guidelines should be; as an ASI Accredited school, we could use their covid safe resources and get ourselves awarded the covid safe operating certificate.

This helped to reassure our paddlers when they did come back to the lake. It was hard to know what to expect, but it was soon evident that people were chomping at the bit to get out on the water again. Suddenly the

word 'staycation' was everywhere, and pretty much every man and his dog wanted to paddle. That was great, but in groups of six, with a limit of 30 with social distancing with the disinfected kit. It was odd to operate like this initially; SUP is a social sport by its nature so having to keep away from each other seemed unnatural but necessary.

There were some considerations with the safety factor of it all; what happens if I need to rescue someone? I would definitely be less than two metres away then. How do we deal with that? Do I wear a mask when paddling? The list went on. We soon got

into the swing of it and perhaps secretly enjoyed a good old board scrub at the end of each session.

As a SUP club and school, we had one of our busiest seasons ever; it was like we had never left. The sting of covid began to fade as sunburn took over. The summer lockdown taught us a few things and encouraged good practice. We took some of what we had learnt and would use it as part of our standard operating procedures at Central SUP. Winter came and went with another lockdown. In terms of Central SUP, this didn't have much impact as we were pretty much closed.

Mainstream

As the spring began to come around, we turned our thoughts to next season, wondering how it would look. Good old Boris had promised us the 'summer of freedom'! So, we figured it would be busy again. It was. More people wanted to paddle. We quite possibly had thousands by the end of it all getting on a SUP. What's interesting is that now the sport is more mainstream we are finding everybody wanting to give it a go.

Five years ago, it was more your 'watersports enthusiast' who wanted to try. Now we have anyone from young kids to people in their 70s. This is partly due to the explosion of budget brand boards and because I think people wanted some kind of release. Covid has affected us all deeply in one way or another. I should know; my wife was in intensive care with it. It was the hardest thing we ever endured as a family, but thankfully she pulled through.

So, where do we find ourselves now? That's a good question as this year's season draws to a close. For us here at Central SUP, we are thankful for the summer season. Our club and school have continued to grow, and our unique vibe has never changed. It will be a winter of planning as we look to next season and the challenges and opportunities it will bring. More SUP schools and clubs seem to be popping up now, so I think the focus has to be on education and making sure people are safe on the water. The 'fastest growing water sport in the world' is certainly living up to its name, it seems. One of the best things about Central SUP is when you have taught somebody how to paddle, and you can see that instant joy on their face. I will never get bored of seeing this. So it's onwards and upwards for us here and hopefully a busy 2022!



PADDLER

The International magazine for recreational paddlers
Issue 61 | Late Summer 2021

magazine

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Finding **TROPICAL SUP** on your doorstep (in late September!)

Words and pics: Tez Plavenieks

It's safe to say summer 2021 won't be going down as one of the best weather-wise. With Momma Nature seemingly in a grumpy mood most of the high season, it's been slightly cooler than average with dull days and those idyllic SUP sessions few and far between. That isn't to say there haven't been any. There have! But you've had to search for it and want it.

Fast forward to late September then, and the irony is that all of the ninth calendar month has been pure Indian summer at its best – at least in my neck of the woods. Pleasantly warm days with oodles of sunshine, light to zero winds and (most) kids adults back at school or work. The silly summer season gives way to more space and room and less 'traffic' on the water. If you're a watersports nut, then it can be a pretty awesome time of year.

For me (as with many others we're aware of in similar situations), the challenges of the times we live in continue. Therefore any respite and headspace time can be nothing short of amazing. Spending time with those you love whilst doing the things you love, all without hassle, is something to cherish. Make sure you mark the occasion when it lands in your lap.

It's no secret I love a bit of full power with my watersports (wind/waves). Still, I also have much love for a serene and tranquil flat water stand up paddle as much as the next person, especially if I'm getting to share the experience with a fellow frother (my daughter in this case).



Quieter corners

Living where I do is always pretty busy – on and off the water. Yet knowing the place like the back of my hand allows sneaking off to quieter corners and escaping the madding crowd doable. Local knowledge is, after all, everything. On some of the most hectic days in summer, there's a nook to seek out and enjoy some chill SUP time. But as stated earlier, this is late September, and the hordes have all but vanished, so it's arguably easier than the previous.

Something I do miss is foreign travel. Up until recently – as with others – getting gone was a regular occurrence. COVID and family health complications have paid to that for a while as the world sorts itself out. One day we'll be back, but for now, we have to play things very cautiously. It's, therefore, very welcome when you rock up at a local SUP put in only to find it resembling a more tropical scene.

The accompanying pics don't it justice, but shallow water, with a soft sandy bottom, zero wind (or minor ruffles at best), blue skies, blazing sun and only the ambient noise of semi-regular boat traffic and wildlife do make the whole thing resemble somewhere more like the Caribbean. And having spent considerable time on many West Indian islands, I'm not just pulling this comparison from thin air. It's based on experience!

You know you've struck SUP gold when you're as happy to be taking a dip (in just boardies or a thin wetsuit) as much as

wanting to stay dry. Taking your time through the sesh, pulling up at various rest spots to enjoy a toe splash, watch my offspring swim and gaze around and admire is what experiences like this are all about. It's a cliché these days, but this is about making memories – memories that'll stick with you a lifetime.

Wildlife spotting

You know it's a less hectic time of year when all those marine animals start making reappearances, happy to float in your vicinity, even though your craft is far larger than them. Dolphin spotting, seal watching, fish gazing and so on become more achievable when it's quieter. Perhaps the wildlife appreciates things have slowed and know they're not going to get hassled. Either way, it's suitable for anyone making the best use of days like this as the hit rate becomes much higher in terms of 'spotting'. (It does make me chuckle the fact fisherman are casting lines a stone's throw away from where we're standing in shallow water, yet around my legs, large Bass fish are happily going about their business. If that isn't a middle finger up to those looking to upset the applecart and put a hook in them, then I don't know what is!).

As I write there's a bit of a change to the weather. Gazing up into the sky, clouds form, and those thermometer readings have started to fall a tad. Forecasts suggest it'll be a chilly night (it is the end of September after all), and the next few days will be

somewhat changeable with degrees of fluffy white and grey clouds coming and going. The wind's due to increase as well. Scanning further ahead and perusing the long-range suggests a changeable weather pattern will be on the cards. Absorbing this information, I'm super glad I decided to take my wee one and head afloat – it could be one of the last truly warm days before we slide into autumn and winter proper.

Of course, there'll be idyllic off-season days, I'm sure. These bring their own SUP magic as there's nothing quite like a warming glow to your face as you exit the brine and bright winter day. Warming up next to a roaring fire with a beverage in hand is another scenario I'm very familiar with and like a lot. Unfortunately, the colder months make it harder to get little kids in the drink as they feel the cold. So, again, I'm glad we did what we did during this particular session.

If you've been scoring similar paddles to the above, then hats off. Likewise, if you're carrying on and not hanging up your gear for winter, then doff of the cap. SUP is an all-weather, all-season activity, after all – as long as you plan accordingly and keep safety in mind. For those looking to get amongst it again next spring, hopefully, you'll kick off 2022 with a session like the one described. For me, I'm reflective on the stoke, having enjoyed September to its full, sharing the experience with my family, outdoors and on the water. A toast then to the Indian summer that was. See you next time!

SUPM

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SOMEWHERE
OUT THERE

rider: Lloyd

Q&A CHARLIE HEAD



Photo: Idyllic Islay - Julie Stitchell

Interview: Supjunkie **Pics:** Idyllic Islay - Julie Stitchell, Scarlet Visuals and John Harris Photography
British SUP explorer Charlie Head has made the first SUP descents of the Rio Mara  n (the true source of the Amazon) and the Blue Nile. Most recently, he completed the first solo and unsupported SUP circumnavigation of the UK.

Charlie finished in style on the Cumbrian coast, with a world record-breaking 87.2-mile non-stop crossing in open water.

During the final stages of his UK circumnavigation, Charlie took some time out to talk to us.

Charlie – you seem to have been stand up paddling forever - when and where did your SUP journey start, and did you do any other water sports beforehand?

I was pretty young when I set up water sports schools for myself and others. At the time, commercial success required a cut-throat attitude I neither had nor wanted. It conflicted too often with my nature and beliefs.

I find teaching therapeutic and beneficial in both directions, and I soon realised people

were learning more than water sports; they were there learning about themselves too. I also realised I was teaching beyond my own experience. I withdrew, knowing I needed to go away and learn, become a better teacher, and be able to offer services in the way that I believe in and not be handcuffed to a certain business model.

As I got more into paddleboarding, I resolved to use SUP as a means for that growth and that soul searching.



Photo:
Idyllic Islay -
Julie Stutchell

Before this current challenge, when did your BIG SUP adventures start, and what have been your main reasons for pushing yourself in some pretty bleak and dangerous waters?

I started with a circumnavigation of the Isle of Wight, then paddled from Land's End to London with bare feet and a tarp. I set my sights early on with some significant SUP firsts; in fact, I was teeing up an ocean crossing with Red Bull on a bespoke craft I'd designed when they asked me to schedule 'Mission Amazon', a first SUP descent of the Rio Marañón, the true source of the Amazon.

My nature means I derive great comfort in testing myself; for me, it represents progress. I love the creativity, innovation, patience and strength of mind of pushing myself, taking my mind and body to places that will teach me a better way of handling the outside world. The point of my UK circumnavigation has been to take on the hardest possible things, using all my knowledge to the max under pressure, harnessing my courage, resilience, and grit. Learning to have a relationship with your fear is an important process, much like dancing with the darkness of mental health.

Exploration is about pursuing the untrodden path and finding the answers in the darkest places within and without, harnessing the creativity you didn't know you had. The lure of the bigger picture motivates you through adversity. It's all in the courage of taking the first step.

In 2016, you set off to circumnavigate the UK, which was, in your own words, a 'social experiment' – can you let us know what led you to attempt this, particularly with the challenges of your mental health issues?

Before exploration came into my life, I had spent life swimming in ponds of people who didn't share my perspective or resonate with me. Moving through communities reassures me; it restores faith in humanity, connecting me to people who love what I love, people who are like me.

I conceived the social experiment to fill the gaps education, and business hadn't and couldn't. I've paddled solo and unsupported, fuelled by the kindness of strangers. The power of the internet brought me the people and the tools that I needed. The UK expeditions have been a meditation in asking for help and connecting with people. I expose 'my underbelly' to connect with people who relate to me and want to reach out. The

trust and reassurance that comes from each expedition have taught me so much about articulating and addressing the origins of my emotions and mental health.

It can feel counter-intuitive, but once you've relinquished control in favour of vulnerability, the thing that you were afraid of no longer has power. You've disarmed the bomb and carved a new path in the process.

Your UK trips are mostly self-supported with limited supplies and no money, with Scotland being no exception - we are guessing that this has involved many friends and strangers helping you along the way. Has this part of your journey been an enlightening experience?

Yes, exceptionally enlightening. I arrive independently and invite organic interaction. The connection is so different if it's organic; it means we have joint ownership of conversations, experiences, and the views we've shared and refined. Sometimes I am a mobile confession box. I'm typically in places for such a short time so people can dive right into their stories, liberated by the fact I'll be moving on and use me as a springboard for their own expression. The help, faith and openness from strangers have been incredibly humbling and educational.

When you have to wait on a weather window, for example, being locked in on the Scottish island of Islay ahead of a big crossing – is waiting a form of frustration or do you have a good mindset for moments like this?

When you're wired in a certain way, the mindset needed to manage waiting is an interesting one. I was a high energy, hyperactive kid with relentless energy, so initially, I found it hard to be a chameleon, simply changing frequency from high energy to standby mode. There are naturally some 'misses' sometimes when you'll find me positively vibrating as I deal with extremes! The challenge is coping with the transitions.

Ultimately, it's about trying to harness that optimum frequency when I need it, the one that keeps me together. So, whilst it can be hard to fight against my design, I know now that redirecting that energy is a good approach for me. I try to practice what I preach; doing what calms my mind is important, so I use breathing and exercise to keep me present.

Luckily the whisky on the Scottish expedition was phenomenal, so that was a cosy comfort – a bit of Dutch courage!





Corsewall Lighthouse Photo: Scarlet Visuals



You are currently supporting the 'dare2express' charity - can you tell us a little more about them and why you chose this charity in particular?

The name hits the nail on the head for me; I was originally drawn by Chief Executive John Dennis's honesty about his mental health. John set up dare2express to providing tipping point grants to give people access to professional help with their mental health. The mission, name and small size all resonated for me. I'm motivated by the transparent and direct potency of tipping point grants managed by people making a difference. My fundraising is an endorsement of daring to express; I'm demonstrating it's ok to express yourself.

We have loved your videos as they give an honest account of your experiences, warts and all! Do you believe this is the best way to connect with like-minded souls?

Thank you! I've come to value the depth of the connection you get with others when you show your vulnerability. It doesn't compromise your masculinity or your ability to be a badass! It does bring a kind of reassurance. You also learn a lot by expressing yourself to the camera and

watching it back, even when not all of it is pleasant or easy watching. It's always interesting examining the fine line between self-expression and self-indulgence, acknowledging the privilege of taking the time to undertake something like this. My emphasis is on learning; I hope my raw 'warts and all' delivery improves as I take on those lessons. The process is essential, and it's one I'm keen to share: trusting that vulnerability will pay off, inspiring truth and honesty, particularly in men.

I encourage everyone to manifest their beliefs and curate their appetite ruthlessly to jumpstart their development.

You are often alone for long periods – have you always been like this and is it what you prefer?

I prefer it in many ways; being able to do things on your own is very empowering. It also used to take quite a lot for me to let people in. People took advantage of me personally and professionally when I was younger, so I had trust issues. Now I'm mindful but much more comfortable, patient, and compassionate with people and their incentives.

Photo: Idyllic Islay - Julie Stitchell



I came to be happy in solitude as a reaction to finding people quite exhausting; the 'noise' was too much.



Photo:
Idyllic Islay -
Julie Stitchell



Mull of Galloway Photo: Scarlet Visuals

Portpatrick 2 Sept 2021
Photo: John Harris Photography



Charlie Head - The Last Stand 10 September



It's fair to say my experience of others has been educational! Some of the comfort with being on my own is natural, comes from conditioning from a young age. Not only am I an only child, but sometimes being with people made me feel more alone; I often felt like the world was against me. I came to be happy in solitude as a reaction to finding people quite exhausting; the 'noise' was too much.

Now I have more insight, and I'm not so bewildered. Resilience, strength, and empowerment came initially from that forced independence just to survive the environments I found so challenging. Being happy with yourself is most important; it stops you from getting lost in the vanity of who you are in relation to other people. The social experiment of circumnavigating the UK unsupported, relying on the kindness of strangers was the engine of that self-discovery, a catalyst to connection and conversations.

What plans do you have for the future?

When Covid interrupted my Scottish circumnavigation, I returned home to the Isle of Wight and used the time to set in motion the venture that this journey has inspired. This will be in the form of 'Explorers Creed'. I will be running expeditions to give people the immersive experiences I've learnt so much



Charlie Arriving in Wick
Photo: Alan McGee

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from myself. People learn and absorb in such different ways; Explorers Creed will address this head-on.

I'm returning to teaching with a wiser head on my shoulders, with a more effective toolkit and sharing my experience. Thankfully, times have changed in the leisure industry; there's more about 'what you can give back' at the grassroots and community levels. There's a welcome revolution in profit for purpose too (B Corps).

There remain many new boundaries to break in terms of UK and global expeditions,

and now more than ever, I want to bring people with me, exploring, showcasing and highlighting the parts of the world that need it the most.

I love film, media and artistic expression, so I want to write a book and produce different creative formats for film and TV.

Do you ever paddle 'just for fun' sometimes, or do you always have a planned mission?

I do paddle a bit just for fun, but I can be a bit possessed on the 'progress' front, so sometimes my 'fun' can turn out a little bit extreme! I love to surf, windsurf and kitesurf, and I always enjoy a good downwinder! It can take quite a bit to entertain me; I take a lot of pleasure in other people's fun and love seeing people happy.

I want to say a huge thank you not only to Charlie but to Lucy Partridge, without whom this article would not have been possible, and we hope upon reading this you have been moved and inspired by Charlie and his story as much as we have.

