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The Summer of Stand Up Paddle

It seems that everyone is talking about the new kid on the paddlesports scene, stand up paddle (SUP). The buzz about this sport has been growing at each passing OR, with increasing floor space taken up by SUP brands every year. All of the major paddle and surf companies have stuck their foot in the door with offerings in this category, and brands are manufacturing more and more application-specific boards.

"In general, SUP is moving very quickly and all over the place," observes Jennifer Holcomb, Editor-in-chief at InsideLine. "When it started people associated it with surfing, but what we're seeing right now is that surfing has become secondary to the inland market." That leads to the question on everyone's mind: how can the outdoor industry hone in on the potential of this emerging sport?

"JUST LIKE RIDING A BIKE"

The key to stand up paddle's explosive popularity lies in its accessibility. Playfully called the "bicycle of the water," it has earned the reputation that anyone, from someone who has never tried a watersport before to an olympic-level athlete, can enjoy it. And it's not just everyone—it's everywhere. With just a couple of inches of water one can be paddling to their heart's content, which allows a retailer to bring surf appeal to any state on the map.

Tied to this accessibility lies a particular appeal to women. The top SUP brands tell us they see a rare 50/50 ratio of men and women buying boards, and many have begun manufacturing boards specifically designed for women.

Gina Bradley, SUP instructor and founder of Paddle Diva (paddlediva.com) recalls, "I realized when I stepped on a stand up paddleboard for the first time that this was a sport



Super popular SUP yoga provides a full-body workout

that I could really bring to women. So many have had that fantasy of becoming a surfer, but that's a very difficult sport to learn and have success with."

Add to this appealing learning curve the lower risks of SUP, and it becomes much less of a commitment to try. Stand up paddle offers a social element that surfing cannot: for example, friends or family can chat as they navigate flat waters, rather than focusing their attention on the incoming wave.

A NEW VANTAGE POINT ON NATURE

While surf is essential to the history of stand up paddle, the nature of the activity has it primed for outdoor application. "Paddleboarding really allows you to interact with nature in a unique way," observes Bradley. "It is so silent when you paddleboard, and your vantage point is so high (as opposed to a kayak) that you can observe nature in ways you may never have before. It has really opened up a new way for people to take in their surroundings."

SUP tours take advantage of this experience by giving paddlers a fun opportunity to explore the area around them. Many successful events draw character from the local culture, such as a paddle beneath the London Bridge in Lake Havasu City, Arizona or the rich surf culture of California's Battle of the Paddle in Dana Point.

STAND UP PADDLE YOGA

A curious interest that has been taking the fitness world by storm is stand up paddle yoga. When you think about it, the appeal is intuitive: both interests improve fitness and balance in a serene, meditative setting. To a retailer, this hot new trend can illustrate the versatility of the SUP board.

Gina Bradley began offering SUP yoga classes through Paddle Diva after meeting Jessica Bellofatto, yoga instructor of 25 years, at a stand up paddle race. "We were neck and neck!" she recalls, laughing. Soon they came together to figure out how to combine yoga and SUP for a complete, satisfying workout.

"We had both seen the physical benefits that paddleboarding has brought to our bodies," Bradley explains. "She's a triathlete and a runner, and she saw that SUP helps with her running and core fitness. I saw SUP helping me improve my swim stroke." The response to the class was enthusiastic, and practically instantaneous. "The first class we overbooked. Then the second, third, and fourth, full out. It was the weather that stopped us short!" Now, Bradley observes, out on the water she is seeing yoga even more frequently than she is seeing women's stand up paddle boarding classes.



Stand up paddle brands see a rare 50/50 ratio of men and women buying boards

'SUP, Dog

Third annual Sup for a Pup most successful yet

On April 9, over 600 people gathered at Kaenon Polarized in Newport Beach for a huge sample sale to benefit A Wish for Animals (AWFA), a nonprofit rescue shelter. This year's effort brought the paddle and dog-loving communities together to raise \$11,000 and find homes for 15 dogs.

