



Souvenir Program

INTERNATIONAL SURFING CHAMPIONSHIPS

MAKAHA, HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

January 15 and 22, 1956



Makapuu Surf Life Savers organized by Makapuu Body Surfing Club

The Makapuu Body Surfing Club has affiliated with the Surf Life Saving Association of Hawaii with its main goal that of protecting swimmers from the treacherous surf in that area. The group is trained in the Australian system using the belt and reel. Noa Kalama, Sr. of the Makapuu Club reports that not less than fifteen rescues have been made by members of their group in the past six months. Makapuu and Makaha are the two beaches on Oahu where the Australian reel is used successfully.



HERB CASE IN ISLANDS' NEW SPORT

What's a 'Mater'

by H. H. Meeker, Jr.

Both board surfing and body surfing, while by no means beyond the capabilities of any moderate swimmer, require knacks which take some time and practice to develop. As in skiing, the expert far outclasses the novice, and does so by dint of many years of wave riding. Board surfing is the province of the Alii.

But if board surfing is the sport of kings, there is a small but enthusiastic and growing group of surfers in the Islands who would tell you that "mat surfing" is surely for princes (or princesses). If you can swim, have an air-inflated surfing mat and swim fins (and some waves), you can go out and get a ride on the first try. There are some refinements in the way of controlling the mat that make for a faster and more graceful ride, but these are not necessary at first for the straight forward business of getting on a wave and having more fun than on a toboggan during a thrilling three hundred to five hundred yard ride to the beach.

The only trick (if it can be called that) is to get the mat moving as rapidly as possible in the same direction as the wave just before it reaches you. For this reason, swim fins or "flippers" are necessary to give a good kick drive. A couple of concurrent strong pulls with the arms are useful.

Note that waves come in "sets" perhaps five to fifteen minutes apart. Wait for a set to judge your position, then fix it by sighting shore landmarks so you can be in the same place the next time. Do not go out beyond the point at which the waves are starting to curl over and break. It is important to understand that in all surfing, the wave should not be thought of as pushing you. The wave front is sloped downward. On a board, on a mat or in body surfing, you slide down this "hill" pulled by gravity—provided the hill is steep enough. It is a short hill, but by great good fortune things work out so that the hill continually moves along under you as you slide down. The boards may be able to "catch" a wave before it is steep enough to curl, but a mat cannot. On the other hand your ride will not be nearly so fast or smooth or maneuverable if you ride in the "soup"—the froth of a breaking wave (though, particularly in

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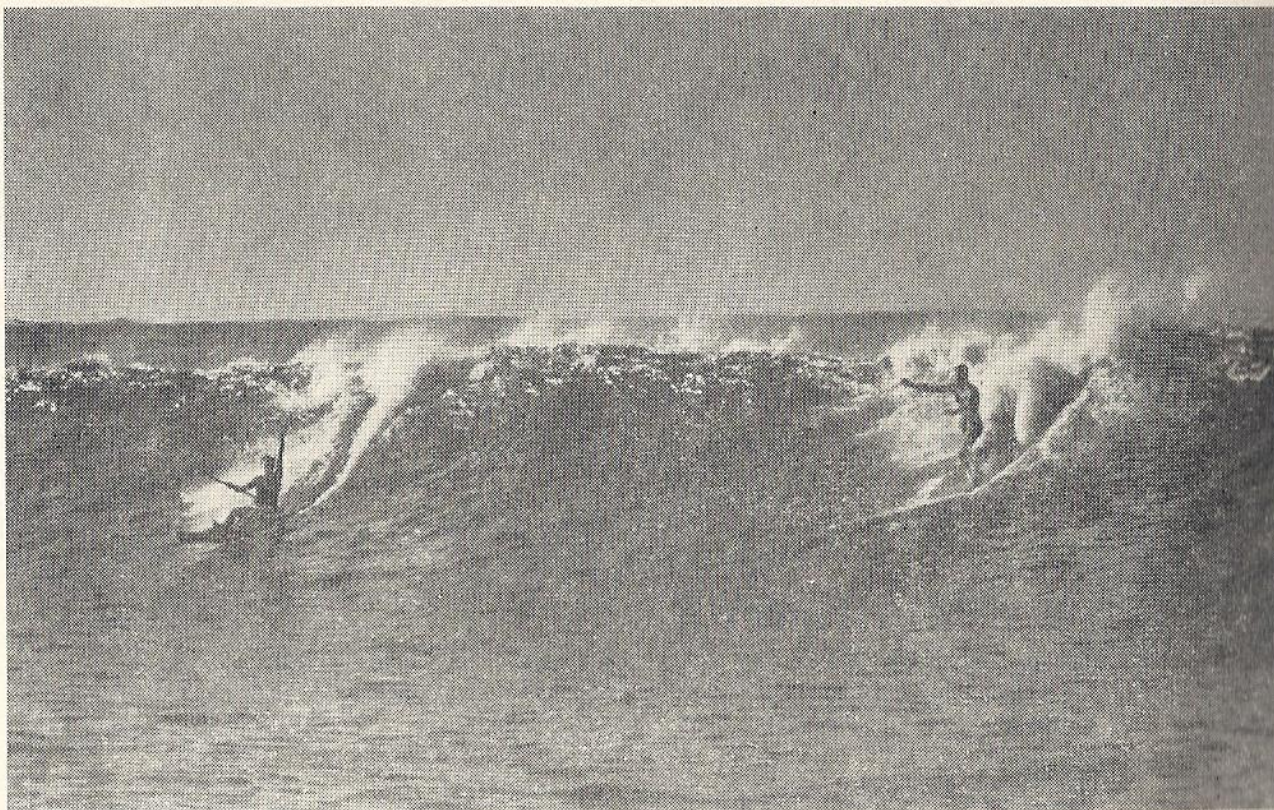
George Downing—World champion surfboard paddler and winner of the International Surfing Senior Championship for 1954 and 1955. Note the shape of Downing's board and removable skeg. Downing keeps the finish on his boards at a polished furniture smoothness.