You can support Charlie's fundraising for dare2express here:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/dare2expressdonationscharliehead

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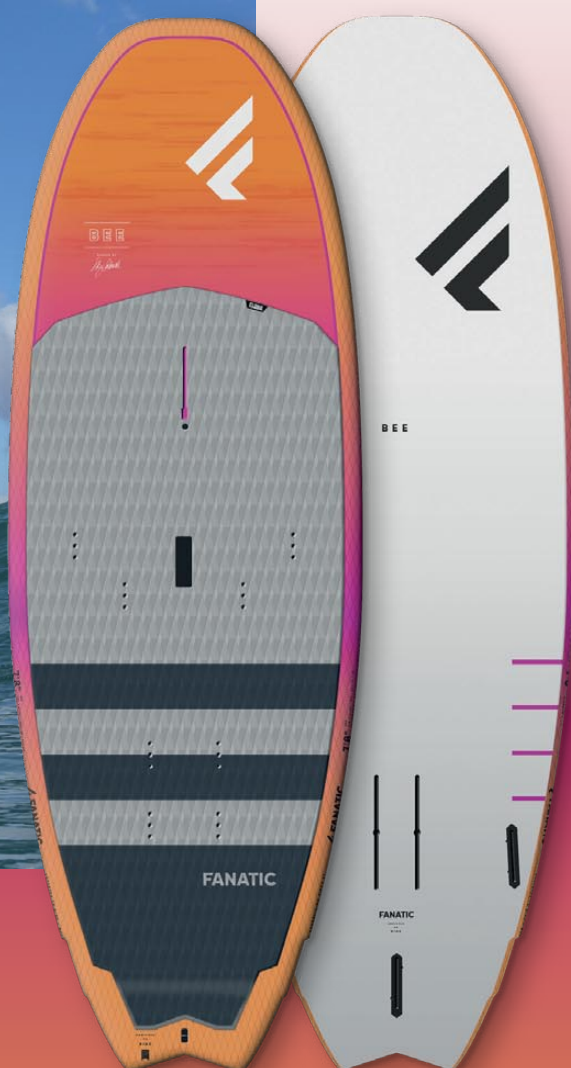
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WW

conversations

Photographer: Graham Woolven



Emma coaching

Interviews: Emma Love

Following the launch of the British Canoeing Stand Up Paddle Board White Water Coach Award in 2019, Emma Love interviewed four incredible women who were the first to qualify and four who are currently on route to qualifying. Since conducting these interviews in February 2020, many more women have started their own coaching journeys. A wonderful testament to the inclusivity of the incredible sport that is White Water SUP!

www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk

Louise Royle

www.facebook.com/louise.royle.9



Photo: Louise Royle

Louise Royle was the first woman to qualify as a British Canoeing white water SUP coach. Already a very accomplished WW kayaker and now in her sixties, Louise is an absolute tour de force in the WW SUP community. She is a constant on the SUP X podium, an ambassador for Tambo SUP and a highly qualified coach who mentors many current and aspiring British Canoeing WW SUP coaches.



#ShePaddles



Photo: Sarapiquí, Costa Rica by Ian Royle



Photo: Soca, Slovenia by Ian Royle

How did you discover paddling?

I was a qualified scuba diving instructor when I was still at school, I then ran the parachute club at university. I moved to Oxfordshire for work and was getting bored when a friend at work recommended joining Kingfisher Canoe Club. I went along for a kayak session and really enjoyed myself. At the end of the session, we had a go at capsizing and, much to the surprise of the coaches, I came up grinning and asked if I could do it again! That was in 1983 when I was only 24 years old. I am still a member, I have been on the committee nearly every year, and I'm currently a trustee and senior coach.

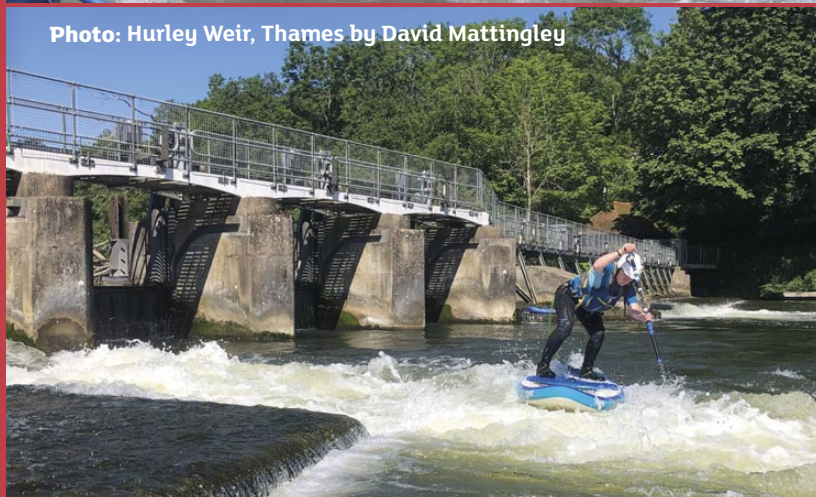
What sparked your interest in paddleboarding?

In 2016, my friend Jen suggested that, rather than being classroom-based, we should get Phil Hadley to come and do the British Canoeing SUP Discipline Specific Module for our coaching update. It was so much fun that we immediately went and bought our first paddleboards! I was approaching retirement, and I felt that SUP was perfect for my core and could help me continue with WW kayaking. But within two weeks, I was taking it to my local weir to play on

Photo: Sun Kosi, Nepal by Ian Royle



Photo: Hurley Weir, Thames by David Mattingley



In my 50s I kayaked the Zambezi and the Grand Canyon. When I was 60, I paddled the Sun Kosi in Nepal with Darren Clarkson

Photo: Sutton Courtenay Weir, Thames by Ian Royle



the white water wave trains. My immediate thought was, "Wait a minute, Louise, this is a lot of fun. You're not too old to enjoy this, and you don't have to think about paddling purely flat water yet!" A few months later, I met Barry Hughes (Nottingham White Water SUP) – he let me have a go on his board on the upper part of the Tryweryn and gave me my first lesson!

Would you now say your white water water craft of choice is a SUP?

Yes! SUP has given me the 'challenge' to continue to push myself in the white water environment. It gives me the challenge of working with the water plus the challenge of a new craft, so I can have all the 'fun' without having to push myself above grade four. Continuous grade four kayaking is too much for me now.

Which rivers have you paddled?

In my 50s I kayaked the Zambezi and the Grand Canyon. When I was 60, I paddled the Sun Kosi in Nepal with Darren Clarkson; this was a raft supported trip where I could SUP as much as possible, including the grade three-plus and four-minus sections where it





was pool drop. When it was continuously above grade three, I kayaked. I have also WWSUP'ed in Slovenia, Austria and Costa Rica with Davide Sartoni. Although I enjoy park and play, my main aim is white water SUP exploration! I love getting out into the wild and paddling natural rivers, enjoying the challenge, the adventure, the places it takes me and the people I meet.

Which of the WW SUP communities do you regularly paddle with?

It is fantastic how much the WW SUP community in the UK has grown over the last few years. I paddle locally with Kingfisher Canoe Club, Nottingham WW SUP, White Water SUP UK, South Wales White Water SUP, as well as with Davide Sartoni (USA) and with Honza Rott and the Tambo family from Prague when I can.

What are your recommendations for women who may be wondering whether to go down the coaching route?

To be a good coach, I think you need to be passionate about the sport. There is no point in trying to coach something

unless you absolutely love it. You have also got to enjoy learning. If you enjoy learning, then you will pass that on to the people you are coaching. Be confident enough in your abilities. One of the things that I know people struggle with is thinking that they are not a good enough paddler. There's no need to strive for perfection – aim at being effective, not perfect because nobody's perfect and everybody is different.

Work on your skills so that you can paddle consistently, effectively and comfortably in the environment in which you wish to coach. Paddle with other coaches, observe and help with coaching other people. Everybody has their own style, their things that work.

Develop various soft skills which you probably already have but don't realise the importance of, e.g. interpersonal skills, connecting with people, treating people as individuals. Work out their specific needs and goals; how you can use your knowledge of not just the technical side, but the tactical and everything else to help them progress.

Remember, there's no such thing as a perfect coach; it's a journey. The best coaches are the coaches who are forever changing, updating, adapting, and evolving.

And in terms of personal progression - what would you recommend?

I'm a great advocate of paddling 'up, down and sideways'! In other words, paddle with as many different people as you can rather than with the same people all the time. You can learn a lot from more experienced paddlers, but you can become too dependent on them if you're not careful.

Paddle with people who are not as experienced as yourself, and you'll find that you're probably better than you thought you were. Paddle with peers to consolidate your skills and learn how to lead a group. Combining all of these things together will help you to progress and have FUN.



Joyce Johnston has been white water stand up paddle boarding since 2017, when she was introduced to the sport in the depths of a Scottish winter. Currently developing her coaching practice, Joyce's enthusiasm for SUP is as infectious as her passion for The Moray SUP Club community she paddles with.

Photo: John Roberts

Joyce Johnston

www.facebook.com/groups/moraysupclub



#ShePaddles



Tell me about your paddling background.

I don't have a background in paddling; I'm not a kayaker or a canoeist. SUP is the only paddling I have ever done. I used to almost apologise for this, but now I am at a point of saying, actually, what I am doing is as legitimate as any kayaker coming into this discipline.

How did you get into WW SUP?

In 2017, Jim Gibson put up a post on Facebook asking if people were interested in stand up paddleboarding. For those of you who don't know, Jim ran Aquaplay (now retired), is a well-known paddler in Scotland, and he lives just down the road from me! As I say, I had no paddling experience, but I had previously done some enthusiastic but not terribly skilled surfing on a foamy board. So, when I saw Jim's post, I thought, well, that's going to be worth a go!

A few weeks later (in January), we met at Tamdhu on the River Spey. I looked at the water, and my immediate thought was, *"Oh my goodness, I'll go in this river. I'll be pushed down to Craigellachie before they know it!"* That is not what actually happened, (well there was a bit of washing), and the feeling was great, just great!

What made you decide to continue with paddleboarding post this WW SUP initiation in the depths of a Scottish winter?

It is something to do with the time of my life I am at – I am 55 years old. It's not some kind of midlife crisis, but there's something about my having a demanding full-time job and knowing how to do it, whereas, with SUP, I am an absolute beginner. Paddleboarding is, for me, an opportunity to try something new that I have no experience in and is about being able to allow myself to learn - that complete immersion is where the thrill is for me.

Do you have rivers local to you?

It takes me seven minutes to walk down to the river. To drive up to Tamdhu, it takes 12 minutes or so. The river Spey is also very close. This last year I have been driving up to Aberlour, paddling down to Craigellachie, which is about two miles in total, locking up my board and then walking back to get my van. The question would be, why would you not go out on the river with it being so accessible? I am so very lucky to have all this close by.

Is the community you paddle with important to you?

Fundamentally, yes! Community is as important as the new knowledge and skills that I have learned. As I say, I knew Jim before (we used to work for the same council), but without SUP, our paths would never have crossed again. Because of paddleboarding, I now have a whole community of people around me and they are all really dear to me now.

Tell me about the club you paddle with.

The Moray SUP Club was the first paddleboard club to be affiliated with the Scottish Canoe Association. The essence is if there is water, we will paddle it! You just have to make sure you have the kit you need for the different environments. We have lovely sandy beaches at Lossiemouth on the Moray Firth. We have the sea, the estuary, slow-moving rivers, white water, the lochs and the white water course at Grantully.



I understand SCA were very keen to talk to the club about the membership?

We did a kind of 'wee' podcast with SCA because they were particularly interested in our membership's growth rate and gender profile. To put it into context, we became an official affiliated club two weeks before the lockdown in March of last year, but, even so, our membership continued to grow. Our profile of membership is fundamentally different to existing clubs because we have more women than men.

And why do you think you have a higher ratio of women to men?

I think this is because of the sense of 'community' – paddle boarding is an activity that has not already been 'claimed', and I wonder if that's something that has encouraged women to find a space. It is not one of those sports where you have to nudge blokes out of the way; it is just a space that is already there that women can come into.

We know through research that if women see other women (who look like them)

having a go at a sport, they feel more encouraged to have a go.

Do you think that your being on the water and on social media has helped other women to think about white water SUP as a sport for them?

Yes! This is something that is quite important to me with my paddling. I am a feminist, and a social worker and equality is very important to me. It is nice to be able to inspire other women to do positive things. For example, one woman, Jacqui, comes to mind who I surf with now as well. She had seen a post that Jim had put up of me going through the Washing Machine on the River A'an, and she said, *"I want to be able to do that; I want to be just like Joyce!"* I thought, how lovely, I have inspired another woman – it was such a nice feeling!

So yes, if women look at me and see that my hair is grey and they also see that I can really shift my board and this inspires them, that is a lovely gift to give to women.

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100 miles

Grasmere



and 13 lakes

Lake District adventure to raise money for Diabetes UK

Words: John Waynforth

Pics: Stephen Angell and Adrian Angell

Over the weekend of June 26th and 27th, Adrian Angell undertook a fundraiser for Diabetes UK by paddling 100 miles on 13 of the 17 lakes of the Lake District. Adrian, 55, a chemical engineer based in Cincinnati, Ohio, planned to complete this challenge in 2020, but they postponed the fundraiser until this year because of the Covid 19 related restrictions. Adrian grew up in Seascale, Cumbria, and the challenge was an especially meaningful homecoming after the separation from family in England caused by the pandemic.



The original idea was to paddle 100 miles along all of the lakes of the Lake District. Adrian explained, "When I Googled the statistics for the Lake District, I noticed that if I added up the lengths of all the lakes, it came to just over 50 miles, so I decided to double this to make it 100 miles." He elaborated, "In previous years, I've raised money by paddling across the English Channel, across Scotland, and last year I paddled 50 miles along the Ohio River close to where I live. I feel that I need to keep increasing the difficulty of the challenges so that people can know that what I'm attempting is legitimately hard and worthy of donating money to Diabetes UK." He began fundraising in 2018 following a suggestion from his niece, Megan, 25, from Derby, who has type 1 diabetes and has received help and support from Diabetes UK since her diagnosis.

DERWENTWATER

Derwentwater, at 4.8 km long, 1.6 km wide and 22 metres deep, is just a short stroll from Keswick town along well maintained footpaths. Known also as 'Keswick's Lake', it has a long historical and literary background.

BUTTERMERE

Buttermere – the lake by the dairy pastures – is 2 km long, 570 metres wide and 23 metres deep. The classic combination of lakes and mountains has made this popular with visitors.

Derwentwater



RYDAL WATER

Rydal Water is one of the smallest lakes at 1.2 km long, 400 metres wide, with a depth of 17 metres. Steps lead up from the western end of the lake to 'Wordsworth's Seat' – reputedly the poet's favourite viewpoint.

ENNERDALE

Ennerdale is the most westerly of the lakes, and the most remote, so it offers, even in high season, a place to escape. It is a deep glacial lake, 4 km long, 1.2 km wide and 45 metres deep. The water is very clear, and contains a variety of fish and is the only lake that does not have a road running alongside it.

Permission to paddle

In the process of planning, Adrian learned that the lakes are managed by either The Lake District National Park Authority, The National Trust, United Water Utilities, and private estates. By contacting the responsible parties for each of the lakes, Adrian was able to get permission to paddle on all of the lakes except for Haweswater Reservoir, Esthwaite Water, Brothers Water and Elter Water. United Utilities don't allow boats on Haweswater due to the high current close to the dam. Esthwaite Water is a trout fishery. Brothers Water and Elter Water are areas of special scientific interest, with unique flora and fauna that would be disturbed by launching from the banks.

The list of lakes that Adrian paddled, in order, are Ullswater, Thirlmere, Grasmere,

Windermere, Rydal Water, Conistone Water, Wastwater, Ennerdale Water, Loweswater, Crummock Water, Buttermere, Bassenthwaite Lake, and Derwent Water. Adrian said, "Tracking down the authorities and filling out the appropriate paperwork to make sure I had permission was an extra step, but worth it. The support and advice I received was a bonus. Since I was representing a charity, I wanted to do things properly."

Challenging roads

Almost as challenging as the paddling was driving along narrow fell roads and finding parking at some of the lakes. Adrian explained, "Ahead of the challenge, I spent a day scoping out the launch spots at each lake, including parking and permits. I did this on a weekday, in rainy weather. My



CRUMMOCK WATER
Crummock Water with the mighty Grassmoor on the west and the fells of Mellbreak on the east, has unparalleled views from either side. It is 4 km long, 1.2 km wide and 42 metres deep and is a clear, rocky bottomed lake flanked by steep slate.

BASSENTHWAITE LAKE

Bassenthwaite Lake, owned by the National Park Authority, is one of the largest at 6.4 km long and 1.2 km wide, but also one of the shallowest at 21 metres. It is the most northerly of the lakes, and has no major settlements on its shores. Its is often full of sailing boats from Bassenthwaite Sailing Club.

LOWESWATER

Nestled in a wooded valley in the far west of the Lake District, in the Vale of Lorton, Loweswater is approximately 1.6 km in length, 800 metres wide and 18 metres deep. It is a peaceful lake that is often bypassed..

Buttermere



brother, Stephen, then joined me to help with driving and logistics during the challenge at the weekend, and the number of tourists and traffic, especially around the popular lakes, was very high. The congestion slowed us down a lot and caused us to have to come back to complete Rydal Water because the White Moss car park we planned to use was full when we first tried." Each day began with a 4 a.m. alarm. On Saturday morning, Adrian started paddling at 05.00 on Ullswater at Pooley Bridge, finally hitting the 100-mile mark on Derwent Water.

white-capped waves

The conditions were generally good for paddling, except on Thirlmere, which was the second lake paddled. A north wind funnelled straight down the reservoir, and



Ullswater

ULLSWATER

Ullswater is the second largest lake in the Lake District at 12 km long. It is on average 1.2 km wide and has a maximum depth of 62 metres at Howtown. The lake has three distinct bends giving it a dog's leg appearance.

