

from the aching cold of December waves. On a typical winter day on beaches around Monterey Bay south of San Francisco, it is not unusual to see four or five surfers streaking across an ominously gray wave, standing on their boards like black-suited aquanauts. In addition to warmth, the suit gives surfers more buoyancy if they lose their board and must swim for it through the pummeling fridity of the north swell. In the past the spread of surfing has depended, to a large extent, on bearable water temperatures. This invention, however, seems to have conquered cold water, and it may well extend the frontiers of surfing into previously unexplorable places.

Today the home of balsa, plastic foam, and the wetsuit ranks second only to Hawai'i as a thriving surf center. The United States Surfing Association (USSA) was organized in southern California in 1961 and has its headquarters there. Embracing the U.S. Pacific coast, the eastern seaboard, and Hawai'i, the USSA is the first national organization devoted exclusively to the betterment of surfing and surfing conditions. Moreover, the West Coast Surfboard Championships inaugurated at Huntington Beach in 1959 now rival Mākaha in crowds and surfing prowess. Although the event is dominated by Californians, several Hawaiians have entered and placed highly. In fact, since the days of the surfing princes, Freeth, and Kahanamoku, many Hawaiians have tried the mainland's chilly waters. But Hawai'i still receives the finest swells that break anywhere; this attracted Californians there in the late 1940s to begin the big migration and finally joined these two separate but related surfing movements. The result, of course, has been a mutual improvement in board-building and wave-riding technique.

As Hawai'i's closest continental neighbor and blessed with a good surfing environment, California was an obvious place for the reviving sport to flourish as it began its global spread.

AUSTRALIA

During the time of the revival in Hawai'i and the new movement in California, another world of surfers was coming to life down below the equator. As far back as the 1880s Australians, taught by a Pacific islander known as "Tommy Tanna," had learned to body-surf. Soon after the turn of the century, tales of Hawaiian surfing with boards traveled four thousand miles down the Pacific to reach Australia's beaches. Stimulated by this exciting notion, several body-surfers around Sydney tried to fashion their own boards. With only stories to guide them, however, their crude planks and unskilled riding attempts failed. Even a surfboard imported from Hawai'i in 1912 proved impossible to ride and eventually became an ironing board.



DUKE KAHANAMOKU, C. 1915.
PHOTO COURTESY BISHOP MUSEUM, HONOLULU.

Australian surfers needed an example, and they soon had one. In 1915 the indefatigable Duke Kahanamoku arrived to give swimming exhibitions. While there he built a board from local woods and finally gave the Australians a firsthand look at Hawaiian surfing. That was all they needed. After Duke's demonstrations, it began to spread in Australia as much as it did in California, but with a major difference.

Immediately the sport was integrated with a spirited organization soon to be called the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia (SLSA). Begun in 1907 it was formed primarily in the interest of water safety for surf-swimmers and bathers on the beaches of eastern Australia. A tradition of surf-swimming has, in most areas, preceded the successful arrival of surfing, and this was probably most true of Australia. By 1906 several clubs had been formed to protect beach-goers from hazards such as sharks, currents, and the large waves typical of Australia's coastline. These clubs banded together in 1907. When Kahanamoku arrived in 1915, the new movement was already an institution; the first Surf Lifesaving Carnival had been held near Sydney the previous year. The new sport of surf-riding was obviously included in the scope of this organization.

This association with Surf Lifesaving has shaped the character of the sport in Australia. In both Hawai'i and California, clubs have been important in the sport's growth, but in Australia they have had a unique significance, since the clubs there concentrate on lifesaving activities together with a whole range of ocean sports; in addition to board-surfing and body-surfing, it includes boat-surfing as well as riding waves on an unusual device peculiar to Australia called the surf-ski. An average ski is built of plywood, maybe seventeen feet long, about two feet wide, and weighing some ninety pounds. The rider sits on the board with feet in deck stirrups and paddles for the wave with a double-bladed oar. Since 1937 the bulky surf-ski has been part of the

SLSA's standard rescue equipment, but it is still a popular and uniquely Australian wave-riding device.