Led by Kaenon, the event also included sample sales, raffles and giveaways by Naish, Quickblade, OluKai Premium Footwear and Hinano Tahiti. Families feasted on Wahoo's fish tacos, with a portion of all sales donated to AWFA to support their mission.

Over the past three years, combined, the annual event has raised more than \$25,000 to assist AWFA and has found quality homes for 45 dogs.

LOOKING INLAND

While stand up paddle can provide a rewarding enough first-time experience to convert many new enthusiasts, the first step to participation always lies in visibility. Those living on a coast will frequently see the boards being used out on the water, but this ubiquity has yet to extend to inland markets. "The best way to spread it inland is to get the board out there so people can see it," expresses Holcomb. "Once they see it they want to try it."

Shops are remedying this by bringing in and hosting community races or having demonstrations in public areas. In fact, one community incorporated SUP into a big triathlon event by using the boards to start the swim portion of the race. It showed the triathletes a new way to be on the water and cross-train, and caught some attention from the event attendees.

Those within the industry agree that adopting the sport for the inland market is a priority—but it is not necessarily a simple task. "Any company that comes in and tries to call it just one thing or the other will probably appeal to a particular market," Holcomb notes, "but they won't get the widespread distribution that they're looking for."

In that vein, touting SUP as an extension of surf isn't always the ideal strategy. "People inland don't want a surfboard," she continues. "Sometimes they don't want to be associated with surf." While the high price point boards still look like surfboards, an inland paddler who is going to be touring or fishing will be looking instead for a longer, more stable design.

It is important for retailers to keep a keen awareness of what their customer wants the board to do, and find the companies that are focusing on that. Most surf companies and kayak companies are designing boards specific to their audiences. In a certain sense, a tug-of-war has begun between surf and kayak to claim SUP as their discipline, but many within the evolving sport see its potential as an independent entity.

THE DRAW OF COMPETITION

When it comes to fueling the growth of stand up paddle, events play a crucial role. Often, races are the first places that people ex-



Gina Bradley, founder of Paddle Diva

perience the sport. The largest event each year is Battle of the Paddle, with races in California and Hawaii. (See box on this event).

In regards to SUP racing, Holcomb sees surfboard categories popping up more and more often, so that beginners don't get blown out of the water like they might on a race board. "If they have a good experience racing on the surf design they may come back to buy a race board," she adds.

Racing is an especially important element for female participation, because it allows women another vehicle to participate in competitive sports. The charitable organization Paddlers for Humanity organizes a women's-specific event called the Wahine Paddle, a short distance race, and the proceeds benefit a women's not-for-profit abuse shelter called The Retreat. According to Bradley, out of the four events that Paddlers for Humanity puts on each summer, the Wahine Paddle is the most well-attended.

"During a relay event, I had 40, 50 year old women hugging me saying that they'd never been able to compete before, that they'd always watched marathons and races from the sidelines," she recalls. "It brought them so much excitement!"

SUP has even caught the attention of USA Canoe/Kayak (USACK) the paddlesport racing

C4 Waterman and Dr. Robert N. Yonover Partner for Inflatable Line

C4 Waterman has entered a partnership agreement with Honolulu inventor Dr. Robert N. Yonover, who owns the registered patent for inflatable surfboards, paddleboards and rescue equipment initially developed for the U.S. Military. Through this, C4 Waterman plans to expand its line of inflatable stand up paddleboards, surfboards, rescue boards and other equipment.

CEO Todd Bradley tells Outdoor USA, "C4 at this time is the only and first to work with Dr. Yonover, who happens to be a long time Hawaii waterman friend of mine."

The inflatable product line includes full-length SUP boards, mid-size surfboards, rescue boards and tubes, as well as floating stage mats of up to 100 square feet. The line is designed for both ocean access and lake and river use.

Inflatable SUP boards have a number of advantages over conventional, heavily weighted fiberglass boards. They can be deflated and rolled up, making transportation and storage much easier, especially for those living in apartments or taking public transportation to the water. Inflatable boards are also less dangerous than fiberglass in the case of a collision.