GRASMERE

Grasmere, at 1.6 km long, 800 metres wide and 22 metres deep, is an attractive and popular tourist area, described by Wordsworth as, "The most loveliest spot than man hath found," the area of Lakeland that he most loved.

Adrian was heading into the wind against white-capped waves. Sunday was almost perfect, with very low wind on all the lakes. Adrian said, "My favourite lake is Wastwater. Wastwater is the lake closest to where I grew up, so I have great memories. It's also one of the quietest lakes, having fewer tourists, and clear, deep water, with beautiful views of Scafell Pike and surrounding mountains."

'Check - Clean - Dry' protocol

Another key consideration for the challenge was to ensure there was no impact on the lakes. Some of the lakes are in relatively poor health, and the National Trust is trying to avoid further deterioration by promoting the prevention of the spread of non-native invasive species. To help with this, paddlers must follow the simple 'Check - Clean - Dry'

protocol. The protocol involves checking and wiping down the board to clean and dry before entering the next lake.

Diabetes UK

The motivation for the challenge was to support Diabetes UK. Adrian added, "Diabetes UK have helped and supported Megan over the years. She went to Diabetes UK youth events as a teenager, including residential outdoor activity centres with other young people with diabetes. She has used their helpline to get advice, and research sponsored by the charity has helped provide better treatments. I hope that my efforts will help them to continue their vital work."

Clare Howarth, Head of the North of England at Diabetes UK, said, "We've seen demand for our services reach record levels over the



Grasmere



Photo at the 100 miles mark on Derwent Water



Wastwater

WASTWATER

Situated in the Wasdale Valley, Wastwater is 4.8 km long, 800 metres wide and 79 metres deep – the deepest of all the lakes. Surrounded by mountains, Red Pike, Kirk Fell, Great Gable and Scafell Pike – England's highest mountain.

CONISTON WATER

Coniston Water is the fifth largest of the lakes, at 8 km long, and with a maximum depth of 56 metres. It has three small islands, all owned by the National Trust.

THIRLMERE

Thirlmere, at 5.6 km long, 2 km wide and 48 metres deep, was originally two smaller lakes. The lakes were dammed and the waters became one vast reservoir. In the process, the settlements of Armboth and Wythburn were submerged.

WINDERMERE

Windermere Lake, at 16.9 km long, 1.6 km wide and 67 metres deep, is the largest natural lake in both the Lake District and in England. The long thin lake itself forms the central spine of the Windermere Lake area of the Lake District. This area is also known as the South Lakes.

last year, while our own funding has been significantly impacted. More so than ever, people with diabetes need us, but we need fundraising support to be able to continue fighting their corner."

"We want to thank Adrian for this incredible effort. Without the help of generous

supporters like him, we simply would not be able to offer support to the thousands of people with diabetes contacting our helpline, to campaign to keep people with diabetes safe in the workplace, or to invest in vital research – taking us a step closer to our vision of a world where diabetes can do no harm."



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The strange world of WW SUP

Words: Corran Addison

Pics: Addison archives

In this article, as a former pro kayaker and designer, and now also a SUP user and designer since 2008, I'm going to talk about my early adventures in whitewater SUP, and a few lessons learned the hard way. SUP on rivers can be laid-back, or challenging, and everywhere in between.

In a study taken on Sup Connect, in 2011, SUP surfing (where SUP restarted in about 2004) was down to only 25% of the total SUP market, and whitewater SUP was already up to 8% of total SUP users. Since then, the surfing aspect of SUP has dropped to just 5%, not because it's shrinking, but because recreational SUP has grown so much.

While I have been unable to find any statistics on current whitewater SUP participation, as a sport, it is complex and contains more inherent risk than other types of SUP. Yet, it is flourishing because the fun factor is off the charts. It also allows people to access their local rivers differently than ever before.

I used to run the most prominent surf school in Canada in Montreal. This might not seem strange until you stop and think that Montreal is 500km from the nearest ocean. The unique thing about my surf school is that we were teaching people to surf on the same river waves that had made Montreal famous in the kayaking world. Students would pay me to take them out for two days and show them how to swim out through the rapids, catch the wave, stand up and surf, and then swim back to shore through more rapids.

A few hours into the first day of a summer 2005 surf class, one of the students suddenly said he wanted his money back. He'd clearly understood that we would be standing up on our surfboards and would be 'surfing' downriver through the rapids. This swimming around wasn't what he'd signed up for.

Needless to say, we laughed at him. Not only did we refuse to give him his money back, but we used him as the brunt of our lunchtime jokes with other students over the months and years.

Standing up on a board and going down through the rapids! Honestly?

SUP was in its infancy in 2005, even in Hawaii, where modern SUP had just been born, so perhaps I can be forgiven for not connecting the dots.



Ex-pro kayaker

However, evidence in favour of my embarrassing oversight is overwhelming. I was an ex-pro kayaker, living in a wonderland of river waves, teaching surfing every day on those waves, and I never made the link to try to add a paddle to the mix. To make matters even worse, crazy kayaker and inventor Jeff Snyder had started to run rivers standing upon an inflatable 'Ducky' (think one-person raft) with a two-bladed paddle in the mid-1990s. My inability to make the link is as significant as the 'Strapped Crew' in Hawaii not discovering tow-in-surfing until 20 years after world champion Mark Richards was pulled into Pipeline by a jet ski in front of 20 of the world's most prominent and influential surfers.

By any standard, a colossal blunder.

In the late winter of 2007, my good friend and mad inventor who now works for Slingshot, Julien Fillion, introduced me to SUP for the first time. We spent a weekend at the beach in New Hampshire surfing and paddleboarding, and it was that same weekend on our drive home that it occurred to me that it might be possible to take a paddleboard down a whitewater river. By the spring thaw of 2008, I had my first river shaped SUP ready to go.

Any kayaker will tell you that as a kayak's volume goes down, as length comes down, and as rails get more 'pinched', the kayak becomes more fun to play with in waves and harder to run rapids with. A beginner kayaker is generally put into a boat with a decent length, raised and rounded 'rails' (edges), and a generous amount of reserve volume. With massive volume and rocker, expert kayakers looking to push their limits in the most extreme rapids take this to the next level.

The Rapidfire

I surmised that as an expert river person (kayaker and surfer) but a beginner stand up river paddler (whitewater SUP skills didn't exist), I would need something between a beginner kayak and an extreme kayak in design, adapted for standing. Aptly named the Rapidfire, my first board was quirky looking by comparison to a 'normal' SUP of the time, to say the least.

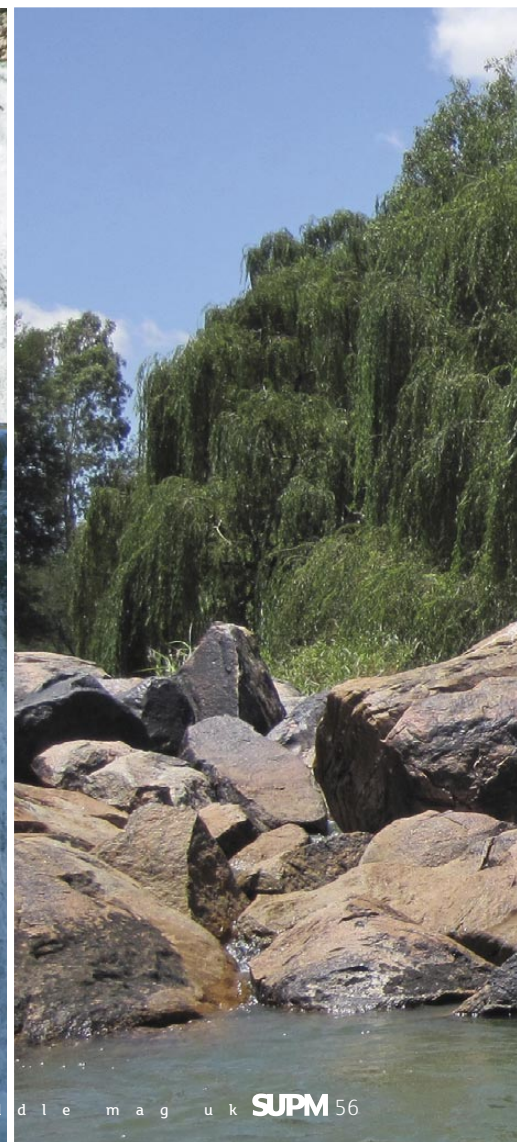
My first tests were an encouraging success. I took my board to the rapids in Chambly, Quebec – a one-mile, high volume section of waves, swirling currents and eddies, a few small waterfall-like drops and a couple of healthy crunching hydraulics called 'holes'. I spent as much time climbing back onto the board as I did paddling it, but as the day progressed and I did run after run, I started

to improve, and by the end of the day, I could make the entire run standing (albeit not elegant). By the end of the week, I was making more challenging moves through the rapids, going from eddy to eddy, and had started to paddle the board like it was an Olympic slalom kayak running a course of suspended gates; feathering my paddle, guiding the board with precision and drive. Life was grand!

Two weeks later, I took my board to the Rouge River on the Ontario/Quebec border. The river is a class 3-4 of whitewater with some tight channels, a boulder-strewn riverbed, holes and waves chaotically placed with all sorts of converging currents coming at you, and a large waterfall that I decided to hurl myself over.

I was significantly less successful on this outing. It wasn't until years later that I discovered that at about the same time, in other parts of the world, there were other whitewater kayakers, like Dan Gavere and Charlie McArthur, to name but a few going through the same process I was.

Perhaps we could have compared notes and eliminated some of the trial and error from the process. Certainly, we would have





alleviated many bruised muscles and aching bodies. On that run and other subsequent ones, I came to some important realisations with regards to safety. Granted, these insights came on sections of river that were, and still are, quite tricky for SUP, and most folks will also choose a mellower (and wiser!) learning progression than I did; yet these lessons hold true for any piece of whitewater, from class 1 to class 5.

Flying circus acts

I was wearing a standard 'bucket' style helmet that the kayakers wear. This is fine when sitting in a kayak, and you spend most of your time upright, and when you flip over, you are generally in a forward tuck protecting your face. However, my forays into the water from the paddleboard consisted mainly of unexpected and dramatic flying circus acts, catapulting uncontrollably through the air. Face first, head first, or teeth first were the order of the day as I ploughed into the water again and again.

There are several full-face helmets on the market for extreme kayaking that are light and offer the necessary protection, but no matter what you get, I highly recommend one. Sadly, most whitewater SUP paddlers today still use minimal protection helmets.

I was tethered to the board with a standard surfing leash. My theory was that you're always safer on the board than in the water. More people die in whitewater from foot entrapment at the bottom of the river than from anything else. Not swimming down a rapid is the best way to avoid getting your foot wedged between two rocks mid current. So, being tethered to the board



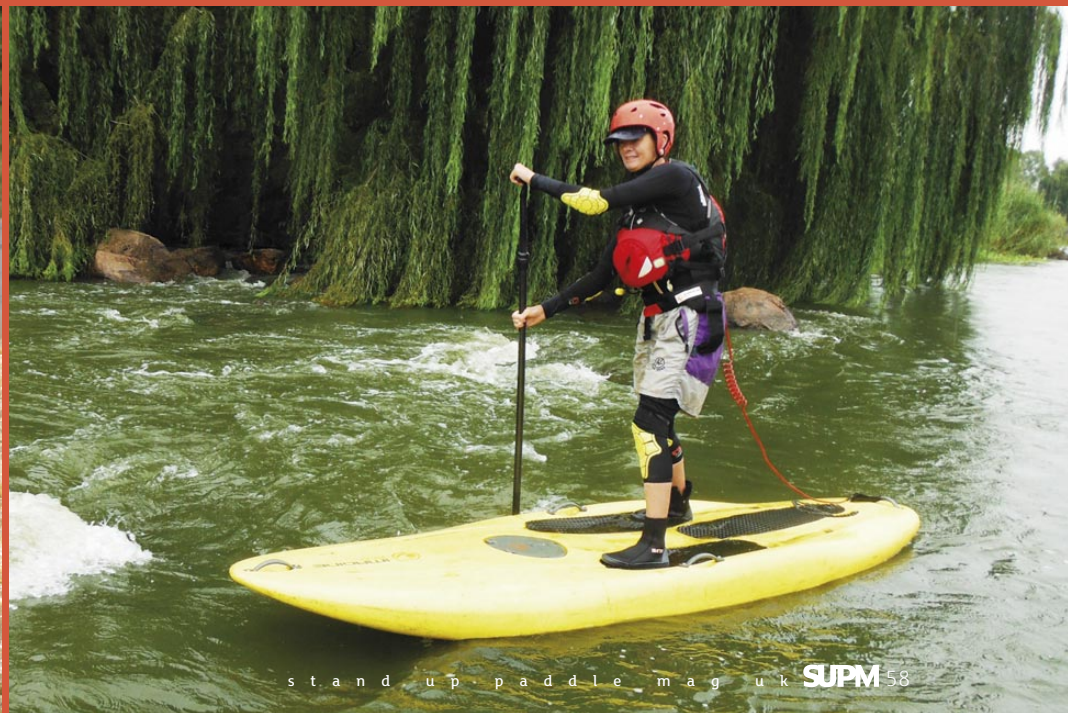
Above: Dan Gavere
Photo: Richard Hallman

means that after a fall, I can recover the board quickly, get back on, and both be out of the water where it's safe and have the opportunity to finish the rapid.

However, on one occasion after a fall, the board went one side of a rock, and I the other, and there I was dangling midstream by my ankle. Luckily I'd had the presence of mind to attach the leash to a 'weak string' on the board, and it broke, setting me free. But it was physically impossible for me to bend my torso against the current and

release the ankle strap on the leash. It was clear that a safer leash was required. By my next outing, I had the prototype of a waist-mounted safety leash, with a quick release, coiled so it doesn't drag, and had multiple 'fail-safe' release points on it that can be set according to conditions.

As I fell more, I learned how to fall, and I began to make a twisting movement, so I'd land in a back flop. This reduced the amount of 'penetration' into the water, keeping me on the watery surface instead



of the rocky bottom, and also cut down on the number of 'face-first' encounters with rocks. However, my top end kayaking lifejacket was designed to be comfortably worn while seated inside a kayak; as such, almost a third of my lower spine and kidneys were exposed to rocks, and by the end of the day, both were tender.

Impact vest

I solved the problem by buying an impact vest designed by Dainese for jet ski use. The jacket is long, covering kidneys and spine and the spine itself has a plastic articulated guard. At \$400, this was quite a hit to the wallet, and Dainese has discontinued the jacket, so the point is moot.

But since then, I have migrated to wearing motocross-style upper body armour on rocky rivers with a spine guard, shoulder pads, and elbow armour under a wakeboarding type PFD (longer and thinner, so it's easy to slide back up onto the board).

Lastly, my shins were bruised and extremely tender by the end of the day. Some of this was from rock impact, but as much was from the constant climbing back onto the board mid rapid after each fall. Clearly, protection was needed. It wasn't so

them all – not an agenda to push any one kind over another.

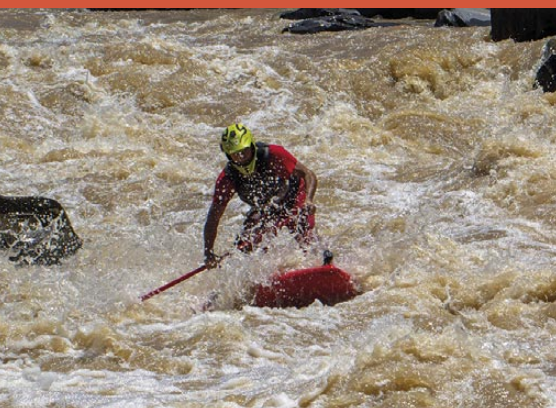
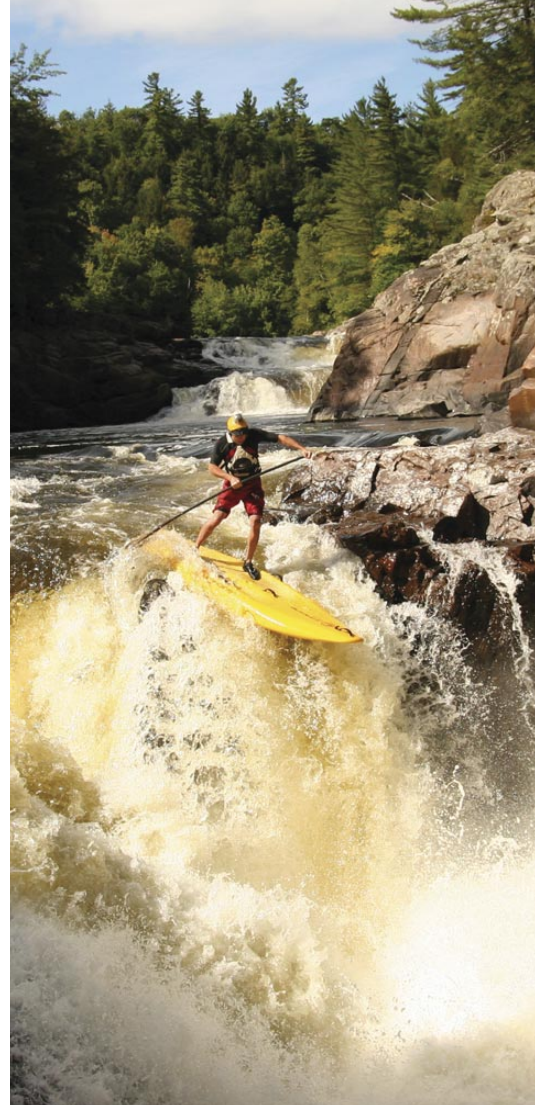
Plastic

Plastic is hard to beat, simply put. Kayaking has clearly shown us that the balance weighs heavily in plastic's favour once you consider all the positives and negatives. The plastic itself is all but unbreakable so that you can beat the snot out of your board, and it'll just take more of it with a smile. Traditionally, plastic boards are heavier (around 50 lbs).