Each year the SLSA sponsors the famous Surf Lifesaving Carnival, an event that draws daily crowds of fifty thousand or more, who come to watch competition in swimming, lifesaving skills, and surfing. In 1956 teams from California and Hawai'i competed in the carnival. Among those representing Hawai'i were Peter Balding, Tom Zahn, Tom Moore, Tommy Shroeder, Harry Shaffer, and Danny De Rago. The Hawaiian team made the trip primarily to observe firsthand the Australians lifesaving methods. But they also brought with them their fibreglassed balsa boards and set the Australians on fire with the performance and maneuverability of these lightweight craft.

Previously most Australian surfers, if not riding surf-skis, were using the so-called "cigar boxes": hollow boards similar to Blake's olo copies of the 1930s, about twelve feet long and made of plywood, cedar or maple, and screwed or glued together. Since 1956, balsa and foam boards have taken over Australia's beaches, and surfers there are now adept at all the sweeps, stalls, and fancy footwork of Malibu and Honolulu.

Today the Land Down Under is fast catching up with California as a populous surfing center. But, like Hawai'i, its significance in the history of the sport involves more than local growth. Australia has been a secondary point from which surf-consciousness has spread around the world. As the idea of their surf-lifesaving methods has reached other British Commonwealth countries, surfing has gone with it, and the SLSA clubs have become convenient focal points for all beach activity.

AOTEAROA

As we have seen, the Māori greatly enjoyed canoe-surfing, bodyboard surfing, and body-surfing, known collectively as *whakarēre*. By the

1930s, however, traditional surfing apparently had declined significantly in popularity. During that decade, Australian Surf Lifesavers introduced their revision of the sport with surf-skis and "cigar boxes." These ponderous boards caught on among new recruits to the sport, particularly in the warmer waters of Aotearoa's North Island. Surfing received a further boost in the late 1950s when Californians brought the first balsa boards to Aotearoa, and since then interest in the new equipment and riding skills has been growing rapidly.

SOUTH AFRICA

Surfing was nothing new in Aotearoa; neither is it anything new to Africa. But there are thousands of miles and evidently hundreds of years between the indigenous sport practiced by coastal peoples of Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Ghana and the Hawaiian-derived sport flourishing in South Africa today. Although West Africans may still ride the waves as their ancestors did in centuries past, their sport does not appear to be linked historically with surfing around the Cape of Good Hope. It was the Australian example, this time spanning the Indian Ocean, that introduced the sport there.

In the beginning South Africans had only a rough sketch of an early ski, brought back by a swimming coach from the 1938 Empire Games at Sydney. The Surf Life Saving movement was already established, and a local lifesaver named Fred Crocker followed the design and built the country's first surf-ski: twelve feet long with a boarded deck, flat bottom, and heavy enough that two men were needed to handle it in the surf. Schoolboy Junior Lifesavers, however, learned to ride it, and the unwieldy craft was used for surfing until after World War II. Improved surf-skis appeared after the war, and in the 1950s Australian hollow boards replaced some of the skis. Also in the early fifties the South Beach Surf Board Club was formed in Durban. More recently

balsa and foam boards have arrived so that today South African surfers are mastering modern riding techniques on Indian Ocean swells.

ENGLAND

In 1953 the Surf Life Saving movement was established in England, and with the unique safety methods came the surfboard, surf-ski, and all the oceanic skills developed on Australia's beaches. With its time-honored reputation for fog, foul weather, and the frigid English Channel, England seems an unlikely spot for a traditionally warm weather sport like surfing. But the southwest coasts of Devon and Cornwall boast the mildest summer climates in the British Isles, and the warm gulf stream, rushing up from the Caribbean, passes so near that water temperatures sometimes approach 60 degrees. This southern coast, full of steep cliffs, sandy coves, and long, shimmering beaches, receives a regular North Atlantic swell and has been a favorite holiday area for beach-minded Britons.

Bodyboard surfing has been known there since the early years of this century. In 1953, Allan Kennedy, an Australian, established a Surf Lifesaving club in Bude, Cornwall, and thus the first surfing club in Europe. Since then, some twenty other clubs have joined, and, as usual, lifesaving and surfing go hand in hand. Many British surfers use Australian surf-skis, but some imported boards are also available.

Unlike Hawai'i, where there are twelve surfing months in every year, surfing is a summer sport in England, which isn't surprising. The main surfing areas—scattered between south Devon and Land's End—are in a latitude parallel to the Sakhalin Island off the coast of Siberia and farther north than the Great Wall of China. Ride a wave off the Cornish coast, and you'll watch it break on the northernmost surfing beaches in the world.