C4 12'6" inflatable race board

organization and member of the United States Olympic Committee. This April's Silver Blades Regatta event marked a milestone for the young sport as the first USACK sanctioned stand up paddle event. It took place alongside the National Team Trials at the Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, California.



Jennifer Holcomb, editor-in-chief for InsideLine

According to Joe Jacobi, CEO of USACK, getting SUP athletes involved is an important step for the paddling community. "We want to focus on ways to take the sport inland and associate it with some of our other canoe/kayak disciplines, including the Olympic ones," he says.

"This event was brand new for us," he continues. "We introduced a new format and a new opportunity for stand up paddle competitors in Southern California to get to compete at an Olympic Training center." The event welcomed 100 SUP competitors, doubling its size from the 100 canoe/kayak paddlers of the previous two years.

At the event, the new format of SUP racing introduced was the 200 meter sprint. "People loved it!" Jacobi exclaims. "It was great getting feedback from some of the best stand up competitors in the country. These talented athletes were looking for a new competitive experience—many of the events they had previously been doing were longer races."

FIGHTING STICKER SHOCK

While SUP's potential lies in its accessibility, one of the greatest barriers to entry can be its cost. "The issue with pricing is that a \$1,500 sticker price may turn people off," observes Holcomb. Most brands are aware of the obstacle and have either created an entry point product below \$1,000 or an additional lower

price brand to avoid diluting the higher price brand value.

The risk can be high, because manufacturing a good-quality board involves proper raw materials and techniques. To achieve that Costco-priced \$400 package, the necessary compromises can lead to consumer dissatisfaction with the sport, especially when the board gets broken.

"If they spend \$400 or \$500 on the entry-level board, anyone who gets passionate

about the sport (and this percentage is quite high) will recognize that they want a different board rather quickly," Holcomb observes. "Now they've invested \$500 in the first one, and they would be spending closer to \$1,000 on the next level, plus \$150 to \$300 on the next level paddle. This can be a significant amount of money to put down in one year."

Trade in-programs can be a solution to bridging this gap of price points. If someone buys an entry-level board from one of the established companies and they decide that they want to upgrade, they can trade it in and use that money toward another purchase.

In the end, someone walking into a retail store may not know or care about the difference between boards or materials, and may be more concerned about paying for two or three boards for their family members. This is why, in the end, communicating with the consumer and educating them on the benefits of a quality board is most important.

AN INDUSTRY CONVERSATION

Keeping a dialogue open to discuss these challenges is a necessary priority for the growing SUP industry. Manufacturers can share where they are coming from on the price level, so that retailers can understand why boards

• • • Battle of the Paddle • • •

Called the "Superbowl of SUP," the largest stand up paddle celebration each year is Battle of the Paddle, featuring an event in Hawaii and one in California. This year's Hawaiian event brought immense visibility to the sport with 600 racers drawing 15,000 spectators to the Duke Kahanamoku Beach in Waikiki, May 14-15.

While Battle of the Paddle originally began with races in Dana Point, California, it has been more than embraced by the Hawaiian audience, seeing more race entries than ever before over the course of the weekend.

The main event is the Elite Race, a championship-style surf race offering the sport's largest prize of \$25,000. The weekend also includes an Open Age-Group Race, Distance Race, Kid's Races and SUP Relays. A SUP Expo brings equipment manufacturers with an assortment of new boards and paddles to demo.

Last year the event was broadcast live on the internet, and this year for the first time it was synched locally to a live television broadcast via Oceanic Time Warner Cable. The response was so positive that they look forward to doing another live television broadcast in southern California this Fall.

Battle of the Paddle comes to Dana Point, California this September 24-25.



cost what they do. If retailers don't quite understand the differences between the boards, they have no way to educate the consumer.

Retailers must be made aware of these sacrifices made to lower the cost of a board, to keep an eye out for lower-quality knockoffs. A name brand board represents quality materials and solid research and development be-

hind it. From this conversation, shapers (from both canoe and kayak backgrounds) began to play an important role in differentiating the higher-level brands from the imitators that come in to take and produce similar designs. In the end, the key to supporting the growth of a healthy SUP industry will lie in that open dialogue between brands and retailers. ♻️



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For flat water cruising, touring, fitness training, fishing, playing at the beach or just plain fun, the Sunset is the perfect stand-up paddle board.