A considerable advantage is that the plastic itself is paraffin-based, so it's slick and tends to slide over rocks rather than catching and throwing you off. As you start to run rivers with more rocks and contact with those rocks becomes part of the desired line, this sliding versus sticking becomes an essential factor. I can run with relative ease rivers with a plastic SUP that I have yet to see anyone run successfully with an inflatable or epoxy/Kevlar board.

Epoxy/Kevlar

Epoxy and epoxy/Kevlar boards have their place and always will, but they are not for everyone. Firstly, you can make the board stiffer than either plastic or inflatable. The



much your knees, as shins, so the logical place to look was mountain biking armour, where the range of fit and price is abundant. I've also experimented with creating full lower body armour like the motocross tops for really steep rocky creeks, but production minimums have so far excluded this from coming to market.

Board construction

Board construction is another hot topic, and while we all have preferences, the fact is that each method has its advantages and disadvantages. There is no perfect way to make a SUP board. The three main methods are hard shell plastic, hard shell epoxy and finally, inflatable. I happen to manufacture all three, so my opinion on this is based on experience and profound testing and use

stiffer the board, the more your energy goes into manoeuvring the board and less into flexing the board. You can also make them 25 lbs, though they are not as strong as either plastic or inflatable. With the use of Kevlar (a necessity for rivers to add strength and durability), an epoxy board used carefully in whitewater can last for years, and paddling a 25lb board is an absolute pleasure when it's stiff and the shape is correct.

The downside of epoxy is that they are expensive, and you have to look after them. But if you paddle in whitewater rivers that consist primarily of water rather than rocks, they are hard to beat. The board will need some repairs from time to time, but if you maintain your board, you have a high-performance tool that is very satisfying to use.

Inflatables

Inflatable boards are presently the most common in whitewater. Many companies are making inflatable boards, so availability is widespread, which is contributing to their popularity. There are no mould costs associated with making an inflatable, again contributing to availability. Finally, this is where they shine; they roll up conveniently into a backpack, making them easy to transport and store, particularly for international travel.

The design, however, is limited. The construction process of drop stitch requires that the deck and hull be parallel. The raw material comes in 4", 6" and 8" thickness. As you go up in thickness, so the 'edges' of the board become more forgiving. Still, your



centre of gravity goes up as you stand higher off the water on a thicker board, almost negating the advantage gained by having raised rails.

Inflatable SUPs for whitewater are here to stay despite the designs themselves being very limited and the material tending to 'grab' rocks as you slide over them, throwing you off. Standing on them in whitewater is like trying to do yoga on a waterbed, and you get bucked around in the rapids far more than you would on a hard shell. It takes more skill to paddle an inflatable than a hard shell because of the combination of shape and the 'bucking factor.' Still, mass availability and the ease of storage/transport are both strong arguments in their favour.

There is no perfect solution to the board quandary. As a manufacturer, I've tried to address inflatable boards' rail thickness/standing area problem with an 8" thick board design and 4" standing area, getting the best of both worlds. Yet I personally never use the inflatable unless I'm flying somewhere and don't want to get gouged by the airlines. In my opinion, even my inflatable design makes running rapids a whole level harder than the equivalent hard shell. But the ability to roll it up and carry it

on public transport or an airline can be a huge advantage. It's hard to say what the future holds, and with my new co-construction method of using a plastic outer shell that has a complex design shape, blended with an inflatable drop stitch inside, making the whole thing both stiffer and lighter than in the past, this appears to be one of the more promising futures.

inspirational SUP movies

Since the earliest days of whitewater SUP, the sport has grown in size and the skill set of those doing it. Guys like Paul Clark in the USA, Masayuki Takahata in Japan, and many others, are taking SUP to all new heights, while the old guard like Gavere and I hang on for the ride. There are some inspirational SUP movies to be found on YouTube like iAfrica and River Walkers that are worth watching.

Whitewater SUP is here to stay. Compared to recreational SUP use, whitewater is still a small sector of the sport, but it is going strong considering how hard it is to do. And today, if I ran into my surf student who thought we'd be going down the rapids standing on our boards, I'm guessing he would say to me – *"Who's the idiot now?"*



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A guide to staying **INJURY-FREE** while paddling

Words: Leanne Bird

Photos: Leanne Bird, Simon Bartlett, Piotr Kadziela, Chris Davies and Jon Siddal

SUP is a fun and generally low impact sport. However, the wrong choice of equipment, poor technique, muscle imbalances, tension and overuse can lead to muscles strains or joint injuries. The last thing you want is to take time out of your beloved sport, particularly if you're doing it competitively.

It's important to remember no individual is the same, and therefore there are differences in limitations and ways our bodies behave. My yoga teacher says, 'there is no perfect pose; there is just your perfection in that pose' (Jeenal Mehta); I feel this is true in paddleboarding. There's no one size fits all; your size and proportions; previous injuries; they all play a part. Consequently, although this guide gives you some general tips, it is often with research, exploration and time you find what is suitable for you.

Further, it's not all about the body. The body does as the mind tells it. Thus, your mind can also play a huge part in paddle performance and injury risk.

The most common issues are lower back pain and shoulder injuries. People also suffer from problems with their knees and feet. Within this article, we will explore some contributory factors to these injuries/issues and how you can prevent and rectify them.

Equipment

When choosing your board and paddle, it's essential to think about how you will use them and what suits you. This will not only make your sessions more enjoyable and enable you to take on more challenging conditions but cause less strain on your muscles and joints and stop you tiring prematurely, a cause of injuries and mistakes. It's also important to consider the weight of and how you carry your equipment to the water, e.g. using shoulder straps, taking bags off the board, adjusting for the wind, and switching sides to keep muscular balance.





Board

In the simplest terms, the bigger the surface area of the board, the more resistance in the water. Therefore, too big a board can lead to early fatigue and poor technique, potentially resulting in injury. A board too small for you, however, can lead to bowing or be too unstable. Poor quality and ill inflated boards also cause excess resistance.

Various board shapes help reduce resistance, improve stability, or work with the conditions, e.g. longer narrower boards, particularly those with hull shaped noses, have improved glide and consequently are better for touring and racing. A wide board can make it more difficult for those with narrower shoulder girdles, reduced mobility or previous/existing injuries to keep the paddle vertical (if looking face on) and lead to strain.

Therefore, look for a board that's a suitable volume for your weight and appropriate shape for you and your discipline. All-rounders are great if you want to do several disciplines but can only afford one board; however, they often lack more specialist features.

Paddle

Paddles that are too long will begin to strain your shoulders and upper back, often leading to impingement injuries. Paddles that are too short for your discipline will cause strain on the lower back through over hinging. The general guide is for the paddle height to be 6-8" higher than your head, but this does change slightly with various disciplines, e.g. shorter for white water or surfing and longer for racing.

The weight and flex of your paddle is a factor too. Aluminium paddles, although robust, are heavy, causing unnecessary strain. Fibreglass





paddles are lighter, and carbon fibre is even more so. The less flex, the more efficient the stroke; however, too much stiffness puts unnecessary strain on the body. The taller and larger you are, generally the stiffer you need the shaft to be, thus accommodating for added stress you put through the paddle and increased shaft length. Adjustable paddles provide options but also add weight.

Finally, consider the blade. Larger blades are suitable for power and speed, so they work well for surfing or sprint racing. However, for longer distances, bigger blades place added strain and cause early fatigue. Also, the taller and heavier you are, or the larger board you have, the bigger blade you may need.

Before deciding on a suitable paddle and board, please do your research, get advice from your SUP coach, speak to SUP retailers, look at what brands themselves recommend and wherever possible, try before you buy.

Position, posture and paddle technique

When paddling regularly or doing more challenging and longer paddles, position, posture, and paddle technique are key.

Your feet should be either side of the handle for general paddling to make sure the board is 'in trim', but this may need adjusting for bags, little ones or pups! Being in the wrong place can cause excessive effort from increased resistance or dealing with the board wanting to turn. As you progress or do different disciplines, you will find instances when moving your feet into different positions is beneficial.

It would be best if you stood with your knees slightly bent, weight over toes and heels. When you paddle, you want to bend forward from the hip, extend your arms, engage your core, and keep your back straight. As you power through, lift your chest upright, thrusting your hips to create drive, using your paddle as a lever. An effective paddle should be creating power mainly through the core and legs, and your arms should not be the main source of power.

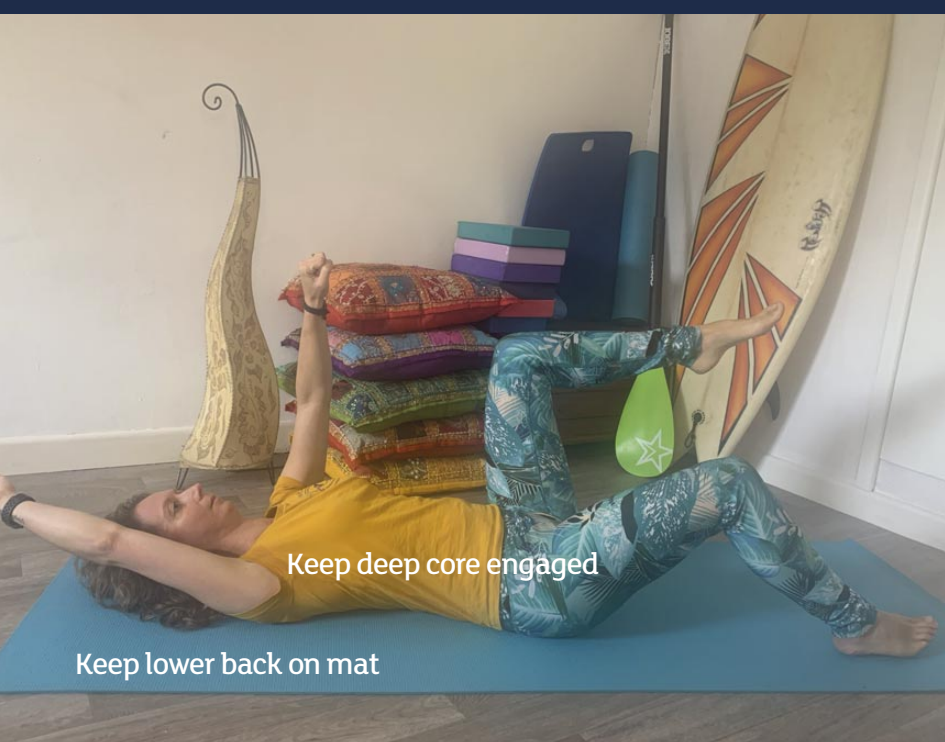
Paddling injuries or issues can be caused by; not keeping your neck neutral; overreaching from the shoulder girdle; lifting the top arm too high; bending at your spine instead of from your hips; pushing your hips to the side; twisting from your hips, putting pressure on one knee; or, gripping the board with your feet. If you struggle to achieve the desired technique, it's often one or more of the following; poor body awareness, muscular imbalance, muscle weakness and previous injuries.



Dead bugs
x 10 reps
x 3 sets



Alternate legs

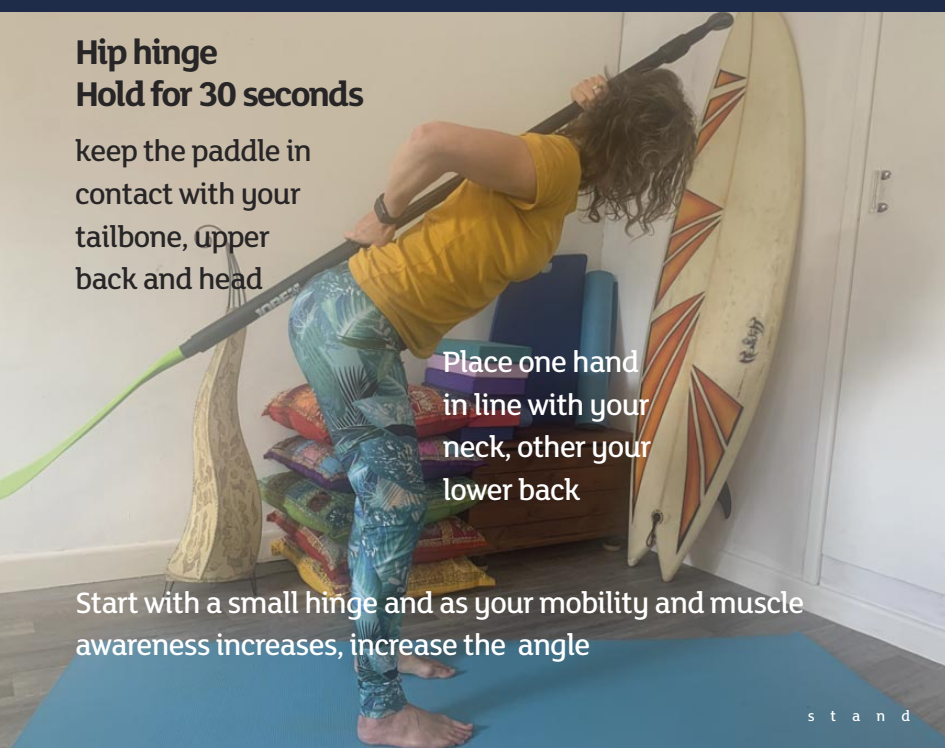


Keep deep core engaged

Keep lower back on mat

Hip hinge
Hold for 30 seconds

keep the paddle in
contact with your
tailbone, upper
back and head



Place one hand
in line with your
neck, other your
lower back

Start with a small hinge and as your mobility and muscle
awareness increases, increase the angle

Another key consideration is warming up and cooling down. An effective warm-up will ensure muscles are warm and joints are fluid. Stretches following a session will help prevent muscles shortening.

Once you've been paddling for a while and want to challenge your technical ability or distance, these finer aspects of technique are essential. Therefore, it's helpful to get progressive lessons. You could attend improver sessions, club sessions with a qualified coach, or ideally, approach a qualified ASI SUP Technical Coach who will analyse your stroke more thoroughly using video analysis.

Suppose you want to improve your range of movement and strength generally (which I recommend for all paddlers). In that case,



attending regular yoga or SUP yoga classes will help increase your mobility and balance your posture. SUP fitness sessions or similar land-based training helps increase strength and endurance, but make sure to balance your training to avoid joint instability and muscle imbalances.

Where poor technique is down to muscular imbalances/weakness or previous injuries, you can work on this with a SUP Mobility & Fitness Coach or Physio for specific support. Always check with your GP or physio if you have previous injuries or current issues before starting any new exercise programme.

To get you started, here are five exercises you can do at home to help improve some of the most common muscular imbalances that can lead to injuries.