Diamond Head Paddling Championships

The annual Diamond Head Surfboard paddle has become one of the nation's top paddle events. It is held under the sponsorship of the Waikiki Surf Club. The event is held annually during the Christmas week ends at a period when the majority of citizens of the United States are shivering in climates of ice and snow.

For the past eight years the day of the event has been sunny, the weather always mild and Waikiki sands have been lined with the usual number of sunbathers and swimmers. This event brings together the best of talent in the Hawaiian aquatic sport of surfboard paddling. The racing boards used in this competition are specially built for the six mile event by the contestants and are beautiful specimens of craftsmanship.

George Downing, recognized Hawaiian Island Champion in surfboard paddling and surfboard riding, did the unbelievable on December 26, 1955 by negotiating the nearly six mile Diamond Head buoy race in the record time of 46 min 23.3 seconds. In 1954 he lost the event to Tom Zahn who set a record that year of 51:59.6. Downing's victory was the result of his enthusiastic competitive spirit. He has traveled more miles to compete in surfing competition than any known surfer anywhere. In 1954 he was sent to Lima, Peru to participate in a carnival there and this past year to Manhattan Beach, California to participate in the Catalina Island Isthmus to Manhattan Beach surfboard paddle, a twenty-six mile event. It is hoped he will be able to avenge his defeat last year by again competing in that event.



Australian Surf near Sydney. Photo by Ray Leighton

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the early stages, a soup ride affords a great deal of bouncing fun). The object is to catch the wave on the "shoulder" and then, by steering the mat, to stay on the shoulder. A wave characteristically starts to break or curl at one point, and then the break gradually spreads down the length of the wave in both directions—but usually more evenly in one or the other direction on a particular beach. The "shoulder" is that part of the wave which has not yet broken but is just ready to break. In other words, it is a moving location on a wave just ahead of the spreading break.

While slewing your feet one way or the other will help to steer, it will quickly be found that banking or tilting the mat side ways in the direction you wish to slide will be most effective. This is essentially the method of steering a board too. With a mat, which is quite stable, a firm grasp on the edges and a strong downward push on one side accompanied by a lifting on the other will be required.

It will not take you long to find that quick observations and actions are required to stay on the shoulder. If you once coast back more than a few yards into the "soup" it will be almost impossible to steer back out onto the clear shoulder. On the other hand, if you steer too vigorously away from the curl, you may find yourself too far out on the less steep section of the shoulder. Sometimes an unpredictable break will also start to recede rather than progress, having the same result. If this happens, your "hill" flattens out so much that you do not slide down as fast as the wave goes forward and the result is that you drop over the back side of the wave ending your ride. You may accomplish this purposely near the shore to avoid the vigorous shore break and the necessity for getting out through it for the next ride.

As a further refinement, you will find that you can stay far up near the top of a large wave or ride down near its base. Sliding your body back on the mat slows down your "downhill" speed and you drop back or toward the top of the wave. Moving forward on the mat accomplishes the opposite. Generally, better control is achieved up near the top of the wave.

The small fraternity of mat surfers urges one and all to try out this new brother to an ancient Hawaiian sport. For malihinis and kamaainas as well, a great deal of enjoyment is available at a minimum of expense and practice.