Photos: S. Whitesell

Naish: Inspired Design for Stand Up Paddle

SUP Product Manager
 Michi Schweiger unveils the company's development process

BY TONY GATTO

If there's one thing Naish Product Manager Michi Schweiger knows, it's the water. In an interview with Outdoor USA, he begins to list his interests—"stand up paddle (SUP) surfing, racing, windsurfing, surfing, diving... simply being in the water as much as possible!"

Certainly, this passion translates to the quality of product Naish offers. Schweiger has been part of the design process for every windsurf and stand up product released during his 11 years as product manager, doing everything from prototyping and testing on the water to releasing the boards for final production, and even guiding the marketing.

Schweiger took a rare dry moment to tell us all about Naish's design process, how a background in windsurfing gives him a unique take on SUP, and the "hero" factor that has everyone falling in love with the sport.

Michi, let's begin with your studies.

I studied electrical engineering, but quit in order to pursue a professional career in windsurfing. During my years on the world tour I started working in product development for the company that sponsored me.

How did you come to join Naish?

Before Naish I was working with the same people I'm working with now (Robby Naish, Rick Naish and Harold Iggy) at a windsurfing company that produced Naish as a limited edition label. Naish already had their own sail brand, so at one point, we simply started making Naish windsurfing boards and began to offer them through our own distribution network.

Who is on your design team?

Our long-time shaper Harold Iggy, Robby's dad Rick Naish who has been designing boards for decades, as well as our sail designer Nils Rosenblad. The design team also includes our team riders for both stand up paddle and windsurfing who bring a lot of key feedback to the product development process.

When was the first time you were ever exposed to the word SUP?

About 6 years ago, my friend (one of the pioneers of the sport on Maui) gave me his board and encouraged me to paddle around on it. Shortly after, I started doing coast runs hitting every surf break on the way, and I got really into the surfing part of the sport. During the summer months Maui is really windy, but the surf isn't as good as it is during the winter months. So, stand up racing was the obvious choice during the summer.

Why do you feel consumers are so attracted to this new discipline?

It fits the current lifestyle. People want to do something that they can enjoy right away. The shorter the learning curve and the road to success, the better. You can compare it to how snowboarding took off when it started—it was initially easier to learn than skiing, and everybody felt like a hero right away. Stand up paddling gives that feeling of accomplishment

from instant success as well.

Another factor is the versatility of a sport that offers surf potential but is just as much fun when cruising on a lake or river. The social aspect of being able to paddle together with friends and family is huge.

Do you see SUP as a surf or a paddle discipline?

I don't feel it's necessary to categorize it. There are different conditions that ask for different applications. The beauty of it is that you can take the same board and basically do everything with it from surfing to cruising on flatwater. It is a hybrid between surfing and paddling cultures, which were tied together very closely in the Hawaiian history in the beginning.

What are some of the design issues you are trying to tackle?

We're working to combine stability with agility on the recreational side of things, pushing the level of what is possible in the surf as well as in flatwater and open ocean racing. We always keep in mind that it has to have a benefit for the consumer. That's one of the reasons that our team rides only production boards (except when we are testing new prototypes, of course) so that the customer gets the best board possible.

What materials do you use in the SUP boards?

We offer different constructions for various applications, mainly sandwich wood layups to combine the natural strength of wood laminates with their own flex characteristics. We use carbon and carbon/kevlar for race-oriented products due to their light weight and stiffness advantage.



The new Naish product offering aims to make entry into the sport easier, without limiting the user's progression

Where do you take inspiration for design?

Definitely from canoe paddling. Tahitian style outrigger canoes have been part of our inspiration, especially for the flatwater boards.

How has your experience in designing other products helped you with SUP?

The combination of surfboard design and windsurf board design has been essential. There is a significant importance in understanding the play between static volume, length, width and rockerline. A lot of that comes from windsurfing or has been developed in windsurfing over the years. But it gains even more importance when you combine it with what comes from the surfing background.