Rhomboid squeeze Hold for 30 seconds

Keep your shoulders
down away from your ears

Draw your shoulder
blades together

Low lunge Hold for 30 seconds each side

Keep deep core
engaged tilting
your hips

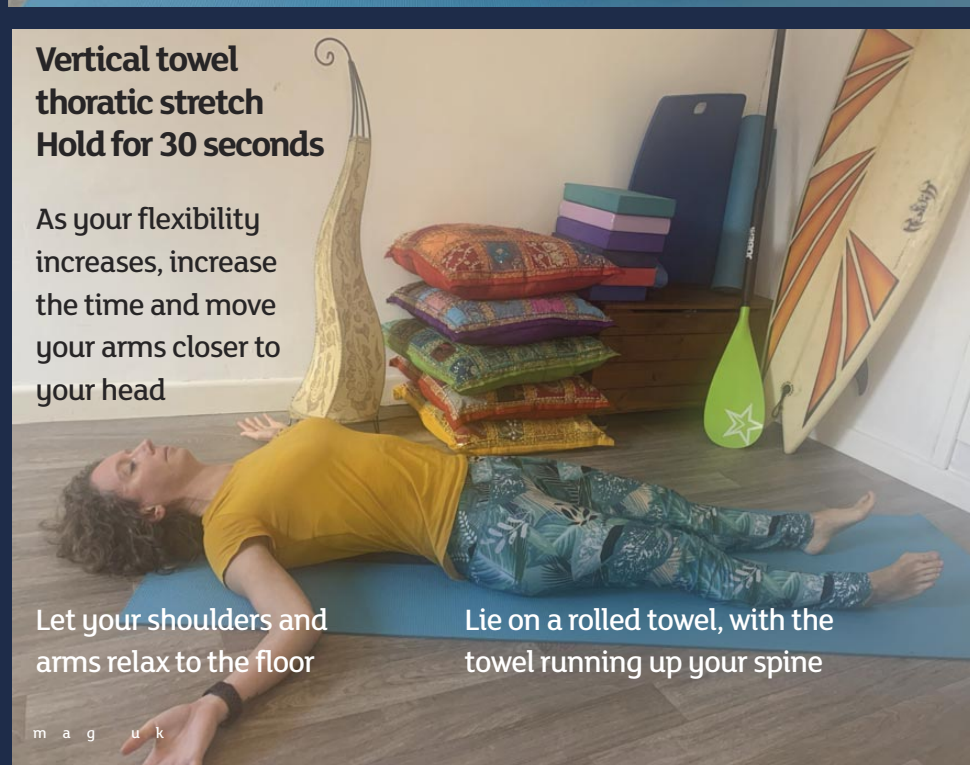
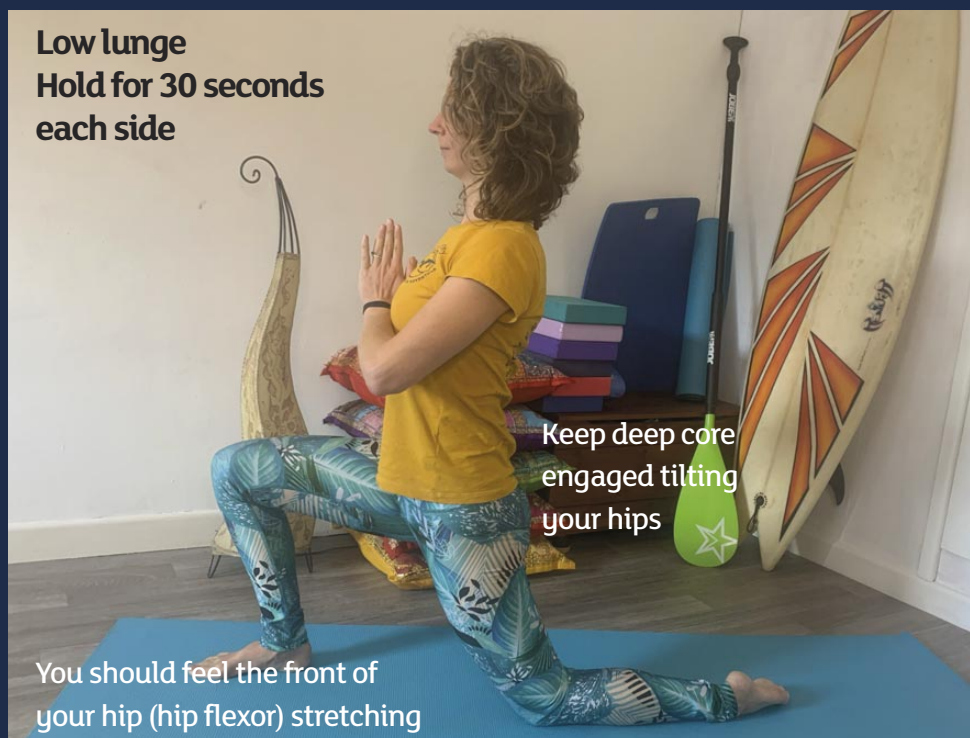
You should feel the front of
your hip (hip flexor) stretching

Vertical towel thoracic stretch Hold for 30 seconds

As your flexibility
increases, increase
the time and move
your arms closer to
your head

Let your shoulders and
arms relax to the floor

Lie on a rolled towel, with the
towel running up your spine





Tension

For many, getting onto the water can instantly calm the mind and relieve tension. However, often when we are less confident, in a new environment, facing challenging conditions, or generally stressed, we can start to tense up. Tense bodies are more prone to injuries or bringing up old injuries. Being tense will also affect your balance and cause you to tire more quickly. Tiredness and anxiety affect your concentration, increasing the likelihood of falling off and impacting your technique.

Therefore, being calm in the mind is also an essential aspect of preventing injuries. Focusing on your breath can make a big difference, e.g. breathing in for a count of four and out for eight will start to dissolve that tension away. Also, try shrugging your shoulders on the inhale and slowly releasing them as you exhale. Tense shoulders can lead to shoulder injuries.

Another tip is to focus on what's happening in the present moment, the air on your face, the feel of the blade in the water.

Furthermore, good preparation can relieve anxieties. Do your research on the location and conditions, bring safety equipment and supplies, and have an emergency response plan. Finally, your concentration and energy are affected by hunger or cold, so make sure you stay warm and are well fuelled.

Assess and consider

So whether you're already struggling with strains or injuries, or you're just ready to challenge yourself more, take time to explore your ideal equipment, assess your paddling technique and any muscle imbalances. Also, consider your mindset, or speak to a SUP mobility and fitness coach such as myself, to work to alleviate, and better yet, prevent any issues.



year round stoke

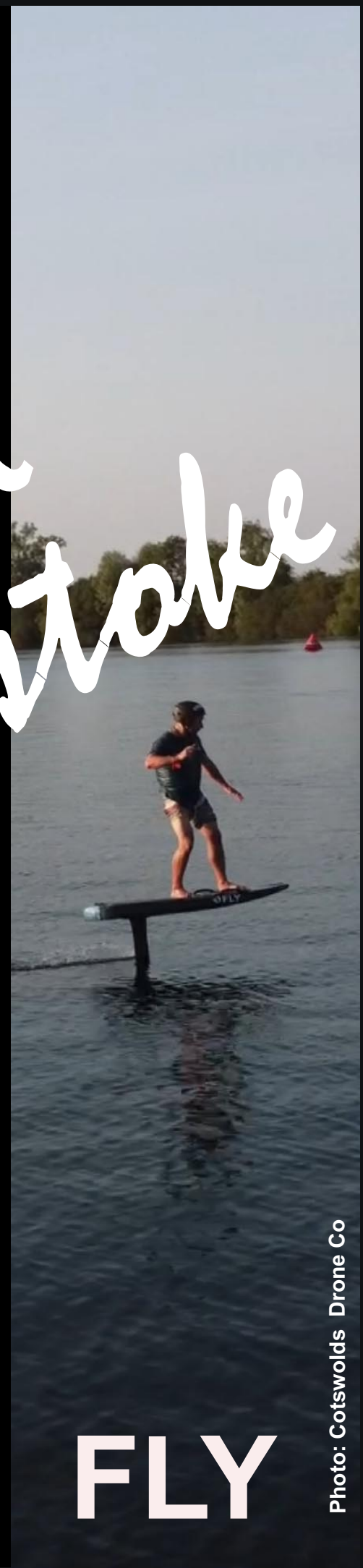
Photo: Paul Smith, Rock and water adventures



SUP



SK8



FLY

Photo: Cotswolds Drone Co

Catching WAVES



Words:

Scott Warren

Pics:

Scott Warren

Introduction

SUP surfing is one of the most enjoyable ways to get out on the water. The feeling of floating over the surface is unlike anything else as you glide effortlessly on a wave. It's also one of the most beneficial for your skills and fitness as you push yourself to catch more waves and burn plenty of calories as you paddle. Catching waves, however, is not an easy skill to master, especially when conditions become a little trickier or the waves get bigger. Through this article, I hope to make your life a little easier and more rewarding when out in the surf on your SUP board.

Jargon buster

Out-Back: a position out beyond the break waves.

Inside: being inside the breaking waves.

Caught Inside: being on the Inside and unable to get Out-Back easily.

The Line Up: the optimal position for catching the waves.

Rip Current: water flowing back out to deeper water from the shoreline.

Take Off: the point where you catch the wave and begin riding under its power.

The Surf Zone: the name given to the entire shore area, water and waves where surfing takes place.

The Drop-in: when you have caught the wave and drop-in to the wave to start riding it.

SUP surfing... it's easy

You might already be a reasonably experienced paddler or even a surfer of traditional prone boards, so does that mean you will be out there catching every wave you see on your SUP? Well, whilst it will undoubtedly be advantageous for you, it's also very easy to miss waves when using a paddle. The biggest advantage you will have in the waves is your vision due to being stood up and the power and speed that comes from using a paddle. However, these can also be your biggest problem, as we will look at next.

The paddle

Firstly let's tackle the paddle. So you have more speed, can quickly move around the surf zone and can produce lots of power to catch waves, so that surely means catching them is easy, right? Well, not so. Have you ever tried to do a sprint start on your board? Even 14' narrow race boards will quickly turn in the opposite direction to your paddle side, so imagine what a shorter all-round or surf shape board will do. They practically spin in a circle before you have moved anywhere.

So what can you do to combat this and get yourself lined up to catch waves easier? Welcome to the school of less is more.







Too much power

Sometimes less is more, and when you start paddling to catch waves, this is undoubtedly true. Too much power will result in the board turning quickly, so instead, take some smaller, softer strokes to get going and then paddle harder as your speed increases. This will also allow you to keep yourself stable against any bumps on the water's surface as the board will remain flatter as you gather speed as well.

The draw stroke

When you start paddling for a wave, using a draw stroke is a great way to hold your line better as you build up speed. It can also help you keep in position against wind and currents while waiting for other waves to come through. You place the paddle out wider than your usual entry point and pull the board's nose slightly before completing your stroke in a curved motion to do a draw stroke. With practice, you can angle the blade to adjust how much draw you create, helping you to paddle on one side for longer.

I can see everything

By far, the biggest advantage of SUP surfing is how much you can see due to being stood up. If you have ever prone surfed, lying down in even two-foot waves restricts your view of what's happening around you. So now you can see everything, does that mean you should go for every wave? Well, the answer is a yes and no depending on the situation and location you are surfing.

Yes – try and catch everything

One of the best ways to progress is to throw yourself in the deep end and try to catch every wave in sight. Being so active in the surf zone will push your progression as you have to deal with more waves, paddling out and riding them back in. Every wave is unique, so you learn way more skills such as different turns, positioning and controlling your board than if you are stood way out beyond the breaking waves all the time.





No – watching is sometimes best

Whilst riding waves is a great way to learn your surfing skills, sometimes getting out back and watching will teach you more. You can start to see wave shapes, the best position you should be in and what the other paddlers and surfers are doing. The opportunity to have a break should also be taken, as it's surprising how quickly SUP Surfing can tire you out. There is another reason, too; surf etiquette. I will cover this in more detail later on, but for now, just because you can catch every wave doesn't mean you should. If it's busy in the surf, be sure to let other people get their fair share of waves.

It's all about positioning

The way you catch waves on a SUP is different from prone surfing as you can't just sit in one spot watching the waves, then spin 180 degrees and start paddling. If you did that on a SUP board, you would most

By far, the biggest advantage of SUP surfing is how much you can see due to being stood up. If you have ever prone surfed, lying down in even two-foot waves restricts your view of what's happening around you.



likely end up being side on to the waves by the time the wave you are trying to catch passes under you. Instead, you want to position yourself side on to the waves or facing towards them before starting to paddle. Then as you begin to paddle around to meet the wave, you will be ready to take off aiming at the beach.

The line-up

On beaches or reefs, you can often see a particular position where the waves will break first, usually over a sand bar or higher part of the reef. This position is what surfers call the lineup. As the prime place to catch waves from, surfers will line up at this position to wait their turn to catch the next wave.





Using your feet

So now you have a rough idea of where you should be and how to paddle for waves, what's should you do with your feet? If you recall my first article, 'Footwork' (SUP Mag UK June 2021 issue 29), you may well remember the 'Ready' stance. All too often, I see beginners out in the waves stood in their normal paddling stance until they are just about to catch the wave. They then do a big jump back into a surf stance, fall off the back or side of the board, and miss the wave more often than not. So what's happening here?

If you are just about to catch the wave, you are more likely to miss it if you make a sudden big movement. As a rule of thumb, the bigger a wave gets, the faster it travels, so you have to be paddling faster as well. A big jump will suddenly stall the board as you apply downward pressure with your body weight, effectively hitting the breaks. The wave then passes under the board, or if you get it slightly wrong, you can fall off sideways as you lose your balance.

The Ready Stance

Using this stance instead allows you to keep your balance, control the board and





keep paddling until you have fully caught the wave. From this stance, you can quickly move forwards or backwards depending on if the wave flattens out or peaks up tall. The Ready Stance is simply a slight offset in your feet, so your front foot is pointed towards the centre, and your back foot comes back and behind, so you are in a 45-degree angle to the board's direction. You have opened your hips, meaning you have maximum balance and can control the board how you need to.

The last three stokes

So you are doing all of the above but still missing waves, chances are you're missing the last three stokes. As you begin to catch the wave, it is all too tempting to let the adrenaline take control and try to get riding it straight away. This is the critical point where the wave fully peaks, and you need to complete the drop-in. All you need to do is keep paddling, take three more big strokes and don't rush trying to ride the wave; after all, your paddle is a huge advantage if you keep using it. From there on, it is controlling the board and enjoy the ride.



Check out

www.haywoodsports.com for details on Scott's SUP coaching, events and training business, and you can follow him on Facebook and Instagram @SUPScotty.



Let's sum it up

SUP surfing is a great way to enjoy your paddling. It's addictive, great fun and pushes your general paddling, unlike most other SUP disciplines. It offers you consistent challenges, every session is different, and the progression is endless. Sometimes it can be frustrating when you have a tricky session or the conditions aren't right but don't be surprised if you find yourself researching new moves or studying swell predictions.

If I could give two bits of advice to beginners, it's this. Firstly take your time to learn about the surf zone, waves and what makes them break. Studying the conditions to get some basic knowledge will pay you back a thousand times over when you hit the beach. Secondly, when you are ready, sit and watch for 10 minutes first, watch what the waves are doing, how other surfers position themselves and where the dangers might be. Then when you are ready to go, get stuck in and enjoy the ride.

Surf etiquette

SUP is a very popular recreational activity and sport now, with its ease of use and accessibility makes it a great way to get into watersports. This very nature also means that things like SUP surfing is not beyond the recreational paddler and learning to SUP surf is in many ways easier than prone surfing. One of the advantages is how easy it is to get out-back on a SUP board on smaller days, so you can quickly find yourself out with other surfers and ready to go.

Stand up paddlers, however, are often given a bad reputation in the surf, and you may well have heard surfers saying how the paddler just caught everything and dropped in on someone else, for example. Surfers are also very protective about their home spots. Usually, they dread the summer swells when tourists, novice surfers, and other water users hit the beach, meaning the surf zone can be intimidating.

Whilst I won't cover every rule of surf etiquette now, here are a few essential pointers to get you going. Please do, of course, take some time to research surf etiquette before you hit the waves so you and others can enjoy your time on the water even more.

Paddle out and take your time – if there are other surfers in the water when you first paddle out, be prepared to wait for 10 or 20 minutes before catching a wave. This will show everyone you're not just going to come charging through on your big SUP board and wipe everyone else out.

Take the first wave easy – don't rush to get the big moves in straight away; show you can control your board and are capable of being in the surf.

Give others room – don't crowd over someone, especially if they are on a prone board. Being stood up can look intimidating especially wielding a paddle.

Find a wave to yourself – if it's busy, look for waves to surf by yourself. On a SUP board, it's easy to paddle off to find the empty waves, whereas surfers will often stay close to the main peak.



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JERSEY GROMS

SUP surf, race or foil? Which do you prefer?

Sam Axford (18)

Photos: Tim Axford of STAxford Productions

Occupation: Student and RNLI Lifeguard.

Inspiration: Kai Lenny and Mo Freitas – 100%!

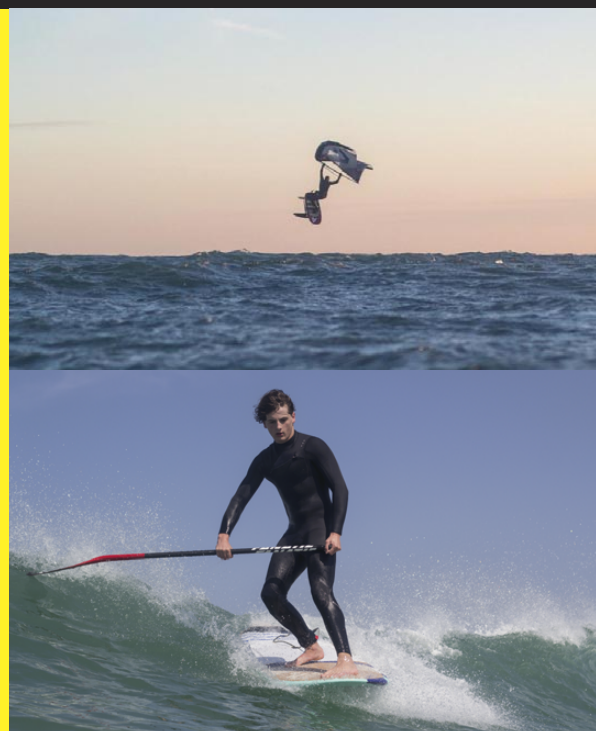
Sponsors: Fanatic, ION and Black Project.

SUP foil and SUP surf are my favourite disciplines. I enjoy the racing but due to covid restrictions travelling to races and different venues has been impossible. The sup foiling and wing foiling has been a massive help with training and keeping me motivated to get in the water over the past year, whilst there has been no event in surf or racing to look forward to. I prefer both SUP foiling and SUP surfing because it's what I want to do.

