

Island Sports

Stand-up paddlesurfing making island waves

By Adrienne Downing

Surfers in New England used to have to wait patiently for a good waves day to get some quality sports time in, and settle for some skateboarding or snowboarding action in between to fill the gaps.

A new sport on the horizon is changing all of that, and bringing quite a few non-surfers along in the process.

The sport, called stand-up paddleboarding or paddlesurfing, was started by ancient Hawaiians. It gained some attention in the 1960's when the Hawaiian Beachboys used to paddle out into the surf to take pictures of the tourists when they were surfing.

It did not make the jump to the mainland and into the mainstream until recently, when surfers like Laird Hamilton increased its visibility.

The board the paddlers use is made of the same epoxy surfboards are made of, but it is about 3 feet longer than a longboard and twice as wide and thick. It has a rubber pad on the surface to decrease slipping and uses a carbon fiber oar to paddle with.

"Because of the size of it, you can stand on it and it is very stable, unlike a surfboard," Brian Cotsonas, the owner of the first paddleboard on Jamestown, explained. "It is also very lightweight and buoyant."

Cotsonas got interested in the sport because he is a surfer, but conditions are not always ideal for surfing in New England.

"I can go out any time of day or night on this no matter what the conditions are, light wind, heavy wind, big waves or no waves," he said. "I can also ride the waves on it, so it is a perfect double for my surfboard."



Brian Cotsonas, the owner of the first stand-up paddleboard in Jamestown, demonstrates how to use it in the waters at Sheffield Cove.

Photo by Adrienne Downing

He said that rather than laying down on the board and paddling with his arms to catch a wave, he uses the paddle to gain the same momentum as the wave and he is already in position for the ride.

Most of the time, however, he is content to just paddle around the island, which he said is where the appeal is for most people.

"A lot of people won't learn to surf, but this is a happy medium. They can do this very easily. The people I have shown how to do it picked it up the first time they tried it," Cotsonas said. His favorite spots around the island include Fort Wetherhill, Horsehead and the ferry area downtown.

Unlike kayaking and sailing, standing on the paddleboard allows the paddler better visibility

because they are looking directly into the water.

"I wear my polarized sunglasses and I am able to see fish, lobster and all kinds of things in the water. It is quite fascinating actually," he said.

Shawn Vecchione, the owner of VEC Surfboards, who has recently started shaping paddleboards because of local demand, says he can

even fish from the board.

"I see striper all the time when I am out, and you can even put a trawling attachment on if you want to," he said. "You can go out when it is flat as a lake and do a lot of different things."

Vecchione said his favorite thing about the board is that he can go almost anywhere with it.

"There are only so many beaches you can surf at, but I can go and explore pretty much anywhere there is water with the paddleboard," he said.

The other benefit to the sport is that it is a very good core, low impact workout.

"You really don't realize you are getting a workout on it, but the next day you can tell the difference," Cotsonas said.

His time on the paddleboard has caused him to become somewhat of an unintentional local spokesperson for the sport.

"I will be out on the board, or have it at the beach and people will come up to me with a lot of questions about it," he said. "I can also see them looking at it trying to figure out what it is or people pass in boats and give me a thumbs up."

He sees almost universal appeal among watersports enthusiasts for the sport.

"Windsurfers, surfers, sailors, kayakers and even skiers and snowboarders could all find something they like about it. And, unlike those things, paddleboarding can be done with a minimum amount of preparation and in any conditions," Cotsonas said.

He hopes to have more people join him in the waters around Jamestown.

"Right now it is so new it is like an elite club," he said. "Until you try it, you don't know how great it is."

For more information about VEC paddleboards, email Shawn at vecsurfboards@hotmail.com.

The Jamestown Yacht Club's fall series race results

Race number 1 of the Jamestown Yacht Club Fall Series was held on Aug. 25. The following are the results for the race:

A Class: 1. Unplugged, Custom 30, S. Murray; 2. Downhill Express, Swan 42, T. and C. Hirsch; 3. Macx, Custom 30, B. MacGowan; 4. Cat Came Back, Swan 42, L. Mossop; 5. Rumours, Thompson 35, T. Woodhouse; 6. Panacea, Beneteau 36.7, S. Clarke; 7. High Voltage, Viper 830, B. Jacobsen; 8. Slipstream, Beneteau 36.7, J. Collins; 9. Baby Bella, Melges 24, M. Nannini; 10. Floating Point, Frers 40, P. Clayton; 11. Hidalgo, Mod Express 27, deAngeli/Moody; 12. Lark, First 40.7, E. Flynn; 13. Alegria, Jeanneau 39i, Jamison/McInnis; 15. Jest, Quest 32, Hal-lowell/Stookey.

B Class: 1. Kaizen, Hobie 33, P. Grimes; 2. Manic, Shaw 6.5, JAC Wadson; 3. Lynx, J/29, D. Nixon; 4. Five, MX-20, H. Dun-laevy; 5. Barfly, J/24, R. Lambert; 6. All In, J/24, P. Schmidle; 7. Night Hawk, J/24, R. Barker; 8. Big, J/24, Buechner/Oliver; 9. Fast Lane, J/24, A. and H. Lane; 10. Bearly Movin', J/24, M. Nah-

mias; 11. Rhapsody (22), J/22, W. & A. Porter; 12. Luna, Albin Nova, C. Brown & S. Hakki; 13. Wind Ensemble, Omega 30, D. Stoops; 14. Blues Eracer, J/22, L. Mariorenzi; 15. Allegro, PC-ODR, R. Ebekhard; 16. Spirit, MX-20, E.C. Helme; 17. Rhapsody, J/30, B. Kneller; 18. Chaos, J/22, L. Thomas; 19. Footloose, Pearson Flyer 30, A. Yates.

C Class: 1. Chairman A, Pearson El., R. Bestoso; 2. Summer Wind, Scampi 30, Alyn/Hansen; 3. Second Wind, Seid 30T, S. Parfet; 4. Czech Mate, Seid S29-9, J.P. Trousilek; 5. Hydra, Cal 33, J. Riedel; 6. Genial, Catalina 25, M. Cox.

Rudman third in swim competition

Jessica Rudman placed third in the 11-12 year old 50-meter breast-stroke at the New England Championships at Springfield College in Massachusetts on Aug. 4.

Rudman swims for the Rams Swim Club and will be entering eighth grade at Lawn school.

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36 Southwest Avenue • Jamestown, Rhode Island 02835
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