Do you use rapid prototyping?

We have the luxury of having a master shaper in Harold Iggy, who we work with on all of the initial masters. From there on we partly use rapid prototyping for particular experiments, or if we want to adjust to different size boards.




They might go for that low-end/short lifespan construction that some manufacturers are offering, but in the end he or she will have to buy something that is designed to last, anyway. So why not invest in good quality to begin with?

So, what do you think of inflatable SUP?

With the high-end technology that is offered in the inflatable boat market, inflatable SUP is turning into a pretty high-tech product if done right. We don't see it as a low-end product, but rather as a great option to introduce stand up paddling to rivers or to customers who simply do not have enough space for a 10 foot board.

We are just launching two new models in two different thicknesses which are both produced with drop stitch technology.

Can you give us a sneak peek into the future of Naish SUP?



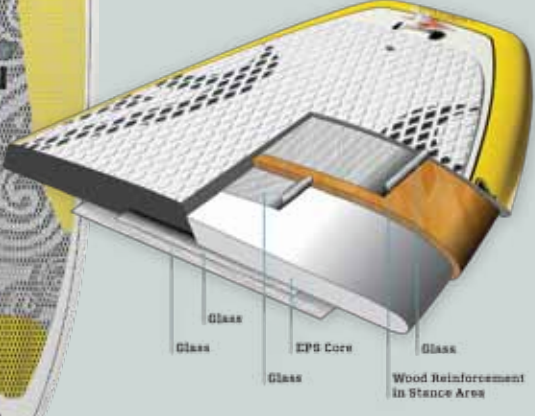
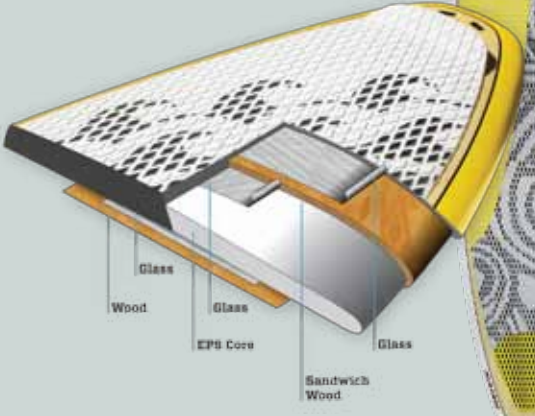
We will have boards and paddles that are made for kids, as well as products designed for women not only in looks but also in board and paddle design. In general, our new products make the entry into the sport easy, without limiting the progression of the user. 

“Stand up paddling gives that feeling of accomplishment”

What do you see as the design trade-offs to have a lower price point offering?

There are really not that many design trade-offs. Lower prices are mainly reached through lower-end construction. For us, we decided on basically two constructions which are, honestly, pretty high-end. We feel that providing a cheaper product that does not last as long is a bit too much of a trade-off for the consumer.

The New 2012 Naish Nalu

	Dimensions in inches: 10'10" x 32" x 4 3/8" Dimensions in centimeters: 330 x 81.3 x 11 Volume: 201	
	Construction: Sandwich Wood and AST Fin: US 10.5	
AST MSRP: \$1629		Sandwich Wood MSRP: \$2099
		

Aqua Glide

www.aquaglide.net // 509.493.4938

Amundson 11'6" SUP



The Amundson 11'6" is designed for maximum flotation and well-balanced performance in a number of different conditions. While offering speed, the tail rocker and forgiving rails make an occasional day in the waves fun. It can be an all-around board for paddlers over 170 lbs., or a family board for a number of different riders. Epoxy AST construction helps to balance light weight, stiffness and durability. The Amundson 11'6" SUP retails for \$1,199.95.