After a hard day of work, there is nothing better to do than go down to the beach for a surf (or foil), it puts you in a good mood like a lot of other surfers find, it is a fun way of exercise, a way for adrenaline junkies to get their fix. Living over in

Jersey, we are fortunate to have conditions that allow us to get in the water every day, whether surfing, winging, surf foiling, or even just for a train; there is always something you can do. Not only this but another reason why I enjoy the surf SUP side of things so much is that it constantly changes, the waves are never the same, and if conditions aren't okay for it, you can always go to a different beach with a heavier wave, etc.

Favourite paddle memory: I would have to say my favourite time was down in Hossegor one year. I had six hours of water time in one session. Every wave was PERFECT! I have never seen surf like it, in real life, before then or since. Stoked.





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JERSEY GROMS

SUP surf, race or foil? Which do you prefer?

Jacques Thomas (10)

Photos: Sara Prescott and Cameron Aird (Aerial photo) at Above & Beyond Visuals

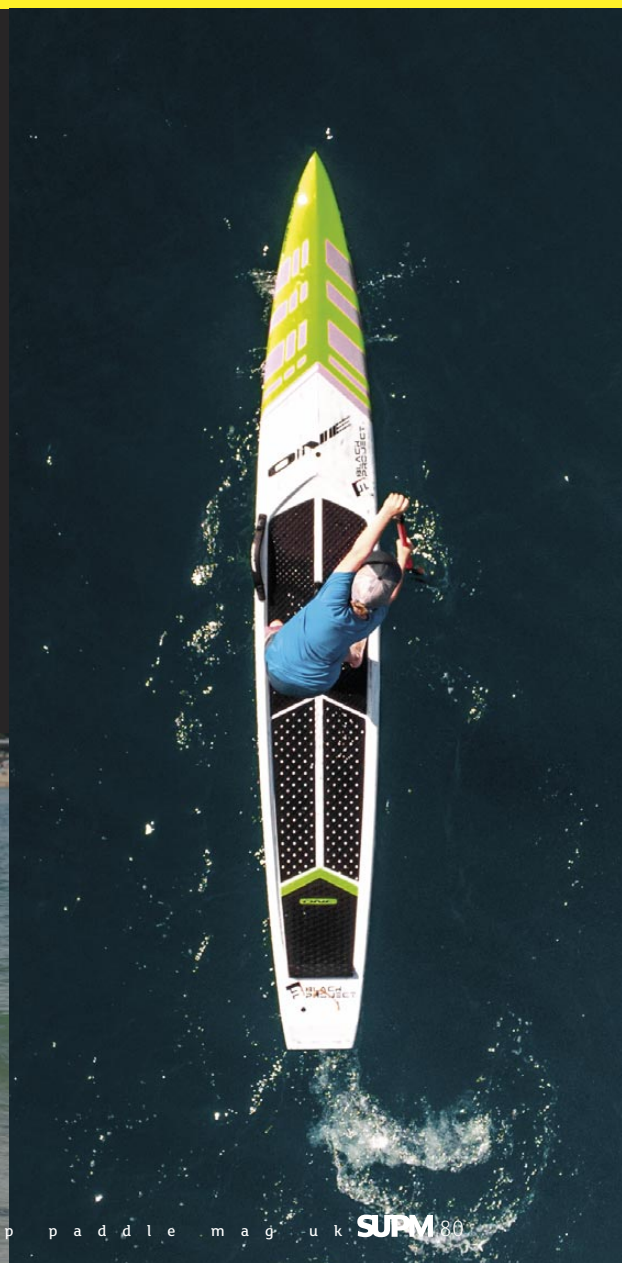
Occupation: Student and all-round 'dude'! 🤪

Inspiration: Who is JOB? (Jamie O'Brien) and Kelly Slater. Locally the hero is Chris Bates because he is fun to be around and kind.

Sponsors: None, but I use a one SUP race board and a Black Project 66.

I've not tried SUP foil, so I can't have an opinion on that. I would have to say 'SUP race' is my favourite. I don't like surfing when it is big as I usually get nailed, and it sometimes scares me! I love paddling, and racing is not just fun; it is good exercise too. I quite like surfing on my race board, when it is small, so you could say I like both of those. I am getting more confident surfing my surf sup board now, but I still think I am more confident in the racing side of paddling. I have a 6'6" Naish Keiko, but I like to steal my Mum's 7'8" Charlie Grey board when it is really small.

Favourite paddle memory: I love racing in the local series all year round, but my most favourite race was Bilbao in 2018. I came seventh in the under 10s on my Turtle Bay inflatable board, and I was only six years old. I think I was the youngest paddler there. After the race, and prize-giving, I got onto the podium with Laird [Dawson], and we taught Seychelle how to 'floss' (that dance everyone was doing at the time). That was fun!



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SCAN ME



JERSEY GROMS

SUP surf, race or foil? Which do you prefer?

Laird Dawson (14)

Photos: Sara Prescott. Euro Tour photos by Emilie Masson

Occupation: Student.

Inspiration: Ty Judson is probably one of my favourite paddlers.

Locally, for surf, I would say Aaron Rowe.

Sponsors: I am using a SIC 14 x 21.5 RS and Black Project Hydro M at the moment. I use a Lokahi board from Aaron [Rowe] for surfing, and I have a Herve Surfboards SUP. Ryan [Herve] is a local shaper who makes fantastic custom surfboards.

I would say my preference is SUP race. When racing, you have to make sure you time your paddle strokes, save your energy and set targets on people ahead of you to try and catch them. The races here in Jersey are enjoyable, as you know everyone there. You can make jokes to the people there and set goals on the people you want to beat. We have a good laugh, and after the main races, we usually do some team relays on the biggest boards we have.

SUP surfing is still fun, but some of the bigger waves here can be a bit terrifying. You have to pick the waves you want to ride on the day. There are a lot of peaks along the main surf beach (St Ouens Bay), so you can always find a wave that is not too big for you. Also, you get to watch people who are better than you at surfing and then learn from them. Everyone is friendly, too, so you can always ask for advice from the other SUP surfers in the water. When it is small and clean, it is so much fun out in the surf. I also surf my

race board when it is too small for a short SUP. That is good practice for when we have a beach race, in and out of the surf. I find racing away in Europe is a lot harder than in Jersey.

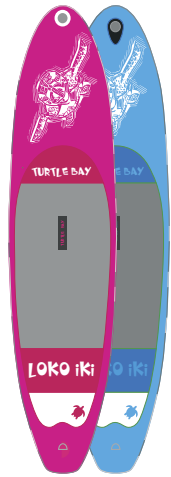
Many of the kids there are my age, and they bring a lot more competition for me than my Dad! I have raced in the Euro Tour junior races, and I have won a few of them in my age category. I haven't tried foiling, but I'm interested in it.

Favourite paddle memory: In racing, it has to be the British SUP Club Champs in 2017 as the racing was amazing, and the after-party was hilarious! When I was about six or seven years old, I had just started paddling, and we went down to a local break called 'Sands' and paddled out when it was flat. A set came in, I started paddling, and I caught the wave. At this time, it was overhead surf on me. I have to say that was one of my favourite days.

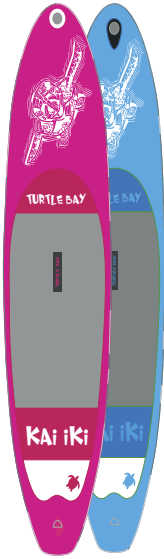


TURTLE BAY

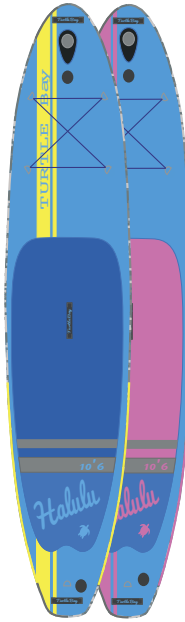
PADDLEBOARDS



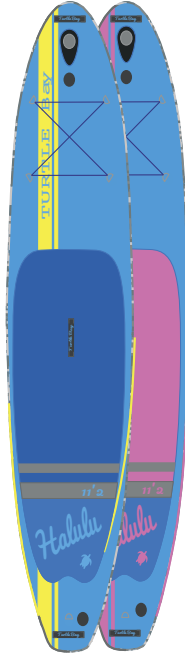
Loko iki
Junior All-Rounders



Kai iki



Halulu 10'6"



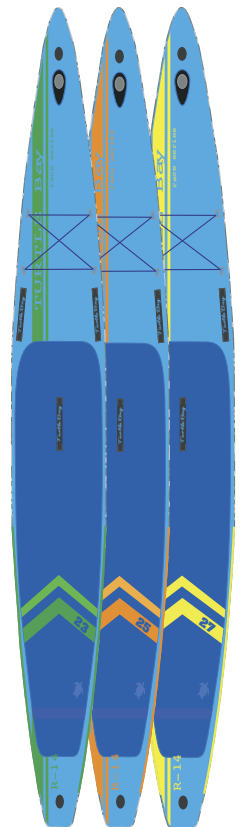
Halulu 11'2"
Adult All-Rounders



Halulu 12'5"



Wailuku 13'
Touring



R-14
Race Series

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Guidance for SUP

users to experience natural
behaviour without impacting seals



Words: Steph Barnicoat **Pics:** Sue Sayer of the Seal Research Trust

Paddleboarding is a beautiful way to explore our coastline and can often provide unique access to remote areas that would otherwise go unseen. However, with this level of accessibility comes a responsibility to leave the areas visited as you found them.

Encountering a seal whilst out on the ocean can be an incredible experience, but if you are lucky enough to come face to face with these globally rare animals, you should proceed with caution. Seals may look cute and approachable, but these are, in fact, Britain's largest land-breeding mammals with a bite four times stronger than that of a dog and the largest males reaching up to three metres in length. They are perfectly adapted to their marine environment, commanding the respect of even the most experienced sea users.



Whilst it may seem that seals pose a potential risk to humans, it is, in fact, humans that pose the greater threat to seals. Seals need to haul out on land to conduct vital life processes such as pupping, moulting, resting, socialising, digesting food and replenishing oxygen levels. However, when hauled out, they are incredibly vulnerable to being disturbed.

As the UK's coastal ecotourism, recreation and leisure sectors expand - especially with recent restrictions on travelling abroad - there is increasing overlap between the spaces utilised by both seals and people. Some encounters reported to the Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust (CSGRT) that were thought to be harmless have been recorded as unintentional disturbance events that potentially had major disruptive impacts on wild seals, their behaviour and functions. Disturbance can be defined as 'changing an animal's behaviour to affect its health, wellbeing or survival', and sadly this is all too common for our native seal population.





Disturbance

Disturbance can take many forms and is not always easy to spot. There are several behaviours to look out for whilst out on your board that signal a seal is aware of your presence and is at risk of being disturbed:

- **Vigilance.** If a seal has noticed you, its fight or flight response has been activated, and its stress levels have already gone up. Whilst this may seem minimal, seals have been known to stay alert for up to an hour after being disturbed, meaning energy is being wasted instead of reserved.
- **Stampeding.** If seals rush quickly into the sea, a serious disturbance event has occurred, which can lead to severe injury and pup abandonment.
- **Tombstoning.** If a seal is well above the water line and feels threatened, it may throw itself from a great height into the water. This is extremely dangerous for both seals and people and can result in broken jaws and ribs, which can be fatal.
- **Flipper splashing and vocalisation.** This is a seal's way of telling you that you are too close, and it is feeling threatened.
- **Crash diving.** A seal may immediately undertake a crash dive if suddenly distracted whilst feeding in the water. This is a common sign of distress that can alter their oxygen levels, as they will not be fully prepared for the dive, and their heart will be racing. Swimming seals mustn't be disturbed, as this can cause them to stop feeding, impacting their energy supply.

Suppose you spot any of these behavioural reactions, slowly and quietly back away to avoid increasing the chances of disturbing them further. Allow them the space they need within their habitat.

Some seals will show signs of habituation, whereby they have become used to the presence of people and do not demonstrate

a natural, cautionary response to their presence. However, this does not mean that they are immune to the impacts of disturbance. Some seals will not react to a single paddle boarder, but after their third or fourth encounter, they will start to show signs that they are not fully relaxed. This is known as sensitisation, where the seal responds to repeated activity rather than a single event.

Which seals are worst affected?

- **Pregnant and pupping females.** Common seals will have their pups in the summer months, and grey seals are heavily pregnant. This coincides with many coastal areas being at their busiest. Rushing over sharp rocks can have severe long-term impacts on unborn pups that are not immediately visible.
- **Pups.** Mothers who waste energy fleeing from disturbance cannot pass on the nutrients their young need, and therefore the chances of them making it through their first winter are drastically reduced.
- **Juveniles.** With fewer fat reserves, they must conserve energy whenever they can. Younger seals are usually more skittish and so are vulnerable to wasting energy when fleeing from people.
- **Dominant beachmaster males.** These males feed heavily in the summer, enabling them to fast for up to three months in the autumn. They do this to protect their pupping females without starving; however, disturbance compromises their energy levels and impacts their chances of survival.

The effects of disturbance are often invisible but are always a waste of energy for seals. Some of the physiological impacts of disturbance include increased stress and cortisol levels, a rapid

Twelve things SUP users can do to help reduce their impact on seals:

1. Make sure you are well-trained, experienced and in complete control of your board.
2. Research the area you are visiting – are seals likely to be present on rocks or remote coves?
3. Keep quiet, so seals can't hear you.
4. Keep downwind, so seals can't smell you.
5. Stay well away (at least 100m); use your camera lens or binoculars to get a good look at them – if you only have a phone, do not approach to take a photo.
6. Take your litter home to reduce the risk of ingestion and entanglement.
7. Do not observe for longer than 15 minutes – they may be waiting for you to move off before getting in or out of the water.
8. Signal to others if you see them demonstrating risky behaviour.
9. If you see signs of alertness or disturbance, move away slowly and quietly.
10. Sign and share this petition to get seals the same legal protection as whales and dolphins.
11. Report the seals you see to sightings@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk – they will pass them on to the nearest local recording scheme.
12. If you see a seal that you think may need medical attention, please phone British Divers Marine Life Rescue on 01825 765546.



heartbeat, increased breathing rate, cold water shock, cracked ribs, damaged and ripped out claws, open wounds, and long-term impacts on unborn and new-born pups as well as moulted pups who are still teaching themselves to hunt.

As many paddleboarders have experienced, seals can be very inquisitive and may approach your board – this would not constitute disturbance as the seal would have chosen to do this on its own terms. If a seal attempts to get on your board, stay relaxed and allow it to happen; the seal should move off on its own. If a seal is following you, keep moving. They are incredibly curious animals but will quickly lose interest if you do not engage with them.

Please note that in most cases, disturbance to seals is caused when you are too close, too visible and too loud. With time spent near or in the ocean, there comes a responsibility to respectfully share this habitat to allow for positive encounters with these iconic wild animals. Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust have been identifying

individual seals from their unique fur patterns since 2000, with seven of those still alive today.

If you would like to help support the protection of seals, Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust and British Divers Marine Life Rescue are always on the lookout for new volunteers, supporters and donations. Your involvement will help conserve these globally rare, vital keystone species to benefit the wider marine ecosystem on which we all depend for both our physical and mental wellbeing.

For more information on seals

Visit www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk or www.sealalliance.org. To read further about the impacts of disturbance, this report provides more detail on the issues discussed within this article.

Learn how to be wildlife safe whilst out on your SUP – The WiSe Scheme runs an adventure course across two evenings on the 13th and 14th of October. Check their website to book your place: www.wisescheme.org

Sign and share

Sign and share this petition at:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/584224> to get seals the same legal protection as whales and dolphins.

Related article

Birdlife paddleboarding guide by BSUPA: www.bsupa.org.uk/2021/06/15/bird-life-paddle-boarding-guide-the-rspb-and-bsupa-code/



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Behind the brand

with Mad Water Sport's Steve Kirk

Interview: **SUPM**

Photos: **Mad Water Sports Ltd**



Mad Water Sports Ltd is a new SUP retail operation based in North Cornwall just outside the town of Wadebridge.

The business has a fabulous well-stocked store, which is worth visiting and has an online presence with an e-commerce shop. It is a family business run by the Kirk family, and today we are talking with Steve Kirk MD about the business and how it has come into being. For many years, Steve has been involved in water sports,

kayaking at school, paddling playboats, K1 and K2. He is an accomplished and qualified coach with British Canoeing and BSUPA for paddleboarding. In the last 20 years, much of his time has been exploring the waters around the stunning Cornish peninsula in sea kayaks or on paddleboards.

So, Steve, how did the Mad Water Sports business come about?

In 2002, Lesley, my wife, two young children and myself moved from Nottingham in the midlands to Cornwall. We bought an eighteen century manor house, and we intended to turn it into an outdoor centre. It became a very successful residential centre offering school activity courses during the summer and an outdoor instructor training course during the winter, training adults to become outdoor instructors. When the COVID pandemic struck, we decided a change in direction was needed. Over the following months, we began the process of establishing the retail operation in Wadebridge. We finally went live just before Christmas 2020 in what we called a soft launch. But we didn't start trading properly until April when shops were able to re-open.