ISRAEL

Beyond the British Commonwealth and outside the California-Hawaii zone, several other areas of the world have been introduced to Hawaiian surfing. Among these is Israel. A former Honolulu resident, Dorian Poskowitz, moved to Israel and organized a club to promote the sport. Israel's surfing is unique because it depends more upon local wind waves generated in the eastern Mediterranean than ocean storm centers looked to by most surfers.

FRANCE

Surfing did not come to France via a visiting surfer but by the successful diffusion of an idea. At Biarritz on the Atlantic coast near Bayonne, close to the Spanish border, swimming enthusiasts first read about the sport and heard tales of its glamour and excitement. After examining published plans of surfboards and studying technique in books, they built their own boards and proceeded to teach themselves to surf. French surfers thus set a precedent in the surfing world. Since this imaginative beginning, new stimulation has come from Californian and Australian surfers visiting France to try the waves around the Bay of Biscay. In tribute to surfing's capital, the French have formed Le Club Waikiki at Biarritz, which has become the surfing center for western Europe.

PERU

On the west coast of South America the great Pacific ground swell licks and lashes beaches from Panama to Cape Horn. But the only area on this endless coastline where surfers are known to ride waves regularly is in Peru, off beaches near Lima. In the 1930s a Peruvian visitor to Hawai'i, Carlos Dogny, fell in love with the ancient sport. When he returned home from one of his several visits to Honolulu,

he brought a board with him, and Peruvians have been surfing ever since. Due to the country's economic conditions, participation has been limited to the wealthier class. Although surfboards cost no more there than elsewhere they are too expensive for the average Peruvian.

The young men of Peru's well-to-do class, already interested in beach recreations, quickly took up surfing and have continued to support it. Today Peruvian surfing is characterized by a luxury found nowhere else in the surfing world. Most surfers belong to the swank Club Waikiki on the beach at Miraflores, only fifteen minutes from Lima. It was founded in 1942 by Dogny and three other surfing Peruvians. Much like a yacht club in appearance, the club is equipped with fish ponds, gardens, a squash court for winter recreation, a kitchen, bar, and clothes-changing facilities. It also provides members with the services of "board-boys" who fetch and carry surfboards to and from the water.

The Club Waikiki members got a fresh stimulus in 1955. Peruvian surfing went international when the exchange began between Lima and Honolulu. In that year George Downing, the 1954 Hawaiian Champion, entered a surfing tournament in Peru; he was the first Hawaiian representative to do so. Just as Kahanamoku inspired Australians and Californians some forty years earlier, so Downing gave Peruvians their first look at Hawaiian skill in big surf. Peru's biggest surfing waves break some twenty-five miles down the coast from Miraflores and the Club Waikiki at a beach now called Kon Tiki. Peruvians had tried its *olas grandes* but with little success until Downing showed them how. In 1955, moreover, the first balsa boards appeared in Peru. With Downing's example and *la tabla malibu*, the Malibu board, the Peruvians took it from there. They are keen competitors. Later the same year two Club Waikiki surfers carried their Hawaiian-inspired Peruvian sport back to O'ahu when they attended

the International Championships at Mākaha.

In 1956 Carlos Dogny traveled to compete at Mākaha. While there he was particularly impressed by the unusual spectacle of women in competition. In Peru it was strictly a man's game. First he invited the women of the Waikīkī Surf Club to attend a Peruvian meet the next year. Then he extended the invitation to the club as a whole, to send a team to compete in what is now known as the South American Championships. The Hawaiian team—three men and three women—made the trip and won several trophies. But more importantly they were “cultural ambassadors” of sorts, as eager Peruvians kept them busy demonstrating riding technique, shaping and finishing boards, and describing the Hawaiian sport in detail. Two years later, Peruvians were back on O'ahu with a delegation of nine, who competed with some of Hawai'i's champion surfers and proved themselves capable on O'ahu's waves. By maintaining this contact with the sport's modern center, Peruvian surfers obtained valuable experience and encouragement. The success of their Hawai'i-South American Championships has earned the Peruvians their place in a dynamic and expanding surfing world.