Amundson 12'6" TR SUP

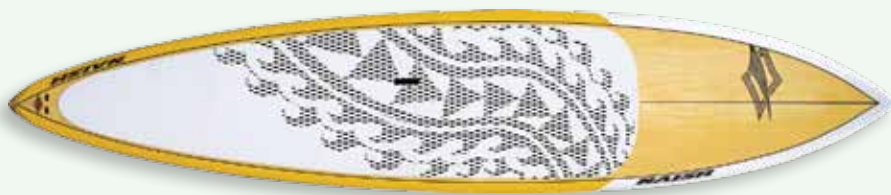


The Amundson Tour and Race SUP was developed to offer speed and efficiency while maintaining comfort and stability. It has a fine entry and pronounced V-shape, so the nose cuts easily through chop. Vertical rails and a flat bottom offer clean water release and stability. Epoxy AST construction provides a balance of light weight, stiffness and durability. The Amundson 12'6" TR retails for \$1,299.95.

Naish

www.naishsurfing.com // 808.575.5432

Hokua 11'6" Gun



The Hokua 11'6" Gun is designed for serious big surf. It has single concave entry with a slight double concave mid-section and V-tail combined with extra width in the nose area to help get in early. The narrow pintail shape delivers speed and control. The Hokua 11'6" Gun is constructed from sandwich wood with a single fin set up.

Mana 10'0" Soft Top



The Mana 10'0" has a soft top/slick bottom construction to make beginner SUP easy for ocean waves or river runs. The embossed deck area provides grip while staying skin friendly. The 3D rail protection makes it resilient against damage caused by the paddle or other hard objects. A slick bottom and soft fins provide extra safety for a rider and their surroundings. The Mana 10'0" Soft Top has Thruster Soft Fins.

Riviera

www.rivierapaddlesurf.com // 949.388.6999

404 10'6" Trainer Race Board



The 10'6" by 404 is a stable fast board initially designed as a training board for Danny Ching. The idea was to create an easily transportable Stand Up board for daily use. Built with the same concepts as the Monster 12'6", the design of the 10'6" is a similar shape but incorporates better stability. The board retails for \$1,395.

Ron House 12'6" Stand Up Race Board



The Ron House 12'6" race board has a racing canoe hull entry to slice cleanly through the water. Midway it blends into a flat bottom finishing with hard rails towards the diamond shaped tail. The deck is scooped out lowering the paddler's center of gravity and comes with an Aero foil wing fin developed by Ron. Exceptional clean lines make the board point and track remarkably straight. Developed for racing, touring, adventuring in smooth to moderate conditions. Retails at \$1,675.00.

PRO Danny Ching Carbon Fiber SUP Paddle



Designed by Danny Ching, this paddle has a dihedral shape to enhance stability throughout the entire stroke. It is constructed from carbon fiber or fiberglass to make it lightweight and durable, with a slightly smaller blade (8.5 in.) to allow for greater paddle speed. The paddle weighs approximately 18 oz. and retails for \$350.

SCOUT Danny Ching Carbon Fiber SUP Paddle



Designed as a beginner paddle, the Scout features a Carbon Fiber shaft and Fiberglass blade. It is built with the dihedral shape and smaller blade (8.5 in.) of the Pro Danny Ching Carbon Fiber SUP paddle. The Scout weighs approximately 22 oz. and retails for \$350.

Carlisle

www.carlislepaddles.com // 800.343.1555

Taboo



The versatile Taboo is designed to easily convert from a stand up paddle to a kayak paddle. It includes two T-grip handles to adjust the length based on height, and a second blade to convert the stand up paddle into a 230 cm kayak paddle. The SUP paddle weighs 39 oz. (75") or 42 oz. (82") and the kayak paddle weighs 52 oz. (230 cm). The Taboo retails for \$84.99.

Kialoa

www.kialoa.com // 541.382.5355

Toro



The Toro features a razor-thin, Tahitian-style teardrop blade profile with a pronounced hook at the top and a powerface dihedral. The shaft and blade are made from a race-specific carbon fiber layup to create a paddle that is stronger, stiffer, lighter and faster. The blade measures 8.75 in. wide and weighs 19 oz. The retail price is \$379.

Pipes



Pipes is a women's specific SUP paddle designed by female paddlers for female paddlers. It features a 7.25 in. wide carbon blade, a strong oval and tapered carbon shaft and Kialoa's unidirectional carbon Ergo-T top. Pipes also features beautiful Aloha graphics. The retail price is \$339.