So Mad Water Sports is very much a family business?

Yes, initially just myself and Lesley, and then our son, Tom, joined us in January this year. Between us, we have a wealth of experience both commercially and practically with the activities. Tom has been surfing since we came to Cornwall in

2002 and tries to get out every day when the surf is up. He is quickly developing his SUP skills and, at the minute, enjoying paddling the top end race SUPS that we sell. We are just recruiting and in the process of adding to the team.

When did you first get involved with the sport of SUP?

In 2008, we introduced SUP as an activity in the centre, initially children on individual SUPs, but frankly, it was a nightmare trying to manage the children. Then during a conversation with our supplier from Mistral, I spotted a picture of what became known as a 'Big SUP', and within minutes I had ordered two. We launched the sessions with children on big SUPs, and it was a tremendous success; in fact, we were probably one of the first, if not the first, to introduce big SUPs into an outdoor centre. We also used them when teaching Instructors; standing on a big SUP is an excellent way to coach paddle technique, and we found instructors developed their skills so much quicker in this way.

We embraced BSUPA as an instructor qualification for students on our training, which worked well for us.



Do you think the outdoor centre experience is helpful in this new business?

Yes, I do. Over the years, we acquired lots of experience and qualifications in each of the disciplines we coached and knowledge of products; this has proven invaluable when sourcing products to sell and advising customers to make the right choices for them.

I also had a good few years working in the commercial sector before we moved to Cornwall; some of that was in retail B2B and B2C, so we do have some experience in retail.

Some of the suppliers that worked with us at the centre now supply our new venture, which is also great – we appreciate their support and help. We have added to our supplier list and will continue to do so, always interested in new products and established good quality brands.

Do you intend to re-establish the outdoor centre; clearly, that was a very successful business and strong brand?

We sold the property but still retain the brand, so possibly, but we have no immediate plans. The outdoor sector has been hit hard by the pandemic, so it needs some time to re-establish itself, and when the dust settles, we will see.

Does it seem a brave move to be setting up a retail operation when many big established high street shops are closing their doors for good?

Well, they say, 'fortune favours the brave', and I have never been afraid of a challenge. I think this is the perfect time to be a part of this developing sector and specifically SUP. We have an online presence, but I think some products need to be seen, touched and experienced, and I think many customers still value and enjoy the high street shopping experience. The sport of SUP is relatively simple but getting good advice when purchasing is so important, especially when looking at the more expensive touring and race boards. But even purchasing your first board, good advice from the beginning can help avoid making some simple and potentially expensive mistakes.

What is the business focus?

When people take those first steps into the sport of SUP, we want to help and guide them; we want them to come back and buy the next board as they progress. We want to share our enthusiasm for the sport and guide them along the way by offering a service second to none. Every time we sell a product to our customers, they become part of our family; we want to be part of their journey and share the experiences.





What brands are you working with?

We currently have a good selection of paddleboards, including Mistral, SIC, O'Brien, TAHE, NSP and more. We also offer a wide range of associated products, wetsuits, BAs etc. We will add to the range as we evaluate new products and equipment to increase our choice and offers.

How do you see the future?

Well, it's still very early days for us; during this first year, we will evaluate how things go and carefully consider the brands and products we offer going forward. The sport will, I think, continue to grow for now, inevitably at some point, sales will slow, but currently, I see no signs of that in the short term. We have exceeded our expectations already, which is good, and we are attracting customers from all over the UK, which is excellent.

You were involved in the world of windsurfing back in the eighties, weren't you?

Yes, I feel lucky to have been a part of something really special, seeing a sport develop and evolve so quickly. I was very much a consumer and wasn't involved in the industry as a retailer at that time, but those experiences certainly gave me a good insight into what's now happening with SUP. Many of the suppliers of SUP equipment also have roots in the sport of windsurfing, and I keep meeting people I sailed with all those years ago! I look back on those years with a lot of affection; it was a great era.

Do you see any comparisons with the growth of windsurfing in the eighties and SUP now?

Yes, definitely, and I think we can learn a lot from what happened to windsurfing. We should also keep in mind that many of the long-established windsurfing companies are today producing SUP boards, which in some ways is good, but also it does have risks associated with it. I think some manufacturers drove the demise of windsurfing from its peak; prices went up and up, and it became a sport only accessible by the well-heeled at that time. Entry-level products became more challenging to find, and so the sport became less accessible. The sport also seemed to move away from its roots, focusing on marketing around big waves in Maui. I am sure lots of other aspects also contributed of course.

Do you think the boom in the inflatable SUP is good for the sport?

Yes, but I do think we need to try to move the quality of the intro boards to a level where they will have a decent life span and second-





hand value. There seems to be an influx of poor quality products currently. I would like to see the big retailers, food supermarkets, for example, stay out of this space; they make lots of money doing what they do and in my opinion, selling inferior quality products, I think, does nothing for the sport or the planet! I do not believe that this is good for the consumer or the planet as many cheap inflatables are destined for landfills.

You have a good range of hardboards and a large selection of inflatables in stock; how do you see the market developing?

I think we will see growth in the hardboard sector of the market as people try better performing boards and suited to the paddling they are doing. Most people paddle on lakes, rivers, canals, and estuaries, generally relatively flat and calm. When people try the touring and race boards, they will experience a craft far better suited to those locations. The drawbacks of storage and transportation of hardboards are far outweighed by the feel and performance of a quality touring or race board. I am sure some inflatable products will improve but at what cost. Experience of other sports like kayaking and windsurfing has shown the enthusiast is always willing to adapt and accommodate larger craft to get the quality experience they are looking for.

The other essential factor is that the lifespan of the hardboard is always going to outperform inflatables. We need to encourage the sale of these products and reduce the impact of poor products that need to be disposed of in relatively short periods.

Do you stock an extensive range of paddles as well?

Yes, so often, when people upgrade their boards, purchasing a paddle becomes a secondary consideration, which I believe is a mistake. SUP is a paddlesport, and the paddle plays a massive role in the overall performance and experience. We need to help people understand the science behind the paddles themselves and coach them on the technique and use of the paddle.

The better Instructors I have worked with, who have become SUP instructors, often have a foundation that comes from kayaking where the paddle is recognised as critical both in itself and in its performance on the water.

What do you see as the threats to the growth of the sport?

Over the last few years, the sport has grown at an extraordinary rate; inevitably, the growth will slow and possible plateau. To ensure its longevity, the foundations need to be put in place now with good governance and supported by manufacturers and retailers to ensure we do it right. Inevitably some businesses will disappear as it's obvious some manufacturers and retailers are in it for a very quick return and have no interest in the long term. Hopefully, the more established players will look long-term, listen carefully to the consumer, and develop good quality products at sensible prices to ensure the sport's future.

The past couple of years with COVID and Brexit has put strains on the supply chain, and stocks have been limited. It is going to take a while for things to settle and get back to some normality. Many importers have had a difficult time keeping up with



demand and forecasting what is needed for the future. Availability of certain products could influence demands going forward. Distribution and container costs are still ridiculously high; COVID is also having an impact, with factories still having to close because of staff shortages, which will result in products being in short supply.

How do you see the company's future? Do you have plans for growth?

We are still in our first year, so it's too early to start planning too much, but we do have some objectives we would like to achieve going forward, so watch this space!

What about you, are you getting time on the water?

The honest answer is no! In the last 18 months, from the first lockdown, I have constantly been busy; the transition from the outdoor centre into retail has been absorbing. Getting the shop set up, organising suppliers and stock, putting in the infrastructure has left very little time! I have also suffered a few injuries; I have to say this ageing lark is definitely overrated! Just saying this sounds crazy, but that is the reality.

Now we are up and running; I hope to get out and play a bit more. We have all this eye candy around me in the shop. It would be rude not to, wouldn't it?



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Email: tezwoz1@hotmail.co.uk

Nimble adventure –

LUUM Paddleboards Miramar 10'6 x 32" x 233L 320 SX-B

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

There's a bit of a trend at the mo with some brands almost reverting to how iSUPs were back in the early days and producing boards that are four (or a little over) inches thick. In many cases, this is as well as the now-standard six-inch thick types. The big difference these days is the quality of dropstitch and manufacturing materials are way better than they once were. So it's now a realistic possibility of buying a thinner air board from a reputable brand that doesn't bend like a banana. Enter LUUM Paddleboards' Miramar 320 SX-B as a case in point...

LUUM®

Price:

£599

Info:

www.luum-paddleboards.co.uk/products/luum-miramar-320-sx-b

The woven fabric featured in LUUM's Dropstitch is far denser than previous, meaning rigidity - even at 4.72" thick - is bang on. This translates to two wins for you, the paddler. Firstly, the board's light as there are fewer dropstitches required, and secondly, it sits more planted and lower in the water as opposed to on it. Personally, I've always favoured this with inflatables as it makes them less susceptible to wind, chop and flotsam. And if

designed correctly, there's no reason the iSUP in question can't knife through the brine just as a hardboard would. Lower sitting SUPs can also be more stable, so much winning.

All fixtures and fitting on the Miramar are top-notch, and it's a board that'll undoubtedly get your adventurous side humming. Being 10'6, however, you get the added advantage of the LUUM being livelier and more nimble than its longer siblings. This was proved during testing when my little helper and I chucked it at some south coast bumps. Whilst not necessarily designed for this, the LUUM coped admirably and provided a few hours of chop, bothering SUP fun. So versatility is guaranteed with the Miramar 10'6.

I will also note the included pump, which is one of the easiest manual iSUP styles I've used. Pumping to nearly full PSI is very doable and very welcome, so big thumbs up on this.



CONCLUSION

Being the first LUUM Paddleboards inflatable SUP I've laid mitts on, the Miramar did everything expected of a SUP styled as such. The biggest point being it sitting so much lower in the water and offering a more connected feel and interaction with the paddling environment how I prefer. Manoeuvrable, yet still with enough adventure SUP pluses – such as efficient tracking and decent load carrying capacity – the 10'6 SX-B is fun and functional in equal measure. My four-year-old son also had a great time helping me test it. If that's not a seal of approval, I don't know what is.



New horizons –

Mistral Adventurist 13.2' x 30" x 360L

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

New for 2022 is the Mistral Adventurist 13.2' x 30" X 360L! Yep, that's a lot of volume whacked into an air board. But with carrying capacity in mind – whereby it can be loaded to the hilt with all manner of essential adventure SUP kit – the amount of float makes complete sense.

mistral®

Price:

£ 699

Info:

www.mistral.com/boards/adventurist-air-132-360L-inflatable/

The lemon and lime colourway should also be noted. Speaking to Mistral's Steve West, this is 100% purposeful, with apparently lime green being the most visible hue when stuck against backdrops of grey water and hazy horizons. Comfort in the Adventurist's safety aspects should be therefore a given.

Also of note are the improved materials the Mistral line of iSUPs are now manufactured from. Denser threads within the Drop stitch material make for a much more rigid board versus a similar SUP board from last season. These days quality SUPs, made with proper design and attention to detail, don't need additional bells and whistles to be performance orientated. And you can feel this when you hop aboard.



Afloat the 2022 Adventurist is rapid from the get-go. It's partly down to the board's flatter rocker and length, but it should also come as no surprise considering the designer's (Westy) racing background. Whilst the 13.2" is billed 'all round', it certainly holds its own in the speed stakes.

Stability is rock solid, with the overall paddling experience being super fulfilling. With 2022 set to be more about discovering what's round the next bend and paddling adventure, the Adventurist Mistral more than delivers on this promise whilst keeping wider versatility for other types of getting afloat. (It has the option of attaching a windsurfing rig, for instance, which will see breezy days being fair game).

CONCLUSION

Looking fantastic but also being much more than an aesthetic, Mistral's 2022 Adventurist 13.2" is poised to take you on all manner of discovery paddles whilst remaining perfectly applicable for just pottering. Speed, glide, stability, versatility and top-notch manufacturing – with cutting edge tech – make for a bang on air board that any SUPer will find favour with.



Song of the... –

O'Shea Siren 10'x 32" x 4.75" x 210L

Review: Tez Plavenieks **Pic:** Pierre Bison – gsyphoto.com

The influx of ladies coming into stand up paddleboarding has been significant over the last 18 months. At any given put in you may find women outnumber those Alpha males considerably, which is excellent. It's, therefore, no wonder we see some brands – such as O'Shea here - pushing out SUP gear for 2022 with a feminine flavour.



Price:

£ 689

Info:

<https://osheasup.com/sup-products/>

CONCLUSION

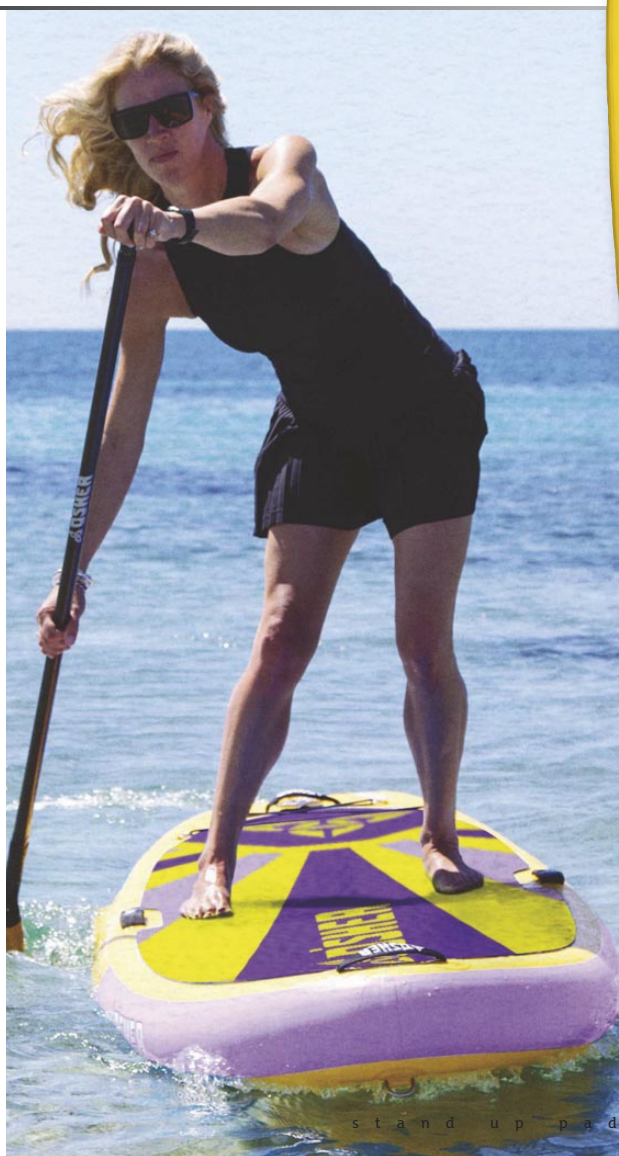
Continuing O'Shea's long history of producing and supplying quality SUP boards, the Siren 10' is another worthy inclusion to the brand's 2022 line up. Of course, colours alone don't make a product gender-specific. But with dimensions and weight being tweaked to suit smaller statures, it no doubt makes a good fairer sex stand up paddleboard as well as retaining additional versatility. Manoeuvrable, fun and great to look at!

At 10' long, 30" and 4.75" thick, the brand new Siren isn't just about pretty aesthetics. The HDx construction is featherweight (but highly durable) and easy to lug around, inflate (and pack away) whilst being super easy to handle on the water.

I've said it before elsewhere: there's a trend within the industry to thin out air boards currently as it makes them sit better. This is a good thing, as long as the overall design is tip top to not have unwanted bendy, banana shapes that are unpaddleable! Thinner SUPs sit lower in the water and aren't as at the mercy of the elements (thick chop and wind). And with quality manufacturing and materials in place -

such as with the O'Shea Siren tested here - a 4" thick iSUP can be more stable than a 6" version.

The Siren is just that. A composed and planted platform that lighter riders can learn and progress with without issue. Its slightly drawn-out nose aids tracking and glide whilst overall being agile, playful and fun. I'm not the target audience for such a board, yet I found it accommodates my bulkier frame with no hassle. So even bigger boned, experienced paddlers, will do fine aboard the O'Shea Siren. My kids also loved it!





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Big fab – Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co Classic 10'6 X 32" x 177L

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

Being a big fan of Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co's Classic 9'11, I was intrigued to get my grubbies on the Pawlonia wood 10'6 version to see how that compared. With aesthetics to rival any SUP board out there, it's an attention-grabbing SUP from the outset with plenty of admiring glances shot its way during testing. But what about on the water?



Price:

£1045

Info:

<https://freshwaterbaypaddleboards.co.uk/product/classic-sup-paulownia/>



Scaled up boards of, ahem, classics don't often turn out to be true to the concept. Often the increased sizing messes up the original design idea, and you end up with a completely different feeling SUP. Upon standing atop the 10'6 for the first time, the Classic displays extremely similar traits to its smaller brethren. While it is a nimble play platform that signals its wave loving properties, there's still plenty of flatwater performance built-in for good measure. The 10'6 is only 0.5" wider than the 9'6, so stability is



almost identical even though minor incremental dimension tweaks can bring about significant performance changes.

What you do get with the Classic 10'6's more drawn out profile is additional glide. Fewer paddle strokes send it well on its way, so in essence, there's a smidgen more efficiency over distance. Or, to put it another way (for the wave heads out there), you can roll into swells even earlier than when aboard the 9'11 and access out of the wave spots even easier.

Talking waves, the thinned out pin tail encourages turning, and it's super fun gunning down small to medium swells,

chucking in carves at will, before round housing back to the pocket. Personally, to aid this further, I'd opt for a smaller central fin which adds a little more zing to manoeuvre orientated riding. For those who fancy a bit of toes over action, the included larger style locks in no issue and allowed plank walking or the practising of. Finally, the Pawlonia wood layup does have a slightly different flex property. All boards flex (some), which is good - contrary to what some may think. The Pawlonia wood version of the Classic 10'6 has a softer ride overall, eating up chop for breakfast, which some riders will appreciate.

CONCLUSION

Nailing the almost (but not quite) impossible, Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co have successfully upscaled their 9'11 Classic to a 10'6. Aesthetically pleasing with eggshell blue and Pawlonia wood livery, the 10'6 is poised to elevate your SUP surfing no end as well as paddling on general. With wave prowess in buckets, it's also a fun recreational board -- although it's in surf that riders will find favour with the 10'6. Another classic Classic, then! (My kids love it as well).



Chasing rhinos? –

Hypr Hawaii Gun 11'6 X 28.5" x 165L

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

Hypr Hawaii's Gun line up is perhaps one of the most unique ranges of stand up paddle boards currently available. Not forgetting the brand's instantly recognisable hull cut outs, and wood livery with dragon graphics, each of the Hypr Gun boards is billed as a big wave charger yet still has so much more versatility than you'd instantly think. It's proof that names mean absolutely nothing when it comes to stand up paddle boarding performance.



Price:

£1799

Info:

www.hyprhawaii.co.uk/store/116-x-28-5-x-4-7-32-Gun-p153360599

Another element of the Gun is it's pronounced (to the extreme) pin tail. It's so sharp it'll have your eye out! And this plays such a part in the board's feel. Being 11'6 the length offsets some of the narrower width of the Gun. Where you stand, however, plays a massive part in how stable you are. Up front and the Gun's composed and cuts through water easily, tracking and gliding well. Step further back and the reduced tail width gives a super lively feel. That aforementioned pin tail offers little drag and releases water



efficiently - but you need to trim it correctly. Find that paddling sweet spot and you have a board with rapid speed yet still with forgiving overall performance.

'Gun'. A descriptive name that conjures up all manner of wave slaying prowess born of Hypr's Hawaiian heritage. Yet massive walls of water aside the 11'6 slides along dribblers with the best of 'em. It's therefore a good choice for cruddy conditions without any world beating adrenaline feats in sight. If you reside somewhere (or close to) a cruddy wave venue then you'll be good to aboard the Hypr 11'6 Gun. For those with bump running in mind the Gun also accommodates. Whereas good ole touring SUP - albeit with a performance bent - is perfectly applicable standing on top of this stead. You may feel the Gun isn't for you based on names alone yet look again as there's more to it than you'd think.

CONCLUSION

Having tested a whole raft of Hypr Hawaii Gun stand up paddle boards the 11'6 is another example of how a shape originally designed with one thing in mind has ended up being a broad range tool fitted to many different styles of riding and paddling. You don't have to be a big wave charger to get the most out of the Gun. It'll do you for all manner of SUP fun. And then when you're ready to step up and 'chase rhinos' you'll be suitably equipped, naturally.



Three way fly by – essential gear for above water antics

Words: Tez Plavenieks

Pics: Oli Lane-Peirce, Mike Pringuer, Tez Plavenieks

If flying above water's your thing, or your interest's been pricked, the following 'toys' should get those juices flowing.

Loco Fly Air 5'7 inflatable foil board

Inflatable foil boards appeal to many – especially those learning or with limited space. Loco's first foray into this market comes in the form of the Fly Air. Featuring a wide, long carbon plate with track foil mount and additional tracking fin further forward, it's a well-designed flight sled applicable to both wing and SUP foiling.



Partnered with the brand's 2000cm² Blade foil, take offs are fairly efficient (air boards will always be slightly less efficient than their hard siblings) and once in flight deliveries a fun and playful feel. Plenty of stability at rest help through the learning process whilst advanced riders will discover a pretty nimble platform that could be the perfect travel companion. The foil has a two-mast option applicable to different tastes, styles and levels, with Loco also able to supply wings if windy foiling's your bag. A good first effort from the North East-based brand that's comparable to many other inflatable foil boards.

Loco Fly Air 5'7/6'3 board, Blade foil and wing package
£1649-£1719

Axis 1150 PNG (pump 'n' glide) foil

Axis foils are held in high regard because of their awesome foil engineering and a vast array of modular components that allow complete tailoring of the foil's feel depending on skill, style of riding and conditions.

The PNG range (pump N glide) is extremely popular, with Axis 1150 being the second biggest in the range. And by big, I mean wide. This is a high aspect foil with a considerable span. If you've only experienced low aspect foils, then an adjustment in thinking is required here. With a low take-off speed, the 1150 lifts incredibly early, making it great for small waves and light wind. Even if conditions ramp up, the 1150 holds true. Being high aspect in design means tons of glide with less drag



than many foils delivering decent top speed. And whilst the 1150 isn't billed as a jumper, it has considerable pop for a few boosts. Just be careful with landings, as wide wings do run the risk of snapping! All in a great product from one of the most progressive foil companies out there.

Price: front wing only – £700 (full set ups available)

<https://foilshop.co.uk/product/axis-foils-s-series-glide-1150mm-front-carbon-hydrofoil-wing/>

Vayu VVing 6.4m wing

Vayu grabbed attention when their VVing range dropped earlier in the year, featuring an innovative, integrated middle strut and foldable fixed boom.

The 6.4m is the brand's light air type that gets me flying in relatively low wind strengths (at 90kgs) with a spot of pumping. Having the integrated boom ensures infinite hand holds with precise placement easily achievable.

Super rigid, with preloaded canopy tension, makes the VVing highly pumpable and reactive. If you're learning how to wing foil gybe, this allows 'working' of the wing to exit in flight.

It drifts pretty well for a big wing. There is slightly more weight in the VVing because of the boom and strut, but the Vayu guys have done everything to keep this minimal and ensure that it floats on the breeze efficiently whilst drifting and depowering. All in the 6.4m is a real winner for those wanting a boom style wing, and being foldable without having to remove it, us a real winner!

Price: €799

https://vayu.world/VVings_1



Feedback power – Ocean Specific V-RX-2 SUP Paddle

www.oceanspecific.com/

Words & pics: Tez Plavenieks



I'm a huge fan of Ocean Specific SUP paddles. The brand's Strike SX-2 I've used to good effect at length. The V-RX-1 comes with a different blade face design featuring a double dihedral for additional power through the catch part of the stroke. Checking this prospect out was definitely getting the juices flowing.

Everyone who picks an Ocean Specific SUP paddle up straight away notices the weight - you can't not! The V-RX-1 is no different with super feather weight traits. It's so light that you feel it mightn't stand up to the rigours of stand up paddling. Yet after it becomes apparent that the paddle's robust elements are also firmly intact. Of course, you need to handle the paddle correctly and not be complacent in terms of transport and maintenance. In use, however, it's a tough 'engine' and will take accidental knocks.

One sweet design feature of the V-RX-2 is the subtle oval shaft. This isn't immediately obvious when looking on but having gripped the paddle the superbly comfortable shaft gives a firm and dependable connection with which paddlers of any style will find favour with. The top T-grip only adds to this with plenty of feedback through each stroke allowing riders to fine tune their



strokes according to conditions, paddler mood (and/goals), type of SUPing and any other factor you care to chuck in the mix.

So what if that double dihedral blade shape? Plunging deep the Ocean Specific paddle encourages you to power up and yank a stroke hard. Instantaneous forward propulsion is what you then get with speed building rapidly. I tried this from standing starts a few times and found the paddle to be extremely efficient at getting you going. It's quite apparent how this would fit SUP racing scenarios (especially sprints off the line or to the finish) but other areas such as critical take offs in SUP surfing situations will also benefit. The V-RX-1 really is a thrust machine with limitations only on the part of the paddler.

CONCLUSION

Ocean Specific have really done a sterling job with their V-RX-1 SUP paddle. Super light and extremely efficient it's a step up from the brand's Strike SX-2 - which I didn't think would be the case. Any advancing stand up paddle should give due consideration to what paddle they're using. At which point riders should certainly check in with Ocean Specific to see what they can offer - you won't be disappointed! The V-RX-1 being just one quality choice in a range of top shelf products.

Price: £274.95



On the bone – Aftershokz Aeropex Bone Conduction earphones

<https://aftershokz.co.uk>



Review: Dale Mears
Perhaps more suited for SUP than canoeing or kayaking, these IP67 sweat and moisture resistant headphones are an excellent choice for anyone wanting to listen to music whilst on the water without affecting safety.

Why? Because these headphones do not go in

your ear, therefore, do not block the sounds around you.

Sitting just in front of the ear, they work by bone conduction and have to be tried. At first, I was dubious, but I remember trying these in a local store and being blown away. I am finally purchasing after many lone paddles and looking for some music.

The design is simple, a titanium rubberised band that sits behind the neck and doesn't impose. You could if the battery would let you, wear these for hours on end as they are super comfortable. Supplied with plugs for the ears if you want to block out all sound if travelling or in noisy environments.

Operation is a simple two buttons, volume up and down, long hold for alternative functions and controls. These were super easy to pair up to the mobile phone and Garmin watch. With a 33-foot Bluetooth range, you can leave your phone in a drybag or pouch and take advantage of music on board, or like me use linked to a Garmin watch. You can connect to multiple devices to so have connected to both phone and watch.

There is a built-in microphone for those who want to take calls on the water, too, meaning you can stay connected with friends and family.

Aftershokz provides the headphones in a package with two charging cables (magnetic so super easy to connect), earplugs, and rubber carry case with magnetic closure.

CONCLUSION

I've been super impressed, and in conversations with many users, these are an excellent choice for stand up paddleboarders. It does motivate you to paddle to music, especially when you can still hear the environment around you!

£149.95



Pocket rocket – Men's long sleeve Pro Change Evo

<https://redoriginal.com>



Review: Dale Mears

With many change robes now flooding the market, how do you know which to buy? It's difficult for many, and there are slight differences between the top brands and little between the lower end of the market.

We at @standuppaddleuk were early adopters of the Pro Change jacket and have been wearing them since the product launched a couple of years ago. So when Red Original (RO) announced an updated model, we had to see what the fuss was about.

Firstly let's start with the hood, a bone of contention with the previous robe as

although lovely and big and snugly, it was a wind flapper! The new hood has taken on board those features of most coats and has an elasticated drawstring in the hood. This is much nicer as you can quickly tighten up and keep that pesky wind and rain out of the jacket. Also handy if chucking it over a young one to keep them warm after a dip.

On to the main jacket, the fabric feels different, feels lighter, however, is the same as previous models designed to keep out the rain, which helps on long sessions or after a delightful rainy paddle. The jacket looks in appearance the same as the previous Pro Change. A couple of new colours such as this parker green with orange fleece, which we think will be a popular addition to the range and a fuchsia pink with grey internal fleece, both adding a bit more spice to the previous colour schemes. The branding has been reduced too, which we think is a great shout. This has now halved in size, so much more subtle.

The robe has also been made longer, offering more protection from the elements when changing. The sleeves have been changed, adapting the previous velcro tightening system, and adding an elasticated wrist band. This means less baggy sleeves and more control of your arms when changing or wearing. We still feel the sleeves could be slightly longer, especially now there is more ability to tighten the sleeve.

Internally RO has added a zip pocket for valuables and a fleece pocket for holding a map or passport or, as RO, state your undies! This will help users worried about storing valuables.

The external jacket pockets are still open, so easy to access, unlike some zipped pockets that can rub you. However, RO has added small magnets to close the pockets, which is a lovely addition.

CONCLUSION

All in all, we love the changes, although at first appearance only subtle they make this robe one of the best on the market. If you're looking for a change robe, then seriously consider this one.

Price: £149.95

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Gently does it –

Palm Equipment Meander BA

<https://palmequipmenteurope.com>



Review: Tez Plavenieks

Palm Equipment's Meander buoyancy aid is what they describe as: "A step up from a club BA." To me, it's a little more than that with its great look, army green colour and overall functionality. It's also perfect for SUP...

If you didn't know, Palm Equipment was one of the first brands to make PFDs to ISO standards. You can therefore be comforted by the fact the Meander may be a 'gentle' PFD, but it's, in fact, a high-performance product that'll keep you plenty safe whilst out for a float.

Fit wise; the Meander's a tailored affair that can be tightened and made more snug as you see fit. It has a simple zip entry system with buckles to ratchet up. There's a chest located zipped pocket for storing a few small essentials whilst out afloat.

It's made from nylon 420D ripstop fabric Gaia, and EPE PVC-free foam whilst the rating is ISO 12402-5 certified. Reflective decals, 3D anti-ride-up waistbelt, adjustable waist straps, pocket clip-in point and an internal velcro slip pocket round out what's a top-shelf floatation device from Palm.

I used the Meander in mainly flat water and a few moderately bumpier environments (purposely taking a dunking to test the product). I found it to be immensely comfortable and more than fit for purpose. The Meander's hard-wearing and in this colour it's also a product you can keep mostly clean, it fends off dirty marks and such with ease. For note, I also used the Meander for sailing and found it worked well here also: versatility guaranteed. It comes in men and women versions with a range of colours (although the olive is only in mens).

CONCLUSION

If you're after some of the best PFDs on the market – great for SUP and all manner of water born activities then you'd do a lot worse than nab yourself something from Palm Equipment. The Meander is a basic, entry level model, although that description really does it no favours. Palm's tip top quality is second to none so what you're getting really is a cracking product. Of course, some of Palm's other PFDs have more bells and whistles but the Meander will more than do the job for recreational stand up paddlers.

Price: £80 <https://palmequipmenteurope.com/product/meander-5>

Read all about it! –

The SUP Bible by David Price

[www.bloomsbury.com/uk/](http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/paddleboard-bible-9781472981462/)

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Review: Tez Plavenieks

Dave Price is an enthusiastic and experienced stand up paddler, instructor and outdoor enthusiast who's put pen to paper to help others along their SUP journey. Published by Bloomsbury it's a quality, well thought out title with plenty of high end photographic illustrations. It also covers a wide number of topics.

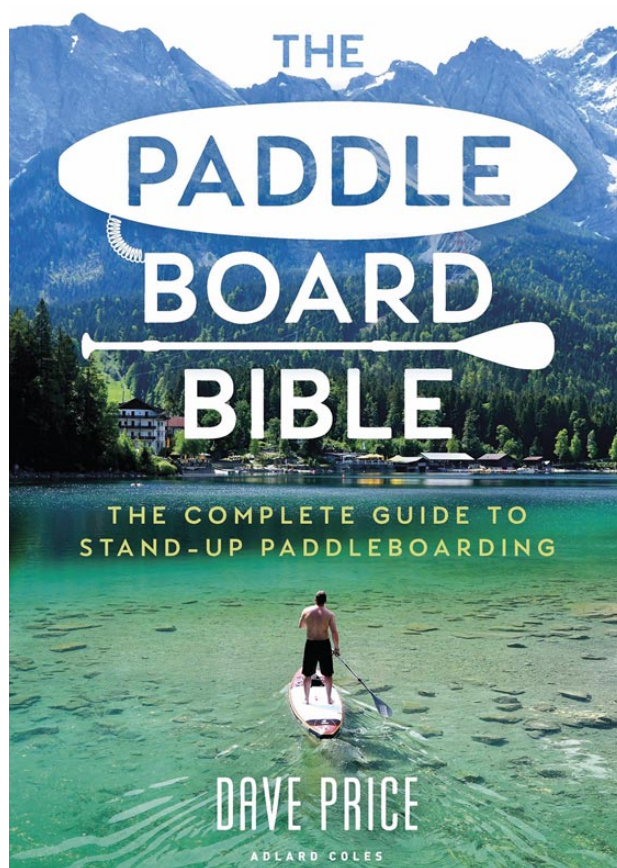
There are a number of SUP books on the market that all have slightly different stand points. Whilst Dave Price's SUP Bible covers the 'usual suspects' topics – such as equipment and basic technique - it's the section on wildlife that sets it apart. This isn't to say there's no info and knowledge to glean from every chapter but with Dave being a nature lover it's this section that stood out the most.


Other chapters have plenty to keep newbie and intermediate paddlers occupied, however. If you combine the SUP Bible's content with coaching sessions, for instance, then you'll be well on the way to the upper echelons of advanced stand up paddle boarding. Even seasoned stand ups could possibly glean some knowledge from the book.

CONCLUSION

A well presented and delivered SUP book that's obviously had a lot of time, effort and passion put into it by Dave. There's a whole heap of info that'll help certain stand ups along their journey. For me, as already mentioned, it's the wildlife section that stood out the most. But everyone will have their own, most useful section.

Price: £18.99





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